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References

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Point: The Media has a Liberal Bias.

Thesis: The American media is largely biased against conservative Republicans. Therefore, conservatives should obtain their news from fair and balanced sources, which may include less mainstream alternatives such as blogs, or websites.

Summary: There is a bias against conservatives among the major network media outlets in the United States. The media reflects bias in both its reporting and coverage decisions. The liberal media appears to enjoy mocking conservative figures and blaming conservatives for problems in society. Journalism should be fair, balanced and impartial, but it is nearly impossible to find coverage of this type in the mainstream media outlets. In order to obtain objective, accurate and fair information, the public must seek out alternative news sources, including less mainstream outlets such as blogs.

The War in Iraq

Media coverage on the war in Iraq has been a consistent example of bias in network news and popular media outlets. Republicans and Democrats are characterized as hopelessly divided about the aims and conduct of the war and the time frame for troop withdrawal. Information regarding liberal politicians supporting legislation that would encourage the current administration to end the war is highlighted as breaking news. Statements published in the media attributed to the former president, George W. Bush, suggested that he would not bring home the armed forces according to any fixed schedule.

These broadcasts would not have necessarily constituted a liberal bias if they were balanced with reports of successes in Iraq and examples of heroism in the conduct of those currently

serving in the war. Alternatively, if these stories were presented objectively, and both sides of the issue were revealed, it would not be considered bias. Unfortunately, that is not the case. In addition to open bias, war coverage itself emphasizes the negative side of any reported situation. The nightly news emphasizes each casualty in an effort to make the public sympathetic toward the anti-war movement. Mainstream news sources never mention that the number of American casualties in the Iraq War is remarkably low compared to other wars. For positive or unbiased coverage of the war in Iraq, the public must resort to finding more creative news sources, such as blogs, or privately-operated websites.

Embarrassing the Right

A key characteristic of liberal bias in the media is the tone or angle which is regularly employed whenever conservative figures or politicians find themselves at the center of an embarrassing or awkward situation. A February 11, 2006, hunting accident involving Vice President Dick Cheney is a perfect example of such media bias. Rather than presenting the data in sympathetic terms or with a neutral voice, the media responded with suspicion and doubt. On the evening of February 13, 2006, MSNBC online ran a story entitled "White House under fire over Cheney shooting: Texas ranch owner revealed story to media nearly a day after the incident." The article did not relate the details of the incident so much as it critiqued the actions and decisions of the vice president and other officials. The article called into question the timeline of the incident and particularly how the news media was alerted.

Meanwhile, CNN focused on the time that elapsed between the incident and Cheney's public remarks, and also raised questions about Cheney's sobriety at the time of the incident. The story, which was presented as a Republican cover-up rather than a matter of serious concern over the man who was shot, or the guilt the vice president was experiencing, quickly became fodder for late-night talk show hosts. The *Wall Street Journal* online ran an article just one day after Cheney's public statement entitled, "Cheney Accident Triggers Jokes on Late-Night TV." Rather than chastising such mockery, the online article ran over thirty different jokes from popular late-night comedians.

The liberal media also takes every opportunity to blame conservatives for the ills of the world. In 2006, when gas prices slowly declined from record highs, the liberal news media consistently reported the falsehood that falling prices at the pump were the direct result of a Republican conspiracy aimed at making voters believe that it was safe to vote Republican. At the same time, news outlets assured consumers that they should expect gas prices to begin climbing as soon as the elections were over. This conspiracy theory was presented by major media outlets nationwide.

Many of these reports emphasized a USA Today/Gallup Poll indicating that 42 percent of voters interviewed believed that President Bush was manipulating gas prices to benefit Republican candidates. Ultimately, the 2006 elections were a sweeping win for the Democratic Party, and gas prices still rose after the elections. An article from the *Denver Post*, which ran November 4, 2006 and was reprinted on Infowars.com, a website dedicated

to unbiased reporting, included an impartial questioning of the conspiracy theory, and offered information suggesting that the gas fluctuations might relate more to the Goldman Sachs commodities index than to the actions of the Republican Party.

"Fair and Balanced"

If media outlets are typically biased toward liberals, that does not mean that conservatives should turn to news sources that are biased toward conservatives. Bias is bias, and is never helpful in journalism. Outside of the context of an editorial, journalism should be fair, balanced, and objective. An honest attempt should be made to tell both sides of a story, and the personal views of network, magazine, or newspaper executives should be undetectable to the general public.

The manner by which media outlets select the stories they feel are newsworthy is another form of bias. The media typically covers only those stories that glorify the liberal side of an issue or that mock the conservative position. This habit of demonstrating bias is unprofessional at best, and at worst, it means actual, intentional cover-ups by media outlets. Bias prevents these outlets from presenting nationally-relevant stories if they prove contrary to liberal ideas, or if they could invoke protest from conservative voices.

In July 2007, a simple Google search on the keyword "superhighway," six of the top ten returned results related to the possible construction of a North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) superhighway connecting Canada, the United States, and Mexico. At the same time, a search through the CNN.com news archives for "NAFTA superhighway" returned zero results. A simple search for the word "superhighway" returned over two hundred results, none of which were related to the possible construction of a NAFTA superhighway. This case exemplifies a situation where the media does not want to draw attention to the actions of conservative officials when their practices agree with liberal objectives. Liberal media outlets would rather avoid covering stories that credit conservatives in any way.

Given the severity of this type of journalistic slant, the only viable solution for conservatives interested in the whole truth is to seek reliable, non-biased news outlets, or to round out their media input by finding programs that emphasize a conservative bias. This may include network programs such as Fox News, but may also include more creative solutions such as news websites and blogs including the Drudge Report, World Net Daily, and Instapundit, all of which attempt broad, unbiased reporting on all manner of subjects.

Ponder This

1. In your opinion, does the author's NAFTA superhighway example effectively support the argument for a liberal-media bias? Explain.
2. The author asserts that "Bias is bias [regardless of whether it is liberal or conservative] and is never helpful in journalism." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not?

3. Can you tell whether the author is conservative or liberal based on the content of this essay? If so, do you think that the essay itself exhibits bias? If not, do you consider the essay to be fair and balanced?

4. Describe the difference that the author implies between media bias in reporting news and media bias in news coverage decisions. Which do you think has a greater effect on the bias of a particular media outlet?

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