

Open Ended Responses Summary Vice Presidential Debate October 5, 2004

BUSH VOTERS SWITCHING TO KERRY (ON CHENEY)

Voters who switched their votes from Bush to Kerry offered a handful of opinions that voiced their disaffection with Cheney's debate performance. A prevailing attitude was Cheney's insufficient answers on Halliburton, confirming doubts people had going into the debate about Cheney's business ties. Some switchers voiced a concern that we have not heard until now, when they said Cheney was not entirely on the same page as Bush on some issues, referring to the exchange about his daughter. Others felt Cheney fell short on answering tough questions.

Not much different from George Bush's debate, though he didn't pause as long, and had a much more depth political career to recall upon than his boss did. Though, he seemed just as rehearsed as Bush did, because some of his answers skirted completely around and away from questions asked.

Not fully in agreement with President Bush policies, particularly when it reaches personal levels.

He didn't give detailed answers and didn't have eye contact with the camera as much as I thought he should.

Only that he has been in a position of power for a longer time because of his age. I don't like his still lingering support of his former company. i believe he should be the one to make sure they do not take advantage of their former connection, i don't trust either one.

Cheney seemed to not want to give ans. to some of the questions that was about his connection with his company CEO job. I just cant trust the tax laws he is in favor of.

He did much better than I thought he would, but he still represents big business to me.

I felt that he wasn't answering the questions as asked and he came off as unprepared. I also felt that he wasn't always on the side of the President.

He was not totally honest, on what they would do to end the war in Iraq. He also was not that clear

BUSH VOTERS SWITCHING TO KERRY (ON EDWARDS)

John Edwards surprised many voters who decided to switch their vote from Bush to Kerry. While they expected inexperience, he addressed these voters' concerns and found him "competent," "intelligent," and "articulate." Like most of the comments in tonight's open ended responses, these voters were moved more by character and presentation than particular issue positions.

He also seemed very well prepared. He is a very smooth and articulate speaker. He is young and seems to understand some of the issues that are a problem here as well as the issues around the world.

Someone I could talk to and trust.

He was not an inept as I expected with regard to his qualifications to be vice president. Though I do not think he is as experienced as our current Vice President, I believe that he could do the job.

He was very thorough in his outlining of future plans for the Kerry/Edwards ticket after reaching the White Office, was concise and exact in his rebuttals, and unnerved when faced with obvious jabs by Cheney.

He was a strong advocate for John Kerry but that's to be expected. He had enough statistics to keep Dick Cheney busy with quick responses. He was considerate of Dick Cheney's family in response to the gay rights questioning. He had a fair response to the marriage of two people whether man and woman or two of the same sex. He didn't belittle any type of people. Basically, I was more impressed with him than I thought I would be.

Very good debater. I was really impressed how he held his ground and seemed to consistently highlight major flaws in the current administration. Also handled charges made against himself very well. I am concerned about Edwards voting record.

I was impressed with him - just as I was impressed with John Kerry last week.

KERRY VOTERS SWITCHING TO BUSH (ON CHENEY)

Those who switched from Kerry to Bush found Cheney's experience and confident demeanor to be reassuring. There were no references to his stances on issues; for these voters, they wrote exclusively on his personal attributes and clarity of vision.

He's a good man. Is not boastful. Seems to be very straight forward and direct. Seems to say what they can actually do instead of just what they would want to do.

A very truthful, sincere man who wants nothing but the best for our country. He is very happy with President Bush as his leader.

Someone who offers the experience and the knowledge to apply to some the issues he will be facing

Experience, political knowledge and clarity on objectives for the country

KERRY VOTERS SWITCHING TO BUSH (ON EDWARDS)

Voters switching to Bush highlighted Edwards' inexperience and questionable promises as their doubts toward Edwards' ability to step up as President if needed. "Lawyer double-talk" and repeating himself rubbed these voters the wrong way, though some felt he came well prepared and "held his own" in the debate.

smooth talker, confident in his ability to talk the talk, but I'm still not convinced that he can walk the walk - the trial lawyer side of him was definitely out tonight.

Keeps talking about John Kerry and not himself. Talks about being truthful but says things like 'tax cuts' while at the same time supports 'more troops' and 'double spending for aids.' How truthful are you about cutting taxes but spending more money. If I were to do that, I would be bankrupt very shortly.

