The Strategy

**Money and Endorsements**

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Money and Endorsements

George W. Bush's campaign yesterday accused Vice President Gore of breaking a pledge to reject the use of campaign "soft money" to finance issue ads on his behalf.

Not that there are any such ads on the air supporting the Democrat. But there have been reports that the Democratic National Committee is planning to spend millions of dollars to air Gore issue and biographical ads.

In March, Gore said he would ask the DNC and outside pro-Democratic organizations not to use soft money--large contributions by individuals, businesses and labor--for ad purchases. He asked Bush to take the same anti-soft money pledge. Bush rejected the offer, calling it a phony campaign ploy.

Bush spokesman Ari Fleisher said yesterday the Bush campaign would consider the DNC ads a violation of the pledge and another sign that Gore would do anything to be president. "That pledge was nothing more than an attempt to claim the mantle of John McCain and cloak himself in reformist garb," Fleisher said. "Now that that hasn't worked, he's changed his clothes once again. It makes you wonder if there is anything he really stands for."

Gore said he would not be breaking his pledge since he already has
been under assault by issue ads paid for by pro-Republican groups, including one attacking his position on missile defense.

"Clearly there have been such advertisements on the other side," Gore said on his campaign plane last night. He said Republicans have been "exploiting" a legal loophole that permits Bush allies to run supportive issues ads.

(...)
WASHINGTON - The Democratic National Committee plans to launch a massive television advertising campaign today, financed with millions of dollars in "soft money" donations, in an effort to rebuild Vice President Al Gore's image. But the move immediately led to Republican charges that Gore was violating a campaign pledge not to initiate the controversial form of advertising.

The action is expected to unleash an unprecedented torrent of advertising from both the Republican and Democratic parties aimed at influencing the presidential campaign. The ads are financed with unlimited, unregulated contributions known as soft money that often exceed $100,000, in contrast to the strictly regulated $1,000-per-person donations from individuals given to presidential campaigns. "This is going to be an explosive use of soft money that will break all past records," said Fred Wertheimer, president of Democracy 21, which advocates campaign-finance overhaul, estimating that this year's expenditure of soft money will double the 1996 campaign total.

Wertheimer said he agreed with Republican complaints that Gore appeared to be breaking a campaign promise, but he said the larger point is that both parties will now start spending tens of millions of dollars in soft money that was never intended to be used in a presidential campaign.

Today's move by the DNC could cause political problems for Gore because of a pledge he made March 15. In several television
appearances, Gore said he would prevent the DNC from using soft money on advertisements "unless and until the Republican Party does."

Gore, appearing yesterday on ABC-TV's "Good Morning America," said the Republican Party has "gone first. They did months ago."

Gore did not provide a specific example, but his aides have said for weeks that the Gore proposal was void because independent groups that back Bush have spent money on advertisements attacking Gore. For example, a group called Shape the Debate has paid for commercials that call Gore a hypocrite for backing campaign-finance overhaul after holding what it called an illegal fund-raiser at a Buddhist temple.

But Republican Party Chairman Jim Nicholson said the Republican National Committee has not spent any soft money on advertisements, and he said it would be illegal for the RNC to try to stop independent groups such as Shape the Debate from airing its ads.

"We have not spent one thin dime on soft money ads," Nicholson said. "This is pathetic. He has been vice president for 7 1/2 years, and now he is trying to reintroduce himself, this time spending money in violation of a pledge he took."

Nicholson said the RNC is looking at "all of our options" and hasn't decided whether to spend its $30 million soft money war chest on advertisements.

George W. Bush, the all-but-certain Republican nominee, said at a Georgia campaign appearance: "It sounds like to me they're laying out a smoke screen to provide cover for Al Gore to break his promise."

Gore spokesman Doug Hattaway acknowledged, "I'm not aware of any soft money ads by the RNC."

But Hattaway said that when Gore made his proposal to Bush in March via e-mail, the vice president specifically included ads by
Republican-oriented groups as well as the RNC. When Gore outlined his proposal in television interviews, however, he referred to soft money spent by the political parties. When Gore was asked on CNN whether he would instruct the DNC "to take the lead in this regardless of what the Republicans do," Gore said, "Oh, sure."

Given the seeming disparity between Gore's televised comments and his e-mail, the Gore campaign yesterday said the vice president's e-mail proposal had been violated by Republican groups.

"They (the RNC) have these front groups spending millions of dollars on attack ads," Hattaway said.

Bush did not accept or reject Gore's March proposal. But Bush was criticized during the primaries when some Texas backers launched a $2 million ad campaign that attacked Senator John McCain's environmental record. McCain filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission about the ads.

"Bush does not come to this with clean hands," Wertheimer said. Bush said at the time that he had nothing to do with the ads and was not responsible for them.

(...)
WASHINGTON - If you plan to watch any TV this fall, make sure you keep the remote control nearby at all times. Because if you thought political ads were annoying before, you ain't seen nothin' yet.

A newly discovered loophole in the tax laws has produced a presidential race awash in secret political cash - millions and millions of clandestine dollars - and most of it will be used to buy TV ads that threaten to eat up much of the airwaves after Labor Day.

"Politicians generally go on vacation when the election is over," said Larry Makinson, executive director of the Center for Responsive Politics, a nonpartisan watchdog group. "After this Election Day, the entire country is going to want to go on vacation."

Fueling the ad flood is the discovery of a tax loophole that allows anyone with a lot of money to bypass campaign-finance restrictions by setting up a tax-exempt front group with an innocuous name - say, Club for Growth or Coalition to Protect Americans Now - to air political spots. The only rule is that they can't specifically say "Vote for Candidate X" or "Defeat Candidate Y." Saying "Candidate X is a thieving child-molester" is perfectly fine, however.

They also aren't supposed to coordinate with a particular candidate, but the legal definition of "coordinate" is hopelessly fuzzy.

Once a 527 group - named after the loophole, Section 527 of the U.S. Tax Code - is set up, millions can be funneled through it, avoiding the restrictions that govern regular political donations. That means anyone -
conglomerates, secretive billionaires, rich pals of candidates, foreign governments or even crime syndicates, such as the Cali cartel or the Mafia - can anonymously influence the outcome of the election.

"We spend hundreds of millions of dollars on national security every year, and for the cost of a few Scud missiles, someone could come in and disrupt our elections anonymously - and do it all legally," Makinson said.

The dodge was discovered last year by two left-wing groups, the Sierra Club and Peace Action, which set up 527 committees to fund ads pushing the environment and disarmament. But the right wing soon caught on.

Now, new groups - most of them unaffiliated with known organizations and most of them conservative - are popping up every day, according to the Center for Public Integrity, another watchdog group.

During the GOP primary, dozens of 527 ads trashed candidates John McCain and Steve Forbes, including a notorious anti-McCain spot aired in New York by Republicans for Clean Air - actually two supporters of Texas Gov. George W. Bush.

The Democratic National Committee yesterday accused the Bush campaign of coordinating with those stealth groups, and it called on Republicans in Congress to stop opposing efforts to close the tax loophole.

The DNC was seeking some political cover for this week's kickoff of its $25 million ad campaign touting Vice President Gore as its presidential candidate.

Gore had pledged he wouldn't let the DNC air any soft-money ads unless the GOP started first. But though the Republican Party hasn't aired any Bush ads, the Democrats say the GOP broke the agreement because so many 527 committees are airing anti-Gore ads.
One spot in heavy rotation by a group called Shape the Debate is a satire of "Jeopardy" called "Hypocrisy" in which the answer to every question is: "Who is Al Gore?"

The Bush campaign says it has nothing to do with the anti-Gore ads and accuses the vice president of reneging on his pledge.

While the two sides squabble, everyone else should get the mute button ready.

"The fall airtime is filling up," Makinson said. "My advice to viewers: Look at the fine print at the end of the ad. If you don't know who these people are, there's probably a reason they don't want you to know."
WASHINGTON, June 16 -- Two advocacy groups accused the Democratic and Republican parties today of breaking federal election law by using large soft-money contributions to pay for television commercials now showing across the country to promote the campaigns of Vice President Al Gore and Gov. George W. Bush of Texas.

Leaders of the nonpartisan groups, Common Cause and Democracy 21, which both advocate the overhaul of federal election laws, said they intended to file complaints next week with the Justice Department and the Federal Election Commission challenging the legality of the advertisements that began showing in 15 states last weekend.

"There is not even an effort to hide the fact that these are ads for the candidates paid for by soft money, and that is illegal," Scott Harshbarger, the president of Common Cause and a former Massachusetts attorney general, said today.

Fred Wertheimer, the president of Democracy 21, said: "We are charging both the presidential campaigns and the political parties with breaking the law with these ads. We are going to do everything we can to make sure that the law is enforced this time, and that these violations are not given a free ride again."

Four years ago, Common Cause challenged the legality of millions of dollars of similar advertising, charging that the commercials promoted specific candidates, not party issues. Although some lawyers and officials at the Justice Department and the election commission agreed, neither
agency took action. Common Cause and Democracy 21 are hoping that the new complaints will be more persuasive.

Federal election law prohibits the use of soft money, the unrestricted donations to the parties, to pay for political advertisements that promote the election of individual candidates.

The Republican and Democratic parties defended the commercials, saying they advocated particular issues and did not violate the spirit or the letter of federal election law.

"These ads are perfectly appropriate and legal," said Jenny Backus, a spokeswoman for the Democratic National Committee. "Our ads reflect a unified Democratic message, whether it is for the presidency, the Congress or key state and local races."

Cliff May, the spokesman of the Republican National Committee, said party lawyers concluded that the Republican issue advertisements were within the law. "It's very clear that our ad is about Social Security," Mr. May said, "and it is appropriate to have the leader of the party talking about that."

(...)
WASHINGTON, Aug. 10 -- Turning to a second legal loophole after another was closed, one of the nation’s largest unions, a leading supporter of Vice President Al Gore, has quietly created a group that this week is televising an advertisement harshly critical of Gov. George W. Bush.

Neither the group’s ad nor its Web site (www.checkforyourself.com) discloses its relationship with the union, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, or Afscme.

Afscme provided $800,000 to start the organization, American Family Voices. In a news release and on its Web site, the group describes its mission as advocacy of "progressive policies, especially economic issues." It says its membership includes advocates for consumers, health care, education, children, the elderly, civil rights and labor.

The organization was created in July, after Congress closed a loophole in federal tax and election law known as Section 527, under which groups were able, with virtually no disclosure, to raise and spend unlimited sums to spread political messages. American Family Voices was instead chartered under Section 501(c)4, a longstanding provision in the tax code that allows it to engage in political activity with minimal financial disclosure.

Afscme, which has 1.3 million members, endorsed Vice President Gore last autumn, months before he sealed the Democratic presidential
nomination.

The executive director of American Family Voices is Michael Lux, a longtime liberal campaigner who worked for two years in the Clinton White House and has been affiliated with People for the American Way.

The new effort makes organized labor the latest of a number of interests, as varied as the Sierra Club and the pharmaceutical industry, to set up independent groups to underwrite political advertising and other election-related activities.

Under its Section 501(c)4 tax status, American Family Voices is permitted to engage in political activities like polling, lobbying and issue advertising but is not permitted to advocate the election or defeat of individual candidates. Such groups must file public information returns with the Internal Revenue Service but are not required to disclose the sources of their income.

They are reminiscent of secretive groups set up under Section 527. Sam Wyly, for instance, a wealthy benefactor of Mr. Bush, created a group called Republicans for Clean Air that ran television advertisements during the primaries attacking the environmental record of the Texas governor's chief rival, Senator John McCain of Arizona.

In June, Congress passed legislation requiring Section 527 groups to disclose their major contributors and spending. American Family Voices was created after the legislation took effect on July 1, Mr. Lux said. As a result, it could not take advantage of the Section 527 nondisclosure loophole and will instead operate under the minimal-disclosure requirements of Section 501(c)4.

Mr. Lux said he had raised $700,000 in addition to the sum provided by Afscme and intended to use the money this fall to buy issue advertising in the presidential campaign and selected Congressional
races. He declined to identify the group's other contributors, saying only that they were organizations and individuals who shared the union's policy agenda for working people.

(...)

Fred Wertheimer, an advocate of revisions in federal campaign law, said the union's hidden sponsorship of American Family Voices dramatized a longstanding problem in American politics.

"Closing the Section 527 secrecy loophole just solved one of the problems," Mr. Wertheimer said. "This is another example of interests' conducting blatant electioneering activities and hiding their donors. And it's a huge problem. This conduct is an evasion of the spirit of disclosure laws and will be a growing problem that will have to be solved just like the Section 527 groups were."
WASHINGTON - With Green Party presidential candidate Ralph Nader at his elbow, Teamsters President James Hoffa called Thursday for Vice President Al Gore to get in step with organized labor or risk losing his bid for the White House.

Hoffa stopped well short of endorsing Nader but said his opposition to recent U.S. trade agreements and advocacy of American workers’ rights should earn him a place in any of this fall's presidential debates.

"Who really wants to see a debate between Al Gore and George Bush?" the Teamster chief asked. "I mean they're somewhat the same on trade, the same mindless debate on Social Security goes on and on. We want to broaden the debate."

Following a meeting of the Teamsters board of directors and Nader, Hoffa told reporters the union is not close to making an endorsement decision and is "not locked into one party or another."

"We're going to continue to wait," he said. "We are not in a hurry to endorse. We think there is time. We have options of endorsing or not endorsing."

Unless the vice president gets "more in tune with us," Hoffa said, the Democrat faces the prospect of going into the November election without help from the 1.4 million-member Brotherhood of Teamsters.
"Al Gore can't get elected without organized labor," Hoffa said.

(...) Gore's support of improved trade relations with China and the North American Free Trade Agreement has rankled the Teamsters and the United Automobile Workers union enough that both have refused to endorse his candidacy. More recently, Hoffa said, the Teamsters leadership was angered by Gore's naming of Commerce Secretary William Daley, the administration's chief lobbyist on the China trade issue, to run his campaign for president,

"One of the problems with Gore is (he does) not listen to labor," said Hoffa.

(...)
WASHINGTON - Struggling to control potential damage to his presidential campaign, Vice President Al Gore released transcripts Friday from his sometimes rancorous interview with federal prosecutors examining 1996 political fund-raising abuses.

"I have admitted that I made mistakes in fund-raising, but I want the American people to know that I have always told the truth about this," Gore said in response to reports that the prosecutors have called for an independent investigation into whether he lied under oath.

The transcript, released late Friday at the White House, indicates that during an April 18 interview with prosecutors, the vice president apparently contradicted himself on whether he knew that his 1996 luncheon at a Buddhist temple was a fund-raising event.

At one point in the interview, Gore told Justice Department investigators that prior to the temple visit he "sure as hell did not have any conversations" that would indicate it was to be fund-raising event.
Political donations by religious organizations are a violation of federal law.

Moments later, according to the transcript, the vice president acknowledges swapping e-mail with a staff member on March 15, 1996, in which he was notified that he was scheduled to attend a fund-raiser in Los Angeles on April 29, 1996.

Gore's e-mail response directed his staff to cancel the L.A. fund-raiser. Instead, his schedule was changed so he could visit the Hsi Lai Temple for a luncheon that netted more than $65,000 in illegal donations for the Democratic Party. Although prosecutors showed Gore several documents indicating that many of his staff members knew that the party would raise money at the temple, Gore said he was never told.

"To this day, I do not know it was" a fund-raiser, Gore testified. Later, the vice president told investigators that he learned from Democratic Party officials after the luncheon that it was a fund-raiser. When his attorney, James Neal, reminded Gore of his previous statement, the vice president back-pedaled.

"Well, that's right. That is more accurate. Let me . . . amend that," Gore said. "That was the first time that I learned it was alleged to be, to have been a fund-raiser. And, again, I still do not know that any funds, that any money changed hands there."

The transcripts also show that Gore was unable to recall whether he sat at the same table at a 1996 Washington breakfast with Maria Hsia.

"Did you know that the price for attending that event was $12,500 per person?" Gore was asked. "No," the vice president replied. Hsia, one of 22 people prosecuted by the Justice Department's campaign fundraising task force, was convicted in March for hiding $109,000 in illegal contributions and making false statements to federal regulators. Hsia
also helped organize Gore's visit to the Buddhist temple.

Government officials have confirmed that Robert Conrad, the Justice Department prosecutor who questioned the vice president, has recommended that Attorney General Janet Reno appoint a special counsel to investigate the truthfulness of the vice president's answers.

Initial word of Conrad’s recommendation was disclosed to reporters on Thursday by Sen. Arlen Specter, a Pennsylvania Republican and longtime critic of the Clinton-Gore administration and the attorney general.

On Friday, Reno declined to discuss specifics of the Gore case, which has been revisited several times over the past three years by a Justice Department task force.

"The worst thing you can do in an investigation is dribble it out piece by piece," Reno said. "I don't want to present half facts. I don't want to present a piece here and a piece there that may not be corroborated. I want to do it the right way."

Reno, who twice before has refused to seek an independent investigation of Gore, said she would "do everything in my power to see that any decision that I make is made without political influence from anyone."

The attorney general, who reportedly has launched an internal inquiry to determine who leaked information to Specter, said: "If we let people think that because they leak something they can pressure us into decisions, that just won't work."

Meanwhile, Gore told reporters that he wants the transcript of his interrogation by Conrad "to be out there, and I want people to be able to judge for themselves" whether further investigation is warranted.

"I think the truth is my friend in this," Gore said aboard Air Force
Two as he flew between Colorado and California for events expected to raise more than $2.5 million for the Democratic Party.

Gore suggested the disclosure of Conrad’s recommendation was politically motivated. "I think the timing is a comment in and of itself,” he said. "Here we are four months before a national election."

(...)

Political Communication Lab., Stanford University
WASHINGTON, July 4 -- In his April interview with federal investigators, two very different Al Gores seemed to be present, law enforcement officials say. One was a confident master of detail, and the other was a defensive witness who could not recall basic facts about his fund-raising activities in the months before the 1996 election.

At the outset, Mr. Gore remembered with precision how long he had served as vice president and as a senator from Tennessee. "I've been vice president for seven years and two months and 28 days," Mr. Gore said. "Before that, I was a member of the United States Senate for eight years and 18 days."

But later in the April 18 interview, Mr. Gore said he did not know whether the now-infamous luncheon that he attended at a Buddhist temple in California was a fund-raising event. He disputed the suggestion that White House coffees were used as fund-raising events by the Democratic Party -- although millions of dollars flowed from the people who attended them. And the vice president said he thought he had attended only one White House coffee when documents showed that he had attended 23.

Law enforcement officials said that Mr. Gore was so meticulous in his recall of some matters (at one point describing himself as a "stickler to a fault" who sometimes corrected the grammar of his campaign letters) that they doubted his vague responses to questions about his campaign finance activities.
That contradiction fueled investigators' skepticism about Mr. Gore's truthfulness. Robert J. Conrad Jr., the head of the Justice Department's campaign task force, recommended that Attorney General Janet Reno appoint a special counsel to investigate the vice president's veracity during the four-hour interview.

Mr. Conrad is focusing on three principal areas of inquiry, law enforcement officials said. None of the issues are new: the vice president's appearance at the luncheon at the Buddhist temple, his attendance at White House coffees and his fund-raising telephone calls from the Executive Mansion.

On June 23, after he ordered his lawyers to release copies of the 123-page transcript of his interview, Mr. Gore told reporters, "I think the truth is my friend in this."

Jim Kennedy, a spokesman for the vice president's office, said, "This isn't news. This is archaeology, and it has no relevance to the kind of issues that the vice president is working on and the American people care about."

What follows is a status report on the significant matters in the Gore inquiry.

Hsi Lai Temple Luncheon

THE ISSUE -- On April 29, 1996, Mr. Gore attended a luncheon organized by John Huang and Maria Hsia, both of whom were Democratic fund-raisers, at the Hsi Lai Temple, a Buddhist monastery near Los Angeles in Hacienda Heights, Calif. The luncheon with about 100 community leaders was one of the first campaign finance controversies to embroil the vice president, who was invited to the temple by a leader of the group, which is based in Taiwan.

The event raised the issue of whether the temple had held a political
fund-raiser in violation of its tax-exempt status as a religious institution and whether temple monastics were illegally reimbursed for contributions. There was also the question of whether Mr. Gore knew it was a fund-raiser.

Initially, Mr. Gore said in an October 1996 interview with National Public Radio that the luncheon was a "community outreach" event. But in January 1997, a spokesman for the vice president said Mr. Gore "knew it was a finance-related event."

THE INVESTIGATION -- Investigators found that Mr. Gore routinely attended fund-raisers and community outreach events organized by the Democratic National Committee. Some documents suggested confusion among Mr. Gore’s staff because the vice president initially planned to attend two events in a single day in Los Angeles, one a fund-raising luncheon and the other a visit to the temple. The two stops were melded into one because of time constraints.

Ms. Reno decided against appointing an independent counsel to review Mr. Gore’s fund-raising, although he was not questioned about the temple event until last April. Justice Department prosecutors brought criminal charges against two fund-raisers involved in the temple luncheon. Mr. Huang pleaded guilty for his role in soliciting about $159,000 in donations from people who attended the event and from temple monastics. In an appearance before a House committee, Mr. Huang testified that he had no evidence implicating Mr. Gore in any wrongdoing.

In March Ms. Hsia was convicted of campaign finance violations, including helping to arrange for donations to be made in the names of monks and nuns who were later reimbursed by the temple.

THE VICE PRESIDENT’S COMMENTS -- In one of the most caustic
exchanges of his April interview with prosecutors, Mr. Gore angrily
denied that he had been told by aides that the temple event was a fund-
raiser.

"I sure as hell don't recall having -- I sure as hell did not have any
conversations with anyone saying this is a fund-raising event," Mr. Gore
tested.

UNRESOLVED QUESTIONS -- Mr. Conrad is said to be dissatisfied
with some of Mr. Gore's answers. Several documents indicate that Mr.
Gore's staff knew that the purpose of the luncheon was to raise
campaign contributions. Because of the discrepancy between Mr. Gore's
responses and some of the documents, Mr. Conrad has recommended
that a special counsel be appointed to investigate the matter further.

The White House Coffees

THE ISSUES -- Mr. Gore's attendance at White House coffees, which
were used by the White House in 1995 and 1996 to help the Democratic
Party raise millions of dollars in campaign contributions. From November
1995 to August 1996, the White House organized 103 coffees. Guests
contributed $26.4 million, and of that total $7.7 million was contributed
by guests within one month of attending a coffee, usually held in the
White House Map Room.

THE INVESTIGATION -- Charles G. La Bella, a former head of the
Justice Department task force, investigated the White House coffees, and
concluded that they required no further inquiry. And late in 1997, Ms.
Reno also decided that the coffees merited no further action.

But Mr. Conrad, who was appointed by Ms. Reno in late December,
decided to ask Mr. Gore questions about the coffees. Mr. Gore disputed
Mr. Conrad's suggestion that White House coffees were used as "fund-
raising tools" by the Democratic Party.
Mr. Conrad asked, "In your opinion, there simply was no quid pro
quo of attendance at a coffee, payment to follow?"

Mr. Gore replied, "That is absolutely my impression."

Mr. Conrad asked if it was true that Mr. Gore had served as host of
23 White House coffees and sat in with President Clinton at 8 others.
"Would that be an accurate statement?" Mr. Conrad asked.

"I don't know," the vice president said.

Later, Mr. Gore said he could not recall attending any coffees. "This
was on the president's side of things," he said. "That's my memory and
impression."

Mr. Gore said it "was not my practice to go to any of these coffees."
He added, "There may have been one that I attended briefly, perhaps
because some of the invitees were known to me and wanted to say hello."

Two days after the interview, Mr. Gore's lawyer, James F. Neal,
acknowledged in a letter to Mr. Conrad that Mr. Gore misunderstood the
question, and thought it dealt only with "White House coffees." Mr. Neal
wrote that according to the vice president's schedule, Mr. Gore had
attended 4 White House coffees and he had acted as host of 21 coffees in
the Old Executive Office Building.

UNRESOLVED QUESTIONS -- The discrepancies between the
documents and Mr. Gore's hazy recollection of his role in the coffees have
prompted Mr. Conrad to recommend that Ms. Reno appoint a special
counsel to investigate the matter.

White House Phone Calls

THE ISSUE -- From December 1995 to April 1996, Mr. Gore made 45
fund-raising telephone calls from his West Wing office in the White
House. The calls raised the issue of whether Mr. Gore may have violated
the Pendleton Act, an 1883 civil service law, which bars elected officials
from using federal property to raise campaign contributions. The law was designed to prevent officeholders from pressuring their subordinates into making political donations.

Mr. Gore made his calls from his White House office. Mr. Clinton made similar calls from his White House quarters, which is not considered official government property.

Among those Mr. Gore called was Robert Johnson, chairman of Black Entertainment Television Holdings. In one document disclosed by a House committee, a call sheet prepared by the Democratic Party, Mr. Gore was told to ask Mr. Johnson "to write $30K for the media campaign."

In an interview with agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Mr. Johnson said he took Mr. Gore's call and then wrote a check to the Democratic Party for $30,000. Later, a Democratic Party finance officer noted on a computerized record of the vice president's fund-raising: "$30K in."

THE INVESTIGATION -- In 1997, Ms. Reno absolved Mr. Gore of any wrongdoing in connection with the phone calls. She found that Mr. Gore's calls were intended to raise money only for general party purposes, a category known as soft money. She concluded that Mr. Gore did not realize that part of the money was funneled into hard-money accounts that were used for Clinton-Gore re-election activities but were restricted by federal election laws.

In 1998, Ms. Reno's findings were challenged when investigators obtained a Nov. 21, 1995, memorandum written by David M. Strauss, then Mr. Gore's deputy chief of staff. On the memorandum were Mr. Strauss's handwritten notes that suggested Mr. Gore might have known that some of the money raised by his calls was allocated to direct re-
election activities.

In a series of interviews with prosecutors, four participants in the meeting, including Leon A. Panetta, the former White House chief of staff, recalled that Mr. Gore was present for a discussion of how the money was to be allocated. But seven or eight others told investigators they could not recall a discussion about money raised by phone calls going to the restricted hard money accounts.

MR. GORE'S COMMENTS -- When interviewed by prosecutors on Nov. 11, 1998, Mr. Gore said he was sometimes inattentive and missed parts of the fund-raising meetings. According to F.B.I. notes on the interview, Mr. Gore said he "drank a lot of iced tea during meetings, which could have necessitated a restroom break."

UNRESOLVED QUESTIONS -- In December 1998, Ms. Reno cleared Mr. Gore of wrongdoing. In reaching her decision, she rebuffed recommendations from six senior aides and relied instead on the advice of a single trusted adviser, Lee J. Radek, the chief of the Justice Department's public corruption unit.

But in the last several weeks, Mr. Conrad, urged on by the F.B.I., concluded that Mr. Gore's truthfulness about the phone calls should also be examined by an outside prosecutor.
GREEN BAY, Wis. - Bill Bradley came here yesterday to praise the man who buried him in the Democratic primary, offering a polite endorsement of Vice President Al Gore in the name of party unity.

(...) 

Bradley withdrew from the Democratic primary, winless, four months ago. While he said in March that he would support Gore as the presumptive nominee, Bradley did not formally endorse Gore until yesterday.

Gore, who accused Bradley during the primaries of being a quitter because he did not "stay and fight" for the party after the Republicans took control of Congress in 1995, called his former foe "a good Democrat."

The two men raised their clasped hands in a victory salute, but otherwise, there appeared to be little warmth between the former opponents.

Bradley was well into his speech before he even mentioned Gore by
name, and only did so after first mentioning the Democratic Party and President Clinton.

"I believe that under [Gore's] leadership, we will come closer to solving the problems I mentioned earlier than under the leadership of Governor George W. Bush," Bradley said, his words nearly drowned out at times by anti-Gore demonstrators.

Gore also has "a deep understanding of technology that will change America's future," Bradley said.

(...)

Bradley, who did not win any states during the contentious primary season, doesn't bring much to the campaign table for Gore, said political analyst Stuart Rothenberg.

Unlike Senator John McCain, Republican of Arizona and a former candidate for president, Bradley does not have a hard-core group of supporters he can galvanize for the nominee, Rothenberg said.

And Bradley's lack of success in the primaries isn't promising in terms of transferring votes for Gore, he said.

"He wasn't a combatant in his own campaign," Rothenberg said. "So how can he be a combatant in somebody else's campaign?"

(...)

Political Communication Lab., Stanford University
Despite Policy Differences, UAW Union Endorses Gore

DETROIT - The United Auto Workers endorsed Al Gore for president on Tuesday, despite serious differences with the Democratic candidate over U.S. trade policy. Union President Stephen P. Yokich has criticized Gore for supporting permanent normal trade relations with China, contending it will cost American jobs, and for backing the North American Free Trade Agreement. Yokich had suggested the UAW might consider alternatives to Gore or Republican George W. Bush, namely Green Party candidate Ralph Nader. But Yokich said Gore was the only candidate who offered a platform the UAW could support and had a real chance of winning the race. "It's no secret that we disagree - and disagree sharply - on NAFTA and on granting China permanent normal trade relations," Yokich said. "Yet even on trade, where we don't see eye to eye, Al Gore is better - much better - than George W. Bush." The UAW has a long tradition of endorsing Democratic candidates. For the first time this year, the UAW's 700,000 members who work for U.S. automakers will get Election Day off. The Teamsters union, which represents primarily freight and transportation workers, also has threatened not to endorse Gore. Teamsters President James Hoffa appeared with Nader at a news conference in June, and was feted at the Republican National Convention last week in Philadelphia, though he is a delegate to next week's Democratic gathering in Los Angeles.
WASHINGTON -- Amid a record-breaking flood of money to both major political parties, one organization is struggling to match its fund-raising pace of four years ago: the Democratic National Committee.

The DNC, host of this week’s national convention, stands alone among the six national fund-raising committees in failing to surpass its frenetic 1996 finance efforts. Through June 30, the DNC has collected $110.6 million in total contributions--a 12% drop compared with the first 18 months of the last presidential election.

The falloff could mean trouble for the Democrats and their certain presidential nominee, Al Gore, as they compete with GOP nominee George W. Bush and the Republican Party in an expensive television ad war during the weeks before the election. Much of the money generated by the DNC is spent on advertising and party-building activities in support of its presidential nominee and other Democratic campaigns.

The drop in DNC contributions is particularly striking given that it occurred during a period of prolonged economic prosperity that has fueled an escalation in political giving to campaigns and candidates nationwide.

"If you look at where the economy is and where the other party committees are, they should be doing much better than they are," said one prominent Democratic strategist who declined to be named.

In-House Competition Also an Issue

The DNC also faces serious competition from a new front: the first family. President Clinton and his supporters are busy raising large sums
for his presidential library in Arkansas and his legal defense fund, and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton is aggressively soliciting Democratic donors for her U.S. Senate bid in New York. Together, these ventures have goals exceeding $165.2 million.

After a lackluster 1999, the DNC has scrambled in recent months to try to close the gap with its GOP counterpart. The party is now flush with an unprecedented $35.1 million in cash on hand for the fall campaign. DNC officials say that since Gore emerged as the Democratic presidential front-runner earlier this year, the DNC set a record for both first-quarter revenues and a single event—a gala tribute to Clinton in May that yielded $26.5 million.

But the Republican National Committee still has a distinct advantage over the DNC when it comes to money in the bank: $63.4 million at midyear. Contributions to the Republican National Committee have jumped 21% thus far to $165 million, according to an analysis of federal election records by the Campaign Study Group of Springfield, Va.

Among the reasons cited by Democratic leaders for the DNC's slow start: Gore was locked in a tough primary battle until early this year; the belated involvement of the party's fund-raiser-in-chief, President Clinton; disarray within the DNC organization; and sudden competition from the Democratic congressional campaign committees. Some also attributed an initial lack of aggressiveness to fallout from the 1996 Democratic fund-raising scandal.

DNC Chairman Edward G. Rendell conceded that the committee is trying to recover from woeful fund-raising returns during 1999. He said the DNC is lagging in "hard-money" donations, the tightly restricted individual contributions of $1,000 or less, as opposed to the unlimited, unregulated "soft-money" checks from wealthy individuals, corporations
and unions. Federal law requires parties to use at least 65% hard dollars in most of their spending for advertisements and other party work.

(....)
WASHINGTON -- The International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the most powerful U.S. labor union, on Thursday endorsed Democratic presidential nominee Al Gore.

The support of the 1.4 million-member union could provide Gore with a boost in the key battleground states of the Midwest where Teamster membership is concentrated, including Missouri and Illinois, political analysts said.

Angered by Gore's support for free-trade agreements and the normalization of trade with China, the Teamsters had for months withheld their endorsement, even after the rest of organized labor endorsed the vice president.

Teamster President James P. Hoffa, who pledged two years ago during his campaign for office to wean the union from the Democrats and adopt a more bipartisan approach, had flirted in recent months with third-party hopefuls Ralph Nader and Pat Buchanan. He also met with Texas Gov. George W. Bush, the Republican nominee.

