



TIM BOBOSKY | PHOTOGRAPHER

Oregon congressional candidates Jim Feldkamp, right, and Peter DeFazio watch the debate between Vice President Dick Cheney and Sen. John Edwards Tuesday. Students also gathered at the Knight Law Center to watch the debates.

National: VP candidates discuss U.S. job situation

Continued from page 1

submit American military commitments overseas to a global test.

He said that was part of a record that led Kerry to oppose the first Persian Gulf War in 1991 and "always being on the wrong side" of defense issues.

On domestic issues, Edwards said Bush has presided over a loss of jobs during his administration — the first president to do so since Herbert Hoover sat in the White House. He also said more Americans are in poverty and living without health insurance than when the president took the oath of office in 2001.

But Cheney said jobs are being created and that a Kerry-Edwards administration would seek to raise taxes.

Edwards denied that even before the vice president said it, noting that the Democratic proposal calls for rolling back the Bush tax cuts on only those earning \$200,000 or more a year.

Cheney, whose daughter, Mary, is a lesbian, spoke supportively about gay relationships and said that "people ought to be free to choose any arrangement they want." At the same time, Bush supports passage of a constitutional marriage to ban gay marriage, and Cheney said, "He sets policy for this administration, and I support him."

Edwards said it was obvious that the Cheneyes loved their daughter and that "you can't have anything but respect" for them. "I believe marriage is between a man and a woman and so does John Kerry," Edwards said. But, he added, "We should not use the Constitution to divide this country."

Edwards also charged that Cheney, as the chief executive officer of Halliburton, pushed to lift U.S. sanctions

against Iran, did business with countries that were "sworn enemies of the United States," and that Halliburton paid millions of dollars in fines for providing false information "just like Enron and Ken Lay," the now indicted former chief.

Cheney accused Edwards of "trying to throw up a smoke screen" and said "there's no substance to the charges."

Kerry and Edwards have sought to link Cheney to Halliburton as a symbol of corporate greed and insider connections. Halliburton has reported making more than \$7.6 billion so far from U.S. government contracts in Iraq.

The Republican said Kerry voted to authorize the war, then voted against an \$87 billion aid package for Iraq and Afghanistan. He said Democratic primary politics were at work at that point. "If they couldn't stand up to pressures that Howard Dean represented, how can we expect them to stand up to al-Qaida?" he said.

Cheney, 63, and Edwards, 51, sat a few feet apart around a semicircular table on a stage at Case Western Reserve University. Gwen Ifill of PBS, moderator for the evening, faced them.

It was the only debate of the campaign for Cheney and his Democratic opponent.

Kerry and Bush debated for 90 minutes last week in an encounter widely viewed as a victory for the Democratic challenger. The four-term Massachusetts senator has gained ground in the polls in the days since, narrowing the gap with the president in some nationwide surveys and moving into a statistical tie in others.

Bush and Kerry will debate twice more, on Friday in St. Louis and Oct. 13 in Arizona.

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