

Nader, Gore votes traded

■ Voters swap, giving Gore votes in swing states and Nader votes in states Gore can't win.
BY GEORGE GREEN

A high-tech and controversial vote-trading scheme has shaken this year's presidential election. Internet providers last week unveiled Web sites that help supporters of Al Gore, the Democratic presidential candidate, and supporters of Ralph Nader, the Green Party presidential candidate, exchange votes.

The idea behind these sites was to help the Green Party get 5 percent of the popular vote, which would make it eligible for federal funds in the next election, while nudging Gore into the White House.

Trading between voters in swing states such as Oregon and California, where Nader is luring support from Gore, and voters in states such as Nebraska, where Bush is almost assured victory, could keep the Green Party's vote totals high without handing Bush, who is viewed by Nader supporters as the worse of two evils, the White House.

But voting officials in California have shut down several

trading sites saying they violate state voting laws.

As of Thursday afternoon, though, at least one site, www.VoteExchange.org, was still working.

Jim Cody, a free-lance Web designer in Los Angeles who designed one of the closed sites, said he had no idea he was violating state law when he created the site.

"As soon as we were informed ... that we were in violation, we shut the thing down," he said.

Before the site closed, Cody said, it helped make 5,000 voter matches.

Nebraska Secretary of State Scott Moore said his office has not planned to take action against these sites.

Moore said he didn't think the sites violated any laws because they don't offer money for votes, which would be illegal.

Election officials in Oregon, Kansas and Missouri are reviewing the legality of the sites.

Regardless of legal terms, Moore said, the sites are still not good for the elections.

"These sites are immoral and wrong," Moore said.

People should vote for the candidate they believe is best, he said.

Discontent with the sites has

seeped into the Green Party, too.

Howie Hawkins, a member of the Green Party's national coordinating committee, said the Green Party is "totally opposed" to the sites.

He said people should choose the candidate they believe will do the best job for the country.

"Vote your conscience," Hawkins said.

But Hawkins said some good things have come out of the Web site controversy.

Since the Web sites became publicized, Hawkins said, the media have paid more attention to Nader.

Denied from the presidential debates, Nader has been forced to the sidelines throughout much of the campaign season.

Now Gore, who ignored Nader earlier, is urging Nader to support him so Bush will not win the White House, Hawkins said.

But the vote-trading schemes don't matter to Karen Brown, a student Green Party volunteer.

She said she is pleased Nader is receiving attention and is not concerned with much beyond his campaign.

"I don't even care if Bush wins," she said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Nelson defends television ads

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He said budget surpluses first should be used to preserve Social Security and pay down the national debt.

Kerrey urged Nebraskans to vote for Nelson because he would be an independent voice in the Senate.

"He's the only candidate who's not promised to be somebody's lapdog if elected to the Senate," Kerrey said.

"We shouldn't send a person to the Senate who only has a point of view but no capacity to put that point of view in place, like our attorney general," he said. "He goes too far. Some of his positions aren't even endorsed by Gov. Johanns and (GOP state chairman) Chuck Sigerson, for crying out loud."

Kerrey, who lost part of his right leg during the Vietnam War, said he learned from his ordeal that government policies can help people in ways the

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Bob Kerrey
Democratic senator

market couldn't.

The recent deaths in a presumed terrorist attack of 17 sailors on board the U.S.S. Cole illustrates the point, he said. He noted that none of the 17 dead had attended college, and many of them may have enlisted in the Navy because they couldn't afford college.

"We shouldn't try to make a political point out of it," he said. "But when we look at their lives, we see that we have an obligation to make sure college doesn't break the backs of American families but gives families a chance to lift themselves up."

"Ben Nelson will go out and say, 'I'm a Democrat, but I realize the limits to what the mar-

ketplace can do."

Nelson urged supporters not to sit on his lead.

"We're ahead today, and if we work hard and do whatever we can to get out the vote, we'll be ahead on Nov. 7, and we'll still be ahead on Nov. 8."

In other Senate news this week, an ad began running in which GOP presidential nominee George W. Bush endorses Stenberg, urging Nebraskans to send him to the Senate to support a Bush agenda.

"I know we can count on Don Stenberg to rebuild our national defense, cut taxes and reduce government regulation and help America's farmers," Bush says in the ad.

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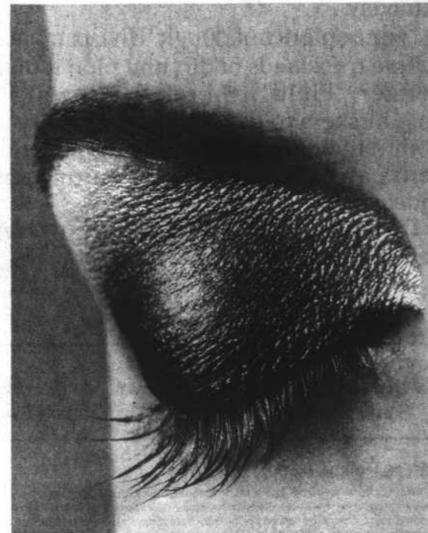
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