But in a telephone conference call Thursday arranged by Hoffa from New York, where he was attending a campaign event for Senate candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton, the union's 27-member executive board unanimously decided to back Gore, calling him a friend to working people.

The union's decision is expected to provide volunteers, money and
get-out-the-vote efforts in key battleground states where the Teamsters are strongest.

(...)
Transcript:

ALAN COLMES, CO-HOST: (...) first we turn to the presidential race, where Al Gore is once again facing more questions about his fund-raising practices. The Justice Department is investigating a series of donations made in 1995. Investigators are trying to determine if the vice president solicited contributions from a prominent Texas attorney in exchange for a veto by President Clinton on tort reform legislation.

Also today, Gore's Republican rival, George W. Bush, finally gave in to Gore's demands that they square off in three primetime debates sponsored by a bipartisan panel.

Joining us now from Washington, former Clinton White House special counsel Lanny Davis; here in New York, the chairman of the Republican National Committee, Jim Nicholson.

Lanny, good to see you. Jim, welcome back.

JIM NICHOLSON, REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE CHAIR: Alan, glad to be with you.

COLMES: Nice to see you again. All right, let's talk about these
charges against Al Gore. First of all, he didn't make any phone call. So I'd like to know how he's culpable, since he never made a call. You're talking about a memo about a veto that the president was going to give anyway, and that's how the Democrats have generally voted. So how is Al Gore culpable here?

NICHOLSON: Two big suppositions in your statement there. How do you know he didn't make the phone call? The memo says, "Sorry the vice president missed you" and asks Fowler to make a follow-up phone call and say, "Tell him that we know he doesn't want to give the $100,000 until the president vetoes the tort reform bill, and -- but tell him we need the money sooner anyway." He didn't give the money until the president did...

COLMES: In order to prove...

NICHOLSON: ... veto the tort reform bill.

COLMES: ... a quid a pro quo, in order to prove any kind of illegality, you would have to prove that there was some kind of a deal with a vote a certain way or a veto a certain way in exchange for that money. Nowhere is that proven. Nowhere is it shown that Al Gore ever had this kind of a conversation.

NICHOLSON: Well, it seems clear...

COLMES: So you trying to connect dots here that don't match up.

NICHOLSON: It seems -- it seems clear to you, but apparently not to the Justice Department. But they for the fourth time now have instituted an investigation into Al Gore's fund-raising, and they've got a...

COLMES: It's funny. The Justice Department...

NICHOLSON: ... very prominent attorney named Conrad looking into it, so there must be probable cause...

COLMES: And it's funny...
NICHOLSON: ... that he did do it.

COLMES: ... because you're -- the Republicans love to attack Janet Reno for not being forthcoming enough investigating this administration, but...

NICHOLSON: Three investigations...

(CROSSTALK)

COLMES: ... investigating the administration in the height of election season.

NICHOLSON: Well, I think that says a lot about how serious this must be, but...

(LAUGHTER)

NICHOLSON: They did it -- they did it three other times, and she decided not to...

COLMES: All right...

(CROSSTALK)

NICHOLSON: ... three other times after her internal task force said...

COLMES: But they're not looking the other way.

NICHOLSON: ... "Yes -- yes, Madam Attorney General, appoint a special counsel."

COLMES: Lanny Davis, what do you know about this and -- you know, we know that Al Gore did not make that phone call, according to up-to-date information we have.

LANNY DAVIS, FORMER CLINTON SPECIAL COUNSEL: We not only know that, in the polls rather than down in the polls. This information was given...

NICHOLSON: We are up in the polls.

DAVIS: Excuse me. You're not up in the polls in any presidential poll...
NICHOLSON: The bipartisan Battleground poll, Lanny...

DAVIS: OK.
NICHOLSON: ... shows us up 6 points two days in a row.

(CROSSTALK)

HANNITY: Hey, Lanny, wait a minute. Lanny, I'm going to...

DAVIS: Can I...

HANNITY: Lanny, I hate to do this to you, Lanny. I'm going to put it up on the screen, buddy, the latest Battleground -- oh, George Bush, 41 percent, Gore 38!

DAVIS: Excuse me...

(CROSSTALK)

HANNITY: Now he's up by 6 in the Battleground poll!

NICHOLSON: Six points!

DAVIS: Excuse me. I thought I just heard the number was 6. My point is that three years ago...

HANNITY: It is 6 because the one today is 6!

DAVIS: My point is three years ago, all these documents were turned over to Fred Thompson and Dan Burton. They looked into all these documents. The Justice Department had them 1,000 days ago. Do you think it's a coincidence that 1,000 hours from election day...

HANNITY: All right...

DAVIS: ... this non-story...

HANNITY: OK. Let me correct...

DAVIS: ... causes Jim Nicholson...

NICHOLSON: You're on the talking points!

DAVIS: ... to come on television?

NICHOLSON: You're on the talking points!

HANNITY: Lanny -- Lanny, listen, assertions been made here...
DAVIS: Jim, you've got better things to do than this program today.
HANNITY: Lanny, an assertion has been made here tonight that Al Gore did not make that call. Clearly, you did not read Susan Schmidt's original article on this, and clearly, you didn't read...
DAVIS: Yes, I did.
HANNITY: Let me read -- let me read it to our audience, then, and inform them. The call sheets and other fund-raising records were turned over to Congress, including the report published by the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee. On page 507 of the report, for example, a hand-written list provided by DNC counsel, Joe Sandler, named Umphrey," and I quote, "as one of the people Gore called."
DAVIS: By the way, Sean...
HANNITY: So unless Susan Schmidt and the liberal "Washington Post"...
DAVIS: Sean, I...
HANNITY: ... got it wrong...
DAVIS: I'm about to...
HANNITY: ... there's a paper trail here, Lanny.
NICHOLSON: I'm about to embarrass you, Sean. The second edition in "The Washington Post," Susan Schmidt took that sentence out because...
HANNITY: You're not...
DAVIS: ... she did get it wrong.
HANNITY: ... about to embarrass me, but it's...
DAVIS: Let me read...
HANNITY: No, no! But that -- no, Lanny...
DAVIS: In the second edition...
HANNITY: It doesn't take out...
DAVIS: ... she took it out because she said she got it wrong...
HANNITY: Lanny...
DAVIS: ... and the White House called her, and she took it out.
HANNITY: Well, that's not what I hear.
DAVIS: That's a fact.
HANNITY: On page 507 of the report -- but we'll look into that. That's fair.

(CROSSTALK)
HANNITY: But I want to put up on the screen...
NICHOLSON: ... that says all about the White House...
HANNITY: Let's put up...
NICHOLSON: ... and the power over "The Washington Post."
HANNITY: Let's put up on the screen here, Lanny, if I can -- let's look at the exact wording of what this -- what this -- what this call said. Reasons for the call is, "Sorry you missed the vice president," which suggests the vice president called. It goes on. And this is the key sentence. "I know you'll give $100,000 when the president vetoes tort reform." In other words, "You've already paid for your veto, but we need the money"...

DAVIS: That was not...
HANNITY: ... "now."
DAVIS: That was not written by Al Gore. He never...
HANNITY: Excuse me!
DAVIS: ... made the call.

(CROSSTALK)
HANNITY: What does this suggest, Lanny? Buying a veto!
DAVIS: Hey, Sean? What is this story about? Gore didn't make the call. He never read that note. Why are you having this program tonight?
Could it be that George Bush needs to go back to being negative because he's on...

HANNITY: Lanny...
DAVIS: ... the down side of...
HANNITY: You know what?
(CROSSTALK)
COLMES: Hold everything! Everybody go to your respective...
HANNITY: Even you can't...
COLMES: ... corners!
(CROSSTALK)
COLMES: We got to take a break. We'll pick up the debate...
NICHOLSON: Yeah, why is the Justice Department...
COLMES: ... give Jim Nicholson another chance...
NICHOLSON: ... investigating?
COLMES: ... Jim, give a chance -- give him a chance to respond when we get back in just a second.

By the way, what's it like to be in the Green Room with Ted Nugent?
Only on this show could you be in the Green Room with Ted Nugent.
NICHOLSON: It was great. He's a good...
COLMES: All right...
NICHOLSON: ... good, solid conservative.
COLMES: Very good. He'll be with us in a moment. I'm sure you bonded. (...) (COMMERCIAL BREAK)
HANNITY: Welcome back to HANNITY & COLMES. I'm Sean Hannity. Coming up: The first debate between Hillary Clinton and Rick Lazio was pretty hot last night.
(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)
HANNITY: (...) Now back to the debate over the explosive story
involving Vice President Gore and his fund raising.

Lanny...

DAVIS: Explosive case?

HANNITY: ... I hate to embarrass you back. Now, the liberal...

DAVIS: You call this explosive?

HANNITY: The liberal "Washington Post" did remove in Sue Schmidt's article in the second printing, you were 100 percent correct.

DAVIS: Thank you, Sean.

HANNITY: But on page 507, as I expressed earlier -- and I stand by this -- that that handwritten note provided by the DNC counsel, named Umphrey, quote, "as one of the people Gore called." So -- now, the White House may be able to pressure a liberal newspaper, but that doesn't mean it doesn't exist because I've just confirmed in the break that it's there, which is what -- and I -- and I don't know to hammer you here, Lanny, but it's there.

DAVIS: Well, don't hammer me, but...

HANNITY: And that's the point.

DAVIS: ... let me get my response in.

HANNITY: Sure.

today's news hang (ph) as this story, rather than talking about his own campaign, tells you more about why the story was leaked after 1,000 days where they had this document and...

HANNITY: Yeah. Sort of like the "rats" story...

DAVIS: ... it wasn't -- George Bush...

HANNITY: ... that the Democrats leaked, that Gore leaked to "The New York Times" three weeks later?

DAVIS: George Bush should stick to the issues. He's better than he's looking lately. He's on the decline. Jim Nicholson...
HANNITY: All right...

DAVIS: ... is here talking about the wrong issue. He should be talking about why his candidate...

HANNITY: Hey, Lanny...

DAVIS: ... is having trouble...

HANNITY: ... the very fact that you're here today...

DAVIS: ... and he ought to be talking about...

NICHOLSON: Thanks for your advice.

HANNITY: The very fact that you're here tonight -- I mean, they only bring out...

DAVIS: You're welcome, Jim.

HANNITY: They only bring -- Lanny Davis only comes out -- here we have "No controlling legal authority." Here we have the Buddhist temple. Here we have a career politician after three decades haven't learned the campaign finance laws. It's one compromising position after another. But when...

DAVIS: He's doing pretty well, Sean.

HANNITY: Wait a minute. But when a note says "I'll give you $100,000 when the president vetoes tort reform," that is a quid pro quo.

DAVIS: That is...

HANNITY: That is buying a veto. And you, Lanny, as an American, should be concerned about that and...

DAVIS: Since it had nothing to do with Al Gore, since he never read the note, never made the call, and only Jim Nicholson...

HANNITY: You don't know that!

DAVIS: And only Jim Nicholson believes...

HANNITY: You're making this stuff up, Lanny!

DAVIS: And only Jim Nicholson believes there's a story here, and
he's not talking about the issues the American people care about...

NICHOLSON: Well, let me -- let me tell you a couple things, Lanny.

DAVIS: ... this is great for us. This is great for us.

NICHOLSON: Number one, Governor Bush in California today talking about education.

DAVIS: He was on television talking about this story, Jim.

NICHOLSON: But -- but...

HANNITY: He was asked a question.

NICHOLSON: The media -- the media’s talking about this important investigation...

DAVIS: Oh, it’s important.

NICHOLSON: ... that the attorney general has launched again on the unsavory fund-raising habits of Al Gore.

DAVIS: It’s important in the mind of...

NICHOLSON: But the broad...

DAVIS: ... desperate Republicans...

NICHOLSON: The broader point...

DAVIS: ... nobody else, Jim.

NICHOLSON: The broader point is this whole pattern of conduct of Gore’s ever since he’s been in the public eye. I mean, he says one thing and does another. Look what’s going on tonight right here in New York after him giving a wink and a nod to the entertainment industry, saying, "You know, you guys ought to clean up your act," then calling them, giving them a heads-up, saying, as he's done so many times before, "Don’t worry about that. We don’t mean it. We got to get through an election." And he and Lieberman come up here tonight...

HANNITY: Right.

NICHOLSON: ... and they’re having a $5.5 million fund-raiser...
COLMES: Let me...

NICHOLSON: ... with those titans...
COLMES: Let me...
NICHOLSON: ... those titans of the entertainment industry...

DAVIS: Jim, you've got...
NICHOLSON: ... which, by the way -- by the way, would not yesterday pay the respect to the Congress or the American people to come to Washington to testify at the hearings. But they were able to come to New York tonight...

COLMES: Jim, let me...
NICHOLSON: ... for a fund-raiser.
DAVIS: The reason that...
COLMES: Lanny...
DAVIS: May I quickly respond? The reason that, since the convention, there is no question that Al Gore and Joe Lieberman are moving ahead, while George is in decline, is because Jim Nicholson and, unfortunately, my old care about. They're attacking. They're desperate. And they're off message.

COLMES: Like, Jim...
DAVIS: And Jim, you got to get back on message or...
COLMES: You know, let's -- let's talk about...
DAVIS: ... you're going to lose this thing going away.
COLMES: Let's talk about...

(CROSSTALK)
COLMES: Let's talk about...
NICHOLSON: Number one, Bush is...
COLMES: Jim, let me answer that. Hold on a second.
NICHOLSON: ... leading. He's talking about education.
COLMES: Jim...
NICHOLSON: He's talking about...
COLMES: ... let me...
NICHOLSON: ... Social Security...
DAVIS: Not tonight, you're not, Jim.
COLMES: Jim -- hold on, guys.
NICHOLSON: Well, let's talk about...
COLMES: Jim, let me get in a question.
NICHOLSON: ... it. You want to? We're talking about an investigation...
DAVIS: Yes.
NICHOLSON: ... the Justice Department is launching today.
COLMES: Jim...
DAVIS: Let's talk about the "patients' bill of rights" that George Bush...
(CROSSTALK)
COLMES: I know you two guys don't need HANNITY & COLMES to have a good debate, but let me ask you a question. He -- right. Lieberman, Gore tonight, Radio City, entertainment industry -- if, indeed, they were pandering...
NICHOLSON: The powerful of the entertainment industry.
COLMES: If they were -- if they were pandering to the entertainment industry, they wouldn't be coming out against violence in the entertainment industry. They wouldn't be coming out against...
NICHOLSON: They're not.
COLMES: ... some of the practices of the entertainment industry.
NICHOLSON: But they're not.
COLMES: If they were taking money and saying the opposite of what
they're saying, you'd have a point. But they're coming out against what they're doing...

NICHOLSON: Look, either -- either...

COLMES: ... and the entertainment industry...

(CROSSTALK)

NICHOLSON: Either you're falling for their fake...

COLMES: How do you know it's a fake?

NICHOLSON: ... or you don't -- or you don't believe -- because! Look what...

COLMES: How do you know it's a fake?


They went out there...

DAVIS: Jim...

NICHOLSON: ... and they said, "Look, you guys have got to clean up your act"

COLMES: Parents Music Resource Center.

(CROSSTALK)

NICHOLSON: ... and then follow it through. He decided to run...

DAVIS: You think anybody...

NICHOLSON: ... for the presidency...

DAVIS: Do you think anybody...

(CROSSTALK)

NICHOLSON: ... and he went back out to Hollywood, and he said, "We should not have formed that society. We should not have had those hearings. I disagree with the way that came out." And then the spigot opened, and the Hollywood money started...

(CROSSTALK)

COLMES: It was because of Tipper Gore, Lanny. It was because of
the Gores, in the first place, that labeling went on records. They've been at the forefront of this. I don't agree with them on this, by the way. But to call them hypocritical...

    NICHOLSON: Oh, they've made a lot of progress.
    COLMES: I think they're wrong on this issue...
    DAVIS: Can I get one sentence in, please?
    COLMES: Go ahead.
    DAVIS: Does anybody watching has any shred of fairness believe that the Republicans take tobacco money and oil money and then vote those interests, that they're not engaging in a quid pro quo?
    NICHOLSON: We're talking about...
    DAVIS: Is anyone out there...
    NICHOLSON: ... Gore and Lieberman!
    DAVIS: Tobacco money, oil money...
    NICHOLSON: We're talking about your guys!
    DAVIS: ... and how about the NRA...
    (CROSSTALK)
    COLMES: Mr. Nicholson...
    DAVIS: Does anyone out there believe the Republicans...
    COLMES: There's a...
    DAVIS: ... don't do that?
    COLMES: There's a double standard here. You know that the Republicans do get big tobacco money. They do get money from gun manufacturers. They have the NRA in their pocket.
    DAVIS: Thank you.
    HANNITY: We only have a second.
    COLMES: And to say that only...
    HANNITY: We only have a second.
COLMES: ... only the Democrats do it is hypocritical. You can’t have...
(CROSSTALK)
HANNITY: We got to break. Quick answer, Jim.
NICHOLSON: They're -- they’re not degrading...
DAVIS: Come on, Jim.
NICHOLSON: ... the life of children in this culture. They're not out there...
DAVIS: Come on, Jim.
NICHOLSON: ... marketing their products to children.
DAVIS: Just say yes, Jim.
NICHOLSON: The tobacco industry is not marketing...
COLMES: All right, we got to break.
NICHOLSON: ... and the alcohol industry is not marketing to children.
HANNITY: Jim, thank you.
NICHOLSON: But what they're doing...
DAVIS: Jim, just say yes. You'll feel better.
NICHOLSON: ... with violence, they're marketing it...
HANNITY: Hey, Jim...
(CROSSTALK)
HANNITY: Hey, Lanny, I have a word for you. Occidental! You ever heard of it before? And by the way...
NICHOLSON: A hundred thousand...
(CROSSTALK)
HANNITY: ... dollars buys a veto, Lanny! A hundred thousand...
DAVIS: Intelligent Republican, oxymoron.
HANNITY: ... buys a veto! That’s the going rate in the Gore
administration.

COLMES: The word was "when," not "if" in that memo, by the way.
HANNITY: Thank you, gentlemen.
COLMES: "When," not "if."
DAVIS: Take care, guys.
HANNITY: Thank you both for being with us.
PITTSBURGH, May 9 -- George W. Bush and John McCain sought to bring their bitter primary battle to a close here today, with McCain offering a businesslike endorsement of his one-time Republican rival and saying he looked forward to "enthusiastically campaigning" for Bush against Vice President Gore this fall.

McCain also said he told Bush in their private meeting what he has long said publicly: that he did not want to be considered for the vice presidency. "I take him at his word," Bush said, ending the hopes of some McCain supporters that the Arizona senator would end up on the GOP ticket despite his earlier protestations.

Bush and his advisers cheered the results of the reconciliation meeting as exactly what they hoped for, but there were clear signs that the divisions that had marked the nomination contest might linger through the election.
McCain had to be prompted before he uttered the word "endorse," and he agreed with a questioner that the decision to announce his support today rather than later was a form of "take your medicine now"—a quip Bush said he took as a joke. McCain later told an aide he was merely trying to be ironic.


"By the way," Bush interjected, "I enthusiastically accept."

The good humor of that moment masked other tensions in the room as the two Republican candidates admitted that while they agree on much, their differences on campaign finance reform and other issues remain deep and perhaps unbridgeable. McCain also indicated that he would remain a free agent on some issues of reform that he pushed during the primaries.

"I will not give up on the reform agenda," McCain said.

McCain’s endorsement was hardly unexpected; only the timing seemed in question. The Arizona senator long had said he would support the party’s nominee for president, but until Monday it appeared likely that he would wait until later to make the support formal. Given the buildup surrounding the first face-to-face meeting between the two men, McCain decided it was expedient to endorse Bush today.

(…)

Aides to Bush and McCain said they doubted that today’s endorsement would, by itself, move those undecided McCain voters to Bush’s column. "I don’t know that those people will necessarily follow because he said this," Teeter said, "but it helps."
Beyond that, Teeter said, today’s endorsement was important to eliminate the issue of McCain's support as "a point of contention" between the two camps. "It's important for Bush to get it out of the newspaper," he said.

Both men later told aides that their private meeting had been businesslike, substantive and friendly--and both had worked to make one another feel comfortable. In their public session, the Texas governor appeared relieved to have McCain's endorsement in hand, whatever their lingering differences. "The good news is, we had a very frank discussion," Bush said. "John's a plain-spoken fellow, and I'm a pretty good listener. . . . I spoke my mind, and he spoke his, and that's good."

During their press conference, the two men smiled, cracked occasional jokes and eventually shook hands for the cameras when the press conference was concluded. But McCain appeared restrained in his enthusiasm for the presumptive GOP nominee.

(...)
Former first lady Nancy Reagan endorsed Texas Gov. George W. Bush for president Tuesday, saying he would carry on the legacy of her husband, President Reagan.

"I am proud to endorse George W. Bush for President," Nancy Reagan said in a statement released by the Bush campaign. "He is doing a fine job of carrying on Ronnie's legacy. His agenda of tax cuts, smaller government, and a strong national defense will build pride in America just as it did when my husband was president. This is a candidate Ronnie would be proud of."

Bush said he was honored to have her support.

"Throughout the years she has stood side by side with one of America's greatest presidents," Bush said after a speech in Everett, Wash. "I thank her for her endorsement and pledge an optimistic, positive campaign, in the Reagan tradition, to renew America's spirit and encourage a new era of personal responsibility and freedom."

The governor's father, President Bush, served as Reagan's vice president. Reagan, 89, suffers from Alzheimer's disease and no longer appears in public.
Bush Fund-Raising is Historic. Activists, Gore Aides Not Pleased With It

By KEN HERMAN

Austin --- In the Bryant Conference Center at the University of Alabama, with no fanfare to mark the moment, a key phase in the nation's most successful presidential campaign fund-raising operation ended.

Fifteen months and more than $92 million into the effort, probable GOP nominee George W. Bush attended his final "Bush for President Reception" last Friday in Alabama, collecting more than $400,000.

From Day One, the events were called "receptions," as in Bush receiving money, lots of it. They were part of a campaign that broke all fund-raising records.

"People will be writing books about this a few years from now," said Larry Makinson of the Center for Responsive Politics, a nonprofit watchdog group impressed and depressed by Bush's ability to collect cash.

The fund-raising will continue for a few weeks through direct mail and e-mail. But in early August, after the Republican National Convention, the Bush campaign becomes a federally funded effort that
will get $67.6 million in government money.

The Al Gore campaign will get the same amount after he is formally nominated at the Democratic National Convention in mid-August.

Money raised prior to the conventions can’t be spent during the general election campaign. So far, Bush has collected more than $92 million, including $1.1 million in interest, and spent more than $83 million.

Bush’s numbers dwarf those amassed by Gore. Unlike Bush, Gore -- who has raised $34 million and has $8.2 million on hand --- is accepting federal matching money for the pre-convention campaign. That should produce an additional $15 million for Gore to spend before his party’s convention.

Though direct fund-raising for the presidential campaigns ends with the national conventions, neither candidate will get out of the fund-raising business. In fact, the game now becomes largely unlimited as Bush and Gore can concentrate on raising "soft money" --- unfettered by the $1,000 limit on individuals' contributions to candidates --- that goes to the parties and goes a long way toward helping the presidential candidates.

Throughout the campaign, as the dollars flowed in --- and out --- Bush has worked hard to couch it in the positive, as in "I am honored and humbled by the broad-based support."

Makinson is concerned about one aspect of the effort.

"I don't think there is anything necessarily wrong with it, except for one thing," he said. "Bush did not accept the spending limits and did not accept the federal matching funds. I’m afraid he has opened a door that will never close again for leading contenders for president."

By passing on the federal money for the primaries, Bush avoided
state-by-state spending limits that can hogtie a candidate. Bush now has spent more than twice as much as he could have if he had accepted federal money for the primaries.

Gore spokesman Doug Hattaway said Tuesday that Bush played by the rules, but showed "he is not at all serious about reform."

Bush’s goal initially was to have enough cash --- and the freedom to spend it --- to fend off GOP foe Steve Forbes, a self-funded billionaire who also declined federal money.

By the end of the primary campaign, when Bush was going head-to-head with Arizona Sen. John McCain, the money helped make the difference. Bush says it helped him get his message out.

Makinson says the money was the message. "The thing that propelled George W. Bush to the top was the absolutely extraordinary effort of raising money," he said. "It was a show of support by people who can afford to write $1,000 checks. We are talking about such a rarefied class of Americans."

The Bush campaign, however, noted that the average contribution through May was $240.

The average contribution to Gore has been $120. Campaign
Negative political ads are the TV commercials everyone loves to hate -- everyone except voters.

Voters don't mind a few fisticuffs between candidates, according to those who study voter response to campaign tactics. In fact, they actually find some ads that fit the label "negative" to be useful.

"Voters think it's OK to criticize your opponent," says Brad Rourke, director of the Project for Campaign Conduct. The project is run by the Institute for Global Ethics, a non-profit foundation in Camden, Maine, that trains businesses and educators in ethics. "They're OK with politics being an argument, a debate, sometimes a fight."

(...) In the institute's survey, 68% of respondents said it is fair to criticize an opponent for talking one way and voting another. That's a little more than the 65% who approved of criticizing a candidate for not paying taxes on time.

Campaign workers and reporters usually talk about ads only as positive or negative. "Positive" spots focus solely on a candidate's biography, record or policy proposals. "Negative" means anything from the mildest reference to "my opponent" to harsher attacks like
Republican Steve Forbes' ad that called Bush's record on taxes in Texas part of "a record of broken promises."

But labeling every ad that refers to an opponent "negative" is too vague, say those who have studied voters' views on political ads.

(...)

Dividing into categories

Kathleen Hall Jamieson, a political advertising expert who is director of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center, divides ads into three categories. "Advocacy" ads talk only about the candidate who is running them. "Attack ads" talk only about the opponent. "Contrast" ads talk about both. Those definitions do not consider an ad's truthfulness.

Voters find contrast ads to be helpful in making up their minds, Jamieson says. In a study done for the Public Policy Center, 75% of 2,000 adults surveyed said "contrast" ads are useful, whether or not they agree with the ads' content. Thirty-eight percent said the ads are negative.

"Voters think it's a good form of advertising," says Jamieson, who writes about the study in a new book, Everything You Think You know About Politics . . . And Why You're Wrong (to be published by Basic Books in July). Contrast ads provide information, and unlike some ads that are pure attacks, it's clear who is sponsoring them, she says. If voters don't like them, they know where to put the blame.

Even ads that simply beat up on an opponent can, to voters, provide useful information, Rourke says. "If someone gets all their money from, for instance, the tobacco, oil and pesticide industries, that can be an attack that may well be seen as fair by many citizens," he says.

The campaigns and the news media express outrage over negative
advertising, Jamieson says. “It’s the press that tells us a campaign has gone negative the minute you have a fair, legitimate attack.”

What voters don’t like is when candidates get personal. Voters will punish a candidate who calls an opponent a deadbeat, a drunk or a patsy of the party, not because they think an ad is negative but because they think it is unfair.

(...)

Negative ads possible

Bush and Gore’s campaigns aren’t saying they’re planning to run negative ads -- but they won’t swear off them.

“All our advertising will be positive, accurate, issue-oriented and in context,” Bush spokesman Ari Fleischer says. “We won’t hesitate to promote the governor’s candidacy if it’s attacked or misrepresented, and we won’t withhold important information from the voters about, say, Al Gore’s voting record.”

For its part, the Gore campaign says its ads will be "extremely focused on the issues," spokesman Chris Lehane says, but they also will cover Bush’s record. And if Bush ads discuss Gore, "We’re going to respond. We’re not going to let scurrilous, negative assaults go unanswered."

In their first ads against each other, before the primary in Illinois on March 21, Bush said Gore had "failed," and Gore sniped that Bush "used dirty politics." Their campaigns are predicting offenses to be committed via the airwaves this year: Bush "will return to the Republican strategies of ’98 and ’96, which were, fundamentally, negative attack," Lehane says. Fleischer says Bush "won’t hesitate to set the record straight when Al Gore tries to distort it."

News reports of negative ads keep candidates from attacking too
strongly, because they fear bad publicity, says Gary Copeland, a University of Alabama political ad expert and sometime Democratic consultant. But the news media’s focus on tactics distracts from the candidates' positions, he says.

That's one reason candidates cry "negative campaigning," even when they are faced with a legitimate criticism, Copeland says. "The focus on 'What is the campaign like?' loses track of 'What is the campaign about?'"

(...)
Just as voter interest in the presidential race was slipping, Al Gore engaged George W. Bush in a rhetorical battle that has injected a negative tone unusually early in the campaign.

Vice President Gore, the presumptive Democratic nominee, lobbed a flurry of verbal grenades in recent weeks, calling Bush's attitude "smug" and "arrogant," and dismissing his proposals as "reckless" and "irresponsible."

The Bush bunker fired back with the Texas governor charging that Gore is an "inventor" and "exaggerator" with a "willingness to say anything."

The language is designed to instill voters with negative impressions of their opponents. But experts in political communication say the candidates have to be careful about not slipping into name-calling.

"You don't want to push it so hard that people begin to see it as an assault," said Roderick P. Hart, author of "Campaign Talk," a book about
political language. "When language or a label can become a presumption rather than an argument, it works best. There's some magic to when that happens."

Even as both candidates promise to focus on the issues, they're honing a proven strategy of trying to stick labels on each other before one sticks on them.

Gore has been trying to paint a picture of Bush as a flaky, irresponsible lightweight who doesn't have what it takes to run the country. Meanwhile, Bush, mostly through aides, has been calling Gore a negative campaigner who has a problem telling the truth.

"It's all a frame game," said Leonard Steinhorn, former speech writer and professor of communications at American University. "You're going to see those words melting into images they want to communicate."

In the last two weeks, the vice president has been replaying the tactics he used successfully to defeat former New Jersey Sen. Bill Bradley in the primaries, aggressively attacking his opponent with a litany of words that have a decidedly personal tone.

Gore started the fusillade in Michigan at a news conference April 21: "Gov. Bush seems to have this smug assumption that he can get away with calling himself an environmentalist, despite his record of what has gone so badly wrong in Texas."

In Atlantic City last week, Gore repeatedly accused Bush of having a "secret plan" of Social Security privatization that resembled "stock market roulette."

In Chicago on Thursday, after berating Bush's health care proposal, Gore denied that his verbal assault on the Texas governor amounted to a personal attack. "Vigorous discussion of the substance of the issues is healthy for our democracy," he said.
The constant bombardment of insults so early in the campaign, however, runs the risk of turning off people, analysts say.

"The language does seem to me to be pretty up on the temperature scale for May," said Gary Woodward, professor of communication studies at the College of New Jersey. "We are going to be in utter campaign fatigue by the time the fall rolls around."

It's no accident that Gore is using words like "smug" and referring obliquely to what is described as Bush's smirk.

A poll of almost 1,200 voters in March conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press showed that 31% of people mentioned a negative word like "arrogant" when asked for a one-word description of Bush, up from 21% in September.

Both campaigns look at this data and their own internal polling to craft their message about their opponent.

"What you really have is a game of dueling focus groups," Steinhorn said.

Unlike Bradley, who reacted angrily and somewhat clumsily to Gore's attacks, Bush seems less fazed by the torrent of biting words. He has carefully steered away from personally labeling the vice president, calling himself "a uniter, not a divider."

But in the meantime, Bush has aggressively characterized Gore as untrustworthy.

"It's disappointing that someone running for the highest office of the land would continue saying, and feel free and comfortable about saying, things that simply aren't true," he said Thursday during a swing through Orange County.

The campaign releases updates of "The Gore Detector" that detail "Al Gore's adventures with the truth."
After Gore accused Bush of never having prepared a budget, Bush spokesman Ari Fleischer said, "Al Gore's imagination knows no bounds."

Later, Fleischer said Gore's description of the current administration's record on Social Security shows that he "either flip-flopped or he has a real problem with credibility."

Some experts said Gore has been more successful than Bush so far in characterizing his opponent because the Texas governor is still searching for the right words to pin on the vice president.

The most common descriptions associated with Gore--"boring" and "stiff"--don't work because they don't have any political utility, according to Hart, a professor of communication and government at the University of Texas at Austin.

If there's any lesson to be taken from previous campaigns, he added, it's that names won't stick unless there's some public perception that they're true.

For example, attempts to call Ronald Reagan "dangerous" in 1980 didn't work because the public didn't have a sense of him as a threat, Hart said. But calling former President Bush "a wimp" resonated with people who thought of him as a government bureaucrat.

"I think right now what Bush and Gore are doing is groping to find labeling devices that might hold," he said, adding he expects they will "continue this lexical search, trying to find the trigger points that will work."
WASHINGTON -- Vice President Gore, lagging in the presidential race after weeks of slashing his rival, will turn this week to promoting his own family-related proposals, including a new welfare-to-work initiative focused on fathers.

(...) Some aides say Gore has paid a price for relentlessly attacking Republican George W. Bush for what the vice president dubs "risky schemes" to reform Social Security, cut taxes and develop a national missile defense system. They fear that message has overshadowed Gore's proposals and made it harder to convince voters that he is a likable person.

