



July 7, 2008

**Dems will stand on green principles
*7-foot-tall stage is enviro-friendly by design, they say***

There are decidedly few right angles in the stage design for the Democratic National Convention, fleetingly shown to reporters Tuesday at the Pepsi Center.

The podium rises nearly seven feet in the center of the arena in front of an arcing, high-resolution video wall.

While the color scheme wasn't announced, the stage, along with the rest of the convention, is taking on a green tinge.

"I'm so excited about this piece of it because we gave the production guidelines to our team and to our set designers earlier this year, saying these are our (environmental) standards," said Andrea Robinson, the convention's director of sustainability and greening.

Planners are trying to keep the final appearance of the stage under wraps until the convention opens.

The stage is being built in Las Vegas by entertainment design company PRG, which was given a mandate to rent used materials, including sustainable woods, and to recycle all materials when the stage is torn down.

Another stage may be built for Sen. Barack Obama's nomination acceptance speech at Invesco Field at Mile High. The convention committee has not yet made a commitment on that set's environmental parameters.

"In our industry, it's not often you have a client who specifically wants and is willing to make the economic sacrifices to do a show as green as possible," said Lincoln Maynard, PRG's general manager for scenic technologies. "Most clients want the (set) to be built, thrown in the Dumpster, and who cares."

The convention contract gave PRG the opportunity to develop environmentally conscious methods that Maynard hopes to pass on to other clients.

"We've researched new materials, we've taken new approaches, and we've maximized in every case the use of rental items," he said.

The set is constructed mainly of steel, wood and particle board, with paints that at most have low volatile organic compounds. Paints will be low-formaldehyde, satin sealer will be soy-based, and

any leftover paint will be used by PRG. No fiberglass or Styrofoam is planned for the set, Robinson said.

After the convention, the set will be dismantled with steel going to recyclers and wood going to companies that will resell it. The trucks transporting the set from Las Vegas will be powered by biodiesel.

The Democrats may gain politically from going green. But it costs money. Biodiesel is the biggest cost - 25 percent more than oil-based diesel, Maynard said, "You can be slightly green, you can be more green, you can be too green in that you can pay so much that it becomes unviable," he said.