I think john edwards needs more experience and more experience. he only knows how to attack the opponent like an attorney and not a political figure. its all smoke and not enough real substance.

He says he has a plan for everything, is going to fund everything, is going to reduce the national debt, and is only going to raise taxes on the over \$200m people. Yeah, right. He does present well. I fear his inexperience in all matters, foreign and domestic. And he would only be a heartbeat away.

BECAME MORE FAVORABLE TOWARD KERRY (ON CHENEY)

Respondents who were favorable towards Kerry largely viewed Cheney as a strong leader and very experienced who was confident and well-prepared. However, many voiced concerns that he is evasive and does not always tell the truth. Many referenced Iraq, 9-11, or Halliburton, and felt Cheney was not an advocate for working people like Edwards has been.

Someone who cares more about keeping his privileges and money at any cost. Ordinary people like me don't matter to people like him.

He projects the fact that he experienced, knowledgeable, calm and clear thinking. You just know he knows what's going on. He's a real statesman.

He's very intelligent and seasoned yet I still had the feeling that he's completely dishonest. I think his involvement with Halliburton and lack of ability to defend his involvement contributes the most to my inability to trust what he says.

BECAME MORE FAVORABLE TOWARD KERRY (ON EDWARDS)

While respondents saw Edwards as intelligent and knowledgeable on the issues, many voiced concerns about his inexperience and history as a trial lawyer. However, respondents saw him as honest and knowledgeable on the issues and wanted to believe in his hopeful vision as an advocate for them.

He impressed me as being a very intelligent man and had a lot of knowledge of what has been going on in the country and in Iraq.

I found his answers to be strong and concise as to how he and Kerry will lead the country in the next 4 years.

good speaker, debator not enough experience, however and hasn't done a creditable as senator

a man ,a lawyer, who wants to be able to tell the truth, if that's possible for a lawyer we well just have to see. He seems honest, and eager, actualy he really reminds me of the VP in his early years.

MORE FAVORABLE TO BUSH (ON CHENEY)

Unsurprisingly, respondents who became more favorable to Bush over the course of the survey described Cheney very positively. Impressions were mostly favorable and centered around Cheney's experience, "firm" or "strong" character, and "calm" and "controlled" demeanor.

He has a total grasp of the problems facing our country today and he and the President have the vision to resolve those problems.

"He projects the fact that he is experienced, knowledgeable, calm and clear thinking. you just know he knows what's going on. he's a real statesman."

"He is a smart, business minded man who has a positive outlook and a plan for our country. he comes across in a serious state, so, however, has a glimpse of humor when he wants to. he seems mature and knows what he is talking about."

A very truthful, sincere man who wants nothing but the best for our country. He is very happy with President Bush as his leader."

His experience on what has happened in the past and his knowledge of world involvement in international war and terrorism. their plans for making it better for the American citizens.

tough negotiator with the best plan for this country. had no qualms about taking on Edwards on and of the issues.. much more knowledgeable than his opponent. he talked from experience where many areas Edwards was clueless.

“He had experience and maturity in his answers,:

“Controlled and focused on answering the questions asked”

He’s a very capable VP, more personable than I thought. A hard worker, experienced”

MORE FAVORABLE TO BUSH (ON EDWARDS)

Although it was by no means all negative, respondents who became more favorable to Bush during the course of the debate largely dismissed Edwards as either too inexperienced for the job, or too slick. People often described him as a “smooth talker” and used the lawyer label. Most of people’s impressions were driven by character and not by issue positioning. There was also some criticism for repetition of John Kerry’s positions, and some of the usual debate criticism for not directly answering questions.

Inexperienced. I can’t envision him as a heart beat away from becoming the president.

Inexperience. Not a deep knowledge of international affairs. Someone I would be leery of becoming president if need be.

He seems like a nice young man, and that’s the problem, I don’t want a nice young man responsible for my safety and this country.

Snake oil salesman, smooth talking lawyer, used to trying to divert attention to his advantage. Not a good record in the Senate and harping on the same rhetoric over and over.

Slick Willy trial lawyer...Edwards did not give me the impression he has depth of either knowledge or depth as a person.

Glib lawyer without much government experience. it seems difficult to imagine him trying to manage the senate and perform the other duties of the VP let alone seeing him trying to run the country as president.

He wandered off the subject repeatedly...He seemed to be form and little substance.