(...) "It would be helpful for Gore to be doing things that more clearly define him as the people's candidate and not just as George Bush's opponent," he says.

"People don't just want denunciation," says Democratic Sen. Paul Wellstone of Minnesota, who has urged Gore to promote his ideas more. "They want enunciation."

In recent weeks, Bush has won favorable comment with a series of speeches outlining proposals on the environment, long-term care, Social Security and nuclear weapons. The Bush campaign and the Republican National Committee regularly e-mail releases to reporters ridiculing Gore...
as unrelentingly negative.

In the interview, Gore wouldn't acknowledge any concern about the course or tone of his campaign or the polls.

"It's May," he said dismissively, laughing.

(...)
WASHINGTON -- Behind the symbolism of George W. Bush's efforts last week to court traditionally Democratic minority voters lies a stark reality: He can afford to focus on expanding his coalition precisely because he has consolidated his political base far more successfully than Al Gore.

In recent polls, Bush is consistently attracting support from about 9 in 10 Republicans--a far better showing than either of the last two GOP presidential nominees. Gore, meanwhile, draws only about three-fourths of Democrats.

And while conservative activists have largely acquiesced to Bush's moves toward the center since the GOP primaries, Gore is still facing loud rumbles of discontent from liberal voices as diverse as Ralph Nader, the Green Party's presidential nominee, and the leadership of the United Auto Workers.

This disparity is providing Bush a significant tactical advantage, allowing him to work much earlier and more systematically than Gore on courting the swing voters likely to decide the election.

This week alone, Bush appeared before prominent Latino and African American groups, touted new proposals to help the disabled and praised measures to move welfare recipients into the work force--all with the aim of convincing voters he is "a different kind of Republican," as his
aides put it. And with the GOP base already seemingly cemented, Bush aides are openly discussing ways to temper the partisan tone at the party convention to increase the Texas governor’s appeal to less ideological independent voters.

"We’ve been able for the past few months . . . to talk to the swing and independent voters in a concerted way," said one senior Bush advisor.

The aide asserts that Gore, in contrast, has to "aim at his base . . . so his campaign’s discussion with the independent and swing voters hasn’t been able to start."

Gore aides say that analysis overstates Bush’s advantage: From the outset, they note, much of the vice president's agenda--from his emphasis on paying off the national debt to his defense of welfare reform--has been aimed squarely at swing voters.

Yet, as Bush advisors note, the Democratic National Committee has been compelled to concentrate its initial pro-Gore TV advertising in states that President Clinton carried in 1996--including some, such as Iowa, considered part of the Democrats' bedrock base. And with Bush running unusually well in local polls, Gore lately has had to visit states, such as Minnesota, Oregon and Washington, that voted consistently Democratic in recent presidential campaigns.

These defensive maneuvers underscore the same phenomenon: At this point, partisan Republicans are lining up behind Bush more enthusiastically than their Democratic counterparts are with Gore.

In a Times Poll last month, 92% of Republicans said they were supporting Bush, while just 72% of Democrats backed Gore. The bipartisan Voter.com/Battleground 2000 poll reached similar results two weeks ago, as did a Gallup/CNN/USA Today survey released Tuesday.

Some of Bush’s advantage is offset by the fact that more voters
consider themselves Democrats than Republicans, but that difference is relatively slight. According to Pew Research Center polls over the last four months, about 32% of Americans consider themselves Democrats, while 28% call themselves Republicans. That means Bush's vote among his partisans still constitutes a larger share of the overall electorate than Gore's among his.

(…)

Several factors appear to explain the GOP coalescence around Bush. Alone at the top of the list, most analysts agree, is the party's desire to repudiate President Clinton by defeating Gore. "Being anti-Gore, and anti-Clinton . . . gives Bush the luxury of a lot of maneuvering room," says veteran conservative consultant Craig Shirley.

Much like Clinton himself in his 1992 campaign, Bush benefits from his party's hunger to return to power after a long exile.

Though it initially hurt Bush with swing voters, the structure of the GOP primary accelerated his progress at unifying Republicans. With Sen. John McCain of Arizona mobilizing a coalition of independents, Democrats and moderate Republicans in what some termed "a hostile takeover" of the party, Bush unexpectedly became positioned as the defender of the GOP base--an association that's stuck despite his moves to the center since.

And finally, despite his gestures toward centrist voters, Bush also has pushed several ambitious proposals with strong appeal for hard-core Republicans, including a sweeping tax cut, partial privatization of Social Security and missile defense.

Gore, by contrast, is facing an ideological cross-fire as he tries to solidify his standing among Democrats.

From the left, he confronts noisy resistance from the United Auto
Workers and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, two large unions alienated by the administration's support for free trade. Though neither is likely to endorse Bush, both unions have given visibility to Nader's Green Party candidacy.

Nader is attempting to mobilize liberals around the claim that Clinton and Gore have made the Democratic Party virtually indistinguishable from the GOP. In a few key states, Nader could hurt Gore by taking even a relatively small percentage of liberal votes.

Analysts in both parties, though, say Gore's bigger problem is at the opposite end of the party's spectrum--with culturally conservative Latino and white voters, especially men. The recent Times Poll showed Bush winning nearly one-fourth of moderate-to-conservative Democrats; some surveys have shown the Texan running even with Gore among union voters; new polls show Bush gaining strength among Latinos as well.

Democrats remain optimistic that they can repel those beachheads, largely by highlighting the elements in Bush's agenda that have fortified him with his base. The AFL-CIO, for instance, on Thursday launched a "Texas truth squad" campaign, with union members from Bush's state criticizing his labor record.

The dilemma for Democrats is that the more time and money Gore has to spend recapturing constituencies and states the party usually relies on, the less resources he'll have to target the race's true geographic and demographic battlegrounds.

And those are the targets on which Bush, already, is focusing his fire, day after day.
George W. Bush seems to have perfected a new campaign style: being negative without appearing negative.

Take last week. In a news conference, the Texas governor was responding to Vice President Gore's suggestion that Bush was too close to "Big Oil." As Bush played down his connections to the oil industry, he deflected the focus back to Gore--accusing him of reversing his long support for raising gas taxes.

"This is another example of when he doesn't know what the meaning of what 'raise' is," Bush said with a sly smile. When a reporter asked Bush to explain the reference, he responded innocently: "A reference to energy prices."

It was, of course, about much more than energy prices.

Bush was referring to Gore's deposition over his role in the Democratic National Committee's 1996 Buddhist temple fundraiser in
which Gore quibbled with a prosecutor over the definition of the word "raise." It was a moment that recalled President Clinton's deposition in the Monica S. Lewinsky case two years ago, when he quibbled over what the "definition of 'is' is."

Bush was able to connect two White House scandals with what sounded like a punch line and raised questions about the character of both men. The exchange was a classic example of Bush's campaign style. While Gore's critics have pilloried him as a political attack dog, Bush has been no slouch himself, relying heavily on attacks on Gore's character and integrity. But Bush has largely escaped criticism by employing a style that calls on ample doses of charm and humor and, when called for, folksy righteous indignation. Even many Democrats are expressing begrudging admiration for Bush's ability to fling mud without getting any on himself.

"Every time he opens his mouth, he has something critical to say, but he does it in sort of an amicable way," said Democratic media consultant Dane Strother, who is not working for Gore. "Perhaps [the media] lets him get away with it because he's not mean-spirited about it. He does it in a relatively clever way, so he gets a pass."

Where Gore pummels with a sledgehammer, calling Bush "arrogant" and "smug" and accusing him of plotting a "secret" plan to destroy Social Security, Bush slices with a scalpel, slyly raising questions about the vice president's moral fitness.

Bush "has a very folksy style, which helps a lot," said Massachusetts Institute of Technology politics professor Stephen Ansolabehere, whose 1996 book "Going Negative" studied the effects of negative campaigning. "Just like Clinton in '92 and '96, Bush has a way of connecting with people on their level. . . . I think it makes him more of a sympathetic
character [than Gore] on a personal level."

A central aspect of Bush’s campaign style is his ability to stay on message with simple, catchy phrases and themes. He has used the technique effectively since his first run for governor in 1994, when he relentlessly pounded then-Texas Gov. Ann Richards as soft on crime.

In the GOP primaries this year, Bush suggested Arizona Sen. John McCain was a hypocrite without ever using that word, with his repeated assertion that McCain "says one thing and does another." When rival Steve Forbes accused Bush of pursuing a tax increase in his first term as governor, Bush displayed the flip side of his campaign personality, expressing astonishment that an opponent would break Ronald Reagan’s "11th Commandment" not to attack another Republican.

Since wrapping up the nomination in March, Bush has sought to portray Gore as a mean-spirited politician and a serial panderer who shapes policy solely on the basis of polls and focus groups.

Bush has sharpened his rhetoric in recent weeks, engaging the Gore campaign in a running debate over Social Security and gas policy. He generally avoids mentioning Gore in his speeches, instead saving his barbs for his frequent news conferences, where reporters are sure to ask him to respond to Gore’s latest volley.

"I think I read where, you know, [the Gore campaign] was running a series of focus groups, and so he made a decision to expand his vision on tax cutting because of focus groups," Bush told reporters recently. "Surely, America doesn't want a focus group-driven presidency. America wants somebody that makes decisions based upon what's right."

Bush has made dozens of similar comments in recent months.

But his words are often carefully crafted to allude to--rather than outright accuse an opponent of--something nefarious. His efforts to stay
on message can at times become almost surreal.

In January, for example, after Bush rolled out his line that McCain "says one thing and does another," reporters--asking rapid-fire questions phrased in slightly different ways--repeatedly tried to get him to acknowledge that he was calling McCain a hypocrite. "That's your word," Bush told a reporter. What then, another reporter asked, was his word for someone who says one thing and does another? Bush paused, looked up in the air, smiled and responded: "Washington."

In an interview in March, Bush was asked whether his repeated assertion that Gore had "a problem telling the truth" was another way of calling him a liar. "I'm not calling him that," Bush said. So what did he mean? "Let's let him then stand up and tell the truth," Bush said. "Let's let him make sure that we know exactly what the facts are."

Bush has aggressively responded to the gas controversy with the seemingly incongruous argument that Gore is in favor of both higher fuel taxes and tax breaks for industry.

Two weeks ago, Bush wandered to the back of his campaign plane brandishing a copy of Gore's environmental treatise, "Earth in the Balance." Reading from one page, Bush noted how "this is a man who advocated raising gasoline taxes." Bush ignored the fact that Gore's full proposal, as noted in later pages, called for a commensurate decrease in the income taxes that oil companies pay to offset the increase in fuel taxes.

Bush spokesman Ari Fleischer deflected questions about that tactic by pointing out that Gore had supported congressional action to raise gas taxes in the early 1990s.

Last week, Bush criticized Gore's proposal to extend the 1995 Deep Water Royalty Relief Act, which provides a moratorium on the royalties
that oil companies pay to the government for natural gas exploration in the Gulf of Mexico. Although that particular proposal was a relatively minor one in Gore's $150 million energy plan, Bush homed in on it to argue that Gore was "giving major oil companies a huge tax break."

Bush demonstrated the alternate side of his campaign personality when Gore spokesman Chris Lehane accused the Texas governor two weeks ago of colluding with Senate leaders to leak potentially damaging information about Gore's role in the Buddhist fundraiser. Lehane likened the tactic to McCarthyism.

Bush, campaigning in Michigan, appeared stunned and said it sounded "like the man got a little carried away. That's the kind of politics that people are sick of." Then he added: "This is absurd what the man said."

Several campaign media strategists and political scientists said in interviews that Bush has been able to escape criticism because he appears merely to be repeating what critics in his own party have said for years. But some political observers caution that it's too soon to tell whether the strategy will remain effective as more people begin tuning in to the contest around the time of the party conventions next month.

"When he is focused, he is very disciplined and stays on message," said Fred Antczak, a professor of political rhetoric at the University of Iowa. "But it's too early now to make any kind of inferences about what is going to stick with the overall electorate."

Gore advisers have all but conceded defeat in the personality contest. But a presidential election, they argue, is about far more than that. "Ultimately, there's going to be debates, and side-by-side comparison is going to be made," said Gore media consultant Bill Knapp, who also worked for Richards in 1994. "His ability to 'aw shucks' the
thing is going to be severely compromised."
PHILADELPHIA, Aug. 1 -- For all its focus on a nicer, blander image, there is one thing the Bush campaign wants to be negative about -- negative campaigning from the other side.

Former President George Bush complained that attacks on the vice-presidential nominee, Dick Cheney, were "coming out of the bowels of the Democratic National Committee."

In Columbus, Ohio, the former president's son, Gov. George W. Bush of Texas, said "Americans are "sick and tired of the politics of tearing people down." In Charleston, W. Va., he said: "This nation is looking for an administration that will appeal to our better angels, not our darker impulses. This nation does not want four more years of Clinton-Gore."

Senator Trent Lott of Mississippi, the majority leader, told a youth group here, "We're not trashing our opponents, we're not looking back."

And Monday night the prospective nominee's wife, Laura Bush, told the delegates that her husband "sets a tone that's positive and constructive, a tone that is very different from the bitterness and division that too often characterizes Washington, D.C."

Ari Fleischer, a spokesman for Mr. Bush, said this consistent message was not derived from polls or focus groups but from the candidate's "heart." But a prominent Republican operative, Frank Luntz, said it matched the strategy his focus groups had dictated.

"Voters don't like political attack dogs," Mr. Luntz said, "and they have complained for two decades about the negativity of politics." Only
now, he said, were they beginning to vote against sponsors of negative advertisements. So, he added, "Once you destroy the messenger, you destroy his message." He acknowledged, however, that the first Democratic advertisement attacking Mr. Cheney's voting record in the House over Head Start, the school lunch program and the Clean Water Act seemed to work against Mr. Cheney among independents.

But Kathleen Hall Jamieson, dean of the Annenberg School for Communication here at the University of Pennsylvania, said, "I think they misunderstand what the electorate believes to be appropriate campaigning." She added, "If the public believes it's accurate, the likelihood is that because it's a low-key ad, the public is likely to accept it as legitimate campaigning."

And Peter Hart, a Democratic pollster, said: "It comes back to the charge. If you prove the charge is false, then negative campaign against negative campaign is fine. But if the charge is true and relevant, all the bellyaching and all the campaigning cannot hide one's voting record." In this case, he said, "they are squealing extra loud on something they have no way of refuting."

But while his arguments matched the general line, there was an intensity to the former president's comments, made on NBC's "Today." He called the criticism of Mr. Cheney, his former secretary of defense, "crazy."

"What are you going to say when you get a great, outstanding choice like Cheney, who's widely respected?" former President Bush continued. "They've got a carping -- they've got a little minion sitting there with their dark glasses, you know, digging up dirt on someone."

"People don't want that anymore," the former president said. "But let them try. Cheney's much bigger than all that, more proven than all that."
And if something ever happened to George when they were elected, he'd make an outstanding president of the United States. So I don't worry about that opposition research crowd digging. 'Hey, look what I found,' some little nerd sitting there in the Democratic National Committee. It doesn't make any difference."

Mark Fabiani, a Gore spokesman, responded, "it tells you a lot about George Junior that he has to send his father out to defend himself." He said: "Someone's record is a legitimate issue. It's hardly improper to criticize someone's record."

And Mr. Fabiani said that Gov. Bush was no innocent when it came to negative campaigning, noting that his first defense of Mr. Cheney was a hostile comparison to President Clinton. Gov. Bush said of Mr. Cheney, "He's a man who understands what the definition of 'is' is."

That was a reference to Mr. Clinton's testimony in August 1999, when prosecutors asked him if he had lied in January of that year when he denied having had a sexual relationship with Monica S. Lewinsky.
PHILADELPHIA -- Abruptly abandoning the campaign's positive tone, Dick Cheney claimed the second spot on the Republican ticket last night with a stinging assault on the "squandered" opportunities of the Clinton-Gore years.

After two days in which Al Gore's name wasn't mentioned from the stage, Gov. George W. Bush's mild-mannered running mate fed his party a heaping portion of anti-Gore rhetoric.

His acid words, coolly delivered in a conversational tone, unleashed a gusher of pent-up fervor when he reminded the convention crowd that Clinton and Gore's term would soon be ending.

"They came in together. Now let us see them off together," said Cheney to a roar of approval from the audience of more than 10,000. Rising along with the rest of the cheering crowd were former President George Bush and his wife, Barbara, the governor's parents.

Cheney's acceptance speech sent the clearest signal yet that the Bush campaign will make Clinton perhaps as much a target as Gore in the election campaign.

On a night when he and Bush were formally nominated, Cheney threw back at the Democrats the same refrain Gore had directed at Bush's father when Gore became Clinton's vice presidential nominee in 1992.

"It is time for them to go," the 59-year-old Republican declared.
"George W. Bush will repair what has been damaged."

Cheney said he and Bush would restore integrity to the presidency and a spirit of bipartisan leadership to Washington that has been missing for the past eight years, since Bush's father left office.

"I'm proud to say that I'm not the only man on this ticket who has learned from the example of President George Bush," said Cheney, who served as his defense secretary.

He also praised another ex-boss, former President Gerald R. Ford, who was hospitalized yesterday after suffering a stroke.

Cheney's free-swinging attack was a sharp departure from what Bush advisers had said would be a positive campaign that would strike back only after being punched first.

Responding even before Cheney had delivered his prepared remarks, a Gore campaign spokesman called his address "the most negative Republican convention speech since Patrick J. Buchanan" spoke at the 1992 Republican convention.

The Gore spokesman, Jano Cabrera, said Cheney's remarks "were designed to cover up the fact that they have no real agenda for America's working families."

In assuming the traditional attacking role of a running mate, Cheney linked Gore inextricably to Clinton, whose personal popularity has fallen sharply even as the public continues to approve of his job performance.

Challenge of prosperity
For the Bush campaign, the challenge is to make a case for change to a country that is enjoying the fruits of nearly a full decade of unparalleled prosperity.

Cheney's speech suggested that the strategy will combine negative personal attacks with a policy agenda centered on the needs of the
elderly, middle class and other swing voter groups.

While praising Bush as a man of "courage," "vision" and "goodness," Cheney sketched a portrait of Clinton as a cynical politician who disgraced the presidency and failed to take advantage of a booming economy to fix the Social Security system, improve schools and strengthen the military.

"As the man from Hope goes home to, uh, New York," said Cheney, grinning wryly at the crowd's laughing response, "Mr. Gore will try to separate himself from his leader's shadow. But somehow we will never see one without thinking of the other."

The Bush campaign's goal will be "to unite our country, to make a fresh start in Washington, to change the tone of our politics," Cheney said. "Can anyone with conviction say that the man for the job is Al Gore?"

"No!" thundered the conventioneers.

(...)
PHILADELPHIA - The middle initial in George W. Bush's name used to stand for Walker. This week, it stands for Women.

Across the floor of the Republican National Convention, delegates wave posters and sport buttons that say "W is for Women." But those visual aids aren't really necessary, because almost everything about the 2000 GOP gathering - the women speakers, the videos filled with children, the compassionate themes repeated again and again at the podium - is aimed at women voters.

It is a huge contrast to past GOP conventions, when Republicans let the angry rhetoric of cultural warriors, pro-gun militants, defense hawks, and abortion opponents set the party's tone. It scared off many women, pollsters said, and it helped create the gender gap that elected Bill Clinton in 1992 and 1996.

"This is a new Republican Party," Celinda Lake, a Democratic pollster who studies gender voting, said this week. "There has never been a Republican leader who understands the targeting of women the way George W. Bush does. If anybody can capture the women's vote, he can."

Lake's latest poll shows Bush and Democrat Al Gore in a statistical dead heat among women voters. With Bush 16 points ahead among male voters in the same poll, the wooing of women has become the central mission of both campaigns.
"When women look at George Bush and Dick Cheney, they don't see a harsh conservative, which has been the face of the Republican Congress," said Linda DiVall, a Republican pollster and strategist. "They see the face of conservatism that is much more optimistic and, quite frankly, one that will not dismantle government programs at every stage and every opportunity."

The convention message and messengers are very much in sync with what pollsters know about women voters: They like civil politics, moral leadership, and effective government. They worry most about the economic and physical security of their families, educational opportunities for their children, and the pressures of juggling tasks at work and home.

Kathleen Hall Jamieson, a political analyst at the Annenberg Center for Public Policy at the University of Pennsylvania, said the convention's theme, "Renewing America's Purpose. Together," sends a strong signal to moderate women voters that the GOP is inclusive and concerned about children and families.

"The theme is symbolically consistent and very well executed," Jamieson said.

But is it sincere? Marie Wilson, who heads the White House Project, a nonprofit group trying to promote women for high elective offices, said she fears women have become "vote objects" for the major political parties.

"I am concerned that both parties are looking at women as vote objects rather than real partners in democracy and governing," Wilson said.

Indeed, Republican women who support gun control, federal family-planning programs, and abortion rights say the party platform crafted by
Bush and approved by the convention Monday does not reflect the image of a kinder, gentler GOP. Some say Bush has not reassured women with his running mate choice of Cheney, who as a congressman voted against the Equal Rights Amendment, the Clean Water Act, and federal funds for Head Start.

"In the choices George W. Bush is making, he is showing us what he believes and what is important," said Doris Wilson of Washington, D.C., a Republican vice president of the National Women's Political Caucus. "And women aren't really important."

Women delegates, many who have been working in the GOP for years, insist something new is afoot - a tone, an attitude, a unity driven by an overwhelming desire to find a way to win in November.

"This is better than it has ever been for women, and it is not just words and rhetoric," said Sue Anne Gilroy, Indiana's Republican secretary of state.

(...)

[Image: FULL COVERAGE Sourcebook for the 2000 Presidential Election - Political Communication Lab., Stanford University]
Republicans are launching a $100 million campaign that will dwarf the spending of presidential candidates George W. Bush and Al Gore in an effort to get wavering or indifferent voters to actually go to the polls in November.

Under the Victory 2000 label, a special division of the Republican National Committee and state Republican parties will target wavering citizens--over the air, on the phone, in the mail and on doorsteps--in hopes of boosting turnout among those who seem most likely to come down on the side of Bush and other GOP candidates, up and down the ticket.

With early indications that this election will continue the trend of lower voter participation in which less than half of those eligible cast ballots in 1996, mobilization of relatively unmotivated potential supporters may be critical to the outcome.

In 1996 and 1998, Democrats and their union allies did a better job of turning out their most reliable voters than did Republicans. But this year, with evidence that the "Republican base" is already more than 90 percent committed to Bush and eager to oust the Democrats from the White House, the GOP is investing an unprecedented treasury in going after the undecided and the weak partisans.

"The Democrats will have to work hard to get out their 'base' for Gore, and I don't think they will be able to match us in the battleground..."
precincts and states," said Fred Meyer, the former Texas Republican chairman and longtime Bush family partner in Houston politics, who came to Washington last April to head Victory 2000.

(...)

While most states have Victory 2000 programs, the national effort will be targeted on the battleground areas. Cino said there now are an unusually large number--18 states--on that priority list, reflecting the fact that Bush looks competitive in a number of states, such as Iowa, Wisconsin, Oregon and Washington, that are normally Democratic in presidential years. But that number is likely to shrink if Gore pulls wavering Democrats back into his column.

Polling results will influence the distribution of Victory 2000 dollars, both Meyer and Cino said, but equally important will be the degree to which state committees can demonstrate they are ready to provide the human and financial resources for outreach to the target voters.

Campaign finance rules require that varying percentages of these outreach campaigns be financed within each state--depending on the number of state and federal races on each ballot. And those regulations allow subsidized, low-cost campaign mailings only if they are done by volunteers, so each state has been given financial and personnel targets it must meet to remain active in the Victory 2000 program.

(...)

In the Iowa caucuses last winter, Cino said, a similar effort, organized around "Bush team leaders," each of whom was responsible for bringing 10 other Bush supporters to their caucus sites, gave Bush a win. A similar program was implemented in Michigan, Cino said, and earned Bush two-thirds of the Republican vote, even though independents and crossover Democrats provided a margin for Arizona

The turnout effort helped Bush to beat McCain in the California primary, and $14 million has been budgeted for Victory 2000 in the California general election, despite the fact that polls now show Gore leading in the most populous state. Bob Naylor, the former California Republican chairman, said last week, "I have heard similar promises from other presidential candidates, only to see them bail out. But I am convinced the Bush people are serious about competing in California," a decision, he added, that can only benefit GOP chances in a half-dozen closely contested House districts.

This ground war will not be as visible as the TV ads or campaign rallies. But if the race is close, the Bush campaign is seeking to ensure it won’t lose for lack of trying to find and turn out each potential vote.
WASHINGTON, Aug. 7 -- Both the Republican and Democratic Parties say they plan to spend record amounts of money on get-out-the-vote operations this fall, showing that both sides expect the battle for the White House and Congress to be so tight that slight changes in voter turnout could carry the day.

Officials with the Republican National Committee said they expected to spend $100 million on television advertising, phone banks, literature and a host of other activities intended to sway independent voters and energize core Republicans.

Democratic Party leaders said they expected to spend half that amount -- enough, they asserted, to match what they described as a less experienced and less efficient Republican operation.

The Republicans have traditionally focused more on advertising campaigns than on voter turnout operations, leaving much of that gritty trench work to religious conservatives, like the Christian Coalition, or single-issue groups, like the National Rifle Association.

So their sharper focus on grass-roots organizing this year indicates a significant shift in strategy in an effort to win the election on what has long been Democratic turf.

"We're trying to reinvigorate the party itself," said Terry Holt, a spokesman for Victory 2000, a branch of the Republican National Committee that will be coordinating the voter turnout effort in all states.

But Democratic officials asserted that the Republicans, for all their
money, were coming late to the war on the ground and would have little
time to build effective operations.

They also suggested that the Republicans were creating their own
grass-roots operations because conservative groups usually aligned with
the Republicans, like the Christian Coalition, have lost much of their
potency. And they argued that undecided swing voters would be more
receptive to the Democratic message.

"The reason Democrats have been winning is because we energize
voters on issues like Social Security, education and health care," said
Michael Whouley, the senior strategy adviser for the Democratic National
Committee and Vice President Al Gore's campaign.

"They can spend as much money as possible, but it will be like the
Wizard of Oz," Mr. Whouley said. "It's a lot of blue smoke and mirrors.
But when you pull back the curtains, there aren't any issues that will
turn out voters."

Fred Meyer, chairman of Victory 2000, said the $100 million, a goal
that was first reported in The Washington Post today, would be 50
percent more than the Republicans spent in 1996.

Mr. Meyer estimated that $75 million of that would be split evenly
between television issue advertisements and voter turnout operations,
which include polls, phone banks, yard signs and mailings. The group
will also be training organizers to work in the most competitive states.

An additional $13.7 million would be used to defray administrative
costs for the Bush campaign. The rest of the pot would go toward
miscellaneous Victory 2000 costs.

In addition to the $100 million, which will be raised by the
Republican National Committee, Mr. Meyer said, state Victory 2000
committees would raise at least $50 million more for the voter turnout
Mr. Meyer is a former chairman of the Texas Republican State Committee and a close ally of the Republican nominee, Gov. George W. Bush. He said one goal of the grass-roots campaign would be to identify undecided voters who are leaning toward Mr. Bush and then aggressively urge them to vote, using follow-up phone calls, mailings and personal visits. Similar efforts in Texas had swayed large blocs of undecided voters to Mr. Bush in 1994, Mr. Meyer said.

The Democrats are planning to depend heavily on the A.F.L.-C.I.O. to do much of the heavy work of energizing Democratic voters, as they have in the past. Labor officials have budgeted $46 million for political activities in 1999 and 2000, the bulk of which will be spent on voter education and turnout activities in this fall's national elections.

Steven Rosenthal, political director for the federation, said that unions would be trying to replicate their successes of 1996 and 1998, when they increased union participation by building old-fashioned ward and precinct systems in closely contested Congressional districts. The federation plans to focus its efforts on 71 districts in 25 states, Mr. Rosenthal said.

"The key for us is the personal contact," he said. "We are filling a void that parties used to fill." The alliance of Democrats and labor will be strengthened this week by the endorsement of Mr. Gore by the United Auto Workers whose leaders decided tonight to do that, an official close to the union said.

The Democrats are also building get-out-the-vote operations in African-American and Latino communities. Donna Brazile, Mr. Gore's campaign manager, said organizers would try to "touch" likely voters in those communities -- with mailings, phone calls or personal contact --
dozens of times before Election Day. Similar campaigns were highly successful in the 1996 and 1998 elections.
Vice President Gore returned to his hometown of Carthage, Tenn., today to introduce his running mate and to vow to run a positive campaign this fall.

"I will not say a single negative word about Governor Bush or Dick Cheney," Gore said of the Republican presidential ticket. "I will not have a single negative, personal attack on either one of them. We want to elevate the campaign."

He presented his running mate, Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman (D-Conn.) to many of his relatives and friends, saying the two of them "are going to run a campaign that honors the American people." Lieberman, in turn, urged the townspeople crammed into an elementary school to brag about their local son.

"Stand up and talk to me, and tell me and my family about Al Gore," Lieberman said. "Make it personal."

(...)
Confident Bush Says Campaign is on Track to Carry California

By BONNIE HARRIS

OXNARD -- Gov. George W. Bush rolled into California for a two-day train tour Wednesday and vowed that he would carry "the biggest, most powerful state in the union" in the November election.

(...)

Karen Hughes, Bush communications director, said this week's California tour would take the two Republicans to areas of swing and independent voters McCain targeted during the spring when he competed in the GOP primary against Bush.

"These are areas of swing and independent voters that we think Gov. Bush will be able to appeal to in November," Hughes said before leaving Austin on Wednesday. "And Sen. McCain will help us to reach out to swing and independent voters."

Democratic strategists called the train tour a head-fake, suggesting
that Bush will not invest the significant time and money it would take to compete in such a large state. This week, the Republican National Committee broadcast a television ad attacking Vice President Al Gore in 17 states, but not California.

"They want two things," said Bill Carrick, a Democratic strategist who advises Gore. "They want to suck us into spending money to defend California and they want to do so without spending their own money. So they're going to come here a lot."

California has been friendly territory for Democrats in the last decade. It is also considered a must-win state for a national Democratic candidate because of Republican strengths elsewhere.

Recent polls, however, suggest Gore has not sealed a victory in California. One survey released today found Gore with a narrow lead among the state's likely voters (40% to 37%). The poll by the Public Policy Institute of California, an independent think tank based in San Francisco, was taken during a one-week period that covered last week's Republican National Convention, which may have inflated Bush's support.

"By going into the Los Angeles media market today, we are obviously saying that we think California is a state we can win," said Hughes, referring to the Ventura County stop. "We don't want the Democrats to have free rein with the publicity for their convention. We intend to remind the voters of California that we have a better candidate."

Stuart Rothenberg, an independent political analyst in Washington, said, however, that he suspects Bush knows California is a longshot and he is trying to keep his options open.

"I have no doubt they want to convey the impression that they're going to play in California," Rothenberg said. "But it's hard to believe
they'll really play in California in a big way." (...)

Political Communication Lab., Stanford University
For years, President Clinton has pledged that what he wants for Washington is "progress not partisanship." But the Democrats now have a new leader and new alliteration--a promise from Vice President Gore that he wants to fight for "the people not the powerful."

This switch in slogans is a small sign of a large shift in electoral strategies between Clinton and Gore. The policies these two Democrats support are nearly identical. But Gore’s decision in recent weeks to sell his candidacy with an appeal to populist grievance--anger at the big oil, drug and health insurance companies that he says are arrayed against average Americans--is in important ways a repudiation of the political model Clinton embraced in the 1996 election and has stuck with since.

Clinton, according to Democrats who have spoken with him, has expressed concern that Gore risks overdoing it with rhetoric that seeks to tap resentment rather than the essential optimism and desire for political consensus he believes most Americans feel.

But Gore’s strategy, according to several senior Democrats both within and outside the campaign, is based on a different conception of who the critical swing voters are in the 2000 election. Clinton targeted suburbanites a few rungs up on the economic scale, with a prosperity-celebrating message that promised help for people trying to pay for education and balance the demands of work and family. Gore apparently believes the 2000 election will be won a couple rungs lower--among lower
middle-class voters, in particular women, who have little to celebrate in the new economy and feel victimized by obstacles they confront in daily life.

If anything, Gore's 2000 election strategy most resembles the Clinton strategy of 1992. The similarities are not coincidental. Clinton's 1992 pollster, Stanley Greenberg, has in the past month taken on an increasingly important advisory role to Gore. Clinton, like Gore this year, eight years ago mixed populist rhetoric—including denunciations of high executive pay—with a traditional values message that was aimed squarely at the working class.

(...)

Gore finds his natural voice on the offensive, his aides say, and he prefers a moralistic brand of politics in which even routine political battles are cast as battles between forces of light vs. darkness. "He finds energy in conflict," said one senior Democratic adviser to Gore's campaign.

