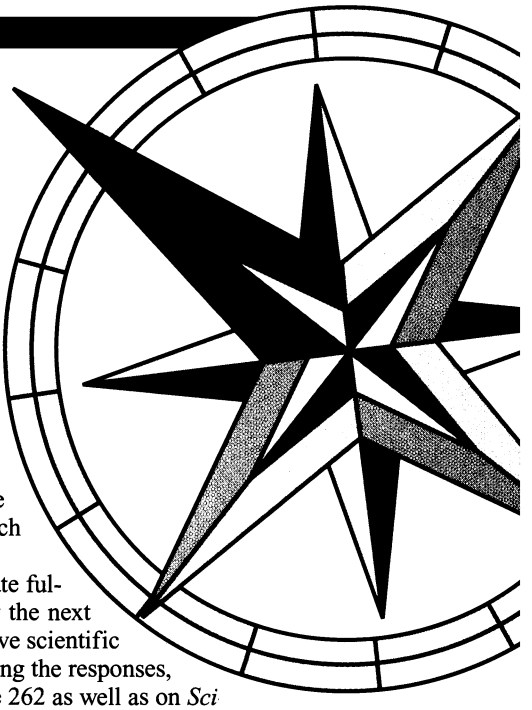

The Candidates' Views on Science

Donald Kennedy

During each of the past several U.S. presidential elections, *Science* has posed questions about science policy to the major-party candidates. The editors have tried to ask hard questions that challenge the candidates and their staffs to develop thoughtful answers—responses that will not only help *Science*'s readership evaluate their positions before the election but might clarify important science and technology issues for a much larger number of thoughtful Americans.

This year, as in the past, the candidates have been good enough to cooperate fully with *Science*, and the results provide some significant insights about how the next president might deal with the multiple aspects of U.S. national interest that have scientific and technical roots. We won't insult your intelligence by rehashing or evaluating the responses, the full texts of which are available in a side-by-side outlay beginning on page 262 as well as on *Science* Online. But here are a few areas that, in the view of the editors, are worth highlighting.

Our first question was the shortest: It asked Vice President Gore and Governor Bush simply to choose their top three science and technology priorities. Both mentioned education, with Bush—consistent with his major campaign theme—putting it in first place. Gore emphasized investment incentives for research and made major commitments to balance and scope in the federal R&D portfolio before turning to education. On education, our second question, Bush's response emphasized accountability, whereas Gore stressed the improvement of teachers and the accessibility of school programs; both unveiled programs to assist students with higher education.

In responding to some of the later questions, the candidates took fairly similar policy positions. Both, for example, expressed support for raising the ceiling on H1-B visas for foreign high-tech workers, but both put it forward as an interim rather than a permanent solution. And when asked about making presidential appointments in the science and technology area, both candidates promised efforts to speed the process while identifying delays in Senate approval as offering challenges to a successful outcome. Both opposed "reasonable pricing" clauses regarding drugs developed with the help of federal funding.

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But there were important differences. When queried about the proposal to double the National Science Foundation's budget over the next 5 years, Vice President Gore responded with a clear commitment, whereas Governor Bush promised an unspecified increase. With respect to the deployment of antiballistic missiles, Gore insists on ensuring compliance with the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, whereas Bush proposes to change the treaty terms through negotiated agreements with Russia. Gore likes the space station; Bush would reevaluate it. Gore liked the Advanced Technology Program at the National Institute of Standards and Technology; Bush didn't say, but advocated more support for defense-related research.

Perhaps it is not surprising that the starkest differences are over programs and policies that have themselves been the subject of especially intense national controversy. Affirmative action programs are clearly favored by Vice President Gore; Governor Bush proposes "affirmative access": expanded recruitment efforts without preference. Our question on the scientific evidence regarding the human imprint on global warming drew an affirmation from Gore that might have been predicted from his previously announced position. But the answer from Bush emphasized other atmospheric quality issues. On global warming, he described the temperature increase as a slight one with uncertain causes, and advocated "extensive scientific analysis" to explore the issue further.

Science has not endorsed candidates for partisan elective office in the past, and we don't intend to start now. Those of our readers who are eligible to vote in the United States, most of them practicing scientists, will want to evaluate the evidence and then reach their own conclusions. We also know that in making their choice, they are unlikely to limit their evaluation of the candidates to issues that lie in the domain of science policy. Still, the future of the United States is perhaps more dependent than ever on science and technology and on how the U.S. government supports and manages them. These issues are our business here at *Science*. We hope that our readers will compare the candidates' responses carefully and that they will find them useful on November 7.