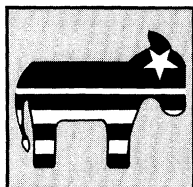


Political Pressure Behind Dukakis Switch on Space

Congressional backers of the manned space station won a statement of strong support from presidential candidate Dukakis



DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE Michael Dukakis changed his stance on NASA's planned \$16-billion manned space station because of

pressure from Democratic members of Congress who support the project, say congressional aides. The change of heart on the space station followed a minor controversy over another scientific project, when Dukakis' director of issues said the candidate wished to stop funding fusion research, but other aides later disavowed that position.

Early this year, Dukakis appeared somewhat soft in his support for a manned space station, which President Reagan has backed since 1984. Dukakis' official statement read: "There are a number of less costly alternatives to the station now envisioned by NASA; some of these could be in operation much sooner, and could perform most—perhaps all—of the requirements of a large, permanently manned station." It seemed to some backers of the manned space station that the Democratic candidate was indicating a preference for an unmanned, robot-operated satellite that would cost much less and create far fewer jobs.

Since the new president will be able to veto half of the \$900 million that Congress has agreed to provide for the space station in 1989, Dukakis' stand was of vital concern to several members of Congress whose districts stood to profit from the space station. For instance, the 20th District in Ohio, represented by Democratic congresswoman Mary Rose Oakar, contains NASA's Lewis Research Center, which has a propulsion contract for the space station. Oakar drafted a letter urging Dukakis to reconsider his position on the space station and collected the signatures of 65 Democratic members of Congress with interest in the project.

Jack Brooks, a Democratic congressman from Texas whose district includes NASA's Johnson Space Flight Center, signed Oakar's letter and also sent Dukakis an extensive memorandum explaining why Dukakis should support the station, an aide said. Those reasons were both scientific and polit-

ical, the aide said, and the memorandum warned Dukakis he risked losing several key states in the election—Texas, California, Alabama, Florida, Ohio, and others—if he did not change his stance.

After Oakar sent her Dear Colleague letter to Dukakis, she arranged for Christopher Edley, Jr., Dukakis' director of issues, to meet with members of Congress to discuss the space station. Of the 25 Democratic senators and representatives invited to the 9 August meeting, 18 attended—a good turnout. Brooks was the most forceful speaker there, according to aides who were at the meeting, and he heavily emphasized the political risk of nonsupport of the station. "Jack Brooks pointed his cigar at Edley and said Texas needed the space station," one aide said. Brooks told Edley point blank that if Dukakis did not support the space station, he would lose Texas in the election. Other participants were less blunt, the aide said, and the meeting ended up being more like a working group than a confrontation. The participants included Senator John Glenn of Ohio and Senator Howell Heflin of Alabama. NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama, stands to be a big winner if the space station is built.

Six days after that meeting, on 15 August, Dukakis offered a statement on space policy that some saw as a sharp turnabout. "I

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support the development of a permanently manned space station," he said. "The space station can provide direct benefits for all of us—in the development of new materials, in medicine, in agriculture and forestry techniques, and in a better understanding of the earth's climate." Three days later, in a campaign speech at Marshall Space Flight Center, Dukakis made an even stronger commitment. "One of our top priorities," he said,

"will be the development of a permanently manned space station."

Although Dukakis has made few, if any, statements on fusion, his top aide Edley has. In an interview published 29 July in the *Washington Post*, Edley repeated an assertion he had made in earlier interviews that the Democratic presidential candidate opposed further funding for fusion research. Edley said Dukakis "would eliminate immediately, if elected, research on high-speed hyper-space aircraft, research on nuclear fusion, and money-losing timber sales from the national forests." After the interview appeared, however, and concerned fusion supporters had queried the Dukakis campaign, aides said Edley had been misquoted. Dukakis has made no specific decisions on which programs should be cut, the aides said, and Edley's comments were meant to indicate that the fusion program should be reviewed to see if it is cost-effective in comparison with other energy programs.

In a widely noted 8 September speech, Dukakis seemed to shift his position on funding research for the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). He had repeatedly opposed the space-based missile defense system with such slogans as "We don't need the Strategic Defense Initiative, we need the Conventional Defense Initiative," and "We need star schools, not Star Wars." Yet in a speech in Louisville, Kentucky, he said he was "not opposed" to the program he had recently referred to as "fantasies in the sky."

Political analysts said Dukakis' speech indicated more a difference in tone toward SDI than any substantive changes in position. For some time, the Governor has advocated spending \$1 billion on SDI research in 1989, as compared with the \$4.9 billion that President Reagan has asked Congress for, and Dukakis continued to emphasize funding for research rather than deployment. "Before we commit billions or trillions of dollars to Star Wars, we've got to do research to tell us whether or not the system can work and whether or not it's essential to our national defense. I'm for continued research."

On the question of whether as president he would move to deploy SDI if research showed it would be effective, Dukakis was less clear. In response to a question, he said, "If I made a judgment and Congress made a judgment that it was essential to our national security, then obviously we would proceed." But when asked how that position agreed with his stance that SDI deployment would violate the 1972 Antiballistic Missile Treaty, Dukakis said, "Obviously we're not going to test and deploy it if it's a violation of the treaty."

■ ROBERT POOL

Next week: George Bush on science issues.