But other strategists, including people who are advisers to Clinton, see considerable risk in Gore's approach. At the most basic level, there is a question about whether Gore's message is consistent. He is simultaneously telling voters they've never had it so good as under eight years of the Democrats and that they are getting the shaft from big business. Gore earlier this year cast himself as a friend of Wall Street, appearing with former Treasury secretary Robert E. Rubin--now co-chairman of Citigroup, the nation's biggest financial institution, to make the case that he would keep the bull market charging.

Above all, in the view of skeptics, Gore's populist themes carry two big risks in the scramble to win swing voters: They could revive a stereotype that Democrats are the party of losers who envy the success of
others; and they could send a message that a vote for Gore is a vote to continue the combative, finger-pointing style of politics that many voters are weary of. "This is more an issue of tone than content," said one Clinton adviser, "but the [Gore] tone is off for these times."

(...)
ALBUQUERQUE, Aug. 29 -- Vice President Gore and Texas Gov. George W. Bush gave in to the tensions of a deadlocked race, delivering harsh charges and personal rebuffs in the past 24 hours that have undermined their high-minded pledges to conduct a campaign dialogue focused on serious policy pronouncements.

Taking exception to Gore’s taunt of the night before that it is "put up or shut up time" for the details of his campaign promises, Bush said today that the statement "doesn't sound very presidential to me."

"His comments underlined the point I made that if we want something done in Washington, we have to do something to change the tone of the discourse," Bush said on his campaign plane this morning.

Just the day before, Bush had complained about his opponent's education positions by saying, "Vice President Gore offers more of the same. He will not end the status quo because he is the status quo." This morning, at a campaign event in Portland, Maine, Bush continued his theme. "If you want to close the achievement gap in America, you better have education vision, a different president to lead our country."

Gore struck a similar tone this afternoon as he spoke in a park here next to a middle school, detailing his plan to offer affordable health insurance for all of the nation's children by 2005. The audience behind him lounged on folding chairs and blankets that the campaign staff had
just bought from Wal-Mart to create a serene scene for the cameras. But Gore's message was martial.

"I hope that my opponent will also present to you specifics of how he would address the problem of children who do not have health coverage today," Gore said. "Presently, he has not presented any plan to address this problem. But there is still time--even before Labor Day--to offer these specifics."

The two had restrained their rhetoric since clinching their respective nominations five months ago, mostly letting their staff members do the sniping. When the candidates took on each other, they tended to sheath their observations in euphemisms such as "contrast" and "counter-punching." But with a poll today showing the race in a statistical tie, both are showing their apparent exasperation.

The candidates' sharp words are striking because Bush has said that a fundamental appeal of his candidacy is the public's desire to "change the tone in Washington," and because Gore promised on Monday that he is "not going to say a single negative personal thing about my opponents."

"You will not hear that from me in this entire campaign," Gore added.

Not surprisingly, Bush's staff pounced on Gore's "put up or shut up" remark, which he made aboard Air Force Two Monday night. Bush's communication director Karen Hughes told reporters that it reminded her of "why [Gore] won't be able to get much done in Washington, with that kind of bitterness and that kind of tone.

"I'm wondering which Al Gore was talking, the one who promised not one unkind word, not one. Or was it the one who yesterday called for a serious adult discussion and then six hours later issued a playground
challenge. It's further evidence of why Al Gore won't be an effective president."

Gore's spokesman, Chris Lehane, had his own diagnosis of the new tone. "Sounds like the specific issues are getting under George Bush's skin," he said.

(…)

Political Communication Lab., Stanford University
Transcript:

SHAW: And we're joined now by Bush campaign press secretary Mindy Tucker and Gore adviser Ron Klain.

Mindy Tucker, are the vice president's rising poll numbers one of the reasons for airing this RNC ad?

MINDY TUCKER, BUSH CAMPAIGN PRESS SECRETARY: No. Actually the vice president's credibility problem. The fact he says a lot and does not much is the reason this ad is run. We have a problem with the fact that the vice president keeps promising things like tax cuts, prescription drugs, health care, and he doesn't follow through on any of it, and that is a very important issue to the American people. They need to know that once again they'll be electing somebody, if they elect Al Gore, they'll be electing someone who says one thing and never follows up on it. It's a very important issue to the American people. They need to be able to trust the people they're electing into office.
SHAW: Ron Klain, has your man failed to deliver on promises?

RON KLAIN, GORE ADVISER: Well, no, and of course the Bush ad doesn’t talk about the issue. Look, this is an ad that CNN and the Associated Press today called a personal negative attack, and it's a sign of desperation on the part of the Bush campaign.

The credibility issue here is Governor Bush’s credibility. Just yesterday, for the 12th time in over a month, Governor Bush said there would be no personal attacks in this campaign. And 24 hours later, I guess because of failing poll numbers, he broke that promise and launched this personal negative attack.

TUCKER: What Ron forgets to point out...

KLAIN: Mindy, let me finish. I let you finish.

TUCKER: Go ahead.

KLAIN: Look, the bottom line is this, last week, Governor Bush admitted he couldn't explain his tax cut plan. This week, the Medicaid system in Texas is found to be illegal. The SAT scores are falling in Texas. The job training system in Texas is under attack. And so what does Governor Bush do, breaks his promise and launches a personal negative attack like this.

SHAW: OK, let's get a response from Mindy, and then I have a question.

TUCKER: What you just heard is the reason that that is run. The DNC has spent millions of dollars running negative attack ads that nobody seemed important to report against Governor Bush. They've distorted his record here in the state of Texas, and it's not fair. Those ads -- and Governor Bush always said, he said, I do not want to run a negative campaign, but I will respond. He is responding, the RNC is responding, to millions of dollars of 10 negative attack ads from the DNC.
Ron Klain launched a plethora of negative attacks just now in this piece misstating the governor's record on things, and that is what we're responding to. It's very hard to have a substantive debate on issues when the other side does nothing but distort the facts, so here we are. We're bringing up this credibility. It's a very important issue. People need to know that Al Gore is not always saying what's actually the truth.

SHAW: Ron Klain, do you contend that the DNC ads ought not be answered?

KLAIN: Oh, well the DNC's ads Should be answered. We've talked about Governor Bush's record in Texas. I invite Governor Bush to defend why Texas is 49th out of 50 in children's health care, has the worst air quality in the nation. I welcome them to defend it. They want to attack our record in the past seven and a half years, what we've done to turn this country around. That's fine, too. But this is a different sort of attack, as I think Brooks Jackson noted.

SHAW: Well, let me ask you this...

KLAIN: It's a personal, negative attack. And no matter how many ways Mindy slices it, that's the truth, and it violates Bush's promise yesterday that there would be no personal attacks.

SHAW: OK, Ron Klain, both you and your opponent made two points twice, maybe three times, so I want to cover some more territory.

KLAIN: Sure.

SHAW: But my question to you is, what are you going to do about it? 

KLAIN: Well, I think what we're going to do about it is what we did today, which is continue to talk about the issues that people care about. A patients' bill of rights -- Al Gore is for it -- an enforceable patients' bill of rights for all Americans; George Bush wants to sign one that leaves over hundred million Americans out.
TUCKER: Not true. Not true.

KLAIN: Those are the real issues in this campaign.

I wish Governor Bush would agree to debate us in primetime on those issues and take those issues to the American people.

SHAW: Mindy Tucker?

TUCKER: I can't wait to. What we will be able to do is tell people that Governor Bush signed into law one of the toughest patient protection laws in the country here in Texas, he said he wants to do the same thing on the federal level, as long as it doesn't supersede what good states have already done, like we've done here in Texas.

You've just heard a very good example of why we shouldn't trust Al Gore, his campaign staff and himself. He distorts Governor Bush's record at every turn. He wants to -- he says he wants to fight on the issues, but when it comes down to it, he knows that he can't win on the truth.

SHAW: Mindy Tucker, is the vice president's character a prime target?

TUCKER: It's his credibility, Bernie. It's the fact that this man will stand up and say, I want to give tax cuts to every American. Yet when his plan comes out, or after they get into office, he and Clinton both raised taxes on the middle class. He says, I want to pass prescription drugs, yet they've had seven years to do it, and they haven't. It's just -- it's credibility; it's the fact that you need to be able to believe what people are telling you on the campaign trail.

SHAW: Mr. Klain?

KLAIN: Well, I think, again, I don't know how many misleading statements there are on that one. The fact of the matter is we did cut taxes, we're fighting for prescription drug relief, against the big drug companies, which Governor Bush has lined up with.
TUCKER: Which Joe Lieberman is taking campaign donations from.
KLAIN: Mindy, the bottom line is this...
TUCKER: You can't have it both ways, Ron.
KLAIN: The person who's trying to have it both ways is George Bush, who's lined up with the drug companies, lined up with the HMOs, fighting against change that Al Gore wants to bring to America.
TUCKER: That's why he passed the...
(CROSSTALK)
TUCKER: ... all over the country? That's why he did that?
(CROSSTALK)
KLAIN: ... wants to launch these personal, negative attacks. That's all your campaign is about.
SHAW: Can I ask you two a very innocent question?
KLAIN: Please.
SHAW: Will your candidates debate as vigorously as you two? If so, when? TUCKER: Absolutely, we've already said we're happy to do three presidential debates, two vice presidential debates, and we look forward to finalizing those and letting the American people hear a real thoughtful discussion of the issues.
SHAW: Wait a minute, let me get in here and ask Mindy this: What about the site in Boston which the governor apparently does not like?
TUCKER: I don't know about any of the discussion on sites. We have people that are in Washington this week meeting with the various people. We've received 53 different various invitations, and we're happy to look at each one of them and find the best possible venues for the American people to hear a thoughtful debate on the issues.
SHAW: Ron Klain?
KLAIN: Al Gore's accepted the proposal of the bipartisan debate
commission for three nationally televised primetime debates on all the broadcast networks. George Bush is not willing to accept that proposal for some reason I can't understand, unless he's unwilling to defend his tax cut plan, his prescription drug lack of a plan, his plans on HMOs. I don't why he won't pursue what his father did, what Bob Dole did, and accept the proposal of the Bipartisan Debate Commission.

TUCKER: It’s much like policy, Ron. You guys think status quo. You think automatically, we should just accept the three commission debates. You can't think outside the box. You do that on policy issues. We're willing to look at all the different options. We have new technology. We have lots of options. We're willing to look at all 53 invitations and say, what's the best thing for the American people? What three debates will give them the best venue?

KLAIN: The best thing for the American people is to have debates seen by everyone on all the networks, and Governor Bush is running from that for some reason that...

TUCKER: I agree, you want primetime debates, you want people to see them.

SHAW: Hold on, hold on, wait a minute, hold it. We're fast running out of time. Now you just accused the governor of running from something. His spokesperson has just said he's willing to do three primetime debates.

TUCKER: We want primetime debates.

KLAIN: What he has not accepted is primetime debates broadcast on all the networks under the proposal of the Nonpartisan Debate Commission. We would like to see what Governor Bush wants to propose. The fact of the matter is, there is...

SHAW: OK, let her respond to that, because we're fast out of time.
TUCKER: What we have said is we're going to do three debates. We look forward to the opportunity to debate in primetime. We want everybody in America to be able to see these debates. We think the more they hear about Governor Bush and his ideas, the more they're going to like him. We welcome the opportunity.

KLAIN: Well, you have a chance to accept the opportunity. That would be the first step, Mindy.

TUCKER: We have 53 chances, we have 53 chances, and we'd like to be able to choose the best three venues for the American people.

KLAIN: One would be a good start. One would be a good start.

SHAW: Well, folks, I'm going to leave you as you discuss this off the air. We've run out of time. But thanks very much to Mindy Tucker of the Bush campaign and Ron Klain of the Gore campaign. We'll see you again on the trail.

KLAIN: Thanks very much.

SHAW: You're quite welcome.

SHAW: Joining us now, David Broder of the "Washington Post" and Bob Novak of the "Chicago Sun Times."

Gentlemen, you just heard the debate between the two spokespersons for the campaigns. The Brits would say: Things are starting to hot up in this American presidential campaign.

Dave Broder, first to you, and your assessment of where we are right now with this campaign.

DAVID BRODER, "WASHINGTON POST": Well, I think what we heard in the last few minutes is classic campaign issues that don't really reach the voters very much. You got people arguing about whether or not an ad is a personal negative ad. You got people arguing about who does or does not want to debate.
I think the voters are way beyond both of those kinds of issues. And they're interested in what those folks have to say about substantive policy. And they started out pretty well on that. I thought both Gore and Bush delivered pretty well on the substance in the past ten days or two weeks. But now it has turned into a typical cat fight, and I don't think it helps either one of them.

SHAW: Bob Novak?

ROBERT NOVAK, CNN "CROSSFIRE": You have to remember, Bernie, that most people have made up their mind about this election pretty firmly. So we're talking about a very small number of Americans who can't figure out whether they want to vote for Al Gore or George W. Bush. And what are they going to decide it on? Are they really going to decide it on who has the better drug-prescription plan? I got a feeling that most of the people worried about that issue are going to vote for Al Gore.

Are they really going to do it on the basis of whether they think the tax cut is good? I think people who think they need a tax cut are going to vote for George W. Bush. I think they're going to end up deciding which of these people looks more like a president, looks more like the kind of person they want to lead the country.

And I tend to agree with David in that respect that I don't think these kinds of fights -- as much as they pay attention to them -- really do either side very much good. But they are going to go negative, because that's the way political campaigns are.

SHAW: Your assessment of the prime issues being pushed by Governor Bush this week after a week last week which he was off balance by the Gore attacks? The governor has been talking about education. His running mate, Dick Cheney, has been talking about the United States
alleged military unpreparedness -- the level of preparedness.

And the vice president has been talking about prescription drugs -- as you alluded to -- and health care. Where are they going with these issues? Are these the kinds of issues that you, David, say the American voters want to hear discussed, and that you, Bob Novak, say they have already been ingested by voters, and voters have virtually made up their minds?

BRODER: Well, Bernie, there is no question that the prescription-drug issue is a real concern. I've been talking to probably 20 different congressional campaigns in the last three days on the phone. And it strikes me that in every one of them, Republicans and Democrats are telling me that they are being asked about prescription drugs by the voters that they are seeing face-to-face. That is a real issue.

I am a little skeptical -- and I'm interested in what Bob thinks -- about whether the defense preparedness issue has the kind of salience in this international environment that it had when we were in the Cold War. I think Republicans in the past were able to make very effective use of that issue, because people really were worried when they woke up in the morning about whether we could match up against the Soviet Union or not.

I'm not sure that people are too worried about who we match up against now with the Cold War over.

SHAW: How about that, Bob?

NOVAK: I agree 100 percent with David. I don't think it's a very good issue. I don't think people are worried about our enemies. I think a better issue would be what in the world are we doing in Bosnia and Kosovo? But since Governor Bush approved those interventions, it is very hard for him to criticize them in any great extent now. I don't think that's an
issue. The drug-prescription issue is a defensive question for Governor Bush.

The staffers on the Gore campaign say: Boy, talk about -- please, make my day, talk about Medicare. That's our issue. And they have a certain point. I think there are arguments about -- that can be made against the Gore plan. But that is a Democratic issue. I know it's not popular right now. And I don't think it's really taken seed with the Bush people, but I do believe that tax cuts is an issue he ought to be stressing.

And I have talked to some very senior Republican senators who are very upset that Governor Bush is not talking more about using the surplus for tax cuts for everybody. And I don't think he has handled that issue very well at all so far. And a lot of other people in the Republican Party don't think so either.

SHAW: Before we are chased by the clock, one quick question: Who's carrying his weight better on the ticket: Dick Cheney or Joe Lieberman? David?

BRODER: Well, I think at this point you have to say that Lieberman is much more comfortable and much more effective on the stump than Dick Cheney has been. The reports that I've been hearing about Cheney's campaigning have not been out with him since the convention. But what I'm hearing is: He is being almost perfunctory in his speeches -- they are very brief -- and reticent about getting in and mixing into crowds.

Lieberman is a natural-born politician, and he's showing up to good effect at this point.

NOVAK: I think David is essentially correct. I thought that Senator -- Mr. Cheney was not very good on the Sunday talk shows last Sunday. But the good news for the Republicans is these -- this race is not going to have any impact of any serious effect on who's elected president. It's not
Lieberman versus Cheney; it's Gore versus Bush. And that's a very close race as far as I can see, with hardly any advantage for either side at the moment.

SHAW: Bob Novak, David Broder, thanks very much.
LOUISVILLE, Ky., Aug. 31 -- After struggling for a week to seize the offensive from Vice President Al Gore, aides to Gov. George W. Bush said today that they had approved a new and sharp attack commercial that strikes directly at Mr. Gore’s character and mocks his appearance at a fund-raising event at a Buddhist temple four years ago.

The 30-second spot, paid for by the Republican National Committee, will go on the air on Friday in 16 states, and comes just a week after Mr. Bush personally blocked another commercial sponsored by the party that also questioned Mr. Gore’s truthfulness. The move exposed rifts within the Republican camp over how to attack Mr. Gore without violating Mr. Bush’s vow to keep his campaign positive.

Mr. Bush’s aides said they had wholeheartedly approved the contents and tone of the new spot, which they described as "tongue-in-cheek." They said it was a response to critical advertisements run by the Democrats against Mr. Bush.

The commercial shows a television set on a kitchen counter with Mr. Gore on the screen and an unseen woman complaining that the vice president is "reinventing himself on television again." At one point the commercial shows a picture of Mr. Gore at the Buddhist temple event in 1996 and another segment shows him saying, "I took the initiative in creating the Internet." At that point, the narrator says, "Yeah, and I invented the remote control."

Predictably, the commercial sparked accusations and
counteraccusations between the two campaigns over which one had "gone negative" first. Mr. Gore's camp wasted no time responding to the commercial, which was widely shown on television news programs and on the Internet during the day.

Mr. Gore also scaled back plans to focus on a patients' bill of rights in the belief that the Republican advertisement would backfire and that the Democrats should not create news that would distract public attention from it.

The new commercial is part of a broader, coordinated effort by the Republicans to raise doubts about Mr. Gore's ethics and integrity, which the Bush campaign clearly views as the vice president's greatest vulnerability.

All this week, Mr. Bush has criticized Mr. Gore as being a weak leader who broke promises made during the 1992 campaign to cut taxes and expand prescription drug coverage. And today, in a speech at a high school in Holland, Ohio, Mr. Bush accused Mr. Gore of using "empty rhetoric" that had disillusioned young people.

But this more aggressive strategy also comes at the end of a two-week period in which Mr. Gore, clearly enjoying a postconvention bounce in the polls, has forced Mr. Bush to defend himself on issues like tax cuts, prescription drug prices and when the candidates would be debating. Since the Democratic National Convention last month, Mr. Gore has pulled even with Mr. Bush in many national polls, and is even ahead in some swing states where he had previously trailed.

For that reason, Democrats asserted today that Mr. Bush was turning negative in an effort to stanch weakening poll numbers and reinvigorate a lackluster campaign. They also accused Mr. Bush of hypocrisy, citing his pledge at the Republican National Convention in
early August "to change the tone of Washington to one of civility and respect."

Douglas Hattaway, a spokesman for the Gore campaign, said Mr. Bush had "broken his own promise not to engage in personal, negative attacks."

"We've seen this from Bush before, in the primaries," Mr. Hattaway added. "When his back was against the wall, he went negative on John McCain. Now he's talked out of both sides of his mouth about changing the tone of the debate."

Mr. Bush's aides have said they had every intention of endorsing commercials that raised questions about Mr. Gore's ethics. But the content of such advertisements has been a subject of debate among Mr. Bush's top advisers and among Republican officials.

While campaign officials said they viewed questions about Mr. Gore's credibility as an important part of their message, they have also been mindful of their candidate's pledge to run a positive campaign.

Just this afternoon, as the Republican Party was releasing the new commercial, Mr. Bush was telling a boisterous audience at a high school here that "politics doesn't have to be ugly and mean."

Strategists in the Bush campaign and in the Republican Party have said that the best way to deliver a tough advertisement questioning Mr. Gore's ethics was to use humor, so as to avoid appearing mean-spirited.

"It's a good-natured way of making a very important point," Karen P. Hughes, Mr. Bush's director of communications, said of the new Republican spot. "That is: the gaping credibility gap between what Vice President Gore says and what Vice President Gore does."

Political analysts were divided about whether the honey-thick sarcasm of the advertisement would help soften its negative message, or
turn voters off. Ken Goldstein of the University of Wisconsin, who analyzes political advertisements, argued that a lighter touch could make a negative message more palatable.

"This ad gets at what Al Gore's weaknesses are, but it doesn't do it in what I think some people would consider an unfair way," Mr. Goldstein said on Political Points, a joint Webcast of ABC News and the New York Times.

(...)
The Republican presidential ad campaign took a decidedly nasty turn yesterday with a commercial that mocks Vice President Gore's credibility, showing footage of Gore's infamous Buddhist temple visit and his boast that he helped create the Internet.

Texas Gov. George W. Bush, who approved the Republican National Committee ad Tuesday, sees it as "a humorous way of making an important point," said his spokeswoman Karen Hughes. That point, she said, "is that there is a gaping credibility gap between what Vice President Gore says and what Vice President Gore does."

Connecticut Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman, Gore's running mate, quickly returned fire in Seattle. "I'm sorry to say that Governor Bush's promise to change the tone of American politics has run into the reality of a troubled Bush-Cheney campaign," he said. "Because these new attack ads break his promise not to launch personal attacks in this campaign and they drag us back to the worst politics of the past. It seems to me today that Governor Bush has sadly changed his tune about changing the tone."

The Democratic National Committee abruptly abandoned plans to unleash its own ad attacking Bush's Texas record. Spokeswoman Jenny Backus said the party preferred to "watch the Republicans shoot themselves in the foot" with what she called "infantile name-calling and finger-pointing."

The sudden escalation in rhetoric, both on and off the airwaves,
signaled a harsh new phase as the campaign heads into Labor Day weekend. The GOP ad indicates that the Bush campaign has grown sufficiently concerned about Gore pulling even or ahead in the polls to risk criticism with a frontal attack--despite the obvious contrast to Bush's repeated call for a gentler tone in politics.

Just yesterday, Bush said in Louisville that he wanted "to remind the young of America that politics doesn't have to be ugly and mean."

"It doesn't have to be a system that downgrades people to bring somebody up," Bush said.

(…)

Political Communication Lab., Stanford University
Transcript:

SESNO: And we're joined now by the Bush campaign's chief strategist, Karl Rove...

Good to see you, Karl.

KARL ROVE, BUSH CAMPAIGN CHIEF STRATEGIST: Frank, how are you?

SESNO: Great -- and senior Gore adviser, Bob Shrum.

Gentlemen, thanks both for coming in on this Labor Day.

Let us start then with the debate over debates.

Karl, I know you have been asked this question before, but I'm going to start by asking it again: Why not use the Presidential Debate Commission -- the Commission on Presidential Debates -- as the starting point -- agree to do those as have been laid out, and then use these other debate platforms as add-ons?

ROVE: Well, look, we accepted three debates. We thought we were making it easy. We took debates that Al Gore not only accepted, but
debates that he had made a big practice on television on March on Larry King's show of asking Larry King to sponsor a debate, and then saying: I'll accept. I'll accept.

And then in July, when he went on "Meet the Press," he went out of his way to hot dog it on the national television about how he had accepted Tim Russert's debate and Bush hadn't. So we accepted -- we thought -- the two debates that he was most on record as having accepted and agreeing to. But apparently, a promise from Clinton-Gore team doesn't mean anything.

Apparently, saying that: I'll debate any time, anywhere -- and making a particular case of accepting these two debates -- doesn't mean anything to Al Gore. He accepted these debates. We joined him in accepting. Now he's backing out. What has he got to fear from Larry King. And what does he got to fear from Tim Russert? Does he not think that they're fair questioners?

(CROSSTALK)

SESNO: You want to respond?

BOB SHRUM, GORE SENIOR ADVISER: I don't think there is anybody who he has anything to fear from debating George Bush. Beyond that, when those offers were made by the vice president, he said: Let's give up the political ads and debate twice a week. George Bush said: Absolutely no.

We can clearly have other debates in this campaign. But we ought to begin with the standard Governor Bush set about a week-and-a-half ago, when he said we should have debates with the biggest possible audience. He told Candy Crowley that. Now, we have three debates that are right now scheduled and that will be universally broadcast on every network. They'll reach 40 million people, 90 million people, depending on whether
the pattern is '96 or '92.

Compared with the -- for example "LARRY KING LIVE" -- and I love "LARRY KING LIVE" -- but he reaches 900,000 people. And the most he ever reached was, on one occasion, he reached 11 million. These debates don't belong to George Bush. They don't belong to Al Gore. They belong to the American people. And it's time for George Bush to stand up, defend his policies, defend his record and do it in front of the largest possible number of Americans.

SESNO: Karl Rove, let me -- Karl Rove, let me whittle the question down and just ask you simply: Why not grab on to the three debates that offer the maximum possible audience?

ROVE: These do. Every network can carry them. People can tune into them on the Internet and on National Public Radio. I love the disingenuousness of Bob Shrum. Let me repeat what Bob Shrum said in July -- quote -- "We'll show up and debate anywhere George Bush will show up and debate."

That's what Mr. Shrum said in July.

SHRUM: Yeah, we will...

(CROSSTALK)

ROVE: He was echoing the words of Vice President Gore. And apparently, a promise from neither of these men means anything. They said: We'll show up and debate. Every network can carry these. We would hope that every network would carry "LARRY KING."

(CROSSTALK)

SESNO: Hang on a second.

(CROSSTALK)

SHRUM: You quoted me and I'm going to respond. I'm going to respond. SESNO: You will.
ROVE: ... they can somehow avoid living up to this explicit promise that they made.

Bob, if you didn't believe it, if you weren't making an explicit promise, then why the heck did you say it in July, when you said: We'll show up anywhere and anytime George Bush will show up and debate? We're taking up these two offers that you previously accepted.

SESNO: All right, let's...

SHRUM: Karl, you asked a question and you don't want me to give the answer. You just want to filibuster. It's the game you guys play.

ROVE: I'm happy to have you answer why you aren't going to live up to your promise.

SHRUM: Look, the offer was -- the offer was: Give up advertising, We'll debate, anytime, any place. The happy was...

(CROSSTALK)

SHRUM: Karl, let me finish. The offer assumed that you would do the presidential debates.

ROVE: It assumed not that at all.

(CROSSTALK)

SHRUM: Karl, shut up! It's either naive or calculated deception...

(CROSSTALK)

SESNO: Gentlemen, if we're going to have this...

SHRUM: I'm going to finish. I'm going to finish.

SESNO: All right, I...

SHRUM: It's either naive or calculated deception on the part of the Bush campaign to think that what's going to happen here is that the other networks are going to broadcast "Meet the Press" or "LARRY KING LIVE." The other networks are already saying they're not going to do it. What you want to do is shrink the size of the debate, you want to shrink...
the length of the debate.

ROVE: Absolutely not.

SHRUM: It is beyond me. Doesn’t George Bush have something to say for 90 minutes without looking at his watch and wondering whether the debate -- when the debate is going to end? ROVE: Frank, the words "calculated deception" were used and that’s exactly what Al Gore and Bob Shrum have engaged in. They made a promise to the American people that they would debate on CNN and they would debate on "Meet the Press," and now they’re saying they aren’t going to do it.

SESNO: Bob Shrum, let me ask you very quickly...

ROVE: They say, we’ll debate any time, any where, and now they are backing off.

SESNO: Let me -- Bob Shrum, let me ask you a very specific question about these debates as being proposed by the Bush camp, and that is that all the debates could be open to all networks. Why is that not a sufficient assurance that there will be large, large audiences?

SHRUM: Frank, I think, first of all, we have three debates that are -- that all the networks have agreed to broadcast. Those are the three Presidential Commission debates. Secondly, Frank, I think you know very well that CBS and ABC are not going to broadcast "Meet the Press," and they’re probably not going to broadcast "LARRY KING LIVE" in primetime. This is an effort to shrink the debates down to the smallest possible audience. George Bush -- the fact a Republican strategist was quoted today in "The Washington Post" as saying he doesn’t want two-minute answers because he may not have two minutes of material to say on specific topics, that’s why he wants town meetings or talk shows instead of real debates.

SESNO: To both of you, there is plenty of public posturing as we are
seeing right here on this issue...

ROVE: Frank, let me make one...

SESNO: Is the appropriate place...

ROVE: May I make one point?

SESNO: If I can just ask the question here, though. Is the appropriate place for you two or your two camps to deal with this, to come up with a compromise behind closed doors someplace in negotiating this out? And when is that going to happen, if so, Karl Rove first?

ROVE: Well, Bob -- Frank, as I said, we accepted these debates because we thought we were making it easy. These were debates that Al Gore on national television crowed that he'd accepted and challenged the governor to join him in accepting these debates. We just simply did what he asked us to do and joined him in accepting responsibilities, and now it turns out that he is afraid of having the kind of free-flowing exchange that are available in these forums. I don't know why, but that's exactly what it is.

SESNO: What about sitting down behind closed doors, not with microphones and cameras, with all due respect to what we do for a living here, and working this out? SHRUM: Well, I think that's exactly what ought to happen and that, in fact, has been asked for by the Presidential Commission, Bill Daley is going to show up and talk...

SESNO: You're willing to do it, Bob Shrum?

SHRUM: I hope that the Bush campaign will do that. And I got to say again, when Al Gore said he would do those debates, he said let's do two debates a week and pull the 30-second ads, and Karl Rove and the Bush campaign refused to do that.

(CROSSTALK)
ROVE: Well, he wanted 68 presidential debates. He wanted 68 presidential debates. We're offering him three and he won't take us up on those three.

SESNO: Karl Rove, how about that private meeting behind closed doors to work this out?

(CROSSTALK)

ROVE: Look, I'm sure there are going to be discussions, but the fact of the matter is, the key here is that the vice president said something -- his credibility is on the line, he went on national television and hot dogged it saying, I've accepted these debates, why doesn't Governor Bush join me in accepting them? OK, we called his bluff, we accepted the debates. And both he and Bob Shrum went on national television and said -- quote -- "We will debate anywhere, anytime George Bush wants to show up."

SESNO: All right...

ROVE: We simply did what they said, and they ain't showing up. There is a question the American people have about the credibility of Al Gore.

SESNO: Plenty of more -- plenty more discussions and debate about the debates to come for sure.

Let us pause for just a moment, though. I want you both to take a look at a piece of videotape from the campaign trail today. On it, you can see and hear Governor Bush using an expletive to describe a "New York Times" reporter during what the Bush campaign is calling a "whispered aside" to Dick Cheney. Here's the tape.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BUSH: There's Adam Clymer, a major league (EXPLETIVE DELETED) from "The New York Times."
DICK CHENEY (R), VICE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Oh, yeah, big time.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SESNO: All right, now, "The New York Times" said today it rejects the Bush campaign's charge that several articles written by their reporter Adam Clymer were unfair. And in light of this flap, the Gore campaign says the vice president made a point today of thanking the journalists who cover him. Here's that.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GORE: I want to thank the working press corps who are working on Labor Day.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SESNO: All right, Karl Rove, Bob Shrum -- first to you, Karl Rove, what's going on here?

ROVE: Nothing much. Look, if expletives were a problem, on August 12 in "The Washington Post" Al Gore used an expletive. On August 11, he talked about a guy that he would beat the expletive out of. On August 13, in the "Boston Globe" he talked about writing an expletive on a CIA report describing the corruption in Russia and particularly the corruption of his buddy Chernomyrdin. Expletives -- who cares. This is a private remark made from one candidate to his running mate, and nothing big is made out of this.

SESNO: Not demonstrating too thin a skin?

ROVE: No, especially since if that were the case, Al Gore in the last month has had three instances where he's been talking about expletives in interviews with "The Washington Post" and the "Boston Globe."

SESNO: Bob Shrum.

SHRUM: Well, Karl knows how deceptive that is, because in fact --
for example, the CIA document he's referring to was Gore's assessment of a report from the CIA. It wasn't a comment directed toward an individual. What's clearly happening here is the Gore -- the Bush campaign is feeling the pressure. George Bush is feeling the pressure. They know they can't win even on their own tax cut, let alone explain it. They can't defend themselves on a patients' bill of rights. They are opposed to a prescription drug benefit for all seniors under Medicare. So they're mad at the press and they want to have a false debate about debates when they could have debates in front of 90 million people just by saying yes.

ROVE: You can have a debate next week, Bob, just show up.

(CROSSTALK)

SESNO: All right, Bob Shrum and Karl Rove, thanks very much.

SHRUM: We can have a debate in front of 90 million people, Karl. Just show up and don't have the governor break his word when he says he wants the maximum audience.

SESNO: Gentlemen, we're going to let you have the rest of this discussion, if you choose to have it, behind closed doors. ROVE: See you later, Bob.

SHRUM: See you.

SESNO: Karl Rove, Bob Shrum, thanks very much. Close race, and 64 days to go in this presidential campaign.
Still Riding Wave, a Confident Gore Heads to Florida for Fall Push

(Excerpts)

By KATHARINE Q. SEELYE

PHILADELPHIA, Sept. 3 -- Vice President Al Gore begins the fall stretch of the presidential campaign buoyant in the polls and brimming with confidence.