A little confused and not at all what I expected of a trial lawyer in a debate. he skipped answering questions and basically used John Kerry's answers word for word

it seems to be Edwards does not have his own thoughts. he only pushes Kerry

But as noted, Edwards was still able to cut through to some of these respondents:

That he cares about helping the middle class get back on it's feet. he sees that we have been going after the wrong person responsible for 9/11. Saddam Hussein was a ruse for taking care of the instigator of 9/11. John Edwards was very confident and composed in his answers and kept on point with his views of the war on terrorism.

He is not as experienced as he could be but he will do everything he can to help this country get on the right track. He is honest.

He seemed to talk planer than the vice president. I mean that I could understand what he was saying. it was not so complicated

STRONG BUSH SUPPORTERS (ON CHENEY)

The reaction toward Cheney among strong Bush supporters was overwhelmingly positive. They felt Dick Cheney exuded strength and calm. Their comments were predominantly directed toward his competence and experience. This helped contribute to the sense that he would be a good President if called upon, and he knew how to protect America. There were virtually no references to Cheney's positions on domestic issues.

confident, in control, knowledgeable, team player

I think he is a very seasoned leader. He has strong convictions and knows the facts.

He appeared confident and methodical as he answered his questions. He has a calming effect on his listeners. I was impressed that he was here to aid the president with his experience and that he had no desire to be the president but would be able to do the job if called upon.

He presents himself as extremely confident in his answers, and what he believes.

A very calm deep thinker able to seriously answer the questions asked, and reply to remarks made by opponent. Much more reserved and mature and made sense in what he said.

Strong, gave full support to President Bush. Firm in their convictions. Full grasp of the issues.

STRONG BUSH SUPPORTERS (ON EDWARDS)

Strong Bush supporters were highly critical of Edwards, frequently echoing the general Republican critique of Edwards as a slick trial lawyer who lacks the experience necessary to lead the country. Their criticisms were character-based and did not delve much into his positions on issues. These hard core Republicans also came down hard on Edwards for his constant references to Kerry instead of demonstrating “what he brings to the table himself.”

Repetitious, on the offensive, youthful.

Not enough political experience. He reverted back to questions he wanted to answer, no what was pit before him

Cocky, slick, disrespectful, inexperienced

Young inexperienced man with words consistently used by running mate, not thoughts of his own. He didn't seem to be able to answer right off the questions asked, but as after thoughts went back to previous remarks the VP made.

Snake oil salesman, smooth talking lawyer, used to trying to divert attention to his advantage.

He is immature. He cannot speak for himself. Everything is what John Kerry says or does. He does not have the maturity or the ability to lead this country, should John Kerry be elected President, and something happen to him. On many issues he seemed to speak out of both sides of his mouth. Many questions he did not answer at all.

He is a typical Trial Lawyer trying to twist he truth.

WEAK BUSH SUPPORTERS ON (CHENEY)

Attitudes toward Cheney among weak Bush supporters were generally positive and supportive, reflecting the favorable comments of the strong Bush supporters but lacking some of their expressive enthusiasm. Like the strong Bush supporters, these

voters praised Cheney's calm and serious manner that reflects his respected experience. Though not prevalent, the Halliburton and big oil image did break through to some of the weak Bush supporters who were seeking reassurance that they did not receive.

Experience, savvy, cool under fire, no political agenda of his own.

His experience is just what President Bush needs.

His expertise shows, he knows how to defend his party. I would like to have had more answers on Halliburton

A level headed person with the ability to present clear and thoughtful information

I felt he was on the defensive through much of the debate. But he is extremely smooth and gets his points across very well. Sometimes Edwards didn't even feel the needle going in.

Calm, Confident and Straight to the point. Not on all things but most, he was direct and answered questions posed.

WEAK BUSH SUPPORTERS (ON EDWARDS)

Weak Bush supporters expressed mixed attitudes toward Edwards' debate performance. Some pointed to his inexperience and found him "smarmy" and a "slick trial lawyer," who was just trying to deliver Kerry's message. But others were impressed with Edwards' speaking and knowledge, and despite the sense that they did not want to like him, these weak Bush supporters grudgingly acknowledged their unexpected positive reaction to Edwards.

Smooth talker, confident in his ability to talk the talk, but I'm still not convinced that he can walk the walk - the trial lawyer side of him was definitely out tonight.

It appeared he was repeating the Democrat talking points rather than directly answering the question the moderator put to him. Also...he gave no credit to the Iraqis who are dying to bring peace, stability and democracy to their country. How can you build a coalition without them?

