

Gore pledges to continue, expand economic growth

The Democratic candidate said voters should focus on what he could do as president.

BY BRIAN CARLSON

LOS ANGELES — Al Gore said Thursday night that he is the only presidential candidate who will not only prolong the country's economic prosperity, but extend it to those who have been left behind.

"This election is not an award for past performance," the vice president said in his acceptance speech to the Democratic National Convention.

"I'm not asking you to vote for me on the basis of the economy we have."

"I'm happy that the stock market has boomed and so many businesses and new enterprises have done well. But my focus is on working families."

Gore gave credit to President Bill Clinton for leading the country out of recession and into its longest economic expansion in history during his eight years as president.

But he also sought to step out of Clinton's shadow. He said his administration would continue the economic progress by extending it to "people trying to make house payments and car payments, working overtime to save for college and do right by their kids."

"That's the difference in this election," Gore said. "(The Republicans) are for the powerful, and we're for the people."

"So I say to you tonight: If you entrust me with the presidency, I will fight for you."

Gore has often been described by the media as a boring, wooden personality. In his speech, he acknowledged those criticisms, saying "sometimes people say I'm too serious, that I talk too much substance and policy."

But he said the presidency "is more than a popularity contest."

"If you entrust me with the presidency, I know I won't always be the most exciting politician," he said. "But I pledge to you tonight: I will work for you every day, and I will never let you down."

Gore also picked up a strong endorsement from the man he defeated for the Democratic presidential nomination, former Sen. Bill Bradley of New Jersey.

"Now we're in the general election, and it's absolutely essential that we get behind Al Gore," Bradley said in his convention speech. "I support him. I endorse him. I'll work hard for his victory. Our country needs a Democratic president, a Democratic Congress and, most important, a Democratic conscience."

Gore presented a long list of causes he said he would champion as president.

On health care, he would fight for a patient's bill of rights, prescription drug coverage for seniors and health care coverage for all children.

"It's just wrong to have life-and-death medical decisions made by bean-counters at HMO's who don't have a license to practice medicine and don't have a right to play God," he said.

On education, Gore said he opposed private school vouchers, saying the federal government should focus on improving public schools' performance. He proposed making most college tuition tax-deductible and allowing middle-class families to set up tax-free college savings accounts.

He criticized the tax proposal of his Republican opponent, Texas Gov. George W. Bush, who has called for a tax cut of more than \$1 trillion. Gore proposed a smaller tax cut and said the federal budget surpluses should be used to pay down the national debt and shore up Social Security and Medicare.

"Let me say it plainly," he said. "I will not go along with a huge tax cut for the wealthy at the expense of everyone else and wreck our good economy in the process."

He also criticized Bush's proposal to allow younger workers to invest one-sixth of their payroll taxes in private investment accounts. Instead, he said, the federal government should set aside the Social Security trust fund in a "lock box" where it could not be used for other spending.

In the days since Gore's convention speech, several polls have shown a sharp upward bounce for the vice president. In

Election 2000

some polls, Gore leads Bush after lagging behind him most of the summer.

Gore's speech was accompanied by a video showing his life story, including his time at Harvard, his Vietnam War service, his early years as an investigative reporter in Tennessee,

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Al Gore
Democratic presidential candidate

his time in Congress and his role in the Clinton administration.

"I stand here tonight as my

own man," Gore said, "and I want you to know me for who I truly am."

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