Perhaps the strongest sign of this self-assurance is the Gore campaign’s visible grab for Florida, a state that has been perceived as favoring Gov. George W. Bush for months and where Mr. Bush’s brother Jeb is the governor. Gore operatives say they are now slightly ahead in Florida. Mr. Gore has visited the state twice in the last week and is popping into Tampa on Monday morning during his 24-hour whirlwind Labor Day tour.

In addition, advisers said, either Mr. Gore or Senator Joseph I. Lieberman, Mr. Gore's running mate, will visit Florida at least once a week from now through the November election, as they will regularly visit other battlegrounds that are becoming increasingly more plausible for the Democrats: Pennsylvania, Ohio and Michigan.

And while the campaign has already bought television time in three swing markets in Florida -- Tampa, Orlando and West Palm Beach -- it is planning a big investment in Miami, Tallahassee and other areas as early as this week.

"When we turn on the lights there," said one top Democrat, "watch out!"

There is no question that the Gore team is pumped and basking in a
spate of positive media coverage. But its euphoria is tempered with caution. There are tricky shoals for Mr. Gore to navigate, and the campaign has some decisions to make. These concern how he will respond to attacks from Mr. Bush, how to present himself as a change from President Clinton even while advocating many of Mr. Clinton's policies, and how to counter the impression of voters that Mr. Gore is weaker on certain personality traits.

A memorandum from Hickman-Brown Research Inc., a firm that conducts polls for the Gore campaign, says that Mr. Gore has made strides in important ways. His personal popularity is up, it says, and voters agree with his positions on most issues that are most important to them and have more faith in him than in Governor Bush to carry out certain presidential duties, like managing foreign policy and preparing the country for the future.

But the memorandum also says that Mr. Gore has shown major improvements in some areas of vulnerability. The pollsters refer to these as "key personal dimensions," which they define as traits related to leadership and trustworthiness, although Republicans perceive him as vulnerable on matters of credibility.

Governor Bush is an aggressive opponent, however, flush with cash, and he has already demonstrated that he will not lie down for a Gore steamrollering. The Republicans, who have spent twice as much as Mr. Gore on television commercials, are on the air now skewering Mr. Gore's credibility on improving the campaign finance system.

Mr. Bush is also stepping up his criticism that the Clinton administration has squandered the opportunities of the last eight years. Republicans say that commercials in the works show Mr. Clinton making the same promises in 1992 -- for a middle-class tax cut, for a
prescription drug benefit for the elderly -- that Mr. Gore is making today.

How severely, and how soon, should Mr. Gore respond? He has a reputation as a cutthroat competitor whose aggressiveness can fire up the partisans but alienate independents and swing voters. The Gore team is deploying countless surrogates, including Mr. Lieberman, to make the case against Mr. Bush. But there is some internal debate about the level on which Mr. Gore should engage.

His recent challenge that Mr. Bush should "put up or shut up," ridiculed by the Bush campaign as a playground taunt, gave a hint of Mr. Gore’s eagerness to get in the fight. But the Democrats withheld a commercial they had prepared last week criticizing Mr. Bush's record in Texas. That is likely to be broadcast in the coming week.

(...)

Political Communication Lab., Stanford University
Transcript:

COLMES: (...) the presidential candidates may not be able to agree on debate appearances, but both Al Gore and George W. Bush are apparently happy to sit down with talk-show diva Oprah Winfrey. The vice president had his turn today, and took the opportunity to court millions of mostly preschool, and violence in entertainment. He also gave the audience some personal insight into that now-famous kiss.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP, "THE OPRAH WINFREY SHOW")

AL GORE, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: When I walked out, the crowd was all expressing emotion, and when I got to the stage -- I mean, it was just the most natural thing in the world to me to express my feelings toward her.

OPRAH WINFREY, HOST: Would you say it was calculated? A lot of people said calculated.

GORE: One of the reporters asked me afterwards, "Were you trying to

(LAUGHTER)
COLMES: Republican George W. Bush scheduled to appear on the show next Tuesday, as he attempts to cut into Gore's substantial lead in the polls among women.

Joining us now from Washington, Democratic strategist Chris Lapetina, Scripps Howard News Service columnist Betsy Hart.

Chris, I just -- I'll prepare you for Sean, who's back, you know, he's full of vigor back from vacation...

HANNITY: Hello.

COLMES: He's going to complain about how, oh, you know, the pandering on Oprah Winfrey.

CHRIS LAPETINA, DEMOCRATIC STRATEGIST: Oh, yeah, I'm ready for him.

COLMES: But George W. Bush is going to do it a week from now, right? Same thing. Trying to get the women's vote.

LAPETINA: Absolutely. Yes, I mean, it's silly to say -- I mean, listen, that's what politics is now. These guys get on these shows and they do the different talk shows and Americans have come to accept it and they take it for what it's worth. It's only people like Sean that get all crazy about it, the Bobby Knight of Fox television.

HANNITY: Let's talk about Sean in the third person as though he's not even here.

COLMES: He'll be here in a moment, by the way.

(CROSSTALK)

COLMES: Go ahead, Betsy.

BETSY HART, SCRIPPS HOWARD NEWS SERVICE: I think the George Bush interview is going to be quite a bit different. I mean, what you saw today...

COLMES: How do you know? You haven't seen it yet.
(CROSSTALK)

HART: Because I think I have seen a little bit of a difference into how these two men have grown...

COLMES: I see, you're spinning it before it happens. Go ahead.

HART: You always accuse me of being prescient, Alan. I hope it's true. But these two men have a very different approach. And what Al Gore was doing is exploiting, I think, emotionalism and feelings and those things that Oprah is so good at, coupled with this whole concept toward women of, "I'll provide for you. I'll take care of you." It used to be that husbands said that, and then the feminists said "Oh, no, no, they can't say that."

COLMES: Oh, Betsy.

HART: And you -- wait a minute.

COLMES: I...

LAPETINA: Are you trying to say he's brain-washing American women?

(CROSSTALK)

HART: Hold on.

LAPETINA: Is this a conspiracy?

HART: Hey, guys. Hold on.

(CROSSTALK)

COLMES: Betsy, I find it remarkable that you are able to tell us what the George W. Bush interview will be like a week from now, how it will be different from the Al Gore interview -- you have already set it up.

HART: Alan, I'm telling what you Al Gore said today, and what he said is, "I will take care of you. I will provide for you," because now the sisterhood has told women, Uncle Sam is supposed to be the one that takes care of you, he's the one man in your life who can say to you, "I will
provide for all of your needs," and that’s what Al Gore was doing.

(CROSSTALK)

COLMES: What about George W.'s prescription drug plan? What about is now talking about, which exceeds what this Republican Congress wants to do? What about that?

HART: Oh, look, oh, believe me, I’m not carrying George Bush’s water. I have some concerns about some of the things that he’s proposing, but I think at least he’s trying to go about things differently and to say, "I’ve got a way that people can better take care of themselves." I wish he would be a little more explicit, particularly when it comes to women. Instead of just talking about tax cuts generally, do it in a way that applies to them, say tax cuts equals time, equals time for you, time for your family.

HANNITY: All right, let me -- Betsy.

HART: There are lots of ways that he can say, "We can do things in Washington to make you more able to take care of your family and to be there for them."

HANNITY: You know, but, Betsy, there is nowhere near the $4 trillion, the biggest expansion of government programs that Gore...

HART: Oh, you’re absolutely right, Sean, absolutely. No, there is no comparison.

HANNITY: Bush's proposals don’t come to 1/3 of what Al Gore -- socialist Al is proposing. So let’s just put that on the table.

(CROSSTALK)

HART: There is no question. You’re absolutely right.

HANNITY: Let me bring this up with Chris about Oprah Winfrey...

LAPETINA: Yes.

HANNITY: You know, here we have Al Gore has to hire a woman to
teach him what it's like to be an alpha male so he can get the female vote, he has to have women tell him what kind of clothes to wear to get the female vote. We have the big kiss. He -- every issue he touched on was female oriented today. And isn't this about manipulation? Isn't this about thinking, "If I just act the way these women want me to act, if I act like -- these are the things the focus groups tell me to do, then I will get their vote"?

LAPETINA: Sean, are you saying -- do you think that women are that feeble-minded that they're going to be taken by little political stunts? Don't you think that Betsy and women like her are smart enough to make their own decisions?

HART: I -- women like me are.

(CROSSTALK)

women who actually are going to vote for this guy because of that kiss? I think when women this year walk into the voting booth, or walk in, you know, to get their voting records, they should be asked, "Are you voting for Al Gore because of the kiss? And if so, forget it."

(CROSSTALK)

HANNITY: Let me ask Chris this question.

LAPETINA: Go ahead.

HANNITY: Chris, do you -- don't you think it ought to be a prerequisite that you know how to be your own man and pick out your own clothes if you want to be the president? Shouldn't that be a prerequisite for the job?

LAPETINA: Don't you think that George W. Bush has the same sort of advisors that Al Gore does?

(CROSSTALK)

HANNITY: No. No. I do not. I don't believe...
LAPETINA: Let me finish for a second, let me finish.
HANNITY: No.
LAPETINA: Do you think -- don't you think that George Bush's advisors told him in the middle of the campaign to now change his strategy and come up with a new slogan, "Real People For Real Results," or whatever it is?
HANNITY: Well, I raised -- you're raising a good point.
LAPETINA: In the middle of the campaign, and not only that, cut off the Republican National Committee...
HANNITY: You mean, sort of like when Al Gore stole Bush's Social Security plan because he knew it was resonating with people? Is that what you're referring to?
(CROSSTALK)
HANNITY: That's what Bush -- that's what Gore did.
LAPETINA: No, but it's fine to criticize Al Gore and say, you know, oh, he uses all these advisors and he uses pollsters and that -- Bush does the exact...
(CROSSTALK)
COLMES: We have to take a break. We know that only Al Gore has advisors. We're going to continue this on the other side of the break.
LAPETINA: Exactly.
COLMES: Stay with us.
(COMMERCIAL BREAK)
HANNITY: (...) we continue now with Chris Lapetina and Betsy Hart.
Chris, I want to ask you a question, you know, Al Gore has this saying now, this phrase as he trashes big business, the oil companies, the pharmaceuticals, on and on, "people not the powerful." Was he standing up for the people when he cast the tie-breaking vote to the
largest tax increase in history that raised the eligibility for Social Security to 67, that raised Social Security taxes? Was he for the people, not the powerful, in that vote?

LAPETINA: Let me talk about the people. The people, under the Clinton-Gore administration, have benefited...

HANNITY: Ah! Ah!

LAPETINA: You’re not one of the 13 million or 14 million people that didn’t have a job that now do have a job. Sean, you’re a television millionaire, so it’s a little different for you.

HANNITY: You must be talking about Colmes.

(CROSSTALK)

HART: None of which has anything to do with the Clinton administration.

(CROSSTALK)

It’s the Republican Congress.

LAPETINA: When you talk about the people -- let me bring up something that people care about, and that’s violence on television.

(CROSSTALK)

HANNITY: No, no, no, Chris, I don’t want -- no, no, no, no, I don’t want violence on television. I asked you a straightforward question, Chris.

(CROSSTALK)

LAPETINA: Go ahead, ask it again, because I felt it was so long...

(CROSSTALK)

HANNITY: You come with your prepared notes. This is simple. He raised -- he says he’s for the people, not the powerful. When he raised the eligibility for Social Security, raised the Gore gasoline tax, and raised the Social Security tax, was that for the people or the powerful? Who got
hurt there?

LAPETINA: I'll tell you why, let me tell you very quickly why it was for the people, because we needed to get rid of the deficit. That was driving up interest rates that most -- affect most Americans, OK?

HANNITY: The people needed that tax increase, all right. There is your answer. That's what I wanted.

Now another question.

(CROSSTALK)

LAPETINA: It was an economic program that no Republicans voted for...

HANNITY: You're right.

LAPETINA: ... and yet -- and it led to the greatest economic expansion in the history of the country.

(CROSSTALK)

HANNITY: All right, here's my next question.

HART: And, Chris, we can largely thank the Republican Congress for that.

HANNITY: For balancing the budget.

HART: But wait a minute, I thought it was amazing, Alan, that he was saying to Oprah Winfrey, "I'm for the people, not the powerful." This is one of the most powerful women in the world.

HANNITY: Exactly.

HART: And for him to say, "I am, in essence, not for you, I'm for the people," what, are we not all Americans? Is he not for all of us together? Because that's what he said in the next sentence, but that's obviously not the case.

HANNITY: All right, Chris, here is my follow-up question.

HART: But wait a minute, I want to talk about...
LAPETINA: What does "Real Results For Real People" mean? What does George Bush's new slogan mean?

HANNITY: Hang on a second, Betsy. Let me get this question out for him.

HART: All right, Alan.

HANNITY: Universal preschool, universal prescription drugs even for millionaires, Chris.

LAPETINA: All right, OK...

HANNITY: He's incremental socialist Al Gore, Hillary Clinton health care he supports, $4 trillion. Is there anything you guys think people are capable of doing for themselves, or is the government going to run every aspect of our lives now?

LAPETINA: At the beginning of the show you had Peggy Noonan on, who came up with the phrase "a thousand points of light." You know, what President Bush's -- one of his "thousand points of light" was? It was Head Start, which is exactly what Al Gore is talking about here.

HANNITY: Answer my question, Chris. Answer the question.

COLMES: The fact of the matter is, Betsy, that Al Gore has big programs -- I mean, rather...

HANNITY: You had it right.

COLMES: ... George W. Bush...

(CROSSTALK)

HANNITY: You had it right.

COLMES: Al Gore does have some big programs, he does.

HART: You got it right. Al Gore...

(CROSSTALK)
COLMES: But so does George W. Bush. George W. Bush has jumped on the prescription drug bandwagon after Al Gore did. He wants to...
(CROSSTALK)
LAPETINA: Of course.
HART: Al Gore's $4 trillion floors anything that George Bush can even come up with in his wildest dreams.
COLMES: Betsy...
HART: But look, I mean...
LAPETINA: Sean, one quick question, one quick question for you. Who talked about reducing the federal debt? Al Gore or George Bush?
HANNITY: Hey, listen...
LAPETINA: And the answer is Al Gore. Bush won't even talk about it.
HANNITY: No, no, no, no, listen. The Congress, the Republicans.
(CROSSTALK)
COLMES: Let me point out something else, Betsy.
HART: Alan, let me just...
COLMES: Let me get this out. We only have a moment left. Look...
LAPETINA: OK.
COLMES: You talked about, or Sean mentioned the biggest tax increase in history, adjusted for dollars, the one in the '80s during the Reagan administration that Bob Dole and the Republicans voted for was bigger. The one that Al Gore...
HART: No, it was actually George Bush's father that gave us the biggest one, Alan.
(CROSSTALK)
COLMES: ... is what is responsible for the -- or '93 -- is what's responsible for the surplus that we have now -- you can credit that fact
to that bill that...

(CROSSTALK)

1994.

LAPETINA: Alan, they're scared of the truth.

HART: But look, when it comes -- hey, when it comes to the issue of taxes, what I want to ask Al Gore is why is it, if people want to keep their own money, Mr. Gore, it's greedy, but if you want to take it from

(CROSSTALK)

COLMES: Betsy, that's a misstatement, take it by them by force. Anybody who agrees with taxation...

HART: If you don't pay your taxes, what do you think happens?

COLMES: Is Al Gore...

HART: You go to jail.

COLMES: Is George W. Bush against taxes?

HART: George W. Bush is for tax cuts. I think...

COLMES: Does he want to do away with taxes? Does he not also want to take tax money by force from the American people, yes or no?

HART: No, of course not.

(CROSSTALK)

COLMES: Can't have a double standard.

(CROSSTALK)

HART: If Al Gore wants to take it, it's compassionate.

HANNITY: Yes, only Al Gore wants all of it.

Thank you both for being with us.

HART: That's right.

LAPETINA: Thank you, guys.

HANNITY: We appreciate it.

HART: You bet. Thank you.
Transcript:

CHRIS MATTHEWS, host: Well, George Bush of Texas can't seem to regain his stride that he had a couple of weeks ago, and his troubles are reflected in the current polls. Here's the latest Newsweek poll. It shows that Al Gore is leading Bush now by 8 points, 49 percent to 41 percent. Ralph Nader has 2 percent; Buchanan, 1 percent.

(Graphic on screen)
White House 2000
Gore 47% Bush 44%
USA Today/Gallup Released September 9, 2000 Margin of Error: +/- 4%

MATTHEWS: Yesterday's Gallup Poll, more problems: Gore was leading Bush by 3 points, 47 percent-44 percent.

(Graphic on screen)
White House 2000
Gore 49% Bush 42%
USA Today/Gallup Released September 11, 2000 Margin of Error:
MATTHEWS: But as we saw earlier today, according to today's Gallup poll, it's now a 7-point lead, jumping up from 3 points to 7 points in just a day.

Joining me right now from Los Angeles is political pollster Frank Luntz. If you had to get into George W. Bush's head right now and give him an idea, if you could tweak him, teach him and train him and fix him, what would you do?

Mr. FRANK LUNTZ (Political Pollster): I would tell him, in a sense, to tear off his jacket, loosen up his tie, come right into the audience, look people straight in the eye and start pointing at them. 'If you believe that you're overtaxed, then you have only one choice. If you believe that education belongs at the local level, then you have only one choice. If you believe that welfare reform was the right thing to do, then you have only one choice.' Voters want passion. They want to see someone who really believes in something. And the problem is, because of shows and polls and things that you've seen over the last three weeks, Bush's passion isn't coming through.

MATTHEWS: Why don't they use this advertising dollar that keeps getting used in these stupid ads with off-camera, weird voices and obnoxious people and these rat ads, whatever they are. Why don't they put him on television to do what you just did and just talk to the people and use all those millions of dollars to talk directly to the people?

Mr. LUNTZ: Well, you know, Chris, you should be getting $10,000 a month for the Bush campaign because that's exactly what they should be doing. Let George Bush speak for himself. When George Bush--and before I got involved in--in all of this, I--I had a chance to take a closer look at the ads and their effectiveness. When Bush looks straight at
cameras, I am to you right now, he performs incredibly.

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

Mr. LUNTZ: But when you put an announcer, that woman with that kind of sarcastic voice...

MATTHEWS: Right.

Mr. LUNTZ: ...you lose the message. Voters want to see exactly what you think, exactly what you believe. They want to hear it from the heart...

MATTHEWS: Right.

Mr. LUNTZ: ...and the soul.

MATTHEWS: Why doesn't he just say--I hate to write his ads for him, but, you know, he--he ought to just say, you know, 'Sure, they can outpromise me. I know they can out--they've been outpromising our party for 100 years. But this--isn't this how we get into trouble with all these government solutions, all these big-spending programs? I can't give you free drugs. Somebody's going to have to pay for them.' You know, why don't they talk like that--the Republicans, instead of this 'me t'--let me ask you the other question. The 'me, too' stuff. On every issue the Democrats raise, Bush says, 'Me, too.'

Mr. LUNTZ: Well, one could argue that that's what the Democrats have done for the last six years against the Republicans. The answer is to take Al Gore's words himself, the words that Al Gore has spoken, about being against big interest and--and special interest and PACs and all that...

MATTHEWS: Right.

Mr. LUNTZ: ...and then show the money that he's taken from them to talk of it--to show Al Gore talking about prescription drug benefits, and then to let viewers know that his plan doesn't even kick in--in its entirety until 2008. It's the hypocrisy.
MATTHEWS: Yeah.

Mr. LUNTZ: But you gotta let Gore speak for himself and let the voters draw the conclusions.

MATTHEWS: You mean Bush.

Mr. LUNTZ: Bush.

MATTHEWS: You know what I think Bush should say? 'Yeah, you get drugs from him, but they aren't free.' I just checked it. It's about $500 a year in premiums you gotta pay. Even under the government's solution--they're proposing. With all that bureaucracy, you still gotta peel off 500 bills a year to get in that program. Why do they keep advertising it as free? Frank, you're great. You agree with me. I love to agree with somebody.

Mr. LUNTZ: Thank you.

MATTHEWS: Joining me right now from Orlando, Florida, the Universal Studios--he's been following the Bush campaign. His name is Howard Fineman. He's with us, and he's with Newsweek, of course. Thank you very much, Howard, for joining us.

HOWARD FINEMAN (Newsweek/NBC News): Hi, Chris.

MATTHEWS: What is going on with this relatively charismatic guy, this debonair, breezy, jaunty fellow of just a month ago? What's going on--Bush?

FINEMAN: Well, one thing that's happening here in Florida, Chris, is that the race which had Bush ahead by 8 mon--8 points a few months ago, now, in the latest Mason-Dixon poll, which came out this afternoon on local television in--in--in Florida, has the race down to 2 points. So this is a dead-even race here in Florida. And I was with Bush this morning. You know, he's had a tough time getting traction day by day. Chris, this was another not good day for George Bush. This morning he
was on TV, didn’t perform well...

MATTHEWS: Let’s–let’s watch that. We’ll all judge.

FINEMAN: Go ahead. OK.

MATTHEWS: And then you can comment.

FINEMAN: OK.

MATTHEWS: Here he is, the--the governor of Texas, talking to Diane Sawyer on "Good Morning America." He’s with Diane Sawyer. Here it is.

(Excerpt from "Good Morning America")

Ms. DIANE SAWYER (Co-host): Would you like to see the ad pulled or changed?

Governor GEORGE W. BUSH (Republican Presidential Candidate): Listen, I...

Ms. SAWYER: No?

Gov. BUSH: Y--you know, I don’t have any idea, Diane. I--I’m telling you, I don’t think there’s a plot to try to put subliminal messages in the people’s minds. The most important thing is to point up the differences between what I believe and what the vice president believes when it comes to important issues, like prescription drugs.

(End of excerpt)

MATTHEWS: ...about the rat subliminal ad. Here he is talking this morning about a question--answering a question about pop culture. I should warn you he’s being asked here, very simply, about this very popular NBC show called "Friends." Now I don’t watch it; it’s for younger people. But he seemed to be unaware that it was a television show. Here he is.

(Excerpt from "Good Morning America")

Ms. SAWYER: Senator Lieberman has said that he thinks that "Friends" is too racy to be running at the early hour it's running. It
should be moved to later in the evening. Do you think it’s too racy?

Gov. BUSH: The movie "Friends"?

Ms. SAWYER: The--the sitcom "Friends."

Gov. BUSH: I mean the TV show "Friends"?

Ms. SAWYER: The TV show.

Gov. BUSH: Well, I haven't seen it. It's all right--I'm--I--I haven't had much time to be watching "Friends." I think that's probably pretty much up to the parents to make that decision. They've got an off/on button on TV.

(End of excerpt)

MATTHEWS: Howard, is being out of it in terms of pop culture a negative, like--like his father when he didn't know what a scanner was in the Safeway's checkout counter? Is it that bad?

FINEMAN: Well, Chris, I don't think that's his big problem. I think--although he has talked about pop culture.

MATTHEWS: We're looking at that now.

FINEMAN: You know, what--what matters here is whether he seems up for the ball game. This morning he was asked, on the tarmac outside the airplane here in Orlando, about that ad that was on. He--he was not much better prepared than he was on ABC. All the people in the press corps were having a great time listening and--to him try to pronounce the word 'subliminal.'

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

FINEMAN: I think it came out on the tarmac as subliminable or something like that.

MATTHEWS: Yeah. Well, you know, everybody has w--problems with some words, you know.

FINEMAN: Exa--exactly. But the--but the--the thing is that--you
know, the question is: Is he up for the ball game? I don't think it matters whether he knows about "Friends" or not. I think it matters if he's able to make the arguments that Frank was talking about before and that you were talking about. George W. Bush is making a big argument. He's saying that, 'The era of big government really is over and that it's a matter of free markets and willing hearts to change the course of America.' If he really believes that, he's got to make a very detailed, very passionate and substantive case on that. And question's whether he's up to it.

MATTHEWS: You know, ever since the days of Jack Kennedy, we know that politicians prepare, with index cards, questions they expect to be asked by the press or in a debate.

FINEMAN: Right.

MATTHEWS: Here he is being asked--this is Governor Bush this morning being asked by Diane Sawyer, not a surprising question--we knew it was coming--that his running mate, Dick Cheney, had not voted in 14 of the last 16 local and state elections in Texas, including a primary--this primary this past spring, where Bush was on the ballot against McCain. Here's his response. It's not really an answer; it's a response.

(Excerpt from "Good Morning America")

Gov. BUSH: Well, I wish he would have voted in the primary. I did get about 98 percent of the vote, nevertheless. No, Dick's going to be a great vice president. I know they're trying to dig into all kinds of things about his past...

Ms. SAWYER: But is that a good model for kids?

Gov. BUSH: Well, of course, you know, people will need to participate in the electoral process. I--but Dick Cheney is going to be a great vice
president. I'm glad I picked him. He is a strong addition to the ticket.

(End of excerpt)

MATTHEWS: This is blocking and tackling; this is basic stuff. Any politician uses the other guy's non-voting record against him. Didn't he know this question was coming from Diane Sawyer this morning?

FINEMAN: Well...

MATTHEWS: And why didn't he have an answer, which is--I don't know if there is an answer why your guy doesn't vote if he wants to be vice president.

FINEMAN: Well, Chris, I think he should have. Listen, there are fewer than 60 days left. Every news cycle, every hour matters in terms of getting your message out. The Gore campaign is up and running with a very intense, very shrewd and very well-focused, professional campaign. George Bush has a few loyal lieutenants around him who are excellent, but who seem, at this moment, to be overwhelmed.

I mean, the sense I got of the Bush campaign today, watching him this morning here in Orlando, is a campaign that's back on its heels; that is not able to take control of the news cycles; that is not able to get its message out. He had a--a town meeting here this morning, a one-on-one, about health care--about his plan for prescription drugs and--and health care. But was he able to get that message out? Not with this press corps, which was interest in whether he said--interested in whether he said subliminal or subliminal...

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

FINEMAN: ...interested in the ad, interested in all those things. He's got to get control of the campaign the way he hasn't right now.

MATTHEWS: And that just creates more bad blood because when you have wise guys in the press corps making fun of his pronunciation...
FINEMAN: Right.

MATTHEWS: ...not you, Howard, but people...

FINEMAN: Yeah.

MATTHEWS: ...that make fun and they giggle about it--and everybody makes...

FINEMAN: Right.

MATTHEWS: ...mistakes like that--that just gets him more angry at the press and creates more bad blood, and it's harder to get anything across.

FINEMAN: Well, it creates a distraction, Chris. What he has to do--as I say, he's making a very big and very fundamental argument here. As I say, free markets and willing hearts as opposed to big government and the courts. If he's going to make that argument against Al Gore, at a time of relative peace and prosperity, then he's got to make it with passion, he's got to make it in detail, and he's got to make it in a way that he cares.

You know, George W. Bush has a very nice quality, which is that he doesn't seem to be overly ambitious. I think that's a very wonderful quality in the next president of the United States. But there's one thing to be laid back, and it's another thing to seem that you care. He's got to se--seem like he cares and seem like he cares with great detail and great passion.

MATTHEWS: Are they afraid that they're going into the Olympics in the next two weeks, with a hiatus in the campaign, with "Today" show and other shows not really covering politics, mainly covering the Olympics? We'll be off. You know, a lot of these people are going to be up...

FINEMAN: Right.
MATTHEWS: ...covering the campaigns, like I'm going to be out there. Do you think that they fear that there's going to be, like, a freeze of this 7-point lag? They're--if they're 7 points off in th--and 10 points in your poll, in Newsweek, are they afraid it's going to lock in and they're going to find themselves, in early October, coming into the last stretch of the campaign back 7 to 10 points?

FINEMAN: Well, Chris, if they aren't afraid, they should be afraid. The paradox and the irony here is that a few weeks ago, George W. Bush was riding high the front-runner.

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

FINEMAN: Now he's clearly the underdog. He's the one who needs the debates. He should have tr--trapped Al Gore into agreeing to those debates in October, plus the debates with Tim Russert and Larry King and so forth, so he could establish his credibility and try to change the dynamics of this now, before we go into the dark tunnel of the Olympics. He, apparently, is not going to be able to do that. The first negotiations are on Thursday.

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

FINEMAN: There aren't going to be debates until October.

MATTHEWS: Can he prepare for a big-time debate with Al Gore, based upon what you've seen in the last couple of weeks’ performances? Is he up to preparing, to prepping, to win that debate?

FINEMAN: I think he is up to preparing, but they clearly would have liked a few preliminary games, they would have liked a few exhibition games before the big show in October.

MATTHEWS: Right.

FINEMAN: George W. Bush has the ability to get up for the big game, but he's not going to be able to do that until the first week of October.
MATTHEWS: Hey, Howard Fineman, thanks for joining us. Up next...
FINEMAN: Sure, Chris.
ST. LOUIS - A platter of cheese in hand, Karen Hughes rushed to the back of the campaign plane yesterday on a mission for her boss, Governor George W. Bush.

"Cheese, anyone? Cheese?" she offered, laughing loudly. To a newcomer baffled to see the senior aide playing flight attendant, Hughes explained: "It's a metaphor for the bizarre nature of the story today."

The story was about rats - the word superimposed onto a frame of a negative television ad about Vice President Al Gore. But the visit by Hughes, and her overtures to a wary press corps, were noteworthy themselves, suggesting the campaign is trying to counter some harsh vibes it has begun to give off.

Until recently, Bush was the undisputed "nice-guy" candidate, the one blessed with natural affability and charm. Even Al Gore worried about the Texas friendliness of his opponent, warning in his convention speech that the election is "not a popularity contest."

Since the end of the conventions, however, as Gore has pulled even or ahead in national polls, Bush has appeared to soften his claim to the popularity prize, through a series of carefully planned negative tactics and accidental missteps. Although some Republicans believe Bush needs to become more hard-nosed to win, it is unclear whether he can do so and still capitalize on his personality, arguably his greatest asset.

In the last three weeks, Bush has all but called Gore a liar on the stump, then approved two personal attack ads to air in a rotation of 21
states. Last week, he accidentally called a reporter a vulgar name before an open microphone, then refused to apologize.

Yesterday, Bush came under fire for what appeared to be another negative move: an ad that ostensibly criticized Gore's prescription drug plan, but subliminally flashed the word "rats" on the screen. Bush insisted that, too, was a mistake, caused by a computer editing glitch, but he refused to condemn the designer who made it, and implied that, while the tactic was reprehensible, there was nothing really wrong with his own ad.

"One frame out of 900 hardly in my judgment makes a conspiracy," Bush said. "I am convinced this is not intentional. We don't need to play, you know, cute politics."

Bush said he would not pull the ad, which has been running for more than two weeks, because it was due to end its rotation anyway. Asked whether Alex Castellanos, the designer of the ad, should continue to produce spots for the campaign, Bush said: "Yeah, as far as I'm concerned."

News of the 'Rats' message first broke on the Fox News Channel weeks ago, but only yesterday, when it was printed on the front page of the New York Times, did it become an issue for Bush. Although he reviewed an e-mailed version of the ad and approved it, the Texas governor said he was unaware of the presence of the word "rats" until yesterday.

The Federal Communications Commission developed a policy in 1974 recommending against using subliminal advertising. It has not investigated the Bush ad because it has not received any complaints, officials said.

Like Bush, several Republicans brushed the contretemps over the ad.
aside as a trivial distraction. But others were more critical, regretting that Bush had failed to convey his message of the day, catastrophic health care.

"This was silly, and you can't make silly mistakes in a presidential campaign in September. Somebody ought to have the grace to resign," said Scott Reed, a Republican strategist who was Bob Dole's campaign manager in 1996. "One of Bush's strongest assets is his upbeat, optimistic message. This silly business undercuts that."

Bush has been struggling to find "momentum" - an intangible force that suggests a combination of good poll numbers, positive media coverage and successful campaign events - for at least the last week and a half. After stumbling over his tax plan in late August, Bush kicked off the post-Labor Day campaign with an incident that overshadowed his policies for days: The insult of Adam Clymer, a New York Times reporter, in front of an open microphone.

That incident, which was clearly accidental, came on the heels of two negative ads about Gore that Bush approved. The first, which shows a clip of Gore at a Buddhist temple fund-raiser and mocks his claim to have invented the Internet, was described by Bush as "tongue-in-cheek."

The second, which barely saw the air but was promoted heavily by the campaign, ridiculed Gore for agreeing to debate "anytime, anywhere," then declining a last-minute invitation to appear on NBC's "Meet the Press."

But the ads received harsh criticism from Republicans, and they have not had any noticeable impact in the polls, which continue to show the two candidates in a dead heat. At the same time, a Time/CNN poll released this week showed more voters believed Bush was running a negative campaign than Gore.
"It has not been a good two-week period for them," said Darrell West, a political science professor at Brown University. "I think people are taking another look at Bush, because you have this example of outrageous advertising, you have the Adam Clymer comment, and you have the Bush people pulling one of their attack ads."

He continued: "Over the last two weeks, there have been so many distractions that Bush has been very ineffective at getting his message out."
Handgun Control Inc., the gun control advocacy group, has begun running this 30-second advertisement in seven cities, including Austin, Tex.; Columbus, Ohio; Lansing, Mich.; Sacramento and Washington. The group says it is spending several thousand dollars to buy air time, but Republican officials assert that the amount is closer to $100,000.