Just saying what everyone wants to hear and not what is actual going to be done..trying to impress

He is young and inexperienced but did a good job tonight

I am impressed with his posture, he is very poised. I am proud that he is from the Great State of North Carolina. But, darn it, he should be more conservative. He has the same charm as Bill Clinton, he has a good heart. I believe him to be an

outsider to the true Democratic policies. They would use him and spit him out after they achieve their liberal goals using his face.

He was very strong, assertive and factful. He was confident that there were better ways to keep us safe and secure; with less repercussions. He impressed me a great deal. Also he convinced me that personal beliefs would not affect the fairness that would be available to everyone.

He has pretty good points, but you can tell his inexperience in politics.

He is very knowledgable and he is a good speaker

STRONG KERRY SUPPORTERS (ON CHENEY)

Strong Kerry supporters generally held views that Cheney could not be trusted and that four more years of the current administration would not offer change. He was viewed as well-prepared and articulate, but often coming across as arrogant. Strong-Kerry respondents also had doubts that Cheney could be trusted, often resulting from concerns on Halliburton and exaggerations on WMD's, Iraq and terrorism, and job growth.

He seemed uncomfortable and on the defense. He is promising more of the same government that we have now and that is not working. They have lied and the country is going down and he is not promising any change. He was defending the same policies that is in place now.

Dick Cheney is intelligent and strong in convictions, even though I don't agree with him. He is obviously self-assured and confident in his actions, whether right or wrong.

Tough customer, articulate at times, prone to exaggerate claims on Iraq, its WMDs, & its connection to al Qaeda. Less comfortable on topics other than terrorism & Iraq.

STRONG KERRY SUPPORTERS (ON EDWARDS)

Respondents that were strong-Kerry supporters viewed Edwards as honest and trustworthy, and also someone who was straightforward with them. These respondents generally saw Edwards as knowledgeable on the issues and an advocate for people like themselves.

I thought he came across as very sincere and honest as well as being in sync with his running mate-John Kerry. I believe he has what it takes to be an effective vice president. He appears to have strong convictions, yet not inflexible.

Edwards is more straight forward. He is also more trustworthy. I believe he can do more for the people of this country.

He is knowledgeable of the issues that are so important to me as an American. The solutions to the problems we are facing here at home and also abroad seem attainable. I feel that he and John Kerry would be strong advocates for me and my family.

WEAK KERRY SUPPORTERS (ON CHENEY)

Weak Kerry supporters were somewhat split in their impressions of Cheney overall. They acknowledged him has a strong, “authoritative,” and experienced Vice President, “loyal to Bush.” But there was hardly any sign of Weak Kerry supporters warming to him, repeatedly describing him as evasive, and saying the “same old stuff.”

Has the experience to do the job

Someone who offers the experience and the knowledge to apply to some of the issues he will be facing.

Arrogant, cocky, but strong

I think he was trying to help the people understand what the President was actually trying to do with our country.

Scripted and evasive

Somewhat evasive; no eye contact

Obscuring of actual topics by throwing up smoke screens regarding unrelated issues.

Defensive, shifty, not responding to points on record of administration's last four years.

I felt that he wasn't answering the questions as asked and he came off as unprepared

People also picked up on his split with Bush on the Marriage Amendment.

Not fully in agreement with President Bush's policies, particularly when it reaches personal levels

I also felt that he wasn't always on the side of the President

WEAK KERRY SUPPORTERS (ON EDWARDS)

There was evidence of a lot of enthusiasm for Edwards based on his performance in the debate. Weak Kerry supporters described Edwards as fresh, honest, and sincere, and a man with beliefs and convictions. Negatives were limited to experience, but the doubts were not serious enough to affect his eligibility for the job.

He is honest and trustworthy. I think he and John Kerry will do all they can to restore respect and trust back to America and regain respect for America from countries around the world

Offered new direction and hope for America

He wants more for the American people than just the same old thing and knows that improvement is needed.

There seems to be help for the American people, and the world.

Fresh ideals

young, eager for change

I felt he was honest and his goals were realistic.

came across as being a little more truthful about certain subjects

A man, a lawyer, who wants to be able to tell the truth...He seems honest, and eager.

Though I do not think he is as experienced as our current vice President, I believe that he could do the job.

A young man who would be able to take over as president if needed.