



Media Fairness Initiative

A Look at Bias in the News



Media Exaggerate President's Approval Numbers 5/5/09

In their stories assessing President Obama's first 100 days in office, the national media have been quick to tout the President's supposedly high approval rating. But the facts are otherwise.

A Rasmussen poll released yesterday showed the President's approval rating at 55 percent and his disapproval rating at 43 percent. Fewer than half of voters say the President is doing a good job handling the economy. And only a third of voters think the President is governing on a bi-partisan basis.

The fact is that many Americans are not happy with the direction of the country under President Obama. The national media should take a break from patting the President on the back and report the facts objectively.

Media Ignore Americans' Conservative Shift

With a newly-elected Democratic President and a Member of Congress recently switching parties, the national media have taken every opportunity to report on the supposed demise of the Republican Party. Using terms like "right wing" and "fringe," the media have tried to imply that Americans have moved away from the Republican Party's values and priorities. But the facts tell a different story.

A new poll by the Pew Research Center shows Americans are, in fact, taking a conservative turn on issues like abortion and Second Amendment rights. The number of people who support legalized abortion has dropped to its lowest point ever in a Pew survey. And the number of people who say it is important to protect gun owners' rights increased to its highest point ever in a Pew survey.

Media Show Double Standard on Party Switchers

In his May 4 article in The Washington Post, media critic Howard Kurtz pointed out the media's double standard in reporting about Members of Congress who switch political parties:

"[News commentators'] analysis often turns on the direction of the defection. In 1994, when Democratic Sen. Richard Shelby switched parties days after the Republicans won control of Congress, a New York Times editorial said: **'Talk about slipping out of the hills to bayonet the wounded! . . . His desertion to the victorious Republicans this week was hardly a huge surprise.'** But when Jim Jeffords flipped control of the Senate to the Democrats by leaving the GOP in 2001, the Times said approvingly that the Vermont lawmaker had given George W. Bush **'an embarrassing lesson' for having pulled a 'conservative bait-and-switch' on the country.'**

Correspondent Carl Cannon, on AOL's new PoliticsDaily site, says conservatives are right in complaining that much of the media have **"a double standard regarding party-switchers. . . . When Republicans morph into Democrats, we tend to act like they finally saw the light, and quote them ad nauseam about how the Republican Party has gotten too narrow, etc., etc."** But when a Democrat joins the GOP, **"we concentrate on the tactical advantage to the party switcher."**