PRODUCER -- MacWilliams, Cosgrove, Smith, Robinson of Washington.

ON THE SCREEN -- A still photo of Gov. George W. Bush of Texas, closing in tightly on his left eye. Cut to a shot in which a man is shown tucking a large silver pistol under his belt buckle. Scenes of a rustic church and children riding on a carousel dramatically break apart, like a smashed mirror, to reveal a grainy video clip of Kayne Robinson, first vice president of the National Rifle Association, talking emphatically to an audience of N.R.A. members. Concludes with a shot of the White House.

THE SCRIPT -- Male announcer: "George Bush says if you want to know what he'll do as president, take a look at his record." Female announcer: "As governor of Texas, Bush signed the law that allows carrying concealed handguns for the first time in 125 years." Male announcer: "And he signed the law that allows carrying those concealed handguns in churches, nursing homes, even amusement parks." Female announcer: "No wonder the N.R.A. says": (voice of Mr. Robinson) "If we
win, we’ll have a president” (here Mr. Robinson’s words are spliced to bring two sentence fragments together) "where we work out of their office." Female announcer: "Tell Governor Bush: The White House is our house." Male announcer: "And it shouldn’t belong to the N.R.A."

ACCURACY -- It is true that Mr. Bush has often sided with the National Rifle Association in legislative battles in his more than five years as governor. Over the objections of gun control advocates, he signed legislation allowing people to carry concealed handguns, allowing handguns to be taken into churches and prohibiting local governments from suing gun manufacturers. The N.R.A.’s executive vice president, Wayne LaPierre, also recently helped raise at least $250,000 at a major Republican Party fund-raiser honoring Mr. Bush. But Mr. Bush has at times tried to distance himself from the organization, by supporting mandatory trigger locks for new handguns and criticizing Mr. LaPierre for asserting that President Clinton had tolerated a certain level of gun violence for political reasons.

SCORECARD -- By trying to depict Mr. Bush as a pawn of the N.R.A., the advertisement seeks to make him seem like an extremist on gun control issues, because the N.R.A. is widely perceived as intransigently opposed to any restrictions on gun ownership. Also, it suggests that the governor is not his own man, that he is beholden to powerful right-wing interest groups. The advertisement is not being shown widely enough to affect many voters directly, but Handgun Control is clearly hoping that journalists in Washington and Texas will use it to write critical stories about Mr. Bush. The group is also running the spot in several cities with hotly contested Congressional races in which gun control may become an important issue, including Lansing and Columbus.
New Ad Chides Bush on Environment: Sierra Club Criticizes Texas Governor's Record, but his Campaign Cites Improvements During his Tenure

By DENNIS CHAPTMAN

Madison -- The Sierra Club is targeting Wisconsin and three other Midwestern states with a TV ad criticizing Republican presidential hopeful George W. Bush's environmental record as Texas governor.

The 30-second ad, which also urges Bush to oppose federal legislation that it says would weaken the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act, will run this week in Milwaukee, St. Louis, Detroit and Lansing, Mich., and next week in Ohio.

About $250,000 will be spent in the four states on ads that aim to put environmental issues front and center in the months before November's election.

"We have three goals," said Daniel J. Weiss, national political director for the Sierra Club. "We want to make the environment part of the debate in Wisconsin. We want to educate the public about George W. Bush's dismal environmental record. And we want to lobby Bush to oppose weakening the Clean Air and Water Acts."

The Bush campaign, however, countered that major strides have been made in improving Texas' environment during the governor's tenure.

"They ought to be praising Governor Bush for improving air and
water quality instead of helping Al Gore pollute the governor’s record,” said spokesman Scott McClellan, at Bush’s Austin, Texas, campaign headquarters.

McClellan blasted the spots as "third-party attack ads" that distort Bush’s record.

"Governor Bush has a proven record of trying to safeguard the environment," McClellan said.

The ads feature a suburban Houston mother and an angler from rural Texas who voice concerns about the condition of the state's air and water quality.

"We have too many children on breathing machines, too many people with asthma. We're in a crisis situation," Tamara Maschino, a mother from Seabrook, Texas, says in the ad.

Ed Parten, a fisherman from Kingwood, Texas, complains in the ad about water pollution, saying: "All of our lakes, all have water quality problems."

But the Bush campaign notes that Texas air pollution emissions are down 11% under Bush. It also said that 96% of Texas drinking water meets public drinking water standards, up from 88% in 1995.

And, McClellan said, Bush last year fought for a $58 million funding increase for water quality and supply programs. In addition, he said, Texas became only the third state in the nation to require older electric generating plants to significantly reduce emissions.

But the Sierra Club noted Texas figures that show that in the state's top eight urban areas there were 508 eight-hour ozone violations between 1990 and 1994, and 679 from 1995 to 1999, a 34% increase.

And the group cites a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency report that found that Texas continues to rank third in the nation for
discharges of industrial pollutants into lakes and rivers.

The Sierra Club is beginning the campaign well in advance of the November election, hoping to give environmental issues a higher profile in the months before voters go to the polls.

"We wanted to go up early, rather than wait until October, when the airwaves are flooded," Weiss said.

Darrin Schmitz, executive director of Bush's Wisconsin campaign, called the ads "political pollution."

"We see it as a San Francisco-based group that prefers we not drive cars and instead live off of flower power," Schmitz said. "The voters will see through this."

The Sierra Club has targeted the four Midwestern states because of their significance as key battlegrounds in the November election, Weiss said.

"All of these states will be key, and Governor Bush may be more sensitive to hearing people's views on these issues," said Weiss.
The Ad Campaign: A Young Bush Is the Star In Ads Set for New York

By PETER MARKS

George Bush will be featured in a new commercial that is to run in New York on Sunday. No, not that George Bush, and not the other one, either. This is George P. Bush, the 23-year-old nephew of the presumptive Republican candidate and a budding star of the Bush campaign.

The new spot, produced in Spanish and in English -- George P. is fluent in both, campaign advisers say -- is being released to coincide with the staging on Sunday of the Puerto Rican Day Parade in Manhattan, in which the younger Mr. Bush is also scheduled to participate.

In the commercial, the young man, the son of the candidate's brother Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida and his Mexican-born wife, Columba, talks about how his uncle is reaching out to voters of diverse backgrounds, Bush strategists say. But they add that his good looks could also help draw in younger voters.

"He's able to deliver a message in a very natural way, and is, in fact, not only a handsome young man, but also totally Latino-looking and as proficient in Spanish as he is in English," said Lionel Sosa, a San Antonio advertising man and an architect of Gov. George W. Bush’s marketing campaign directed at Hispanic voters.

Republicans are making an aggressive pitch this year for the Hispanic vote, long seen as reliably Democratic, in part because Mr. Bush has been successful in winning Spanish-speaking voters in Texas. In Fresno, Calif., several weeks ago, the Republican National Committee
spent about $150,000 on a test run of a commercial intended to attract voters of Latin American descent.

Advertising time in New York for the English-language spot was bought during WNBC’s coverage of the parade, and the Spanish-language version will be broadcast on the Telemundo network, Mr. Sosa said.

He added that he recognized the telegenic potential of George P., who is to begin law school in the fall, when he saw him work the crowd at a meeting with farm workers in San Bernardino, Calif.

People there were so taken with him, Mr. Sosa said, "they forgot he was a Republican."
Los Angeles Times
June 10, 2000; Page 15

**GOP to Launch Ads for Bush to Parry Democrats’ Spots**
(Excerpts)
By JEFF LEEDS

Responding to the Democratic Party’s multimillion-dollar advertising blitz, Republican Party leaders and the George W. Bush campaign said Friday they would soon hit the airwaves with their own ads praising the Texas governor.

Republican National Committee officials said they would start the ad campaign with a 60-second spot trumpeting Bush's plan to partially privatize Social Security.

GOP buyers were purchasing air time in the same 15 states where a Democratic ad featuring Gore discussing prescription drug prices started running Thursday. Republican officials said the ad also would air in two states where the Gore spot is not, Arkansas and Maine.

Republicans spent an estimated $2.2 million on air time for the spot, which is set to run Monday through June 18 in several media markets surveyed by The Times.

The RNC spot starts by trying to blunt Gore’s bid to seize credit for the nation’s economic growth, as an announcer declares: "With our nation at peace and more prosperous than ever, now is the time to find real solutions to America’s problems. George Bush knows that to keep our commitment to seniors, we must strengthen and improve Social Security now."

Bush has proposed allowing Social Security recipients to invest some of their money in the stock market. Gore has derided the plan as risky,
warning that some people will lose the benefits if they invest the money poorly.

(...) On a second front Friday, the Bush campaign worked to cut into Gore's support, officially unveiling its first ads of the general election. The four 30-second clips spotlight the Texas governor's nephew, George P. Bush, whom the campaign intends to use to woo younger and Latino voters.

The son of Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and his Mexican American wife, Columba, speaks fluent Spanish and has campaigned for his uncle in New Hampshire and California.

The telegenic 24-year-old speaks only in Spanish in one ad, only English in another, and in two others he switches between languages, an increasingly common technique in commercial advertising targeting young Latinos.

To be sure, the marketing of the younger Bush is a message itself--putting a Latino face front-and-center is designed to make the campaign appear inclusive. Bush's campaign has already cut several other spots featuring him.

In two of the spots, the nephew introduces himself as "a young Latino in the U.S. and very proud of my bloodline." Not until the end of the spot does he reveal that he has an uncle running for president. He ends by saying, "His name? The same as mine. George Bush."

Lionel Sosa, one of the governor's media consultants, said the "surprise" of the youth's identity will "help carry the message. . . . We just want people to see this young man and see how sincerely he believes in his family."

In the two Spanish-English spots, Bush speaks over a dance beat
while the camera quickly shifts from color images to grainy black-and-white, sometimes at sharp angles, in a style common to MTV.

In one spot, the nephew says his uncle will be "un gran presidente. That is the reason, esta es la razon, why I will vote for him."

Bush advisors said the ad would air only in the New York television market. It will run during television coverage of Sunday's Puerto Rican Day parade in Manhattan. The nephew is scheduled to march in the event.

The ad also bolsters the GOP's effort to lure Latino voters, long viewed as a Democratic-leaning bloc. About two months ago, the RNC aired an ad in Fresno in which a Latina asks voters to keep an "open mind" about voting for GOP.

"It's going to be extremely important that we let every Latino know the governor wants their support," Sosa said. "George P. Bush is a good messenger to carry that message."
The Republican and Democratic National Committees are on the air this weekend with issue advertisements on behalf of Gov. George W. Bush of Texas and Vice President Al Gore. The spots are running in 17 states, including crucial ones like Illinois, Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

**The Republican Spot**

**PRODUCER -- Cold Harbor Films**

**ON THE SCREEN --** In the opening scenes, greeting-card images of America -- an orange sunrise, a windmill on a wheat field -- melt into one another. Cut to a quick succession of shots of Mr. Bush mixing with voters and then to a series of portraits of average citizens.

**SCRIPT --** Announcer: "With our nation at peace and more prosperous than ever, now is the time to find real solutions to America’s problems. George Bush knows that to keep our commitment to seniors we must strengthen and improve Social Security now, or the retirement of the baby boom generation will push it near bankruptcy. He's proposing a bipartisan plan to strengthen and improve Social Security. The Bush plan guarantees everyone at or near retirement every dollar of their benefits. No cuts in Social Security. You paid into it, it’s your money and it will be there for you. And the Bush plan gives younger workers a choice to invest a small part of their Social Security in sound investments they control for higher returns. Learn more about George **
Bush's voluntary plan for personal Social Security retirement accounts. The Bush blueprint: Better for seniors today, better for all of us tomorrow.

ACCURACY -- With aging baby boomers inching ever closer to eligibility for retirement benefits, shoring up Social Security has become a signature issue of the presidential campaign. The party's 60-second commercial highlights Mr. Bush's plans for a partial privatization of the system, allowing workers to invest part of their payroll taxes as they see fit. Vice President Al Gore has been a fierce critic of the idea, arguing that the less financially savvy could fall prey to foolhardy investment schemes.

SCORECARD -- A direct appeal to Mr. Bush's own generation. While polls show that older people are wary of privatization plans for their retirement money, younger voters are more amenable to the idea. The spot is also an emblem of the Bush marketing style: no scare tactics, just lots of postcard panoramas and loving snaps of the candidate wading into crowds. As such, it is indistinguishable from Mr. Bush's own commercials.

The Democratic Spot

PRODUCER -- Victory 2000

ON THE SCREEN -- In 30 seconds, with a musical underscoring but no voice-over, a Gore family album, including black-and-white pictures of Mr. Gore as a boy with his father, Senator Albert Gore Sr., and shots of the candidate with his wife, Tipper, and their children. Cut to a graphic that says, "The Gore plan: promote responsible fatherhood," and shots of other fathers and children.

SCRIPT -- (graphics only) Don't ever doubt the impact that fathers have on children. Children with strong fathers learn trust. That they're
wanted, they have value. Boys learn from their fathers how to be fathers. I know I did -- Al Gore.

ACCURACY -- Yes, that is Mr. Gore's family.

SCORECARD -- The commercial, pegged to Father's Day, is serenely composed, and more of a traditional biographical spot than an issue advertisement. The reference to Mr. Gore's plan to encourage fathers to live up to their obligations comes from a proposal he recently outlined that would provide financial bonuses to states that did the most to crack down on deadbeat fathers. But that is almost subtext in this spot, which is essentially a testimonial to a candidate's family values.
Washington -- The battle for America's burgeoning Hispanic vote is on, and in some unexpected places.

Take Wisconsin.

In ads launched last week, Democrat Al Gore, speaking Spanish throughout, vows to protect "el Seguro Social (Social Security) y el Medicare."

Aired on Spanish-language TV, the spots are running in only five markets, including Albuquerque (nearly 40% Hispanic), Chicago (roughly 900,000 Hispanics) and metropolitan Milwaukee, whose Hispanic population barely topped 60,000 in the 1990 census.

Wisconsin, with its 11 electoral votes, is only 2.6% Hispanic. And Milwaukee's Latino vote, due to its small size, youth and historically low turnout, represents an even tinier slice of the state's voting pie.

So why is it part of a national Democratic ad strategy?

"We recognize there are emerging Latino communities all over the Midwest, including Milwaukee. . . . We think they will make a difference," said Dagoberto Vega, a spokesman for the Democratic National Committee, which is running the ads.

"In a way, it doesn't surprise me, because this campaign has got to be as competitive as possible. These voters represent what a company would call an untapped market," said Democratic state lawmaker Pedro Colon, whose near-south side Milwaukee district has Wisconsin's largest
concentration of Hispanics.  

"It says two things to me," said House Democrat Tom Barrett of Milwaukee. "One, it says the price for running commercials on Hispanic television in Milwaukee is pretty affordable. Second, it shows you how key the state of Wisconsin is, that they're willing to put the resources in a niche here."

Republican Gov. Tommy Thompson's take on the Gore ads?  
"It shows he's in trouble with that constituency. Otherwise he wouldn't do it," he said.

Bush Does Well  
Nationally, Gore is leading Republican George W. Bush among Hispanic voters, but by smaller margins than Democrats traditionally enjoy.

In a bipartisan poll by Voter.com released Thursday, Gore led among Hispanics 53% to 41%. But Bush, who speaks some Spanish and has wooed Latino voters in Texas, is doing well just to be close. No one suggests Latino voters are monolithic.

"He is performing better than any Republican has performed among Hispanic voters," GOP pollster Ed Goeas says of Bush.

Darrin Schmitz, director of the Republicans' coordinated campaign effort in Wisconsin, predicted that Bush would do well with Hispanics in the state, because his relationship with Latinos in Texas "resonates outside of his home state." Bush won around 40% of the Hispanic vote when he was re-elected governor of Texas in 1998. "We don't think that's really a number to be proud of," said the Democrats' Vega.

Hispanics made up about 5% of the U.S. electorate in 1996, and 72% voted for Clinton, according to exit polls. But because of the Electoral College system, Hispanic voters -- like any other group -- only
matter on a state-by-state basis. And that fact had led some analysts to question whether Hispanics are a factor in the 2000 presidential race.

Of the four states with the largest Hispanic populations, Gore is widely expected to win California and New York, and Bush is a lock in Texas. Bush is favored in Florida, though Democrats believe they have a chance there.

Meanwhile, many of the most competitive states have relatively small Hispanic populations: Michigan (2.7%), Ohio (1.6%), Pennsylvania (2.6%), Missouri (1.6%).

There are exceptions. Illinois is 10% Hispanic, New Jersey is more than 12%, and New Mexico is 40%. All are considered battlegrounds.

Key States Targeted

The new Democratic ad campaign is clearly targeted to states important to Democrats. The spots are running in two Florida cities (Orlando and Tampa) as well as Chicago, Albuquerque and Milwaukee.

Of those, metropolitan Milwaukee has the smallest Hispanic population in both percentage terms (6%) and raw numbers (60,340 in the 1990 census, although no doubt much higher today).

Among states, Wisconsin ranks 32nd in the proportion of Hispanics who live there. But the state's Hispanic population, an estimated 134,000 in 1998, is up 44% since 1990. Perhaps more important, Wisconsin is considered a "must-win" for Gore. It's a state that has voted Democratic in the last three presidential elections, but is too competitive to take for granted. In that sense, even small voting segments grow in importance.

"This is concrete proof this is a battleground state," said Wisconsin Democratic chair Terri Spring.

But how many votes the new ads are likely to sway is another
question. Colon is gratified by the ad campaign and argues that it's smart politics.

But he questions one thing about the media buy. The Democrats are airing their ads on the Univision network run by former Clinton cabinet member Henry Cisneros.

In Milwaukee, Univision is now available only on cable, since it was replaced on Channel 46 last November with Telemundo, the nation's number two Spanish language network. Colon, who doesn't subscribe to cable, says most of his constituents watch Channel 46.

"I don't know how effective it's going to be, due to the fact that it's on cable," he said of the ads. "They really need to get on Telemundo."
The Democratic National Committee's new television commercial being broadcast in 17 battleground states shows Vice President Al Gore saying that he supports an amendment to the Constitution to protect the rights of crime victims.

PRODUCER -- Democratic Victory 2000

ON THE SCREEN -- Pictures of Mr. Gore addressing a town meeting and talking to police officers. Near the end, there is a picture of people who appear to be unhappy crime victims with a police officer.

THE SCRIPT -- Mr. Gore: "Accused criminals have all kinds of rights. But the victims of crimes do not have rights that are always protected and guaranteed. That's why I'm for a constitutional amendment to protect victims' rights. So that for example, if somebody has been a crime victim and the person who committed that crime is about to be released, they ought to be notified. If there's a trial, they ought to have a right to speak to the jury. The people who are hurt by crime need to be heard."

ACCURACY -- Mr. Gore does support a constitutional amendment, as does Gov. George W. Bush of Texas, the presumptive Republican nominee. Thirty-two states have laws providing victims varying rights to be heard, though usually at the time of sentencing and not when a jury is considering guilt or innocence. President Clinton called in general terms for a constitutional amendment to protect victims' rights in 1996, but his administration opposed some versions of such an amendment in
Congress. One version came to the Senate floor in April, but it was withdrawn after it became clear that objections to putting such a narrow amendment in the Constitution would keep it from being passed.

SCORECARD -- The advertisement portrays Mr. Gore as a forceful defender of crime victims and as an enthusiast for the recent tendency to propose constitutional amendments to solve a variety of problems. While a detailed explanation of an amendment is not possible in a 30-second spot, one is not supplied on Mr. Gore's Web site, either. His office said there was no text of a proposed amendment.
Resuming its advertising campaign on behalf of Gov. George W. Bush of Texas after a brief hiatus, the Republican National Committee has begun running a 30-second commercial reiterating Mr. Bush's broad goals for education. For the new spot, California, Nevada and New Hampshire have been added to 17 other states, from the Pacific Northwest to New England, where the Republicans have been buying commercial time.

PRODUCER -- Alex Castellanos

ON THE SCREEN -- Mr. Bush, in an open-necked shirt, speaks directly into the camera. His voice and that of an announcer provide the narrative for a montage of portraits of schoolchildren that includes shots of Mr. Bush mingling with students in classrooms and at school functions.

SCRIPT -- Mr. Bush: If we really want to make sure no child gets left behind in America, we need the courage to raise standards in our schools. We need more accountability and more discipline. And we need to stop promoting failing children to the next grade and giving up on them.

Announcer: George Bush raised standards. Tests scores soared. Texas leads the country in academic improvement.

Mr. Bush: It's easy just to spend more. Let's start by expecting more.

Announcer: Learn more about the Bush blueprint for accountability, high standards and local control.
ACCURACY -- Raising educational standards was one of the first issues the governor staked out during the primaries, and he has augmented his advocacy with a series of proposals to increase federal education spending, including a $2.3 billion plan to strengthen math and science education and $2.9 billion to upgrade teacher training. The reference to improvements in standards and pupil performance in Texas is based partly on the results of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills test. The campaign says that average scores have improved in each of the last four years and that the percentage of minority students who have passed the test rose to 69 percent in 1999 from 38 percent in 1994. The Gore campaign, however, challenged Mr. Bush's record, contending that Texas's average SAT scores remain among the lowest in the country and that some children's rights groups rank the state near the bottom as a place to raise a family.

SCORECARD -- This issue advertisement, paid for in part with the soft money donated to the parties in unrestricted amounts, is supposed to refrain from electioneering. But like all of the spots that the Democratic and Republican parties are running this year, it does not try to disguise its intention to convince people to vote for Mr. Bush. Like many of the advertisements produced by the Bush campaign, the party's commercial spotlights the affable candidate, espousing the values he has labeled compassionate conservatism. The script is filled with words like "courage," "discipline" and "standards," all meant to convey a highly moral core to a benevolent policy.
AUSTIN - Three television ads designed to portray Republican George W. Bush as a future president who can unite Americans, maintain prosperity and make the nation proud to "look at the White House" began airing Thursday in four key battleground states. The commercials avoid any mention of Bush's expected general election opponent, Democratic Vice President Al Gore. The ads also do not specifically outline any of Bush's positions on issues. Instead they create a mood through rhetorical questions such as, "Shouldn't our grandkids find Social Security secure?" Bush spokesman Ari Fleischer said the commercials are meant to outline the framework of the campaign. "These ads define what the issues are," Fleischer said. "When was the last time you saw a Republican candidate himself introduce the issue of Social Security?"

The commercials are running in Florida, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Washington state. Fleischer declined to say how much the campaign is spending on the commercials, other than to say "it's a heavy buy." He described each of the states as key battleground states, including Florida, where Bush's brother, Jeb, is governor. "Florida has been a close state in the past. We're going to win Florida, but the governor is going to run hard everywhere," Fleischer said. The ads are being paid for with money raised by the Bush for President campaign, and they are likely to be the last the campaign runs before it is eligible for federal funding after the Republican National Convention. Bush speaks directly to voters in
one of the commercials, saying: "It's not always popular to say, 'Our children can't read,' or 'Social Security needs improving,' or 'We have a budget surplus and a deficit of values,' but those are the right things to say. "And the right way to make America better for everyone is to be bold and decisive. To unite instead of divide. Now is the time to do hard things." Gore's campaign quickly put out a "reality check," criticizing Bush's ads. "All three of George W. Bush's new ads focus on priorities and leadership, but Bush has failed voters on both," the Gore campaign statement said. The Gore campaign said Bush put tax cuts ahead of health care for children and said he is "pushing reckless tax cuts" in his presidential campaign.
The Ad Campaign: Bush Is Chided on 2 Issues

By JAMES DAO

The Democratic Party released two new 15-second television commercials yesterday timed to the opening of the Republican National Convention that attack the Texas record of Gov. George W. Bush, the Republican's presumed presidential nominee, on health care and the environment.


ON THE SCREEN -- In the commercial on health care, a map of Texas with a bandage slung around the Panhandle appears. In the commercial on the environment, the same map is shown, only with fumes billowing from the Panhandle as if from an industrial smokestack. Both close with the words, "For the facts, visit www.texasunderbush.com."

THE SCRIPT -- In one spot, the narrator reads: "Tonight in Philadelphia, you'll hear a lot about 'leaving no child behind.' Meanwhile, back in Texas, George W. Bush opposed health coverage for 200,000 more children. The state ranked second to last in children with health insurance. Get the facts." In the other spot, the narrator reads: "Tonight in Philadelphia, you won't hear a lot about 'the environment.' Maybe that's because back in Texas, George W. Bush appointed a chemical company lobbyist to enforce the environmental laws. Houston is now the smog capital of the U.S. Get the facts."

ACCURACY -- On health care, it is true that Mr. Bush fought for a plan in 1999 that would have excluded 200,000 of the more than
400,000 children eligible for the federal Children's Health Insurance Program. But the Legislature insisted on the more expansive plan, and Mr. Bush signed the bill. It is also widely accepted that Texas has more uninsured children than any state other than Arizona. The Bush campaign contends that the number of uninsured children is increasing four times faster nationwide than in Texas. On the environment, Mr. Bush's first appointee to the Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission was a former Monsanto executive, Ralph Marquez, who was also vice chairman of a chemical trade group that did lobbying. And according to preliminary statistics from the Environmental Protection Agency, Houston surpassed Los Angeles last year for having the most days that exceeded smog standards. The Bush campaign says it has significantly reduced industrial air pollution since 1995.

SCORECARD -- Polls suggest Mr. Bush has been adept at reaching out to centrist swing voters on education and health care, traditionally strong issues for the Democrats. The two new advertisements are part of a broader effort to stop Mr. Bush's march toward the center by portraying Texas as suffering an array of social maladies and the governor as beholden to the rich and powerful.
The Republican National Committee is spending an estimated $3.7 million this week to air an advertisement in 17 competitive states from the traditionally Democratic Pacific Northwest to the tossup Midwest, but not in California.

**Producer**

National Media from Alexandria, Va.; led by longtime Republican media consultant Alex Castellanos. (The firm is also purchasing air time for George W. Bush’s campaign.)

**The Pictures**

Opening scenes of Bush at a podium and Bush next to a schoolgirl. Vice President Al Gore is shown on a television screen. A Texas silhouette has a background of grassy fields and blue skies. An aerial shot of the Gore farm in Tennessee. A pipe is shown with a sewage-like outfall.

**The Script**

Female announcer: "While George Bush offers a positive issue agenda, more negative attacks from Al Gore. The truth? George Bush is cleaning up Texas. The Environmental Protection Agency reports that Texas leads America in reducing toxic pollution. And Al Gore? Gore has allowed mining companies to mine zinc from his property. They've been cited for polluting the source of local drinking water. All while Gore's made half a million dollars in mining royalties. Even on the environment, Al Gore says one thing but does another."

**Accuracy**
According to federal data, the commercial correctly states that Texas cut its release of toxic chemicals by more than any other state between 1995 and 1998. But the state also started with a high volume. On a percentage basis, Texas cut its releases by about 16% during that period, ranking it in the middle of the pack nationally. Gore has received $20,000 in annual royalties for the last 25 years from the mining companies leasing land on his farm property near Carthage, Tenn. The mining firms have been cited periodically for violating state water quality standards. In January, a broken pipe caused excessive waste water to run into the river on the property.

Scorecard

In responding to an earlier ad by the Democrats attacking Bush’s environmental record in Texas, the Republican National Committee is seeking to paint Gore as a hypocrite. Democrats consider Gore’s handling of the environment to be one of his strongest issues, but GOP leaders are trying to weaken his position by casting the vice president as a shrill negative campaigner.
Media: CNN Inside Politics
Date: 23 Aug 2000, 5 pm EST

Air Wars: CNN’s Bernard Shaw Analyzes Bush’s and Gore’s Television Advertising Strategies (Video)

Transcript:

SHAW: You know tonight, many Americans will turn on their television to see a group of “Survivors” who have nothing to do with the presidential race. But, during the course of this evening, some viewers may also get an eyeful of campaign ads which will help determine whether Al Gore or George W. Bush is the survivor of election day.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

SHAW (voice-over): In week one of the general-election air-war, swing-state viewers are getting bombarded by an Al-Gore biographical ad.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP, GORE CAMPAIGN AD)

NARRATOR: Al Gore has his doubts, but enlists in the Army.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SHAW: And a pair of George Bush spots, one on the need to focus on tough choices, the other on education.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP, BUSH CAMPAIGN AD)
BUSH: Now is the time to teach all of our children to read and renew the promise of America’s public schools.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SHAW: Each campaign is spending over five million dollars this week alone, with the sprawling Midwest swing-belt the prime target. Both campaigns are on the air in Missouri, Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, and the belt's eastern anchor, Pennsylvania.

Another major air-battle is underway in the Northwest in Washington and Oregon. Both campaigns are also up in Delaware, Florida, Arkansas and New Mexico. And Bush is running uncontested spots in Nevada, Georgia, North Carolina and New Hampshire. But the two richest electoral prizes, New York and California, are off this week’s battle map.

Gore's selection of Connecticut Senator Joseph Lieberman may have taken the entire New York market our of play, at least temporarily. California is the nation’s most expensive media market. Bush trails Gore there and has apparently decided he get more bang for the buck elsewhere.

(END VIDEOTAPE)
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Republicans Pull Unaired Ad Attacking Gore (Excerpts)

By HOWARD KURTZ

The Republican National Committee, in a last-minute reversal, yesterday withdrew a harsh television ad that attacked Vice President Gore by using misleading excerpts from a six-year-old interview.

Bowing to objections from George W. Bush's campaign and Bush advisers at the RNC, party officials took the rare step of yanking an ad they had already delivered to 350 television stations. The ads were to begin airing today.

The spot shows a stammering Gore maintaining that President Clinton has never told a lie. Although the ad seems to suggest that Gore is deliberately overlooking Clinton's repeated statements denying his relationship with Monica S. Lewinsky, the footage in the ad actually comes from a Gore interview conducted in 1994, well before the president had even met Lewinsky.

The tag line is a version of the refrain--used often by the Bush campaign--that "Al Gore will say anything to get elected."

The ad is revealing because it was produced at a time when Bush is insisting that the presidential campaign should be about policy differences and not personal attacks. The Texas governor regularly vows to restore "honor and dignity" to the White House, but insists that he is not trying to tie the vice president to the scandal that led to Clinton's impeachment.

(...)

Political Communication Lab., Stanford University

FULL COVERAGE

Sourcebook for the 2000 Presidential Election
Transcript:

SHAW: Just a few hours ago, George W. Bush told Kentucky voters that, quote, "politics doesn’t have to be ugly and mean." At about the same time, the Republican National Committee was unveiling its new ad attacking Al Gore and his credibility.

Our Brooks Jackson has more on the spot due to begin airing tomorrow, including its tone and whether it's truthful.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

BROOKS JACKSON, CNN CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): George W. Bush is allowing the Republican National Committee to release a negative, personal blast at Al Gore. Here it is, all of it:

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP, RNC AD)

ANNOUNCER: There's Al Gore, reinventing himself on television again, like I'm not going to notice. Who's he going to be today?

The Al Gore who raises campaign money at a Buddhist temple? or the one who now promises campaign finance reform? Really, Al Gore,
claiming credit for things he didn't even do. VICE PRESIDENT AL GORE:
I took the initiative in creating the Internet.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

JACKSON: The Republicans say the ad will air in 17 battleground
states. It's obviously negative, but is it factual? Let's see.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP, RNC AD)
ANNOUNCER: The Al Gore who raises campaign money at a
Buddhist temple?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

JACKSON: Well, to be perfectly accurate, Gore himself never asked
for money at the Hsi Lai Temple during that 1996 event. But Gore's
friend, Maria Hsia, was later convicted of campaign finance violations
relating to $60,000 in illegal donations to the Democratic National
Committee. And Gore does split hairs by insisting that it was a finance-
related event and not a fund-raiser. Altogether embarrassing.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP, RNC AD)
ANNOUNCER: Al Gore, claiming credit for things he didn't even do.
GORE: I took the initiative in creating the Internet.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

JACKSON: Wait, play that again.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP, RNC AD)
GORE: I took the initiative in creating the Internet.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

JACKSON: Gore never said he invented the Internet, as he's widely
misquoted, and, in fact, he did push government support for computer
networking as far back as 1986, and he's widely crediting with coining
the term "information superhighway." But he's still taken a ribbing for
saying he took "the initiative," when his contribution was one of many.
(on camera): This is by no means the first negative ad. But candidates have been attacking mainly each other's policies on taxes, Social Security, Medicare. This ad attacks Gore's personal character, and that's a whole different thing.

