



Bush brought his whistle-stop tour through Burlington on Wednesday.

President

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"I think everyone should go [see Bush] regardless. It's exciting," Stika said.

David Jones, president of the College Republicans, said he had been helping the Burlington headquarters prepare for Bush's arrival.

"It's great that he was coming here. It's so important, especially so close to the elections," Jones said.

Officials from both towns have been busily preparing for Bush's visit. Elon Town Manager, Mike Dula said police officers were to be positioned at each railroad intersection an hour and a half before the president's arrival.

Burlington police began closing streets throughout downtown Burlington that surrounded Bush's whistle tour venue at 10:30 a.m.

Festivities planned to precede the president's arrival began at 3:30 p.m. included high school bands and the Elon Pep Band. Gates at Worth Street and Webb Avenue opened to the public at 3 p.m. and metal detectors were set up for added security of the event.

Burlington business owners have been getting ready for the

president's visit as well. Stores like Leon Gilliam and Son Farm and Garden Supplies located on the corner of Main and Market Streets were asked to lock doors that can be accessed from the roped off area on Main Street.

Arnold Gilliam, manager of Gilliam and Son said the Secret Service contacted him last week, informing him of the president's upcoming visit. None of the businesses close to the train stop were asked to close, but to detour store traffic to side doors.

A sign on the door of Burlington Pawnbrokers Inc. on Main Street announced that they would close at noon on Wednesday in honor of the president's visit.

Gene Hall, owner of City Furniture on Main Street said he was going to close about 3 p.m., just before the festivities began.

"I'm excited. It's something for the Commander-in-Chief to come to town. It makes you feel more patriotic," Hall said.

While some merchants were concerned with the affect blocking off certain streets would have on their business, Hall was not worried.

"If anything, it will help. People will be window shopping as they come by," he said.

Debates

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poll in his classes about the debates and found that only two out of 50 students had seen none of the televised debates.

"The debates have raised people's interest in the process," Colbert said. "As far as numbers go, however, nothing major has occurred."

According to a USA Today/CNN/Gallup Poll taken after the final debate, only 12 percent of the voters said that the debates changed their vote, with Perot gaining six percentage points, Clinton losing two points and Bush remaining unchanged.

Trailing by approximately 18 points in the ratings behind Clinton, the President needed a strong showing in the debates to narrow the gap.

"Bush was the obvious loser because he is behind and needs to jump," Colbert said. "Clinton didn't lose anything and that's all he needed to do."

Billionaire Ross Perot emerged as the unlikely media

darling in these debates, boosting his faltering approval ratings from 40 to 70 percent. Few believe,

however, that Perot's down-home approach will be enough to convert this new approval into votes.

"I feel that Ross Perot came off better than anyone," said senior Courtenay Houston, also a volunteer at Republican headquarters. "I'm not for him, but I think he spoke what he felt, which is what both of the candidates should have been doing all along."

"Bush did a nice job of defending himself, however, and hopefully his ratings will go up," Houston added.

The final debate brought about more aggressive attacks by the candidates, notably by Bush, in search of the elusive "knock-out punch."

"I think George Bush did much better (Monday night) than in the last two," said junior Shannon Moody, a registered

Republican. "He carried himself better and was much more confident and prepared."

"The debates strengthened our opinions (as decided voters), but for those who hadn't made a decision yet, this was probably the deciding factor," Moody said.

President of the College Democrats Greg Reisher noticed the new Bush spark but said it was too little, too late.

"George Bush, up until the third debate didn't look like he wanted to be in the race," Reisher said. "He came out hitting (Monday), but it didn't mean anything. It was too late and basically didn't affect the campaign."

With no clear winners in these debates, the candidates are back to square one with only two weeks left to make their last pleas to the public.

On November 3, the public will have the opportunity to make their own closing statements at the polls.

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