ndependent vote steers from Dole

WASHINGTON (AP) — By excluding him m the presidential debates, Ross Perot said nday that Bob Dole has "poisoned the atti-de" of millions of independent voters, a up Republicans desperately need to win the ite House and keep control of Congress.

But analysts also said that absence of the Texas in- pendent from the two de- es would give Dole a nce to make up his dou- -digit deficit in the polls going head-to-head with dent Clinton.

Dole

clearly makes it a one us another situation t will dramatize the dif- nces between the two or candidates," said Robert Schmuhl, e Dame professor of American studies rt Schmuhl.

eform Party nominee Perot said he ld file a lawsuit Monday to force his way to the debates, now scheduled for Oct. 6 d Oct. 16. And he warned that the deci- by the Commission on Presidential De- es to bar him from participation could iously backfire for Republicans.

Senator Dole, for his own self-interest, willing to sacrifice the Senate and House es so that he wouldn't have to confront Perot said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

Perot is thinking of his own interests, too, he noting that his underdog campaign will suffer without a nationally televised debate forum.

"Eighty million watch that debate. They know very pragmatically that if they can keep me out of the debate, then that diminishes my chances for success," Perot said on Fox News Sunday.

Larry Sabato, a professor of politics at the University of Virginia, said the commission's decision will give Clinton a "free ride" because "Perot will air most of his fire between now and the election on Dole to undermine him."

And come Election Day, independent swing voters might cast their ballots against Republicans, he added. "Dole is the guy who kept Perot out and that makes Dole the bad buy for Perot people."

The Dole campaign, which is thought to have more to lose from a strong Perot showing in the election, objected to Perot's participation. The debate commission, made up of five Republicans and five Democrats, agreed, saying the Texas billionaire should be left out because he doesn't have a realistic chance of winning the election.

The Clinton campaign was willing to have Perot participate, as he did in the 1992 presidential debates with Clinton and President Bush, but acceded to Republican demands that Clinton and Dole go one-on-one.

Representatives of the two campaigns agreed to debate Sunday Oct. 6 in Hartford, Conn., and Wednesday Oct. 16 in San Diego. Both debates will be 90 minutes. Each debate will have one moderator, but the San Diego showdown will be a town-hall format. There is also a vice presidential debate scheduled for Oct. 9 in St. Petersburg, Fla.

Dole campaign spokesman Nelson Warfield, trying to lower expectations for the former Senate majority leader in advance of the debates, told reporters Sunday that Clinton "comes in with substantial advantages."

Perot

"He's glib, he's agile, and he's willing to stake out positions unrestrained by the truth," Warfield said. "But we remain confident Senator Dole can hold his own."

Perot insisted that it was independents — Perot voters in 1992 — who gave Republicans the support needed to take control of Congress in 1994, and that Dole was squandering those votes by excluding him from the debates.

"It's going to be very very very difficult to get any independent voter excited about Republicans because of what Sen. Bob Dole did."

Perot said Dole had "poisoned the attitudes of millions of independent voters who put the Republicans in power."

"Here's a guy that's supposed to be a war hero, you'd think he'd be willing to stand up and talk to another person."

"If Bob Dole is afraid of something I'm pretty darn sure it's not Ross Perot," responded House Majority Leader Dick Armey, R-Texas, on NBC.

NRA targets financial situation

WASHINGTON (AP) — In signs continuing financial trouble, National Rifle Association has off 30 workers and suspend- production of its weekly cable evision program, according to A officials.

Two NRA board members said gun lobby has furloughed al- ost 10 percent of its roughly -employee work force in re- t weeks.

The group also is relocating aff in its headquarters building free space to rent to other com- anies, one board member said. goal: to generate enough ntal revenue to help cover pay- lls in coming months.

"There is no other reason for this than money problems," said one of the board members. The embers spoke on condition ir names not be used.

NRA spokesman Bill Powers uld not comment on layoffs ond an Aug. 26 press release t said the NRA was putting ewed emphasis on grass- ts initiatives.

To meet the growing demand the many programs of NRA, must continue to empower members ... in the communi- where our members live, rather than from a building near Washington's beltway," the release quoted Wayne LaPierre, the NRA's executive vice president.

That same day, LaPierre sent a letter to NRA board members notifying them of the group's "ongoing efforts to streamline headquarters operations."

In that memo, he announced

"We're exploring our options right now, and we'll have to wait and see what happens."

Chip Waller
NRA spokesman

the association's restructuring into seven divisions, with the popular Hunter Services division slated for elimination. And in an accompanying document, he said the changes mean "less of a demand for staff at NRA headquarters."

