

The Democratic Contender

Democrats all over the country are breathing a sigh of relief. Since telling the world "I am my own man," it seems, Vice President Al Gore is now "the man"—a true contender in the race to the White House—at last.

What took him so long?

For several months preceding the successful Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, the name "Al Gore" was synonymous with many things (boring, wooden, wonky, to name a few); but "presidential" was rarely on the list. And, although there was never a question that he is a more seasoned politician than his rival Gov. George W. Bush, why, his party wondered, was he performing so abysmally on the campaign trail?

Part of the problem was his struggle to distinguish himself from President Bill Clinton. Despite a constant stream of alleged scandals and sexual peccadilloes, there is always an undeniable magic in the air whenever "Slick Willy" is around. But more important, the Clinton administration can claim major victories such as unprecedented economic highs and unemployment lows. Al Gore played a major role in all that, but none of the magic rubbed off on him. Instead, he was spent a lot of time denying a taint of impropriety.

In the week before the Los Angeles convention, when Gore trailed in the polls by 10 or more points, he

named Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman as his running mate. The announcement, considered bold by some, brought Gore more to the center and provided cover against the morality issue.

He must now distinguish himself from Gov. Bush. "There is a fight now. The polls are more even," says Howard University political scientist Alvin Thornton. "And Gore appears to be flexible, agile—and kissable."

Winning over working people and families one way in which he has worked to distinguish himself is his concern for working people and families. The vice president knows that education is one of their major concerns and, like his opponent, has made the issue a large part of his message. So, where does he stand?

"Gore wants to invest wholesale in the infrastructure all the way down to the local level, helping school systems rebuild their buildings, reduce class size, hire and retain teachers," Thornton says. "The Republican approach, as it always has been, is to provide, at best, block grants to states and the states will decide how to use those moneys." The democratic party, he adds, believes there should be a "national floor under which no child or school district should be allowed to fall, and the federal government ought to play a role in that."

How the national surplus should be spent is another area in which Gore and Bush fundamentally differ. Gore has often called many of his opponent's economic ideas risky, particularly his individual investment account program for Social Security. "Bush proposes to divert 16 percent of the trust fund moneys into the stock market. I think that is a mistake," charges Gore.

"Instead, I want to protect Social Security and then give a very generous new tax incentive to encourage savings on top of social security so individuals who have found it difficult to save in the past will get a monetary benefit from doing so and the lower and low middle income groups will get the largest incentives. Those are the groups we know need to make the most gains." He is also against any tax cuts for the rich. William Spriggs, policy and research director of the Washington Urban League also has problems with Bush's plans.

"How do you finance that?" he asks. "You say there's a \$2.3 trillion Social Security surplus and most be locked away for only Social Security. So now when you take the money out for these individual accounts, then you don't have a \$2.3 trillion surplus. He'd have to figure some way of getting it back in and needs smoke and mirrors to explain how he makes up for the money that people are taking out of

the system." Given the size of Bush's tax cut, there will be no money to put back into the system. "He has to cut benefits or he's not going to have a tax cut. There's not enough money on the table."

Over the next two years, Gore would plan a \$1 increase in the minimum wage, which he says would benefit 1.3 million African Americans. He also plans to expand the amount of earned income credit that goes to families with three or more children. "I believe that wages should reflect the needs of each individual household, including the number of members and wage earners in each household."

The Earned Income Credit gives a tax break to low-income workers based on family size and wage earners, and is a great way to target tax relief for families who need it." His number one priority, he says, is to make certain the nation keeps its prosperity going and the economy growing "to create good jobs, not just for the few but for all of our people."

Reaching out to African Americans

Gore also differs with Bush on issues that target African Americans such as affirmative action. "I strongly support affirmative action and think it is still needed," he says. Despite the conviction with which he declares his support, many people were left wondering after he chose Lieberman

as his running mate. Some members of the Congressional Black Caucus and other African Americans questioned his views on affirmative action. Hogwash, says CBC chairman, South Carolina's Rep. Jim Clyburn. "The best way to tell what a person will do is to look at what he or she has done," he charges, citing Lieberman's work as a young college student on voting and other issues during the civil rights era.

At the NAACP's national convention this past summer, Gore took a stand on racial profiling and has also spoken out against hate crimes. "Talk doesn't cost much," he said. "The true test is joining our battle to ban racial profiling, speaking out and acting. As president, I will end racial profiling in the United States of America."

I'll work to bring all of our people together." According to his campaign, Gore has also been a strong supporter of hate crimes legislation. As a senator, he co-sponsored legislation that would document and identify when and where hate crimes occurred, and as vice president, he fought for the 1994 Crime Bill which included the hate crimes sentencing enhancement Act, increasing sentences by about one-third. "This is, even with the Republicans, one of those kinder, gentler things you can do without giving away a lot of re-

sources," says University of Maryland political scientist Ron Walters. With regard to racial profiling, he adds, "Gore will be able to get a law passed, but the question is what. It's one thing to pass a law against the principle, but unless you have something like, each year states have to do a do a statistical count of people who have been stopped and the racial factor, [racial profiling] will continue."

