



## Media Bias Comes Out in Many Ways

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*"I invite journalists – and supporters – to RT: We have America's back. We are not the enemy."*

**Randy Ludlow, Columbus Dispatch Reporter**

*"[W]hen you look at history, the first thing that dictators do is shut down the press. And I'm not saying that President Trump is trying to be a dictator. I'm just saying we need to learn the lessons of history."*

**John McCain, Republican U.S. Senator and failed Presidential candidate**

Both of the above quotes were in response to President Donald Trump referring to the media as "the enemy" at a campaign event. Without a doubt, the use of the word enemy was too strong, but Trump's overall point rings all-too-true; namely, the media is little more than a wing of the Left and it does an enormous disservice to the American people in how it exercises its critical First Amendment freedom. It simply isn't true that the media has "America's back." There is a reason I coined the term JINOs in 2012 to refer to [Journalists in Name Only](#).

As the saying goes, with great power comes great responsibility. When it comes to politics, the media is irresponsible and Trump's criticism of the media is proper. Many politicians have alleged bias against the media going all the way back to our country's founding. In fact, throughout history many media outlets outwardly served as mouthpieces of political parties.

After serving as the moderate media darling (**read:** critical of fellow Republicans) during George W. Bush's presidency and the Republican primary in 2008, the media turned its powers on McCain once he became the nominee (like they do on every Republican nominee), thereby easing the path for Barack Obama's victory. Governor John Kasich now serves in that same role given his penchant to focus his criticism over the last two years at fellow Republicans, especially Trump. Seriously, when is the last time you heard Kasich criticize a Democratic politician?

The truth is that media bias is both overt and covert. Their bias comes out not just in how they write or tell news stories, but equally important it comes out in what they choose to cover. In terms of the former aspect, their bias emanates in four ways. First, as borne out by [a review following the 2016 presidential election](#), the media's coverage of Trump was far more negative than its coverage of Hillary Clinton. They also ask center-left candidates (if they are not already feeding them the questions in advance as reporters did for Clinton) [far easier questions](#) than center-right candidates get or [treating both sides differently](#).

Next, they subtly use words to tip readers/viewers off. When referring to a free market or center-right group, they use "conservative" or "libertarian," but when referring to a progressive group, they use "non-partisan." Another example comes from an experience I recently had running an [op-ed in the Cleveland Plain Dealer](#). Without letting me know, the editor slipped in the words "self-published" to my byline to refer to my book, [Taxpayers Don't Stand a Chance](#).

Why is how my book was published relevant? It wasn't, but the editor wanted to signal to readers that my op-ed shouldn't be taken too seriously because, after all, I couldn't get my book published by a publisher. Had she asked me, I would have told the editor that, unlike my first book which did have a publisher, I wanted to control the timing and price of the second book in order to ensure that it came out when I wanted it to and at a price affordable to Main Street Ohioans to ensure wide distribution. Because of the publisher's schedule and profit needs, my first book came out nearly a year after it was done and at a shocking price of \$49.95.<sup>1</sup> By self-publishing, my second book came out just days after final edits at a price of just \$10.00, selling far more copies than my overpriced first book.

The third way media bias comes out in selecting who they quote on the center-right. Rarely will you read/see a hardcore left-winger interviewed by the media. You will, however, read/see hardcore right wingers in the media because they make outlandish or extreme statements that allow the media to portray the Right as unhinged or crazy. This practice reached new levels with the rise of the Tea Party in 2010. I vividly recall a meeting I hosted with journalists and Trump voters where a JINO kept asking the same loaded question hoping an attendee would confirm the belief she had that there was planned violence if Trump lost. Ironically, it was the Left that engaged in violence after Clinton lost.

The final overt way media bias comes out is where the center-right voice gets placed in the story. Typically, that person's quote comes in near the end of the story when readers have stopped reading. This action allows them to check-the-box of presenting both sides and is their "evidence" of neutrality. As with restaurants, location is everything in the media, as many readers stop reading before the end of the article once they get the gist of the piece.

On the covert side of the issue, media bias is evidenced by what they choose to cover. It is well-known that the media conveniently ignores or downplays errors and embarrassing actions from Democratic politicians (**see:** Obama's numerous misstatements such as America having 57 states), but will beat the horse dead when it comes to the same actions from Republicans (**see:** Dan Quayle's now infamous potato incident).