"Just as other major organizations and companies seek to improve efficiency, so too should the NRA," LaPierre wrote.

Cancellation of the television show, which cost the NRA at least $310,000 in 1995, is another sign of financial problems at the lobbying group, which has depleted most of its cash reserves and run deficits during much of the 1990s.

"Our contract was up in July, and right now they're showing reruns," said NRA spokesman Chip Walker. "We're exploring our options right now, and we'll have to wait and see what happens."

Since December 1994, the NRA has aired the hour-long public affairs show on the populist, conservative-oriented National Empowerment Television cable network, which reaches 12 million homes nationwide. Reruns have been running since July 30, when the old contract expired.

The key reason the contract was not renewed, NRA officials said, is that NET requested a significant rate increase.

"What they want to do, we would have real trouble paying for," one NRA official said.

While production of new shows has been suspended, NET general manager Bob Swanner said both groups "are exploring future options" in hopes of a new deal.

Swanner acknowledged the program's cost was one item under negotiation but said many others were as well, including the program's content and its broadcast schedule.

The NRA's financial woes stem from a multimillion-dollar campaign aimed at boosting membership.

The plan, which cut into cash reserves, backfired amid negative publicity. Last year, as membership reached 3.5 million, former President Bush quit the NRA after a fund-raising letter referred to federal agents as "jack-booted government thugs."

Since then, membership has dropped to about 2.8 million.

At the end of 1995, according to NRA financial records, the group's liabilities exceeded its assets by $44 million.

It reported it had about $49 million in cash and investments on hand at the end of 1995. But the bank holding the mortgage on its new headquarters in Fairfax, Va., requires the NRA to keep $36 million in cash, an arrangement that means the NRA can spend none of that reserve for day-to-day operations.

eltsin's bypass surgery scheduled

MOSCOW (AP) — Boris Yeltsin ushing for his bypass surgery e performed soon, but his ef surgeon said Sunday the cedure is too risky to rush and haps could be canceled.

Yeltsin had said the surgery uld take place at the end of ptember. However, Dr. Rinat churin said it may not be per- med until mid- to late Novem- r, depending on results of heart sts to be done this week.

Asked whether the surgery ght be canceled, Akchurin told Russian NTV network's Itogi ow: "It's possible, but we would ve to create (lifestyle changes) the patient which he himself uld not tolerate."

The intrigue surrounding ltsin's condition was ratcheted Saturday by Pavel Voshchanov, a journalist and former Yeltsin top aide who told Associated Press Television that the 65-year-old president has problems with his back, and with the hearing and blood vessels in his brain.

Dr. Sergei Mironov, the Kremlin's chief physician, denied last week that Yeltsin has major liver or kidney problems, but acknowledged other problems he said may complicate surgery. He did not identify them.

Yeltsin has been hospitalized since Sept. 13 for what aides said then would be a couple of days of pre-surgery tests. Akchurin said doctors are trying to improve Yeltsin's general heart condition.

But Akchurin told ABC News on Friday that Yeltsin had a heart attack this summer. Akchurin said Sunday that it actually was an attack of stenocardia that did not damage the heart.

The attack occurred, Akchurin said, while Yeltsin was campaigning in the Ural Mountains in June, but did not slow Yeltsin down.

Heart experts have said Yeltsin's surgery likely would be a triple bypass, but there has been no official word on its nature.

A team of doctors, including American cardiologist Michael DeBakey, is expected to make final decisions about the surgery after a Wednesday meeting and examination of Yeltsin.

Akchurin said Yeltsin will undergo echocardiography, an ultrasound test of the heart that determines how well it is functioning, and a radioisotopic myocardium exam, which shows whether damaged areas of the heart are still alive and, therefore, whether they can be surgically restored.

DeBakey left Houston on Sunday for Russia. He told reporters he knew little about Yeltsin's condition.

"I have formally been approached and invited to be a consultant," he said. "What that involves, I have to wait until I get there and see."

For Yeltsin, reported to have been a heavy drinker, doctors also may be dealing with liver disease, which thins the blood and complicates surgery, said Dr. Samin Sharma, director of interventional cardiology at The Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York. There is a danger that, even after the surgery, a patient could die from blood leaking out of cuts made by the doctor, he said.

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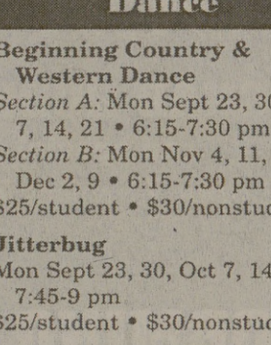

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