Brooks Jackson, CNN, Washington.
Revisiting Several Moments That Have Embarrassed Gore

By KATHARINE Q. SEELYE

The Republican National Committee is to begin running this 30-second commercial, titled "Really," in 16 states today. It features some of the most embarrassing aspects of Vice President Al Gore's career, including his raising money at a Buddhist temple and his claim to have created the Internet. It is being shown in Arkansas, Florida, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

PRODUCER -- Cold Harbor Films

ON THE SCREEN -- The setting is a peach-colored kitchen, with a small television atop a counter. On the television screen Vice President Gore is seen speaking, though there is no sound, in the White House briefing room on the day he said there was "no controlling legal authority" over how he raised money in the 1996 campaign. The screen goes fuzzy and then shows Mr. Gore nodding to a Buddhist monk, who is bowing at him. The screen shows monks in saffron robes testifying under oath and then shows Mr. Gore, a near smirk on his face, speaking at the Democratic National Convention. It then shows him in a "Larry King Live" interview saying, "I took the initiative in creating the Internet." The camera returns to the kitchen. Flashed on the screen is a Web site, gorewillsayanything.com.

THE SCRIPT -- A female narrator says: "There's Al Gore, reinventing himself on television again. Like I'm not going to notice. Who's he going to be today? The Al Gore who raises campaign money at a Buddhist
temple? Or the one who promises campaign finance reform? Really. Al Gore, claiming credit for things he didn't even do." Mr. Gore: "I took the initiative in creating the Internet." Woman: "Yeah, and I invented the remote control, too. Another round of this, and I'll sell my television."

ACCURACY -- The commercial, a compendium of some of Mr. Gore's most embarrassing public moments, uses Mr. Gore's own words and pictures of him to suggest that he has no credibility. The statement that Mr. Gore "raises campaign money at a Buddhist temple" is technically not correct because he did not actually ask for money at the temple, but that point has been lost. The larger question is whether it is fair to link these events and cast them as Mr. Gore's "reinventing" himself. Earlier this year, Mr. Gore publicly acknowledged that he was "an imperfect messenger" on the subject of fixing the campaign finance system, a point the commercial ignores. He has also said that he thinks his comment about the Internet was the biggest mistake of his campaign, although at the time his aides defended the claim and had various leaders in the high-tech field vouch for Mr. Gore's involvement in legislation that helped pave the way for the Internet.

SCORECARD -- Perhaps the most striking aspect of the commercial is the sarcastic tone of the narrator. Analysts say sarcasm is a dangerous weapon in commercials because if no actual humor is evident, sarcasm can come across as petty and malicious and turn off swing voters. The tone may also detract from the message, which seeks to exploit Mr. Gore's vulnerability on the matter of credibility. The timing of this commercial -- unusually early and coinciding with the slide of Gov. George W. Bush in the polls -- suggests a certain desperation by Republicans and an implicit assumption that negative advertising works. Whether it will prove to be a breakthrough commercial of some sort
remains to be seen, but it is certainly laying the groundwork for harsher attacks to come, from both sides.
WASHINGTON - The Democratic National Committee pounced on a federal judge's ruling critical of Texas' health care efforts for poor children in a new television ad attacking Gov. George W. Bush. The ad was unveiled Tuesday as Bush presented his plan for prescription drug coverage for seniors. It marks one of the clearest articulations yet of the Gore strategy to force Bush to run on his Texas record. "The Bush record is certainly becoming an issue in this campaign," said DNC National Chairman Joe Andrew, as he introduced the ad, which the DNC will spend $3 million to $5 million to air. But the Bush campaign called the ad part of a "$30 million distortion" of Bush's record. "If Vice President Gore wants to complain about health care in Texas, then he ought to be complaining about the situation in America under his watch, because it's worse," said Bush spokesman Dan Bartlett. "Texas is doing a better job than the nation as a whole does when it comes to providing health and dental care to children enrolled in Medicaid." The ad is to begin running Thursday in nine states that are considered up for grabs in November - including Louisiana and Arkansas, but not Texas. It also will run in critical Midwestern states such as Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, as well as Missouri, Washington and Delaware. "George Bush says he has a plan for children's health care, but why hasn't he done it in Texas?" is the opening salvo in the 30-second ad. From there the spot recites the state's ranking as 49th out of 50 in one study of health care insurance coverage for children. The ad then alludes to a finding last
month by U.S. District Judge William Wayne Justice. He held that state Medicaid officials had failed to implement a 1996 agreement to improve health services to children such as medical and dental checkups and transportation to medical appointments. "It's so bad a federal judge just ruled Texas must take immediate corrective action," says the narrator. "The Bush record: It is becoming an issue," says the ad's parting shot. The ad was timed to begin on the day Bush unveiled his plan to provide a prescription drug benefit for the elderly. The DNC had prepared the ad to run as early as last week, but a Democratic source said it was held while the news media reported on Justice's ruling, which the DNC viewed as a free assault on Bush's Texas health care record. One DNC official said a decision was made to wait until news coverage of the Justice ruling waned before running the ad. The Aug. 14 ruling was the latest development in a class action lawsuit dating to 1993, and filed initially against the administration of Democratic Gov. Ann Richards. The judge said about 1 million Medicaid children did not get medical or dental treatment last year, and noted that many Medicaid families do not know they are eligible for services such as dental checkups. But the Bush campaign has said the judge, appointed in 1968 by President Johnson, is well-known as a liberal activist. A Bush spokesman said the ruling focused on "hyper-technical reporting and methodology disputes" in an effort to embarrass Bush.
New Ad Played Mainly to Media, Bush Camp Says (Excerpts)

By JEFF LEEDS and ELIZABETH JENSEN

George W. Bush's latest television commercial, questioning his rival's commitment to debate, is titled "Credibility." But it was the Bush campaign's own believability at issue Thursday, when it acknowledged the spot was created to draw reporters' attention more than that of viewers.

The ad attacking Vice President Al Gore will only air in a few markets, aides said. But they defended their prominent announcement Wednesday of the spot, which generated front-page attention in major newspapers.

"There is a long tradition in both parties and with all advocacy groups of seeking maximum attention for their ads," Bush spokesman Ari Fleischer said. "When we release our ads we seek maximum attention." Touting an ad buy, even a light one, he said, "serves viewers and reporters. They all get to see it and hear it."

The ad released Thursday charges that Gore is reversing an offer to debate Bush on two national talk shows. Gore said his offer is contingent on Bush accepting three other debates sponsored by a nonpartisan commission.

By Thursday afternoon, the spot had not run on broadcast television in any of the nation's largest 75 media markets, according to Campaign Media Analysis Group, an independent monitoring service for The Times.

"This ad will not be remembered as a heavy media buy," one Bush aide said.
When they announced the ad and distributed the script to reporters traveling with Bush, aides said the spot would rotate with two other commercials the Texas governor is running in 21 states. But they declined to be specific about the markets where it would be seen.

(...)

Political Communication Lab., Stanford University
Bush Team Seizes Control of RNC Ads (Excerpts)

By THOMAS B. EDSALL

Operatives for Texas Gov. George W. Bush have conducted what campaign and party sources are describing as a "hostile takeover" of the Republican National Committee in a bitter dispute over who is to blame for controversial ads and for the general difficulties facing the Bush campaign.

The action reflects the increasingly adversarial relations between the Bush campaign's Austin headquarters and the party bureaucracy in Washington. Middle-level workers in both camps are fearful of retribution if they are publicly identified in the controversy.

The dispute first came to a head over a negative television commercial that was initially approved--and then abruptly rejected--by the Bush camp. Bush campaign officials have blamed RNC political director David Israelite for the controversy that resulted in bad publicity about internal conflicts. But other campaign sources and Bush supporters contend that the highest-ranking Bush strategists in Austin approved the disputed ad.

Wherever the responsibility belongs, the result has been that two Bush operatives, Fred Meyer and Maria Cino, have taken away from Israelite responsibility for party ads and for polling, two key functions of the RNC.

In addition, RNC communications director Clifford May has been "taken out of the loop," campaign sources say. May disputed that portrayal, saying, "I've got plenty of work to do. . . . They are partners, we
value them." May contended that the campaign has conducted a "friendly" takeover of the RNC, as is traditional in presidential election years.

The dispute has not, however, stopped there. Since Meyer and Cino took over, the RNC has put on the air an ad attacking Gore for his involvement in a 1996 event at a Buddhist temple. Republicans are sharply split over whether the airing of this commercial has been effective, and whether the ad was adequately tested before it was shown to the public.

According to some campaign sources, the "Buddhist monk" ad, as it is generally known, was not extensively tested before focus groups, despite an investment of an estimated $3 million to $4 million in buying television time.

An RNC source said the "concept" of the commercial was tested before a focus group, but "not the final content." Critics said this was not adequate for such a costly project. Later, the RNC source said the ad was tested twice, and a campaign source in Austin said the findings were "fabulous."

The ad, as it has appeared repeatedly on television in battleground states, has been tested in focus groups set up by the Gore campaign. Sources in the Gore campaign dismissed the commercial as failing to move voters. "You can just say we felt no need to respond to it, and we would have if it was doing any damage," a Gore campaign strategist said. (...)

Political Communication Lab., Stanford University
Transcript:

SHAW: Despite all the attention attack ads have been getting lately in the presidential campaign, Bush and Gore themselves are taking a positive spin.

Brooks Jackson now on what they are saying and where they're putting all their TV-ad money.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

BROOKS JACKSON, CNN CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): They're taking the high road, leaving the political parties to cover the dark side. Al Gore's campaign ads are blasting away at HMO bean-counters, never even mentioning George W. Bush.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP, GORE CAMPAIGN AD)

GORE: I'm telling you, we need a patients' bill of rights to take...

(END VIDEO CLIP)

JACKSON: Since Labor Day, the Gore campaign has spent nearly $1.5 million to run that ad, according to new figures from CNN's consultant, Competitive Media Reporting. Gore ran very little else.
Meanwhile, the Bush campaign was running this ad, also positive.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP, BUSH CAMPAIGN AD)

BUSH: And President George W. Bush will keep the promise of Social Security.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

JACKSON: One million, three-hundred thousand dollars on that ad alone. Meanwhile, look what the parties are up to.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP, RNC AD)

NARRATOR: The Al Gore who raises campaign money at a Buddhist temple?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

JACKSON: The Republican National Committee spent more than two million dollars on that ad alone since Labor Day -- nearly 80 percent of all the money they spent -- while the Democratic National Committee was running this:

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP, DNC AD)

NARRATOR: The judge's findings: Bush's administration broke a promise to improve health care for kids.

(END VIDEO CLIP) JACKSON: The DNC spend more than $850,000 on that ad, attacking Bush's record in Texas. Nearly all the party spending is going for ads that are either purely or partly negative.

RICK DAVIS, FMR. MCCAIN CAMPAIGN MANAGER: In the Dole campaign, we actually ran negative ads on Dole's dime. And I think we've learned a lesson since then: Let the party do the dirty work.

JACKSON: Where is it being spent? Last week, the candidates and their parties spent a total of nearly eight million dollars on TV ads, which ran in only 21 battleground states. And Republicans outspent Democrats by more than one million, $4.5 million by the Bush campaign and the
Republican National Committee, and $3.4 million by the Gore campaign and the Democratic National Committee.

But more than half of all that money was concentrated in just three states: Florida -- where Bush campaigned Monday -- Ohio -- where Gore campaigned Tuesday -- and Pennsylvania. In Florida, a state once thought safe for Bush, Republicans outspent Democrats nearly four to one: $800,000 to $213,000, an indication Bush may be worried there.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Florida is absolutely critical to Bush. He is already at a disadvantage not being able to compete in California and not being able to compete in New York. He needs to be able to win a large state.

JACKSON: In Ohio, Republicans were outspent $608,000 to $733,000. But in Pennsylvania, Republicans spent $894,000, beating out the Democrats' $767,000. Republicans have promised to contest California, even though many consider the state safe for Gore. And sure enough, Republican ads appeared in California last week, as promised, but only $82,000 worth. Democrats spent next to nothing. So it's not yet clear yet whether either side can afford a California TV campaign.

DAVIS: California is a very expensive to play. We learned our lesson in the Dole campaign. We spent about six million dollars and wound up getting beat by 15 percentage points. So I'm not sure it was the greatest use of our money.

JACKSON (on camera): Talk is cheap, but TV time isn't. So, where a campaign puts money says a lot about its real strategy.

Brooks Jackson, CNN, Washington.
WASHINGTON - Republican George W. Bush denied yesterday that his party was trying to brainwash voters with an ad flashing the subliminal word "RATS" just after a picture of Vice President Gore - but the spot was pulled anyway.

"This has got to be one of the more bizarre accusations," Bush said, adding that his campaign "doesn't need to be manufacturing kind of subliminal messages to get my message out."

Bush told ABC-TV in the morning that he would not instruct the GOP to yank the commercial, but later he said it was being pulled.

"This ad is coming out of rotation," he said. "It is not going to be played anymore."

The GOP had spent $2.6 million to air the ad about 4,000 times in the last few weeks. It probably aired that many times again for free yesterday as the "rats" flap took over the airwaves and threw Bush off stride yet again.

The GOP ad includes lightning-fast word fragments jumping around the screen. One fragment - the end of the word "bureaucrats" - leaps out on the screen in huge type for a split second just after a picture of Gore appears.

While the GOP tried to laugh off the "rats" racket as a Mickey Mouse controversy, Democrats were publicly somber.

Gore said he was "disappointed" by the GOP's ad. "I've never seen
anything quite like it," he said.

The Texas governor said he was convinced the subtle flash was "not intentional," but advertising professionals said it had to be, based on how technicians labor over each frame.

Scott Reed, a Republican strategist who ran Bob Dole's 1996 presidential campaign, said it was clearly no accident. "Someone ought to have the grace to resign," he said.

It's the second time the ad has tripped up Bush.

The spot's nonsubliminal content - touting a Bush prescription drug plan that doesn't yet exist - was savaged by New York Times reporter Adam Clymer two weeks ago. It was that, in part, that led an irritated Bush to call the Timesman a "major league a------." The comment was picked up by an open microphone.

The commercial's offending word was brought to the Gore campaign's attention by Gary Greenup in Seattle.

Alex Castellanos, the GOP adman who made the spot - as well as last month's Buddhist temple attack ad - shrugged off the "rats" flap as inadvertent.

"It's all part of our clever rodent strategy," he joked on CNN, calling the Gore camp "cheesy" for making a to-do.

(...)
Bush Says Rats Reference In Ad Was Unintentional

By FRANK BRUNI

ST. LOUIS, Sept. 12 -- As yet another of his campaign days skidded onto unexpected ground, Gov. George W. Bush today defended a Republican television commercial that, in attacking Vice President Al Gore's plans for health care, includes a fleeting, almost undetectable image of the word "rats."

Mr. Bush said that the word, which is on screen for one-thirtieth of a second and can be seen with clarity only by freezing a videotape of the advertisement, was a fluke, not a deliberate subliminal message to voters about his opponent.

"Conspiracy theories abound in American politics," Mr. Bush said early this morning at an airport news conference in Orlando, Fla., trying to make light of the situation. But, he added, "I am convinced that this is not intentional."

He also emphasized his belief that because the word appeared for only the tiniest fraction of the 30-second commercial, it could not have had any great purpose or impact.

"One frame out of 900 is hardly a conspiracy, it seems like to me," Mr. Bush said.

His aides later elaborated that the commercial, produced and released several weeks ago by the Republican National Committee, incorporated a computer editing device that makes portions of words pop onto or skitter across the screen, a kind of visual spice. "Rats" simply happened to be the last four letters of "bureaucrats," they said.
Mr. Bush's aides also sought to turn the tables on the Gore campaign, which alerted The New York Times about the "rats" reference, by pointing to a Democratic advertisement released a week ago that they considered misleading. That advertisement, which criticized Mr. Bush over health care in Texas, used a headline from The New York Daily News in such a way that made it look as if it were on the front page when in fact the article ran inside the paper.

"I would say that this is a case of somebody doing something that was a) deliberate and b) clearly designed to mislead," said Mr. Bush's chief media adviser, Mark McKinnon. "Because of that the D.N.C. ad should be subject to much greater scrutiny."

Rick Hess, a spokesman for the Democratic Party, insisted that the commercial was fair because Mr. Bush's photograph and a smaller headline about the article did appear on the cover of The Daily News.

(...) On "Good Morning, America," he first told Diane Sawyer that he had not known about the controversy over the word "rats" in the advertisement until that moment. Then, when she expressed skepticism, he clarified that he meant he had not known about it until waking up to the news this morning.

At the news conference, he said the word "subliminal" four times and each time garbled it, giving it an extra syllable in the form of the suffix "-able."

Mr. Gore's aides, barely able to contain their delight over the latest distraction to bedevil the Bush campaign, jumped on the news about the commercial, which was reported this morning.

Today, they criticized Mr. Bush for not issuing a direct apology for the commercial. One senior aide said he was convinced that the fleeting...
reference to rats was not accidental.

Mr. Gore, campaigning in Ohio with his running mate, Senator Joseph I. Lieberman of Connecticut, told reporters, "I think it's a disappointing development."

In Orlando, Mr. Bush said he did not condone subliminal advertising, but did not think it was the aim of this commercial and would not order the commercial pulled because it was already scheduled to conclude its run on Wednesday.

Mr. Bush said he had seen the commercial several weeks ago and had not noticed the word rats.

"We don't need to play cute politics," Mr. Bush said, seeming to mean both that the party did not have to and that it should not. "I'm going to win this election based upon issues.

"But nevertheless, in order to put people's minds at ease, I will say loud and clear this kind of practice is not accepted," Mr. Bush said.

He later reiterated, "I want to make clear to people that the idea of putting subliminal messages into ads is ridiculous."

Mr. Bush seemed to be commenting not just on the theoretical practice of such a device but on any insinuation that he and other Republicans were using it. In West Palm Beach, Fla., where he began his day, a woman in a diner that he visited mentioned the brewing controversy.

"They read everything into anything, don't they?" Mr. Bush told her, apparently referring to reporters.
Who's Leading in the Polls

USA Today
May 3, 2000; Page 6A

Close Poll Numbers Extend to Candidates' Characteristics (Excerpts)
By RICHARD BENEDETTO

Vice President Gore and Texas Gov. George W. Bush not only run nearly neck and neck in most polls, they also rank fairly close in how the public rates them on personal characteristics and issues.

Unless something changes dramatically between now and November, analysts say, the election could be less a debate over issues and more a personality contest.

(...)  

A USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup Poll taken last weekend found that likely voters do not see big differences between Bush and Gore when it comes to characteristics such as "vision," "shares your values," and "cares about the needs of people like you."

On several issues that people say influence how they vote -- the economy, education, Social Security and Medicare -- neither candidate has a major advantage.

Bush leads slightly on some poll issues and Gore on others, but the gaps are generally within the poll's error margin of +/- 5 percentage points.

One area in which likely voters rate Bush almost 20 percentage points ahead of Gore: as "a strong and decisive leader."

Even women, who generally favor Gore, see more leadership in Bush, by 44%-38%.
Much of that, Republican strategist Tom Edmonds says, stems from Gore's subservient position as vice president and his continued attempts to make over his image.

"Gore has had to defend the president and still bob and weave and leave himself some wiggle room. That doesn't make for a strong image," Edmonds says.

Gore had an 8-percentage point advantage on understanding complex issues, aided in part perhaps by Bush's halting style of speech that often results in incomplete sentences, his reputation as a fun-loving college student and his inability to name several world leaders in a TV interview last fall.

(...)
New York Times
May 16, 2000; Page 1

Poll Shows Bush Ahead of Gore, With Leadership a Crucial Issue
(Excerpts)
By RICHARD L. BERKE with JANET ELDER

While many Americans find Vice President Al Gore’s stands on issues more appealing, he is not as well liked or considered as commanding a leader as Gov. George W. Bush, the latest New York Times/CBS News Poll shows.

Mr. Gore’s lackluster personal favorability ratings may help explain why Mr. Bush has emerged at this early stage as the preferred candidate across the demographic spectrum, including three critical groups that voted Democratic in 1996: Catholics, independents and Northeasterners.

Voters polled, in fact, are so lukewarm toward Mr. Gore that he is widely perceived as a loser in November: by a ratio of nearly 2 to 1, they expect Mr. Bush to capture the White House.

(...) Voters also seemed skeptical of Mr. Bush’s proposed tax cut of $483 billion over five years -- a measure that Mr. Gore has condemned as a "risky tax scheme." Even 57 percent of people who said they planned to vote for Mr. Bush were uncertain of the effect of that proposal. Mr. Bush will also have to cautiously navigate roiling factions in his own ranks.

Three of every 10 Republican voters polled said that if the governor picks a running mate who supports legalized abortion they would be less likely to support him. About a third of all voters said religious conservatives carry too much influence in the Republican Party.

The nationwide telephone survey was conducted last Wednesday
through Saturday with 947 adults, including 716 registered voters. The margin of sampling error was plus or minus 3 to 4 percentage points.

(...) Among all voters, Mr. Bush led Mr. Gore by 8 percentage points, 47 to 39. Mr. Bush held a wide advantage among men, 50 to 36 percentage points; among women, Mr. Gore drew 42 percent, Mr. Bush, 44 percent.

The vice president's lagging ratings appear to have more to do with personality than policy. Mr. Gore was seen favorably by 34 percent of registered voters and unfavorably by 36 percent. By contrast, Mr. Bush was seen favorably by 40 percent and unfavorably by 28 percent.

A related problem that has dogged Mr. Gore is that Mr. Bush is viewed as more of a leader. Fifty-three percent of registered voters in the new poll said Mr. Gore had strong leadership qualities; 63 percent said the same thing about Mr. Bush.

The contrast is striking, particularly since Mr. Gore has been an elected official since 1976, when he was elected to the House from Tennessee; Mr. Bush was elected governor, his first office, in 1994. That said, Mr. Gore has spent the past seven years in the shadow of a president who consistently draws high ratings for the job he has done in office.

(...)
'Education Voters' Pose A Tough Test. Poll Shows Gore, Bush Face a Conflicted Group (Excerpts)

By DAN BALZ and RICHARD MORIN

Vice President Gore and Texas Gov. George W. Bush face a daunting task in trying to corner the dominant issue of education in this year's presidential campaign, with voters strongly agreeing that public schools need urgent improvement but deeply conflicted over how to fix them, according to a new national survey.

At this stage of the campaign, Bush has made dramatic strides in neutralizing what has traditionally been one of the Democrats' strongest issues, according to the poll, conducted by The Washington Post, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation and Harvard University.

Voters rated Bush and Gore roughly even on their abilities to deal with education, a historic shift in attitudes over past campaigns when the Republican candidate often trailed the Democrat by a wide margin on the issue.

But the survey of registered voters shows that Bush confronts significant obstacles to winning over voters. While he has offered an education agenda that represents a departure for the GOP, Bush stands on a shaky foundation, with core elements of his program--particularly his voucher plan for students in failing schools--highly controversial and even less popular the more voters learn about them.

(...)

Education Ranks High

The poll confirms that education is the highest-rated issue, along
with health care, on voters' agenda, with 38 percent of those surveyed listing it as either their first or second priority.

But the survey also underscores the difficulties facing the candidates as they try to respond to public concerns about education. When asked to name their greatest worry, voters most often cited "school violence," far ahead of more traditional concerns over teacher quality, class size, low test scores and inadequate funding.

Although Bush led Gore in a presidential trial heat at the time of the survey, those voters who put education at the top of their agendas preferred the vice president by a clear margin.

These "education voters" are younger and more likely to have children of school age than voters overall. They also are more liberal and more likely to have voted for President Clinton in 1996.

About two in three voters said that, while there are good things about the nation's public schools, the system "requires major changes." But a similar percentage agreed that increasing the amount of money the federal government spends on education is not the best answer to spur those improvements.

Voters look far more to local and state governments to shoulder the responsibility for fixing public schools. About two in three said they preferred a president who would inspire state and local governments to make the necessary changes rather than try to persuade Congress to increase federal education spending.

(...)

Attitudes on Vouchers

Voters generally liked many of the proposals offered by Gore and Bush. Eight in 10 said they approved of giving state and local governments more say in how to spend federal education money, a key
element of the Bush agenda.

Three in four backed Gore’s proposal to boost federal spending for school construction. Two in three supported Gore’s call for additional federal funds to allow all 4-year-olds to attend preschool.

Four in 10 parents with children in public schools said they would consider private schools if the federal government offered them $1,500 toward tuition, even though most said that amount would cover only part of the tuition.

(...)
Most Americans support George W. Bush’s proposal to let workers invest part of their Social Security taxes in stocks and bonds, according to a USA TODAY/ CNN/Gallup Poll.

Despite Vice President Gore’s characterization of the plan as "risky," 59% of 491 adults polled Tuesday and Wednesday favored it. Margin of error was +/-5 percentage points.

"People should be allowed to invest their own money. The money you get from Social Security now is inadequate," says Loretta Gonzalez, 51, a Democrat in Moreno Valley, Calif.

Strongest support comes from people younger than 50. Those closer to retirement are wary of changing the system. Two of three people 65 or older oppose the plan. "Look at how the stock market fluctuates. With Social Security, you have automatic savings," says Helen Benda, 72, a retiree in Delray Beach, Fla.

Gore would preserve the system and shore it up with money from the federal budget surplus. When asked which was the greater risk to Social Security, leaving the system as is or allowing personal investments, 51% said standing pat is more dangerous. Support for change cuts across gender, party, racial, income and education lines. "I don't think the Democrats understand how potent this issue is with younger and independent voters," says political scientist Mark Rozell at Catholic University in Washington.
"This puts Gore in an awkward position," says political scientist Herb Asher at Ohio State University. "How do you scare people about the Bush Social Security plan without scaring them about the economy? The economy and prosperity are his best issues."

Meanwhile, the race between Republican Bush and Democrat Gore continues to be a tossup. A two-way matchup gives Bush 48% of likely voters to Gore's 44%, which is within that question's +/-5 percentage points margin of error. Regardless of whom they support, 55% of Americans say they believe Bush ultimately will win. "A lot people I know just aren't that impressed with Gore," says Justin Hahn, 27, a computer consultant in Durham, N.C., who leans toward Gore.

(...)

Political Communication Lab., Stanford University
WASHINGTON -- More than a quarter-century after the Supreme Court established a constitutional right to abortion, overall support for the landmark Roe vs. Wade decision seems to be softening as Americans adopt a more nuanced view of the circumstances under which abortions should be allowed, according to a new Los Angeles Times Poll.

Despite the increasing level of discomfort with the high court’s ruling--43% of current survey respondents express support for Roe, compared with 56% in 1991--the poll shows continued opposition to a constitutional ban on abortion.

(...)

More than half of those surveyed say abortion should either be illegal in all circumstances or legal only in cases of rape, incest or when a woman's life is in danger. At the same time, more than two-thirds say that, regardless of their own feelings on the subject, the highly personal decision to obtain an abortion should be left to a woman and her doctor.

Even more striking, while 57% of respondents say they consider abortion to be murder, more than half of that group agree that a woman should have the right to choose an abortion.

These conflicting perspectives make abortion a particularly tricky issue for politicians. President Clinton attempted to straddle the ambivalence in his first presidential campaign by saying he wanted abortions to be "safe, legal and rare." So far, neither Republican
presidential candidate George W. Bush nor Democratic rival Al Gore have
found a similarly deft formulation.

The issue could help--or hurt--both men. Nearly two-thirds of
Americans say they have no clear sense of either candidate's position on
the issue at this point in the presidential race. But 34% of poll
respondents say that if they learn that a candidate's position on abortion
disagrees with their own, it would be enough to change their vote.

The Times Poll, supervised by polling director Susan Pinkus,
surveyed 2,071 Americans from June 8 through Tuesday. The margin of
sampling error was plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Sentiment Varies on When and Why

Bush's opposition to abortion appeared more likely to help his
candidacy than Gore's support of abortion rights will help his. When told
that Bush opposes abortion, 27% of respondents say that makes them
more likely to vote for him. But only 18% of respondents say Gore's
support for legal abortion would make them more likely to vote for him.

Still, there may be risks in emphasizing a stand against abortion,
some experts say. If a candidate strongly opposes legal abortion, that
could mobilize opposition among sizable groups of voters, such as
suburban women and college students.

"The country leans toward limited pro-choice," said Bob Blendon, a
professor at the Harvard School of Public Health who tracks views on
health care issues.

Public sentiment varies considerably based on when and why a
woman chooses to obtain an abortion, the poll shows.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents say abortions should be illegal after
the first three months of pregnancy. While 85% support abortion when a
woman's physical health is at risk, the level of support drops to 54%
when only her emotional health is at stake. And 66% say they support abortion when the fetus is at risk of an abnormality.

The poll shows growing support for RU-486, the "abortion pill" that was developed in France and can be used during the first eight weeks of pregnancy. Americans are almost evenly divided between those who favor making it widely available (43%) and those who oppose doing so (46%). When the question was first asked 11 years ago, 32% approved of making the drug available.

Overall public support for a woman's right to choose has remained relatively steady over time. But with abortion rights constitutionally protected by Roe vs. Wade, Americans appear to feel increasingly comfortable considering limitations on its availability. Indeed, in some cases, they now appear to favor more restrictions.

(...)
The White House ambitions of Vice President Gore were boosted yesterday by a poll that shows him running even with George W. Bush among registered voters.

The Newsweek magazine poll gave Bush a slight 42% to 40% edge over Gore, but with a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points, it was considered dead even.

An additional 5% were divided between Ralph Nader and Pat Buchanan, with 13% undecided.

If the race were narrowed to two candidates, Gore and Bush split the vote with 45% each and 10% undecided.

Previous polls indicated Bush had a lead ranging from 6 to 12 percentage points.

The vice president also could take some comfort in the poll's conclusions about the debate over how to fix Social Security.

The survey suggested that a significant number of voters, 25%, considered Social Security reform a key issue. And 67% preferred Gore's plan to create a supplemental savings plan that would be matched with federal contributions. Gore's savings plan would not affect any Social Security funds.

(...)

Political Communication Lab., Stanford University
Poll Shows Bush Eroding Democrats' Hispanic Edge (Excerpts)

By DAVID S. BRODER

A poll of Hispanic registered voters released yesterday shows Texas Gov. George W. Bush making major inroads into this growing, normally Democratic constituency. Vice President Gore leads Bush 54 percent to 32 percent, according to pollster Sergio Bendixen, whose Coral Gables, Fla., firm, Hispanic Trends Inc., will be doing tracking polls of Hispanic voters this year.

"That sounds impressive," Bendixen said, "but it is only half the average margin Democratic candidates enjoyed in the exit polls of the last three presidential campaigns."

The May survey of 1,002 registered voters with Hispanic surnames found that a growing proportion of Hispanic voters--45 percent now--are foreign-born. One out of five have become citizens in the last five years, and Gore has a 2-to-1 advantage among them, which Bendixen attributes to Republicans' stance on the immigration issue during the 1990s. Among those who became citizens before 1995, Gore's lead is only 12 points.

According to the poll, Gore's opposition to the repatriation of 6-year-old Elian Gonzalez gained him no support in Miami's Cuban American community. Bush led among Cuban Americans 75 percent to 16 percent. He also led Gore among Mexican Americans in Texas--a better showing than Bush managed in his two races for governor.

Bendixen said Gore's biggest asset is the popularity of President Clinton, whose overall favorable rating among Hispanic voters is 70
percent. But the pollster, who has worked in Democratic campaigns, said, "Gore is not getting anything on his own." He said Bush "is head-and-shoulders above Gore" in campaigning before Hispanic audiences and has the potential to narrow Gore's lead further.

(...)
Washington --- American voters increasingly are focusing on honesty as the most important trait for a presidential candidate, according to an Associated Press poll. Voters are about evenly split on whether Al Gore or George W. Bush is more honest.

Thirty-nine percent of voters now pick honesty ahead of such traits as caring about people like them, showing strong leadership, standing up for beliefs and having a vision. In a November AP poll, about 33 percent picked honesty, which ranked first at that time as well.

In the new poll, conducted for the AP by ICR of Media, Pa., about one-third picked Bush as most honest, one-third picked Gore, and one-third said neither candidate or they didn't know.

In the latest poll, black voters put the most emphasis on a candidate who cares about people like them. But honesty ranked second.

The Monica Lewinsky affair and the long Clinton impeachment process sent the message to voters that "you can't believe what politicians are saying," said political scientist Merle Black of Emory University. "Now they want someone to tell it like it is."

(...)
WASHINGTON -- Vice President Gore has moved into a virtual tie with Texas Gov. George W. Bush in the latest USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup Poll, mainly because of gains among independent voters. The nationwide survey of likely voters in the presidential race, taken over the weekend, found Bush leading Gore 45%-43%. Among the 628 interviewed, the margin of error was +/-4 percentage points. A poll June 23-25 showed Bush with a 50%-38% lead.

Among independent voters who said they were likely to cast ballots on Election Day, 36% favored Democrat Gore and 37% backed Republican Bush. In June, Bush enjoyed a 54%-29% lead with that group.

The survey also found that Gore was picking up support among traditional Democrats who have been tepid in their backing of the party's choice. Only 77% said they favored Gore last month; the figure rose to 86% in the new poll.

"Al Gore for the last several weeks has been talking about prosperity and progress and talking about fighting for the people and not the powerful," Gore spokesman Mark Fabiani said. "These are compelling issues for swing voters, and as people start to pay more and more attention to the election, these issues will persuade them to vote for Gore."