Less well known is the coverage of reports from groups on the Left compared to groups on the Right. As I [detailed in my second book](#) (see link for the chapter excerpt), the big six news media ignored report-after-report published when I ran the Buckeye Institute, as they covered many of the reports from left-wing groups. Five years later, that practice is still in force as only two reports issued by Opportunity Ohio and, I believe, one report from the Buckeye Institute received media coverage since I wrote the book.

The media has used this practice especially with the coverage of Medicaid. If Ohioans received their news from just the media, they would be shocked to learn that Medicaid expansion isn't the greatest act in Ohio history. From mid-2012, Opportunity Ohio [released thirteen pieces](#) critical of Medicaid, ranging from in-depth policy reports to surveys of Ohioans to a video. The Buckeye Institute [released fifteen policy](#) reports, briefs, and testimony on Medicaid. The media didn't cover any of these items, yet reports from the Left received coverage when released.

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<sup>1</sup> When given the opportunity, I bought the copyright from the publisher so I could issue a [second edition](#) priced under \$10.00. Like my second book, I self-published [my third book](#) for the same reasons. For the record, I donate 100% of all book royalties to charity, so price matters much less to me than spreading the ideas far and wide.

Similarly, on a broad range of issues, Opportunity Ohio [published over 250 pieces](#) over the last 4.5 years and the media [managed to cover two items](#): one story on a government salary tool and one item jointly done with the progressive group Progress Ohio on redistricting reform. During the same time, The Buckeye Institute [released nearly 100 policy](#) reports, policy briefs, testimony, and legal briefs. Other than being quoted in a few stories, the media covered [a single item from the Buckeye Institute](#) when it ran a piece on its report criticizing a funding request for the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.<sup>2</sup>

This failure to cover the work from center-right groups demonstrates the media's covert bias at its worst. Why? Because it deprives citizens of all of the facts and ideas available, thereby subverting the democratic process. If the media truly executed its role responsibly, our civic trust in them would be much higher and our civic debate much richer.

After all, Opportunity Ohio uniquely leveraged available data to predict the following events:

- The [enrollment under Medicaid expansion would far exceed Governor Kasich's estimates](#), thereby putting an [increasing strain on the budget](#) in future years;
- Ohio's private sector would be [mired in mediocrity](#) regardless of the [efforts by JobsOhio](#) and the [impact of personal income tax cuts](#);
- The [excessive spending](#) over the [Kasich years that outpaced inflation and tax revenue](#) growth would [lead to deficits](#) despite [media reports](#);
- Threatening Ohio's nascent energy industry with [repeated tax hikes](#) would [quell drilling activity](#) and chase them [over the border to Pennsylvania](#); and
- Failing to rein in public sector pay, benefits, and pensions would [force tax hikes and lead to a pension bailout](#).

Despite being proved right on every one of those predictions except the pension crisis still to come, the media failed to report on those predictions, giving cover to Governor Kasich because he mostly did what they liked – expanded government and increased spending. Even now, the media refuses to give Opportunity Ohio credit for its years of consistently accurate policy work.<sup>3</sup>

Thankfully, we don't do our vital work to get accolades from the media. We do it to educate citizens. Despite the media blackout, in 2016, we educated over 11.3 million Americans on key issues and already have reached over 500,000 Ohioans in 2017. The reality is that what the media report is increasingly biased and irrelevant to Main Street Americans. Trump should continue to use his First Amendment right to criticize the media's biased use of its First Amendment right...just as other presidents have done throughout history.

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<sup>2</sup> Editorial pages have routinely run op-eds from Opportunity Ohio and The Buckeye Institute. As I detail in the [excerpt from Taxpayers Don't Stand a Chance](#), at the same time the news side ignored the two organizations, the editorial side repeatedly cited and hosted op-eds on work being done by both groups.

<sup>3</sup> Because we have criticized Kasich's failed policies such as tax-shifting, expanding government, increasing spending, and failed job growth initiatives, several media outlets have told us that the Kasich Administration has pressured them to ignore our work or risk not getting access to Governor Kasich.