

Campaign takes negative turn

The week of the election, Bush launches an ad attacking Gore's character.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

George W. Bush launched a tough new ad Tuesday accusing Al Gore of "bending the truth again," setting the stage for a bitter climax to their closely fought presidential campaign. Gore said Americans need a president who will fight for them "and has the experience to do so."

Gore advisers jumped on Bush for challenging the vice president's character after promising to run a positive campaign. For their part, the vice president's team planned to continue raising questions about Bush's credentials from the campaign trail, but decided against — at least for now — a TV ad making that same point.

A week before Election Day, each candidate struggled to pull away from the other — while a budget showdown in Washington and scores of close congressional races competed for voters' attention.

Ralph Nader, the presidential race's third-party wild card,

upped the ante with a biting satire ad that cast the Bush-Gore race as a choice between "the lesser of two evils."

The negative turn was further proof that neither major-party campaign was confident enough of victory to close the race in traditional fashion with high-minded positive ads.

Analysts said both candidates could face a backlash — with little time to recover.

A number of Republicans privately said they were surprised that Bush would take the risk, suggesting his move belies the apparent confidence he and his troops are careful to keep on display.

The candidates chased each other across California and Oregon, two states Gore hoped long ago to lock up. Bush could win Oregon and its seven electoral votes, but California, the election's biggest prize at 54 electoral votes, is still a longshot. Gore looked at the rally packing a Los Angeles intersection and, using Hollywood-agent lingo, called out: "We're going to win California. Book it!"

In Oregon, Gore cast himself as the dragon-slaying populist in hopes of drawing Nader support-

ers back into the Democratic fold. "You need someone who will fight for you and win and has the experience to do so," Gore said. The line came out of polls that show many voters still question Bush's credentials.

Bush has criticized Gore for playing "class warfare" in his tax-cut arguments. Gore turned that against the Republican on Tuesday, too, saying: "What he is actually proposing is a massive redistribution of wealth from the middle-class to the wealthiest few. It is, in fact, a form of class warfare on behalf of billionaires."

Bush stuck to the strategy of telling voters he is a sunny optimist, a champion of bipartisanship. "I can't think of a better way to end a campaign in an important state than to come to a place that is founded not on politics but on love," he said at a Christian relief agency in San Jose, Calif., before heading for campaign events in Portland, Ore., and Seattle.

His new ad says Gore is "bending the truth again" and talking "nonsense" about Bush's Social Security plan. It shows a video clip of Gore saying he had never said anything that was untrue.

Nader: Not job to get Bush elected

Appearing with Minnesota Gov. Jesse Ventura, he addresses Democrats' concerns.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MINNEAPOLIS — Ralph Nader, under pressure from progressives who say he could help elect George W. Bush, gave the Republican nominee a backhanded defense Tuesday night.

"Let's not turn this guy into a Ghengis Khan," Nader said at an ABC town hall meeting at the University of Minnesota, referring to the 13th century Mongol leader.

Nader was responding to a questioner who said Bush's election could overturn abortion rights because of the conservative justices he would be expected to place on the U.S. Supreme Court.

"First of all, he doesn't know much, secondly he's lazy, and third, he avoids conflict," Nader, the Green Party's presidential nominee, said to laughter. "Those are all assets."

He appeared with Minnesota Gov. Jesse Ventura, one of the nation's most prominent third-party figures. Ventura said he will not endorse Nader but supports the third-party movement.

Earlier, Nader dismissed as "whining, carping, low-expecting politicians" the Democrats who

are urging him to drop from the presidential race. He also previewed a new campaign ad.

"It's not my job to get my competitor elected," Nader said at a news conference, alluding to Democrats' fears that he will draw support from Al Gore and turn the election in Bush's favor.

Nader said voters who back him will get "an instant watchdog" in Washington.

"I say to some of these people with whom I've worked for many years, 'For heaven's sake, raise your expectation level. Don't settle for too little,'" he said.

Nader, however, should not look for a lift from the appearance with Ventura. The independent governor declared Tuesday that "I would never vote for a Republican or a Democrat" but named Natural Law Party candidate John Hagelin — not Nader — as someone he might support.

Nader averages about 4 percent in national polls, but comes in higher in many of the half-dozen traditionally Democratic states considered tossups between Gore and Bush.

In Minnesota, for example, polls show him with 10 percent support.

His new 30-second TV spot, a parody like his first, is based on an ad by the employment Web site Monster.com. The black-and-white ad features children

matter-of-factly reciting dismal hopes for "when I grow up," and asks voters if they "want something better for yourself and the next generation."

Nader's potential for taking votes away from Gore has prompted a vigorous campaign by Democrats. In Seattle, Jesse Jackson urged voters Tuesday to make "the politically mature" decision and back Gore. Without even mentioning Nader's name, he told the crowd: "Either Gore or Bush will be president. Let's make a president, not just make a point."

Ventura denounced such warnings.

"Isn't that interesting? I heard the same thing," he said. "I just am so pleased with the voters of Minnesota that they saw through that farce."

Ventura predicted Gore will ultimately win Minnesota because the state historically has picked Democratic candidates.

"But then again, surprises happen. Nobody predicted that I would win," he said on NBC's "Today."

Calling himself a "centrist," Ventura said he considers Nader too far left and Reform Party candidate Pat Buchanan too far right.

He said his appearance with Nader at the University of Minnesota for ABC's "Nightline" shouldn't be seen as an endorsement.

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240 Misc. For Sale

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265 Stereos/TVs For Sale

270 Ticket Exchange

300s Services

300 Adoption

310 Automotive

355 Instruction/Tutoring

365 Legal Services

370 Misc. Services

378 Pregnancy

400s Housing

400 Roommates

430 Houses For Rent

440 Duplexes For Rent

450 Apartments For Rent

450 Apartments For Rent

490 Homes For Sale

500s Jobs

500 Help Wanted

500 Help Wanted

670s Help Wanted

680s Help Wanted

690s Help Wanted

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