



Government & Politics

From the issue dated August 18, 2000

[SEARCH THE SITE](#)

[SITE MAP](#)

Lieberman, Gore's Choice as a Running Mate, Has a Substantial and Unexpected Record on Higher Education

By BEN GOSE

Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman of Connecticut, named last week 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, has called racial preferences "patently unfair," and recently denounced colleges for doing too little to control 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.

Following the selection of Mr. Lieberman, some polls last week indicated that Vice President Gore had trimmed what had been a double-digit lead for Texas Gov. George W. Bush.

Mr. Lieberman's record on higher-education 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. 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," Mr. Lieberman said at the time. "And in our time they must be stopped."

SECTIONS:

- [Front Page](#)
- [Today's News](#)
- [Information Technology](#)
- [Distance Education](#)
- [Teaching](#)
- [Publishing](#)
- [Money](#)
- [Government & Politics](#)
- [Community Colleges](#)
- [Students](#)
- [Athletics](#)
- [International](#)
- [People](#)
- [Events](#)
- [The Chronicle Review](#)
- [Jobs](#)

FEATURES:

- [Colloquy](#)
- [Colloquy Live](#)
- [Magazines & Journals](#)
- [New Grant Competitions](#)
- [Internet Resources](#)
- [Facts & Figures](#)
- [Issues in Depth](#)
- [Site Sampler](#)

CHRONICLE IN PRINT:

[This Week's Issue](#)

[Back Issues](#)

[Related Documents](#)

SERVICES:

[About The Chronicle](#)

[How to Contact Us](#)

[How to Register](#)

[How to Subscribe](#)

[Subscriber Services](#)

[Change Your User Name](#)

[Change Your Password](#)

[Forgot Your Password?](#)

[How to Advertise](#)

[Corrections](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[The Mobile Chronicle](#)

[Help](#)

Mr. 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, a 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 Mr. 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 month, strongly condemned ideological indoctrination in higher education.

Mr. Lieberman also has criticized programs that give advantages to black people and others to make up for past discrimination. "Polls show that 75 percent of the American people think affirmative-action laws have to either be changed or abolished," Mr. Lieberman told *The Hartford Courant* in 1995. "That doesn't mean 75 percent are racists. It means they think this is an unfair way to achieve equal opportunity."

More recently, Mr. Lieberman has 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.

Edward M. Elmendorf, vice president for governmental relations at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, said the concerns of Mr. Lieberman and others were 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 applauded Mr. 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 scientific research offered the highest praise for Mr. 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. That bill was superseded by another measure, but it was one of the catalysts for the effort to double the budget at the National Institutes of Health within an even shorter period -- five years.

Mr. 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.

<http://chronicle.com>
Section: Government & Politics
Page: A26



[Easy-to-print](#) version



[E-mail](#) this article

[Copyright](#) © 2000 by The Chronicle of Higher Education

Find that *book* and *buy it*
chronicle.com/books

