

Biden bows out, urges focus on key issues

By Tara Flockhart | Thursday, January 3, 2008 2:00 AM CST

DES MOINES - U.S. Sen. Joe Biden ended his campaign exactly how he started it - urging his supporters to stay committed to the issues at hand.

With less than 1 percent of Iowa's caucus vote, the Delaware candidate said he had no regrets about his presidential run and would return to the Senate as chairman of the foreign relations committee and continue to push the democratic party.

"I'm going to insist as a U.S. senator that they keep their commitment to the men and women currently in harm's way," Biden said. "I'll be their worst nightmare if they do not."

Biden, who joked that he slept through the caucuses, reassured more than 300 supporters Thursday night at the Des Moines Science Center that he was not going away anytime soon.

Iowa House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, who endorsed Sen. Biden, emphasized Biden's ability to unify both the Republicans and Democrats by obtaining support for his strategy on Iraq.

"Neither party has a cohesive vision for the war," McCarthy said. "But Biden's involvement in the debate has now led to 2/3 support in both the House and Senate. That's bigger than any political campaign."

Dan Scholer, who has caucused a total of three times, said the younger crowd and open field of candidates led to a more rowdy environment with almost double the turnout.

"It was more like a football game than a political game," said Scholer, an Iowa State alumni from Des Moines.

Scholer's support for Biden stems from his experience and ability to back up what he says rather than making empty promises.

"Biden is a candidate with substance," he said. "He is a 'thinking person's candidate.' "

Caucus supporters fought to the end for Biden, insisting that the night's results were not indicative of the race to come.

"Biden may not be viable yet, but his chance for president is right now," said Tom Rial, a campaign spokesperson, during a caucus speech at Merrill Middle School.

Although the final tally did not fall in his favor, Biden reiterated that there was nothing to be sad about.

"My reason for doing this is because I really do believe in this country," he said. "People deserve a government as good as they are."