



Media Reality Check

From America's Media Watchdog: A Regular Report on Major News Stories Distorted or Ignored

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Networks Protest Arizona's Immigration Law With Cameras and Microphones

MRC Study: By Almost 10 to 1, ABC, CBS, and NBC Stories Support Amnesty for Illegal Aliens in Arizona

The TV networks have aggressively demonstrated their dislike of Arizona's state law "cracking down on illegal immigrants," a law that "pits neighbor against neighbor." An MRC review of morning and evening news programs on ABC, CBS, and NBC from April 23 to July 25 found the networks have aired 120 stories with an almost ten-to-one tilt against the Arizona law (77 negative, 35 neutral, 8 positive).

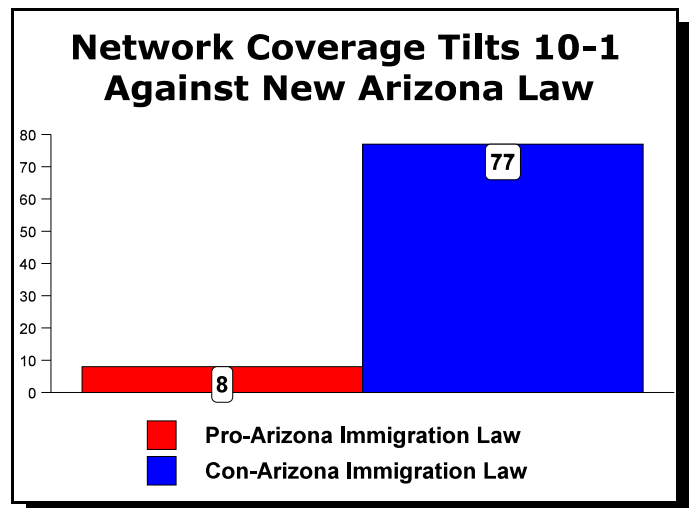


The soundbite count was also tilted over the last three months — 216 to 107, or an almost exact two-to-one disparity. Network anchors and reporters sided against defenders of border control and championed sympathetic illegal aliens and their (usually American-born) children. In 120 stories, they never described "immigrants rights activists" as liberals or on the left.

Between them, the three networks described the Arizona law as "controversial" on 27 occasions, despite its popularity in opinion polls. The Obama administration's decision to sue file a lawsuit against Arizona to crush the law was never described as "controversial."

Stories were evaluated as positive or negative if the talking-head count (and the themes forwarded by the reporter) slanted at more than a 1.5 to 1 ratio in favor of either side. A number of network reports were either unanimously in favor of illegal immigrants or tilted by ratios like ten to one (as in one NBC report).

On May 19, all three networks highlighted how Michelle Obama sympathized with a second-grader who said her mother doesn't have any citizenship papers and "Barack Obama is taking everybody away that doesn't have papers."



Slant of immigration stories on ABC, CBS and NBC morning and evening news programs, April 23 - June 25.

Mrs. Obama replied, “We have to fix that.” ABC anchor Diane Sawyer underlined that “a child’s fear brings a new focus to the debate” since “the First Lady had to respond to a child’s poignant question” which, reporter Jake Tapper relayed, “immigration reform advocates called...the most meaningful exchange of the day.”

This school visit was part of a trip by Mexican President Felipe Calderon, who attacked the Arizona law both at the White House and before a joint session of Congress, where he received a standing ovation from congressional Democrats, Attorney General Eric Holder, and Homeland Security secretary Janet Napolitano. Calderon’s remarks on Capitol Hill drew speeches of protest from congressional Republicans like Rep. Tom McClintock, who pointed out Calderon was a hypocrite since Mexico’s immigration laws are “brutally exclusionary.” But only ABC noticed Calderon’s speech, and Diane Sawyer only highlighted his accusations of imported American guns causing violent crime in Mexico.

The networks highlighted the “army” of protesters against the Arizona law and ignored their sometimes radical connections. As with sympathetic media coverage of large amnesty rallies in 2006, none of the stories allowed anyone to suggest it was improper for illegal aliens to petition the government whose laws they’re breaking or cancel out the votes of law-abiding citizens.

On May 30, ABC anchor David Muir asked, “Will an army of protesters be heard?” Reporter Jeremy Hubbard began his story for *World News*: “In their most massive numbers yet, a deluge of adversaries rally and rail against what could soon be the law of the land in Arizona.”



On NBC, Telemundo correspondent Janet Rodriguez featured a woman holding a sign from the far left Answer LA. Rodriguez, however, described her simply as “from Long Beach.” The woman smeared opponents as “racists.”

Network correspondents routinely mourned how illegal aliens didn’t feel welcome in Arizona, and felt they had to move back to Mexico or other friendlier states. On July 8, NBC reporter Lee Cowan sympathized with Marcial Bolanos, who didn’t think Arizona was a good place any more. “He took his 15-year-old son out of school and is headed back to Mexico, which brings Hugo to tears. But you’re really going to miss your friends?” Hugo said “Yeah.” The networks didn’t apply this blatant emotional appeal on behalf of families who’ve lost loved ones in crimes committed by illegal aliens.

In 18 of 120 stories, the networks mentioned the public opinion polls, in which broad majorities favor the Arizona law. One poll question the networks didn’t ask was if it might seem odd for the Obama administration to sue Arizona for trying to enforce immigration laws, but would not sue cities that vowed to ignore immigration laws, which call themselves “sanctuary cities.”

A Rasmussen poll found 54 percent favored the Justice Department suing “sanctuary cities,” and 61 percent favored cutting off federal aid to them. But the three networks haven’t used the words “sanctuary city” since 2007, when it was a hot topic in the Republican primary debates. It was never mentioned, so was never described as “controversial.”

– Tim Graham