



No Doubt About It: All But Fox News Tipping Obama's Way



By Rich Noyes (Bio | Archive)
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Yes, the media are rooting for Barack Obama. Two studies out in the past couple of days show that it's not just conservatives who see a strong tilt by journalists in favor of the Democrats: A nonpartisan media monitoring group and a liberal-leaning research organization both confirm the pro-Obama, anti-McCain bias of ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN and MSNBC.

In reports this week, the **Center for Media and Public Affairs (CMPA)** and the Pew-funded Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ) found the most balanced campaign coverage was on the Fox News Channel, although PEJ claimed FNC's balance was actually a right-leaning bias, since it deviated from the "norm" of other big media:

In cable, the evidence firmly suggests there now really is an ideological divide between two of the three channels, at least in their coverage of the campaign.

Things look much better for Barack Obama -- and much worse for John McCain -- on MSNBC than in most other news outlets. On the Fox News Channel, the coverage of the presidential candidates is something of a mirror image of that seen on MSNBC.

Back in July, the nonpartisan **CMPA** delighted liberals with a study showing that McCain earned better press coverage than Obama in the first few weeks following the primaries. But CMPA's look at the general election is based on far more coverage (nearly 1,000 individual news stories) and shows a heavy slant in favor of Obama on ABC, CBS and NBC in coverage from August 23 through October 24.

CMPA found nearly two-thirds of soundbites on the three broadcast networks were pro-Obama (65%), while less than one-third could be rated as positive towards McCain (31%). An earlier report from CMPA (assessing coverage through the end of September) showed a similar level of good press for Obama, but pegged McCain's positive press at 36%, indicating that the networks have become even more hostile towards the Republicans in October.

In an October 31 report on the study, Associated Press TV writer David Bauder quoted CMPA's director bluntly summarizing the meaning of his study:

"For whatever reason, the media are portraying Barack Obama as a better choice for president than John McCain," said **Robert Lichter**, a George Mason University professor and head of the center. "If you watch the evening news, you'd think you should vote for Obama."

On Wednesday, the more liberal Project for Excellence in Journalism reported their breakdown of cable news coverage of the election, and it showed MSNBC was overwhelmingly tilted against John McCain and in favor of Barack Obama. Nearly three-fourths (73%) of MSNBC's McCain coverage was negative, compared to just 10% positive. For Obama, the good press outweighed the bad by a greater than 3-1 margin, 43% to 14%.

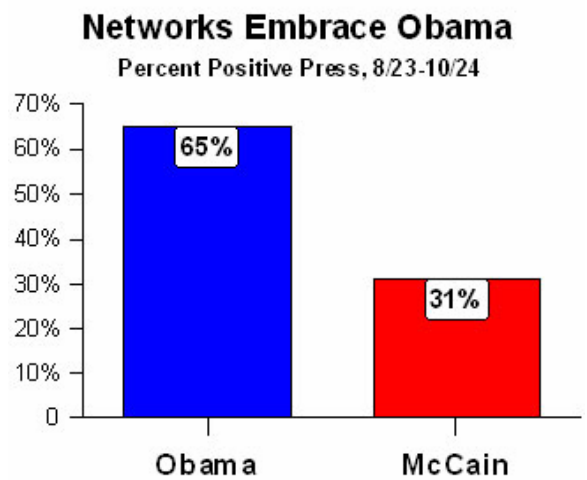
On CNN, McCain faced nearly five-to-one more bad news than good (13% positive vs. 61% negative), while Obama received much more balanced treatment — 36% positive stories vs. 39% negative stories.

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The bias has become apparent to nearly everyone. Last week, the Pew Research Center polled voters and found that “by a margin of 70 percent to 9 percent, Americans say most journalists want to see Obama, not John McCain, win on November 4.”

All that means is that 30% just aren't paying enough attention.

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