

Presidential Candidates Seeking Similar Tech Goals --

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The future of science and technology policies under Vice President Al Gore could look strikingly similar to those of Texas Gov. George W. Bush, as representatives for the two presidential candidates showcased Thursday the rivals' support for a permanent research and development tax credit as well as a doubling of basic science and biomedical research.

Gore's general approach to science policy issues would not divert too much from the Clinton administration's current approach. Bush supports repairing the nation's ailing math and science education programs as a way to address the nation's workforce shortage — a centerpiece in long-term investment in science research, according to statements made in a debate sponsored by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

“[Vice President Al Gore] understood long before most public officials the role of information technology and its potential for transforming our economy,” said Gore's chief domestic policy adviser

David Beier. “The framework that the vice president laid out in 1993 had three parts: fiscal discipline, investment in people and innovation, and opening markets here and abroad,” he said. In his role as vice president, Gore has tied science and technology policy issues to solving other economic, education and environmental concerns, but noted that energy policy would be key as the demand for it rises, according to Beier.

Though both speakers noted that the candidates shared beliefs, former Rep. Bob Walker, R-PA, speaking for the Bush campaign, asserted that the premise of a Bush science and technology policy would center on education reform. “Gov. Bush believes that our country is in an educational recession...It's simply not capable of keeping up,” said Walker. “You have the accountability education. It is not good enough for teachers to say ‘I taught it, they didn't get it,’” Walker said. “While Gov. Bush favors expanding H-1B visas for a high-tech industry, the fact is that that's a temporary solution,” Walker said. “In the end, what we have to produce is an educated populace capable of allowing us to compete in the 21st century.” With an emphasis on math and science education reform, Walker said a Bush administration would target incentives to students who take advanced placement science classes in high school and would give student loan debt relief to math and science majors who volunteer to work in inner city schools. In addition to advocating a tax-free Internet, Walker also said that export controls needed reform so as not to stifle businesses' growth.

But Beier asserted that Gore and the Clinton administration have tried to argue for more lenient export controls, but have been stonewalled by congressional opposition. Beier argued that although Bush was advocating more defense research, his proposal would only boost funding by \$45 million while Gore would seek \$100 million over the next few years. Walker said that it was imperative to introduce tort reform and tax reform, in order to break down the legal barriers to innovation and avail more capital to the nation's entrepreneurs who are driving the new economy.