Bush advisers reacted cautiously. Spokesman Ari Fleischer said,
"When you average all the public polls for the month of July, the race is about a 6-point race," with Bush ahead. "We expect a close race, and we’re very satisfied with the way this campaign has shaped up to date."

The Gore campaign in recent weeks has been talking about the nation's strong economy and trying to convince Americans that the vice president deserves a share of the credit, along with President Clinton.

When survey participants were asked if they were satisfied with the way things are going in the USA, 61% said yes, up 5 points from last month.

Recent national polls have shown the vice president trailing Bush. Gore supporters have insisted that he would pull even by Labor Day, when voters are expected to pay closer attention to the race.

In a poll breakdown closely watched by political insiders, Gore's favorable/unfavorable ratings improved: 58% had a favorable impression of him, compared with 34% unfavorable. Last month, those figures were 52%-39%.

Bush also gained: 64% held a favorable opinion and 29% unfavorable. Last month, those figures were 60%-31%.
WASHINGTON, July 20 -- Despite the confidence displayed by Gov. George W. Bush's campaign, the presidential election today stands as a very competitive contest, with ample time and opportunity for either him or Vice President Al Gore to surge ahead.

At a first glance of the electoral map, opinion polls show Mr. Bush is leading in enough states to assure him an electoral college victory. But in many of those states, the governor's margin is quite slim. Moreover, Election Day is more than three months off, and the contest is entering a crucial phase where the choice of running mates and the message the conventions deliver could define the race.

An analysis of opinion polls state by state, along with interviews with Republican and Democratic strategists in the campaigns and around the country, found enough crucial states that are so competitive that those midsummer events, and the fall debates to follow, could overturn the current standings in state after state. Or they could solidify Mr. Bush's position.

(...) 

The state-by-state analysis shows that Mr. Gore is most potent along the coasts, while Mr. Bush has an inland foundation in the South and mountain states. That leaves the race to turn on several states in the industrial Midwest.

For now, Mr. Bush appears safe in 18 states with 140 electoral
votes, from Texas to Alaska to Virginia. Another 11 states, including Florida, Michigan and Oregon -- with a combined 138 electoral votes -- seem to be leaning his way, though many of them could easily change quickly. If all these states went for Mr. Bush, it would give him 278 electoral votes, 8 more than needed for election.

The vice president looks safe in eight states, from New York to California to Hawaii, and the District of Columbia, with 134 electoral votes. Another four states, from Connecticut to Illinois, with 39 electoral votes, appear to be leaning his way.

That leaves nine states, including such powers as Pennsylvania and New Jersey, as tossups. Combined, they account for 87 electoral votes.

On the face of it, if Mr. Bush won all the states that are safe or lean his way, with a total of 278 electoral votes, he could win without taking any of the tossups. But while many more states are leaning toward Mr. Bush, polls and politicians agree that in several important states, the governor is barely ahead. It would not take a shift of too many voters to deny him Ohio, Missouri and Florida, and then his total would drop precipitously, to 221 electors.

(...)

Kathleen Hall Jamieson, dean of the Annenberg School at the University of Pennsylvania, disagrees with the Bush camp as well. She is conducting the largest polling operation of the year, 100,000 interviews this year in key states night after night.

Dean Jamieson studied the eight states where Mr. Gore (through the financial fig leaf of the Democratic National Committee) spent at least $300,000 more than Mr. Bush (through the Republican National Committee). Those states were Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, Oregon, and Pennsylvania. Over all, Dean Jamieson
found that Mr. Gore had gained 10 percentage points on average in those states. "He was closing substantially," she said. "It is reasonable to say the ads worked."

After months in which Mr. Bush seemed to have the advantage, national polls made public this week showed the race closer than previous surveys by the same organizations. Those national polls, with their consistent methodology, provide a rough guidelines to the contours of any presidential race.

"It's close now, and the movement mainly is on Gore's end," said John Zogby, an independent pollster.

Yet experts say today's electoral snapshot should hardly be considered definitive, since the public really is not paying much attention to the campaign in midsummer. Prof. Thomas Patterson of Harvard, a student of public involvement in politics, said his surveys showed that if people were not given a name but only asked if they had a presidential choice, half say they did not. Other polls, which offer names, find the undecided numbers as low as 10 percent. As for the numbers reflecting people's preferences, Professor Patterson said, "I think they are soft."

(...)

Political Communication Lab., Stanford University
Young Americans Favor Conservative Outlook, Poll Finds

By BOB GRAVEY

WASHINGTON -- Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 tend to be conservative, rate honesty and trustworthiness as the most important trait for a president and feel alienated from government, according to a poll released yesterday by Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism.

"I was actually quite surprised by the conservative mood of the 18-24 generation," said Dwight Morris, president of the Campaign Study Group, which conducted the poll.

The numbers may bode well for Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush in his race against Democrat Al Gore.

The poll, which was conducted June 19-30, found that Bush holds a 44 percent to 32 percent advantage over Gore among young voters who said they plan to vote. The poll also found that 41 percent of young people feel at least some allegiance to the Republican Party, compared with 28 percent who feel at least some ties to the Democratic Party.

Morris said the poll numbers might not translate into a significant boost for Bush, however, if young voters follow their traditionally low turnout rate.

"The good news for Gore is that young people don't vote," said Morris, who estimates that only one-third of voters in that age range will cast ballots.

The poll was taken during a period when Bush led Gore in most national polls, but since then the race has tightened. A Bloomberg News
poll last week found that Bush holds a 41 percent to 39 percent advantage over Gore, a difference that was less than the poll’s margin of error of 4 percentage points.

Young voters consider honesty and trustworthiness the most important quality of the next president out of six categories, the Medill poll found. Some 72 percent listed honesty as the most important trait. Behind honesty are vision, intelligence, the ability to excite and energize the country, prior executive experience and agreement on the issues. Only 23 percent listed agreement on the issues as the most important quality.

Young voters also feel alienated from the political system, according to the poll. Some 57 percent responded that they feel at least fairly disconnected from government and 68 percent said they believe their opinions are largely ignored.

Young voters tend to side with standard conservative views on abortion and allowing the use of public funds for parents to send their children to private schools, the poll found.

Some 64 percent said they favored requiring women under the age of 18 to notify their parents and wait two days before getting an abortion.

On school vouchers, 74 percent said they favored a program that would provide $1,500 to low-income parents for their children to attend another public or private school.

On gun control, the poll found that 49 percent of young voters believe that stricter gun laws are needed, while 42 percent believe that stricter enforcement of existing laws is all that is needed to reduce gun violence.

One finding that went against the general conservatism of those polled is the issue of gays in the military. Two-thirds said they favored
allowing gays to serve in the military, while 25 percent said they were opposed to such a policy.

The poll surveyed 1,008 randomly selected U.S. citizens between the ages of 18 and 24. It has a margin of error of 5 percentage points.
At this point in the presidential campaign, polls indicate that most voters have little idea where the candidates stand on issues, but two new surveys of female voters suggest that when they start to pay attention, Vice President Gore may fare better than Texas Gov. George W. Bush, particularly on the issue of gun control.

A survey released yesterday by Handgun Control Inc. found that when they learned of the candidates' stands on guns, suburban women living in six key swing states went from narrowly supporting Gore to backing him by close to 30 points over Bush.

Overall, the survey of 814 voters by Democratic pollster Peter Hart found that 48 percent believe there are "real differences" between Gore and Bush on guns while 46 percent said they either did not know enough to say or consider the candidates' views "pretty much the same." Among a smaller sample of women living in suburban New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Missouri and Michigan, 47 percent said there are "real differences" between Bush and Gore on gun control; 45 percent of the suburban women surveyed said they supported Gore and 41 percent said they favored Bush.

But those numbers jumped to 57 percent for Gore to 29 percent for Bush after the women were told that Bush is an "ardent defender" of the right to bear arms, helped to pass two laws in Texas making it legal to carry concealed weapons, and that a National Rifle Association official said if Bush is elected president, the group will be able to "work out of"
the White House.

(...) In a separate study released yesterday, the non-profit group WomenVote 2000 also concluded that minority female voters are unfamiliar with the candidates' positions and have developed no real preference for either Bush or Gore.

In a series of focus groups conducted by Democratic pollster Celinda Lake and Republican pollster Chris Matthews in New York, Chicago, and Oakland, minority female voters said they are pessimistic about the direction of the country, a factor that could help Bush. But they stressed issues that are traditionally associated with Democrats: education, Social Security, health care and government-provided child care, job training and affordable housing.

Some recent polls have shown Bush doing well among minority female voters, not a traditional GOP constituency, and the focus group findings gave some explanation for Bush's appeal. According to Lake, the Asian, Hispanic and African-American women interviewed stressed their concerns over juvenile crime, which Bush has cracked down on in Texas, and expressed some support for providing government vouchers to low-income families to help them send their children to private schools, an idea Bush supports.

(...)
Texas Gov Gets a 13 Point Poll Vault

By THOMAS M. DEFRANK

Critics might claim no one is watching the Republican convention, but a bipartisan poll yesterday indicated the GOP lovefest is hitting its target audience.

The Voter.com-Battleground survey found George W. Bush with a 13-point lead over Vice President Gore. The daily tracking poll of 500 likely voters gave Bush 41% to Gore’s 28%.

More significantly, Bush is a whopping 18 points ahead of Gore among independents and 6 points ahead with women. They were virtually tied among both groups before the convention opened Monday.

The poll also had Bush with double-digit leads among white women, white working married mothers and white women 65 and older, groups that voted for President Clinton in 1996.

As the campaign heads toward a grueling three-month sprint, Bush aides believe their candidate’s lead over Gore is roughly 10 percentage points.

They’re hoping that the bounce from his acceptance-speech performance, combined with a weekend train tour through Midwestern battleground states, will boost Bush’s margin to 15 points. That would be enough, strategists think, to keep Bush with a respectable lead even after Gore’s bounce from the Democratic convention.
WASHINGTON, Aug. 4 -- Gov. George W. Bush of Texas got a clear bump upward from his acceptance speech and the Republican convention generally, but its dimensions and duration were uncertain.

One overnight poll, conducted for NBC News, indicated that Mr. Bush's lead over Vice President Al Gore had gone from 6 percentage points to 11. Candidates almost always gain after a convention, and Mr. Teeter, who conducted this poll with Peter Hart, a Democrat, called it "a normal, an average bounce." Another poll, by the Tarrance Group, said the margin had gone from 8 points to 18.

While the Tarrance poll showed an especially big gain among independents, there were indications in some focus-group studies that Mr. Bush's attacks on Mr. Gore had played badly among such voters. Frank Luntz, who conducted a conventionlong focus group of 36 uncommitted voters for MSNBC, said, "Virtually every criticism received a negative reaction."

Neither poll was able to pinpoint states where the convention had most helped Mr. Bush. G. Terry Madonna, a pollster at Millersville University in Pennsylvania, said that in his state, which is a crucial swing state, "I don't really know that it moved a lot of suburban voters, and in Pennsylvania, I am absolutely convinced that the election depends
on the suburbs."

The NBC poll gave Mr. Bush 47 percent to 36 percent for Mr. Gore, 6 percent for Ralph Nader and 1 percent for Patrick J. Buchanan. Before the convention, it had 44 percent for Mr. Bush, 38 percent for Mr. Gore, 6 percent for Mr. Nader and 2 percent for Mr. Buchanan.

The Tarrance Group poll, a two-day survey completed on Thursday with only a few interviews after the governor’s acceptance speech, gave Mr. Bush 49 percent, Mr. Gore 31 percent, Mr. Nader 6 percent and Mr. Buchanan 2 percent. When the convention began, the numbers were 46 percent for Mr. Bush, 38 percent for Mr. Gore, 3 percent for Mr. Nader and 2 percent for Mr. Buchanan. Ed Goeas of the Tarrance Group said that Mr. Bush’s gains were widespread among various demographic groups, and that Mr. Gore lost strength among Democrats.

Whatever the extent of Mr. Bush’s gain, it is unclear whether it will be lasting. Andrew Kohut, a pollster and director of the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, said, "Is it a blip or a bounce? There are as many blips in recent elections as there are booms."

(...)
Gore Turns to Lieberman. First Jewish VP Pick Lifts Dems' Standing in Poll (Excerpts)
By LAURENCE MCQUILLAN

NASHVILLE -- Vice President Gore on Monday chose Connecticut Sen. Joe Lieberman, a political centrist sometimes called "the conscience of the Senate," to be his running mate on the Democratic ticket.

"The vice president asked me if I would do him the honor of running with him, and I said, 'Believe me, it's my honor,'" said Lieberman, the first Orthodox Jew chosen to be on a major party's national ticket.

A USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup Poll taken Monday night after Lieberman's selection shows Texas Gov. George Bush's lead has almost disappeared among registered voters.

Bush's lead was reduced to 2 points, 45%-43%, in the poll that included Lieberman on the Democratic ticket. That's down from 19 points among registered voters in a USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup Poll conducted Friday and Saturday.

Gallup Poll senior editor David Moore says polls of registered voters are not as accurate as those of likely voters. Among that group, Bush led by 17 points in the Friday-Saturday poll.

Moore also notes that one-day polls are subject to errors not found in polls taken over more than a day. But, "clearly there has been a narrowing of the race."

(...)
Republican presidential nominee George W. Bush has moved into his biggest lead of the year over Vice President Gore as Democrats put the finishing touches on a party platform and convention program they hope will provide a bounce up in public support for their ticket, according to a new Washington Post-ABC News survey.

Bush held a 54 percent to 40 percent lead over Gore among all registered voters, according to the poll. Two weeks ago, Bush and Gore were in a virtual dead heat, with Bush claiming 48 percent of the vote and Gore 45 percent.

Those results suggest Bush received a 6-point "bounce" in support from convention-related publicity--about average for the nominee of the party that holds the first convention. Bush made his biggest gains among moderates, white women, middle-aged voters, independents and college graduates, the survey found.

But most of Bush's surge in popularity occurred in the days immediately before the convention opened, and not during the convention itself. On the eve of the GOP convention, Bush led Gore by 53 percent to 42 percent, a margin that grew slightly during the convention week. But post-convention bounces don't always last, and Gore may counter with his own surge in popularity over the next two weeks.

(...)
Gore—virtually identical to his advantage among all voters. The Republican also maintained a double-digit lead over Gore when Reform Party candidate Patrick J. Buchanan and Ralph Nader of the Green Party are included among the choices. Bush held a 51 percent to 37 percent lead over Gore, with Nader getting 5 percent and Buchanan 4 percent of the hypothetical vote.

An analysis of survey results suggests that Bush has made impressive gains among key voter groups since late July. Among white women, Bush now claims 58 percent of the vote, up from 49 percent two weeks ago. (He gets 64 percent of the white male vote.) Bush’s support among college graduates has increased during that time from 47 percent last month to 59 percent in the latest poll.

He has also increased his share among voters 45 to 60 years old from 44 percent to 58 percent. And he has gained among moderates, winning 51 percent of the vote, up from 42 percent two weeks ago.
LOS ANGELES - As Bill Clinton prepares to say farewell to his party tonight, new polling shows Al Gore closing in on George W. Bush.

Gore still trails the Texas governor, as he has for most of this year. But two new voter surveys released yesterday put Bush just 3 to 5 percentage points ahead, though a third showed Gore behind by double digits.

(...)

The latest voter surveys show that Democrats strongly approve of Gore’s pick, the first Jewish candidate ever named to a major party ticket. That approval is also reflected in rising support for Gore’s candidacy, including from independent swing voters.

A new NBC/Wall Street Journal survey showed Bush with a 44-41 edge over Gore, a margin of just 3 points. A new Fox television poll gave Bush a 44-39 edge in a four-way race that includes Green Party nominee Ralph Nader, at 6 percent, and Reform Party candidate Patrick J. Buchanan, 1 percent.

However, a CNN/USA Today/Gallup survey of likely voters, released last night, showed Bush at 55 percent, Gore, 39 percent, Nader, 2 percent, and Buchanan with less than 1 percent. That 16 point Bush lead is down a statistically insignificant percentage point from the 17 point lead he scored immediately after the Republican convention.

Bush aides say they have always expected the contest to tighten.
If Al Gore wanted voters--especially undecided voters--to give him a second look, he apparently succeeded with a speech to the Democratic convention that gave his campaign a badly needed second wind.

(...)

Frank Luntz, a GOP pollster who watched Gore’s acceptance speech with an MSNBC focus group of 36 voters--undecided Democrats, Republicans and independents--called the performance "a home run."

Two new polls Friday showed that Gore had gotten the customary "bounce" from his party's four-day convention.

An NBC News overnight poll showed the race essentially even--with Gore ahead, 46% to 43%--though flash surveys like that one are often little more than a gauge of emotional reaction to a big event.

A Voter.com survey conducted Wednesday and Thursday showed Gore trailing Republican George W. Bush by single digits, 47% to 42%. The same poll showed Bush leading by 18 points after the GOP convention two weeks ago.

The survey by Voter.com showed little movement during the first two nights of the Democratic convention, meaning the gains came after voters heard from Gore and his running mate, Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman of Connecticut, in their centerpiece speeches Wednesday and Thursday nights.
Perhaps more important, the poll suggested Gore made significant strides toward polishing his lackluster image. By 57% to 34%, likely voters viewed Gore favorably. More voters than not—42% to 35%—said they were inclined to support Gore based on what they had recently heard or seen about him. The opposite was true at the start of the convention.

(...)
YPSILANTI, Mich. - George W. Bush - conceding, "I am the underdog" - vowed yesterday to retool his campaign and seek a compromise on debates.

"The vice president is running a strong race," Bush said as polls showed his once double-digit lead over Gore now completely evaporated. "But so am I . . . I've never been under any illusions that this was going to be an easy contest."

One new survey by pollster John Zogby showed Gore ahead of the Texas governor, 46 to 40%. The Zogby survey also showed a widening gender gap, with more women voters flocking to Gore.

Bush groused over a New York Times report that prominent GOP leaders were starting to worry that his homegrown Texas management team was dropping the ball and that his campaign may need to call in some heavy hitters.

"That's Washington," Bush shrugged. "That's the place where you find people ready to jump out of foxholes before the first shell is fired."

Still, Bush moved to make several midcourse corrections in an attempt to slow Gore's Big Mo. He said he plans to resurrect the "one-on-one" town hall meetings that helped him beat Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) in South Carolina in February. These informal, question-and-answer sessions with "real people" showcase Bush's human side as well as his grasp of issues - something Gore has suggested isn't all that great. (...
Transcript:

CHRIS MATTHEWS, host: (...) first, let's take a look at the latest poll numbers. According to the latest NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll, Al Gore is ahead of George W. Bush by 3 points, 45 percent to 42 percent. Ralph Nader has 4 percent; Pat Buchanan, 1 percent. The latest Newsweek poll has Gore leading Bush 49 percent to 41 percent, 8-point lead. Nader has 2 points in that poll; Pat Buchanan, once again, 1 percent.

And in case you missed it yesterday, Tim Russert had House Republican Whip Tom DeLay and Senator Chris Dodd, Democrat of Connecticut, on "Meet The Press" to talk about, among other things, the race for the White House. Let's listen to T--Tim talking with the man called "The Hammer" from Texas and Senator Dodd.

(Excerpts from "Meet The Press," September 10, 2000)

Representative TOM DeLAY (Republican, Texas): Well, Tim, w--we
knew it was going to be like this. We've been talking about that f--all--all year long. This is going to be a very tough race, and we know it's going to be a tough race. There are some Republicans that are nervous about this, and we should be nervous. We should be focused and nervous and--and carry this fight all the way to the election.

TIM RUSSERT (Host, "Meet The Press"): Senator Dodd?

Senator CHRIS DODD (Democrat, Connecticut): Well, we feel like we're in pretty good shape. Only a few weeks ago we were 17 points behind, after the choice of my colleague, Joe Lieberman, as the vice presidential running mate. Great convention. The issues are clearly moving in our direction, and the American public ultimately will make a choice not about who they'd like to have a beer with or go to lunch with, but who they think is going to best protect them and their families on the issues they care the most about: their jobs, their health care, their children's education and their economic security. And I think on all of those points, Al Gore and Joe Lieberman are clearly--clearly heading in the right direction. The American public is sensing it.

(End of excerpts)

MATTHEWS: Also, that was quite a stark contrast in confidence levels. Here Tim--here's Tim talking to Jesse "The Governor" Ventura yesterday.

(Excerpt from "Meet The Press," September 10, 2000)

RUSSERT: Do you think there would be any difference if Al Gore or George Bush was elected?

Governor JESSE VENTURA (Independent, Minnesota): Do I think there'll be? I don't think there'll be much of a di--well, there'll be a few differences, I suppose, just in maybe the focus on where certain spending will go. You know, one may have a preference, a stronger one, to one
particular area than--than the other and vice versa. But other than that, no. I think--I--I th--I don't think you're going to get much difference regardless of who's elected.

(End of excerpt)

MATTHEWS: We're going to have supersleuth Bob Woodward on in a minute. But, first, let's go to Jay Carney up in New York. Jay...

Mr. JAMES CARNEY (Time): How are you?

MATTHEWS: ...you know, I have a sense--Is it yours?--that George Bush, a man of great, admirable qualities and quite a charismatic fa--figure, now seems to be flying blind. What's going on in that campaign?

Mr. CARNEY: Well, Chris, I wouldn't say it's that bad. This is a campaign that thought it had mastered the plan, which was to come out of the c--of the primaries, present the candidate, George W. Bush, as a moderate, new kind of Republican and as a person who represented reasonable change. That's the phrase that Bush strategist Karl Rove uses internally in meetings, a--and that's what they've been selling.

The problem that Bush has encountered, coming out of the Democratic convention, is that Al Gore is now presenting himself as reasonable change as well. And in the time when the economy is doing as well as it is and the public is--is hard pressed to find an issue that is really going to decide the election for it, re--you know, Al Gore, as reasonable change, i.e., Clinton's policy, but without the baggage, is--is a pretty good bet. And--and--and Bush is having a hard time finding an alternative argument, except that he's more popular.

He has another problem, Chris, and that is that, you know, he's had some pretty serious, substantive policy proposals. Even last week, although it came late, his--his prescription drug coverage plan is a serious proposal. The problem with it and his Social Security plan, which
is partial privatization—that these are pretty bold recipes for change at a policy level at a time, again, when the public doesn’t feel like it needs dramatic change in its policies. The only two presidents who’ve been able to do that successfully in recent history are FDR and Ronald Reagan, at times when the public either was faced with an economic depression or a recession and a period of malaise, when it was willing to put somebody in the...

MATTHEWS: Right.

Mr. CARNEY: ...White House to revolutionize some policies.

MATTHEWS: 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it,' in other words.

Mr. CARNEY: Exactly.

MATTHEWS: D—you've been covering George W. Bush for many months now—in fact, a couple of years now. Why does he want to be president?

Mr. CARNEY: Hm. Toy, that's a big question. He would say, 'To change the tone in Washington, to restore dignity and decency to the White House and in order to get some things done.' The problem, of course, he faces now is that when he talks about changing the tone, he's got a situation when, in the next few days, he has to decide whether or not he's going to take the low road or the high road with Al Gore. And--and we've already seen that they're willing to hit Gore pretty hard on the credibility issue, and I think they have to hit him harder because they're looking at polls in which Gore's favorability is now as high as George W. Bush's. And I don't—I think it'll be hard for Bush to win if he doesn't bring Gore's negatives up. And the only way he's going to do that is to stick to the same old tone in Washington, which is to play the negative card.

MATTHEWS: Stick with us, Jay. We're going to Bob Woodward now.
sitting across from me. Bob, thanks for joining us. You fought a number of these races. Does--does this have the look of a campaign that--that's lost its purpose, lost its orientation even?

Mr. BOB WOODWARD (Washington Post): Well, the rationale for the candidacy is--seems a lot more meager than it--than it did...

MATTHEWS: Yeah. Like Ted Kennedy was once asked by Roger Mudd, 'Why do you want to be president?' It took him 70 words to say, 'Restoration,' which we knew that one. Is this another restoration attempt, more Bushes back in the White House?

Mr. WOODWARD: No, no. I d--I don't think it's that. I mean, they--they lean very, very heavily and--and with good reason on the tax issue and the argument that the military is too weak and not prepared. Those have kind of dissipated.

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

Mr. WOODWARD: If--if--if you look at the military preparedness issue, they've really undercut themselves very badly in going out and saying, 'Oh, two divisions are not ready.' Well, it turns out that they are. But--but the military issue has to be transferred to the future, 5 years...

MATTHEWS: Right.

Mr. WOODWARD: ...10 years. It's a very elegant foreign policy, defense national security argument that is v--difficult to make in a presidential campaign.

MATTHEWS: Here's the question that--that confounds, I think, in these polls. You'll see these results. And it's always fun to read these polls slowly. The Washington Post poll--here it is, your poll. When voters were asked if they thought Al Gore will say or do anything to get elected--I've said this many times on this show and--and have been accused of being too rough on him--60 percent of the American people say that Al
Gore will say or do anything. 'Lick the floor' is a phrase I've, unfortunately, used over the time to win the election. That doesn't bother them, though, because the same people say that when they were asked if they thought Al Gore was honest and trustworthy, the man they said who would basically lick the floor, 63 percent said, yes, he's honest and trustworthy.

Mr. WOODWARD: Now...
MATTHEWS: How do you put those two together...
Mr. WOODWARD: Well--well, but the...
MATTHEWS: ...both over 60 percent? How do you explain it? Here's another one. Seventy-one percent think that Gore has high moral and ethical standards. How can you have high moral and ethical standards, be morally up to the presidency and willing to do anything, say anything to get the office?

Mr. WOODWARD: Well, you know the answer to that. It--it's--it's--it's in your--your book...
MATTHEWS: But help me. It's a question and answer show.
Mr. WOODWARD: ...that is the name of this show, HARDBALL, namely. The--the first question is really a way of asking, 'Is he a politician?' And everyone knows that politicians will say anything to be elected. That's kind of acceptable. That's class A behavior.

MATTHEWS: So the Re--that says the Republicans better not target his, quote, "credibility issue" as a way of saying he's a bad guy because you can have a credibility problem, as you say all politicians do, and not be perceived as bad--as a g--unacceptable to the presidency. That's what those poll numbers show.

Mr. WOODWARD: Well, of course, this can all flip around. You can be sitting here in one month and say, 'Wow, Bush is ahead now or seems
to--to have the momentum.' I think one of the problems, if you try to look
ahead--and it's always dangerous to--to do that--is that Gore is going to
debate Bush, as best we can tell, at some point, somewhere...

MATTHEWS: Right.

Mr. WOODWARD: ...with somebody moderating, whoever that might
be. And what's going to happen is Gore gets so into himself, gets so alpha
male that he may come out as a bully...

MATTHEWS: Yeah, that's what I think.

Mr. WOODWARD: ...and people do not want a president who is a
bully.

MATTHEWS: If he's an old--old liberal big talker in those debates
and starts to mull over the--Jay, let me ask you two questions. First of
all, we know from watching these elections that--that there can be
distractions from presidential campaigns. It used to be the World Series,
and it may still be this year, but also we've got the Olympics coming up
on this network for the next two weeks. It's going to blow a lot of news
out. Does that really kill Bush's chance to get--to turn this thing around
in the next two weeks? Plus the fact they're going to set up debate
schedules, which usually freezes the poll numbers.

Mr. CARNEY: Well, actually, Chris, I--this may not turn out to be
true, but I think it's possible that--that by having the nation's attentions
pulled a--attention pulled away from the presidential race, it might help
Bush. Basically, he's done well during periods when there's less scrutiny
by the public and the--and the race is less engaged. The more that the
public is paying attention...

MATTHEWS: He's so right.

Mr. CARNEY: ...and the issues are joined and Gore is sort of
hammering Bush on the issues and forcing Bush on the defensive, the
better Gore has done and the worse Bush...

MATTHEWS: You are so smart. Jay, that is really smart because this is so interesting. When they're fighting it out and duking it out and they're punching each other's brains out, Gore wins.

Mr. CARNEY: It's bad for Bush. Right.

MATTHEWS: But the minute we get into a slow period, like we were in earlier this summer before the conventions or before the--the primaries, Bush goes up. The natural tendency is to change...

Mr. CARNEY: Bush probably wishes...

MATTHEWS: ...parties every eight years. And the minute you get our minds off politics, that helps the Republicans, right?

Mr. CARNEY: Exactly. And I think if--if--Bush is probably hoping that the Olympics could start--you know, wishing the Olympics could start a little earlier so that he could get a little more time to get back on his feet.

The problem for--for Bush, however, is that, you know, he is fighting against this incredible economy, and he--and he's still searching for a--a rationale for his--for his candidacy, you know, that's going to be effective in the fall. And if we have debates coming right out of--out of the Olympics, you know, we still have to say, even though ex--expectations are, you know, grossly inflated for Gore, that we do expect him to be a pretty darn good debater against George W. Bush. And if, coming out of the--the Olympics, Gore nails Bush in the first debate, that could be--that could be very bad news for the--for the governor.

MATTHEWS: October 2nd--October 2nd if we have a debate then.

Mr. WOODWARD: Yeah, but--but, again, you go back to that question of change. Bush says we need change. And I think all of us--myself, you, everybody in the media--kind of bought the idea that Clinton
was on the ballot, at least an invisible link, in that people were going to make their judgments based on Clinton. What has taken Clinton off the ballot is the way Gore has handled himself and, also, the Constitution. People have--and--ha...

MATTHEWS: And now the 23rd Amendment...

Mr. WOODWARD: Yeah, it's say that Clinton doesn't...

MATTHEWS: ...22nd Amendment?

Mr. WOODWARD: ...whichever--that he's out, he's going...

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

Mr. WOODWARD: ...that the one thing that's sure, if there is that date next year, January 20th, Clinton will be gone.

MATTHEWS: You hate this.

Mr. WOODWARD: He wil--won't be president.

MATTHEWS: But I want to ask you to make a real pundit's answer to this. Is Gore wrong--I mean, is Bush wrong in targeting the issue of Al Gore's character?

Mr. WOODWARD: Well, y--you--you can't tell. You can't tell. I mean, there's still unanswered questions about Gore and his fund-raising and so forth and whether Gore knows--the--it--the basic thing a politician has to master is: How does he sound, how does she sound? And I think on some of those fund-raising calls, he did not realize that he was putting the heat on people.

MATTHEWS: You have seen your own poll, though, Bob. Your own poll, The Washington Post/ABC poll this weekend, clearly says that there--most people see Bush and Gore about the same morally; they see them both pretty good. They don't see them as sleazy guys. They don't have the personal problem they have with Clinton, which is--the last poll says over 60 percent of the people in The Washington Post poll say they
don't really have--have a favorable opinion of President Clinton.

Let me ask you something. Jay, you start here, then Bob. Is--is there a problem between the Bush family--now this is such a profound question--and the press? It seems like it, not just this thing with Adam Clymer and the--and the bad language used the other day--unfamiliar to us all, of course. But is there a problem between the--the--the pack--the journalistic pack and the Bush family? They don't like each other?

Mr. CARNEY: Well, actually, Chris, I don't--I don't think that's so. I--I think the--those journalists who covered the Bush--the first Bush administration would say that, in terms of personal relations, President Bush got along fairly well with--with a lot of the members of the press, far better than Bill Clinton did in the first few years of his presidency--I know from covering that. And George W. Bush, while starting off not so well necessarily with the press in his campaign, since being beaten in New Hampshire...

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

Mr. CARNEY: ...by John McCain, has really e--embraced the traveling press corps...

MATTHEWS: Thanks...

Mr. CARNEY: ...and I think gets along pretty well with most members of the press corp.

MATTHEWS: We've got to go to Bob. Thank you very much...

Mr. CARNEY: OK.

MATTHEWS: ...Jay Carney of Time magazine. Bob.

Mr. WOODWARD: But w--w--why...

MATTHEWS: President Bush--was it the true fight?

Mr. WOODWARD: ...when Bush and Cheney are up there, why is the thing that's on Bush's mind, 'Who is there from The New York Times?'
And what's going through his head? He...

MATTHEWS: Do you feel you were skipped over, that he could have mentioned you in that context?

Mr. WOODWARD: I--you know, I don't--and once...

MATTHEWS: Here's Bob Woodward. He's a major league you know what.

Mr. WOODWARD: Once he told me to stay the hell out of Texas and-half jokingly but--but also seriously. We were not in Texas.

MATTHEWS: I once called George W. Bush at home, and he says, 'How the hell did you get this phone number?' That was nice. I'm just kidding--a long time ago.

Mr. WOODWARD: But--but his--but his father wrote--wrote me a letter...

MATTHEWS: Did he?

Mr. WOODWARD: ...former President Bush, when I wanted to interview him for my last book.

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

Mr. WOODWARD: And President Bush said, you know, 'I don't want to sit down with journalists. I've been there,' and so forth. And he said, 'So I'm going to stay the hell out of Dodge'...

MATTHEWS: Yeah.

Mr. WOODWARD: ...meaning...

MATTHEWS: OK. Got you. You were both Navy officers, so that's what it's about. That's--a common trait. Anyway, thank you, Bob Woodward. Thanks, Jay Carney.