Walters believes that Gore's approach to these and other issues that concern black Americans would be very similar to the Clinton administration's. "It will be pretty much the same. I don't think we can mess with affirmative action anymore other than to end it," he says. "The Clinton administration weakened it because of the courts, so he adjusted it so it would still be legal."

The conventional wisdom among political pundits is that a Gore administration would provide the nation with pretty much "more of the same," minus the scandals, it is hoped. "I think Gore will try to follow a lot of the Clinton mode in terms of style of governance. He will be consultative but will want to make the final decision and will be much like Bill Clinton in terms of knowledge of detail," says Walters. In the end, it's a battle for the middle. "I think Gore will win that battle," predicts Thornton.

State Voters' Pamphlet Is Largest in Oregon's History

Oregonians are now receiving the state Voters' Pamphlet containing information on ballot measures to be voted on during the November 7 General Election. The first volume of the Pamphlet is the largest produced in Oregon's history at 376 pages, however, with new features for 2000, it also the most user friendly.

"Although the Voters' Pamphlet resembles the Eugene/Springfield white pages," Secretary of State Bill have tried to make it easier to read. "Tabs" on the non-partisan information explaining the proposed ballot measure and has placed a full table of contents at the beginning of the book. "We are trying to make it easier for voters to get to the facts about the measure by looking at the contents, then having the opportunity to tab to the impartial information," Bradbury stated.

The Voters' Pamphlet has served as an election guide for voters since 1903. It contains information about voting in the November 7 election, a list of county election offices, a form to request a voter registration card and information pertaining to a statewide measures.

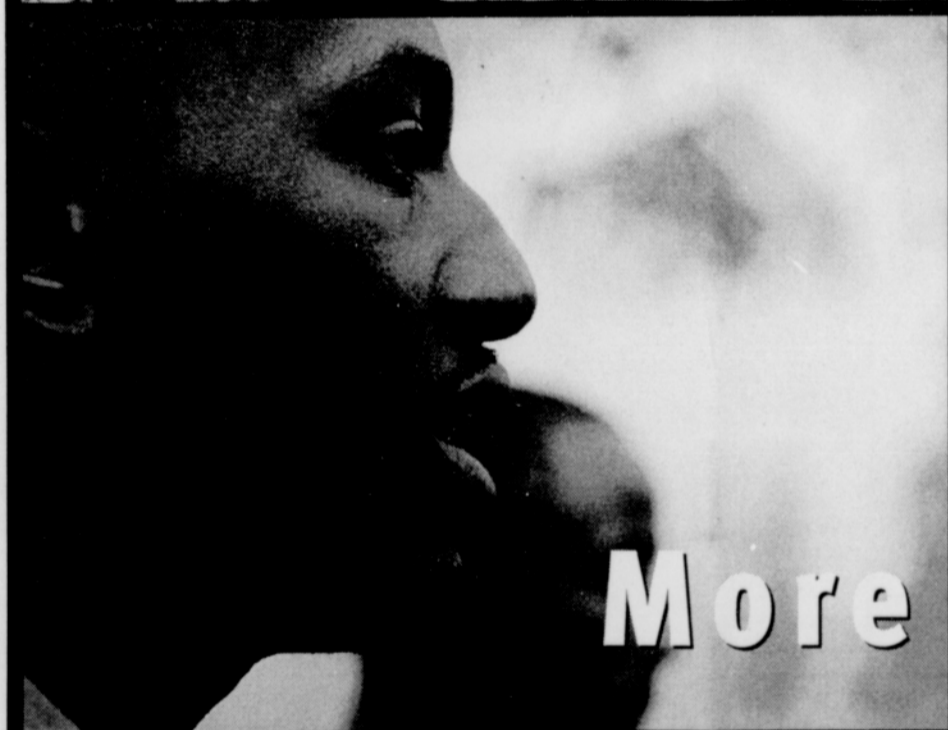
Volume two of the state Voters' Pamphlet, containing candidate information, will be delivered this week.

By state law, the Secretary of State's Office has limited editing authority and does not have the authority to check candidate statements and measure arguments for accuracy or truthfulness prior to their publication in the Voters' Pamphlet. Both volume of the Pamphlet can be viewed through links from the Oregon Votes web site, www.oregonvotes.com.

Libraries To Serve As Ballot Drop-Off Sites

For the first time ever, voters will be able to drop off their ballots for the fall election at Multnomah County libraries.

"The library is pleased to offer its customers this service," says director of Libraries Ginnie Cooper. "It fills our libraries' role as community centers." Multnomah County libraries will accept ballots from Saturday, Nov. 4, through 8 p.m. on Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 7. Although libraries will be open until 9 p.m. on Election Day, polling will close at 8 p.m. and we will not accept ballots after that time.



Better Education.

More Opportunities.

Stronger Communities.

...But only if you vote

VOTE DEMOCRAT - NOVEMBER 7TH

Paid for by the Washington State Democratic Central Committee