

OCPA FaxLine Report

a public policy information service for members of the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, Inc.

Dear OCPA Member:

Wednesday, September 10, 2008

Any objective person viewing the national news media's recent reporting leading up to and following the political conventions, must certainly realize we are witnessing some of the most blatant evidence of media bias that has ever occurred during a presidential campaign. There's clear evidence that such bias has been happening for some time. Last November, *Investor's Business Daily* (IBD) reviewed the results of a joint survey and found that in covering the upcoming presidential race, the media was sympathetic to Democrats while being hostile to the Republicans. IBD correctly asserts that the groups who conducted the survey, Project for Excellence in Journalism and Harvard's Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, are hardly bastions of conservative orthodoxy.

Media Tone of Coverage			
Percent of all stories, by party			
Newspapers	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Democrats	58.8%	30.0%	11.3%
Republicans	26.4	34.0	39.6
Network evening news			
Democrats	39.5	43.4	17.1
Republicans	18.6	44.2	37.2
PBS news			
Democrats	8.3	66.7	25.0
Republicans	0	77.8	22.2
Cable news			
Democrats	33.9	40.6	25.5
Republicans	28.7	40.9	30.4
NPR's "Morning Edition"			
Democrats	41.2	52.9	5.9
Republicans	30.0	50.0	20.0

Sources: Project for Excellence in Journalism; Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy

In comments about the survey IBD says, "Democrats are not only favored in the tone of the coverage. They get more coverage period. This is particularly evident on morning news shows, which 'produce almost twice as many stories (51% to 27%) focused on Democratic candidates than on Republicans.'

"The most flagrant bias, however, was found in newspapers. In reviewing front-page coverage in 11 newspapers, the study found the tone positive in nearly six times as many stories about Democrats as it was negative. . . .

"Reviewing 154 stories on evening network newscasts over the course of 109 weeknights, the survey found that Democrats were presented in a positive light more than twice as often as they were portrayed as negative. Positive tones for Republicans were detected in less than a fifth of stories while a negative tone was twice as common. . . ."

IBD also notes that, "The gap between Democrats and Republicans narrows on cable TV, but it's there nonetheless. Stories about Democrats were positive in more than a third of the cases, while Republicans were portrayed favorably in fewer than 29%. Republican led in unfriendly stories 30.4% to 25.5%. . . .

"The anti-GOP attitude also lives on National Public Radio's 'Morning Edition.' There, Democrats were approvingly covered more than a third as often as Republicans. Negative coverage of Democrats was a negligible 5.9%. It seemed to be reserved for Republicans, who were subject to one-fifth of the program's disparaging reports."

Is it any wonder the national news media is bemoaning rapid losses of readership and audience when their only products, accuracy and objectivity, are found to be defective?

Until next time. . . Brett A. Magbee, Vice President for Operations

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