

Presidential candidates converge on Iowa

DES MOINES, Iowa — Five Democratic presidential candidates took shots at each other at an environmental debate here Sunday, but saved their harshest word for their Republican rivals.

"We've been looking for the Republicans all day and it just occurred to me where most of them probably are. They're at the courthouse taking depositions for polluting the government with sleaze and corruption for the last seven

years," Jesse Jackson said.

The debate culminated a busy weekend of campaigning by both Democrats and Republicans in the state, whose February caucuses are a key early test.

In fact, Iowans could barely turn around without slighting a presidential candidate, as 10 of the 12 hopefuls made a round of appearances.

For the Democrats, Sunday's debate was their sixth joint appear-

ance and fourth debate in eight days, and some of them decried pressure on them to accept invitations from influential groups.

Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis said he hoped Democratic National Chairman Paul Kirk would step in to help set guidelines for such events, but Kirk indicated over the weekend he had no such plans.

Tennessee Sen. Albert Gore Jr. said he was the only Democratic candidate who had refused to enter a pact limiting such appearances.

"The question is not what's most convenient for us as candidates. The question is what's in the public interest," he said after Sunday's debate, sponsored by the

Iowa Wildlife Federation and the state chapter of the Sierra Club.

Dukakis, Gore and Jackson appeared at the debate with former Arizona Gov. Bruce Babbitt and Missouri Rep. Richard Gephardt, who complained after the event about the scope of subjects addressed and time limits on responses.

The sixth major Democratic candidate, Illinois Sen. Paul Simon, missed Sunday's debate because of other commitments, but he made other appearances in the state Saturday.

Coup authorities proclaim new era for Tunisia

TUNIS, Tunisia — The regime that abruptly removed elderly President Habib Bourguiba from power proclaimed a "new era" Sunday, promising greater political freedom that could include an amnesty for exiled opposition leaders.

The capital city was calm one day after the country's newly installed prime minister, Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, seized control from the ailing, 84-year-old Bourguiba, Tunisia's only president in its 31 years of independence.

Police and armored cars barred access to Bourguiba's palace in suburban Carthage, where the "president-for-life" was under military guard, but there was no sign of unusual military activity elsewhere.

Ben Ali, who had been the North African Arab nation's security chief since 1977, was formally sworn in as president Saturday.

Bourguiba has cataracts, a weak heart and arteriosclerosis. Tunisians long had known he also was becoming increasingly senile and erratic in his conduct of national affairs, but the subject had been officially taboo.

Ben Ali, a 51-year-old French and American-trained army general, staged his peaceful palace coup barely a month after Bourguiba named him prime minister. Organized with military efficiency, the takeover completely surprised foreign diplomats and Tunisians at all levels.

Dole launches campaign amid lingering questions

WASHINGTON — Senate Republican leaders Bob Dole is launching his campaign for the 1988 presidential nomination as the clear runner-up to Vice President George Bush in the polls, but critics and supporters say he faces lingering questions about personal style and political contradictions.

As Dole embarks on his campaign from his hometown of Russell, Kan., there is general agreement on the impressive steps he has taken in the last 12 months as he has emerged from the back of Bush's pursuers.

"I think we're ready to go one on one" with Bush, said Bill Lacy, a key campaign aide. "The thing that pleases me most is organizationally, we've made dramatic strides," he said, referring to strong

fundraising and paid political operatives in 35 states.

But others say that won't be enough.

"Dole has a marvelous sense of humor, but it's like a two-edged sword," said one campaign aide, speaking on condition of anonymity. Dole must be careful to use his humor on himself, and not use it for "undermining and deprecating an opponent," he said.

In public he has accomplished that thus far; but in private, Dole is still capable of cutting, acidic remarks. According to one aide, when Dole was musing about how to answer a debate question on which portraits he would hang in the White House, he said he would put up pictures of the men he has defeated in past campaigns.



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