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## Gore's Pick for Running Mate Is Supporter of Science Research, Critic of Political Correctness

By [BEN GOSE](#)

Washington

Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman of Connecticut, who is expected to be named today as Vice President Al Gore's running mate on the Democratic ticket, is viewed by many in academe as that rare politician who truly takes the time to understand higher-education issues.

Not that college leaders always agree with his opinions: He is an outspoken critic of political correctness, and has denounced colleges for doing too little to control the cost of tuition.

But he is also a staunch supporter of increasing federal support for basic science research, and has pushed for less-stringent visa laws that would make it easier for talented foreign scholars to conduct research and teach at American institutions.

Senator Lieberman's views on higher education, of course, probably had little to do with Mr. Gore's selecting him. Mr. Gore is said to have wanted a candidate of integrity, to appeal to voters turned off by President Clinton's personal conduct. Senator Lieberman sharply criticized President Clinton during the Monica Lewinsky scandal.

Senator Lieberman's record on higher-education

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issues also demonstrates that he is willing to walk a lonely path for reasons of principle. He was the sole Democrat to oppose the nomination of Sheldon Hackney to become the chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1993. (See an [article from \*The Chronicle\*](#), August 11, 1993.) Mr. Hackney, whose appointment was approved nonetheless, had been criticized while president of the University of Pennsylvania for wavering in protecting the free-speech rights of conservatives during some highly publicized incidents on the campus.

"Speech codes and other attempts to suppress what is not politically fashionable at a given moment in our history simply cannot be tolerated," Senator Lieberman said at the time. "And in our time they must be stopped."

Senator Lieberman also was one of the founders of the **American Council of Trustees and Alumni**, a five-year-old organization known for its stands against political correctness and its defense of the Western canon. Another prominent founder of the group was Lynne V. Cheney, former head of the N.E.H. and the wife of Richard B. Cheney, the Republican nominee for vice president.

Bradford Wilson, executive director of the National Association of Scholars, another group that opposes political correctness, said Senator Lieberman's vote against Mr. Hackney "shows how deep his concern is over political correctness." Having Mr. Lieberman on the ticket "may well neutralize any hay that the Republicans can make on this issue," Mr. Wilson said. The Republican platform, released last week, strongly condemned ideological indoctrination in higher education.

Senator Lieberman has also prodded colleges to put an end to annual tuition increases that

outpace the rate of inflation. At a Senate committee meeting in February, he warned that going to college is becoming "a luxury that an increasing percentage of our population cannot afford." At the hearing, he expressed an interest in legislation that would encourage greater competition among colleges and lead to lower costs. (See an [article from \*The Chronicle\*](#), February 18.)

Edward M. Elmendorf, vice president of governmental relations at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, said the concerns of Senator Lieberman and others are misplaced. Tuition is not nearly as high at public colleges, where most people enroll, as at private institutions, Mr. Elmendorf noted. Mr. Lieberman has a bachelor's degree and a law degree from Yale University.

Nonetheless, Mr. Elmendorf praised Senator Lieberman for taking the time to understand the issue of college costs. "I like informed leaders who look at the research, rather than those who thrash around and try to figure out what their next move will be" based on opinion polls, Mr. Elmendorf said.

Advocates of more money for science research offered the highest praise for Senator Lieberman, who is completing his second term in the Senate. With Sen. Phil Gramm, a Republican from Texas, he introduced legislation in 1997 to authorize a doubling of support for civilian research over 10 years. (See an [article from \*The Chronicle\*](#), November 7, 1997.) That bill was superseded by another measure, but it was one of the catalysts that may lead to a doubling of the budget at the National Institutes of Health within an even shorter period -- five years.

Senator Lieberman is also a founding co-chairman

of a caucus that brings together senators with prominent scientists and engineers.

"Both the senator and his staff have been consistently thoughtful and open to meaningful discussion with the scientific community," said Charles M. Vest, president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



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