



Media Fairness Initiative

A Look at Bias in the News



Media Give Obama Pass on Economy

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The U.S. Department of Labor last week announced that the unemployment rate rose to 9.4 percent in May – higher than the Obama Administration predicted it would rise if Congress failed to pass the President’s stimulus package. But the national media put a positive spin on the news, pointing out that the 345,000 jobs lost in May were fewer than anticipated and provided hope for the future.

For example, The New York Times last week claimed that the 9.4 percent unemployment rate was “amplifying hopes of recovery.”

In addition, the media have downplayed the fact that the price of oil has doubled since Inauguration Day and gas prices have increased 75 cents per gallon. In contrast, the media frequently connected former President Bush to rising gas prices during his term.

Media Ignore Sotomayor’s Comments

In 2001, Judge Sonia Sotomayor controversially implied that a Latina woman would reach a better conclusion in deciding cases than a white male. The White House has characterized the statement as one Judge Sotomayor would like to have back.

However, according to a report that surfaced last week, Judge Sotomayor said virtually the same thing on several other occasions.

Although the Associated Press mentioned Judge Sotomayor’s 1994 statement in several articles last week, **major newspapers like The New York Times and The Washington Post completely ignored them. There was also no mention of her comments during the evening news programs the day after the story broke.**

The Two Worst Media Quotes

1) “I mean in a way Obama’s standing above the country, above – above the world, he’s sort of God.”
– *Newsweek* editor Evan Thomas, June 5, 2009

2) “This was as sleazy a presentation by a Vice President as we’ve had since Spiro Agnew. This was an absolute abomination ... This guy just has to lie from beginning to end through his setup of his opposition’s position in order to advance any of his ideas at all, none of which have any proof to them at all ... This is the kind of sleazy arguing that this guy does in these speeches. It is just ridiculous. It is an insult to the intelligence of anyone who’s listening to him.”

– NBC political analyst Lawrence O’Donnell on a speech by former Vice President Cheney, May 21, 2009

