



Late-Night Comics Skewer Republicans 7-to-1, Study Finds

If you're a fan of Jay Leno or David Letterman, you may already know this: You have to listen to seven Republican jokes for every one the late-night comedians tell about Democrats.

By Jennifer Lawinski
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John McCain is slated to return to "Late Show With David Letterman" Thursday night, but should the onetime media favorite be preparing for an ambush?

A study shows the Kings of Late Night are not equal-opportunity destroyers this year when it comes to telling jokes about the candidates for president and vice president -- they're hammering Republicans a stunning seven times more often than they skewer Democrats.

The Center for Media and Public Affairs, a media analysis group, kept a tally of jokes told about the presidential contenders on the "Late Show" and "The Tonight Show With Jay Leno" in the five weeks after McCain chose Sarah Palin to be his running mate and vaulted the little-known Alaska governor into the national spotlight.

The total: Republicans, 286. Democrats, 42.

"Generally the Republicans get targeted much more often than Democrats, but this election is driving it off the charts," said CMPA Executive Director Donald Rieck.

Letterman and Leno told 106 jokes about McCain and 180 about Palin in the 25 shows that aired between Aug. 29, when McCain chose her, and Oct. 2, the date of the vice presidential debate.

Barack Obama, who may be Leno's guest next week, was targeted only 26 times -- barely once a night. His gaffe-prone running mate, Joe Biden, who is scheduled to appear on Leno Thursday night, was hit only 16 times, not even one-tenth the number of jokes told about Palin over the five-week period.

McCain's date with Letterman Thursday comes weeks after he canceled a scheduled appearance in September that left the late-night comedian hopping mad.

The Republican candidate canceled his appearance so he could go to Washington to deal with the economic crisis. While recording his show, Letterman learned that McCain was still in New York, doing an interview on the CBS Evening News, and he spent much of his show skewering the Republican who stood him up.

Palin also has taken a big hit from the late-night comedians -- and from Saturday Night Live, where Tina Fey's parody of the vice presidential candidate has skyrocketed the show's ratings. It is rumored that Palin will make an appearance on SNL on Oct. 25.

"Palin's just a bonanza for these guys," said Rieck. "You have a woman who shoots wolves from a helicopter; whether she's a Democrat or Republican, that's just a bonanza. Biden's kind of boring compared to that, isn't he?"

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