



Campaign 2000

Media Reality ✓ Check

Expert Documentation of the Latest Liberal Media Bias ☆ Tuesday, October 17, 2000

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State Comptroller Not Allowed To Respond, Even Though She Was Cited As Source By Gore Backers

Media Malpractice on Texas Health Care

Are the networks really trying to help George W. Bush? That was the preposterous concern on last night's *CBS Evening News*, as correspondent Bill Whitaker fretted that heavy international news coverage has aided the GOP. "Bush has already benefitted from the foreign flare up," Whitaker stated. "Last Thursday, the day after the second joint appearance, all eyes were on the Middle East, not on the candidates' mistakes."

What mistakes? Whitaker only related the claim of a trio of Texas Democrats that Bush was wrong when he stated last Wednesday night that "we spend \$4.7 billion a year on the uninsured in the state of Texas."

"These are the most misleading statements in the campaign to date," steamed state Rep. Elliot Naishtat. CBS offered no chance for the Bush campaign or other Texas officials to rebut the partisan Naishtat.

The same attack was relayed in briefer form on ABC's *World News Tonight* and the *NBC Nightly News*. On CNN's *Inside Politics* correspondent Tony Clark quoted four critics and zero supporters in his review of Bush's Texas record. After showing the clip of Bush saying that \$4.7 billion was spent on health care for the uninsured, Clark interrupted: "Yet the Texas comptroller reports three-fourths of that is from charity care provided by doctors and hospitals and paid for by local governments and charitable institutions, not the state."

Democrat Naishtat also cited the 1999 comptroller's report, and watching CNN and CBS, you'd never know that the Texas state Comptroller Carole Keeton Rylander declared yesterday that the critics are wrong and Bush is "absolutely correct when he says in the state of Texas we spent \$4.7 billion a year for uninsured people."

Let's go to the videotape: Bush never claimed that all the spending was state controlled, only that uninsured Texans received necessary medical attention. He was trying to knock down the false image that's been conjured by Democrats that the uninsured don't receive health care.

According to Ms. Rylander, "the point is that the uninsured are being treated and taken care of in the state of Texas. That's the bottom line."

Neither CNN nor CBS even hinted at Rylander's rebuttal, and Whitaker made it plain in his story that he agreed with the Gore campaign complaint that Bush had gotten a freebie from the TV networks.

"All of this is especially frustrating to the Gore camp, because after the first debate Gore was deemed the winner, but dropped in the polls after opponents and pundits pointed out his mistakes and exaggerations," Whitaker empathized.

It's pretty obvious that the Democrats are going to try and paint Bush as at least as gaffe-prone as Gore, and that they plan to discredit the Texas health care system in the process. That's politics, of course. But fair journalists would show, not censor, the state official who's a source for the critics, especially when she disagrees with their criticism.

Absent such basic fairness, it's silly to argue that the networks are suffering from a pro-Bush bias. — *Rich Noyes, Director of MRC's Free Market Project.*

...And About Those Uninsured Texans

"There are more than 40 federal health care service programs that fund health services for the uninsured in Texas. The largest single program — spending more than \$1.5 billion dollars a year — is the disproportionate share hospital (DSH) payment program, designed to compensate hospitals that serve a larger than average number of indigent patients. There are also programs for public housing residents, seasonal farm workers, legal immigrants and even undocumented immigrants. A 1985 federal law made it illegal to turn away hospital emergency patients in every state." — *Naomi Lopez Bauman and Devon M. Herrick, "Uninsured in the Lone Star State," National Center for Policy Analysis, August 29.*

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