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Bush leads ... in sales of canned beans
By DUNCAN MANSFIELD
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. -- Judging by the bean vote, President Bush could be on his way to a second term. A Tennessee company that has been in the chili business for more than 100 years is selling satirically packaged 15-ounce cans of beans for in honor of Republican Bush and Democratic Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts.

Every online order draws a vote, and the Republicans were ahead 2,402-2,316 as of Friday.

"We don't call it scientific by any means," says Philip Connelly, president and chief executive of Vietti Foods Inc., of Nashville. "But it could be what they call a bellwether, one of those barometers of public opinion."

For Republicans, a grinning cartoon elephant graces Vietti's "Conservative Republican Texas Chili Beans" on a label promising "Dubya would love!" them. The counterpoint is a smiling donkey on Vietti's "Liberal Democrat Boston Baked Beans," described as "liberally spiced Boston beans married to a rich ketchup-based sauce," presumably Heinz. Kerry's wife, Teresa Heinz Kerry, is heir to the $500 million Heinz food fortune.

"Let's make sure no Kerry-bashing, meat-eating, fur-wearing, gun-toting, oil-drilling, SUV-driving, Limbaugh-listening, conservative Republican, capitalist pig gets elected," the Boston baked beans bellow.

To which the Texas chili beans counter: "Let's make sure no Bush-bashing, tofu-eating, tree-hugging, government-loving, NPR-listening, Hollywood-hobnobbing, animal activist, bleeding heart, left wing socialist gets elected."

The beans went on sale at $9.95 for a case of 12 in early September, around the time of the Republican convention.