



# Media Reality ✓ Check

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Study: ABC, CBS and NBC Push Global Warming Alarmism, Purge Skeptics and Hide Economic Costs

## Morning TV's One-Sided Climate Crusade

**A**l Gore has complained that the media are biased against the inconvenient truth of global warming. "I believe that is one of the principal reasons why political leaders around the world have not yet taken action," Gore told a "Media Ethics Summit" at Middle Tennessee State University back in February. Gore lectured journalists that any coverage of views opposed to his own was irresponsible, calling it "balance as bias."

It's impossible to imagine the big TV networks actually accepting an edict from a conservative politician to report only their side of a major public policy issue, but a new Media Research Center study of ABC, CBS and NBC's global warming coverage finds the networks are giving Gore practically everything he demanded. Not only does nearly every global warming story exclude any contrary voices, but the coverage of Al Gore personally has been exceptionally positive as well.

MRC analysts examined all 115 news stories that dealt with global warming from January 1 through April 15 on NBC's *Today*, ABC's *Good Morning America* and CBS's *The Early Show*. These morning news programs had a combined audience of more than 13 million during the first three months of 2007. Unlike the networks' evening newscasts, the two- and three-hour morning shows have longer segments that should (in theory) make it easier to include multiple points of view on controversial topics. But MRC's analysts found just four stories out of 115 (just over 3%) contained any mention of dissent from Gore's approach to global warming — and even those stories were heavily stacked in favor of his "climate crisis" position.

### IGNORE COSTS, FOCUS ON DOOMSDAY

Climate change is not a settled issue. The regulatory remedies prescribed to tax or cap carbon dioxide emissions — the main human-generated "greenhouse gas" blamed for global warming — would have a severely damaging economic effect. A 1998 government study found the costs of abiding by the Kyoto Protocol would cost the U.S.

economy perhaps \$400 billion per year, far more than is annually spent on the Iraq war. Much disagreement remains over whether the science is certain enough to justify such drastic action, and whether the environmental benefits would actually outweigh the enormous economic costs.

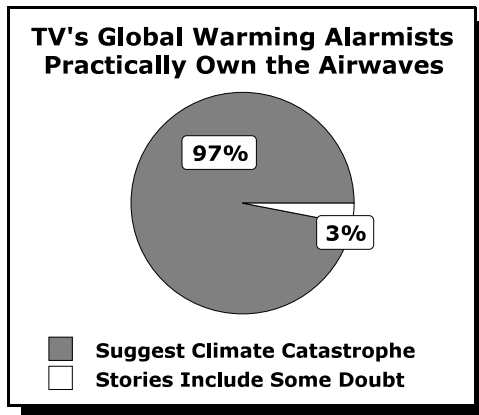
Despite the huge stakes, MRC analysts found TV ignored the economic debate while pretending the scientific debate is over. Just 12 stories (10%) even mentioned new regulatory proposals, and none of these dealt with the potential costs or consequences. Most references were extremely brief and presented new policies as logical common sense, such as on March 22 when ABC's Chris Cuomo summarized Gore's testimony from the day before: "Mr. Gore says if we start now, by the year 2050 greenhouse gases could be significantly reduced," never explaining what Gore had proposed.

While sidestepping the debate over new regulations, journalists helped hype a variety of dire global warming scenarios. Just under half the stories (56) presented alarming predictions of life in a warmer world, with practically all of these stories (97%) excluding any mention that many scientists disagree with the doomsday scenarios.

On the January 31 *Good Morning America* ABC's Sam Champion trumpeted a UN report predicting water and food shortages, as an on-screen graphic blared: "Will Billions Die from Global Warming?" The next day, CBS's Harry Smith was in Miami in advance of the Super Bowl. He asked a local columnist, "Do people here know that very likely in the next several decades all of this is going to be under water?"

After a warm day in January, NBC's Meredith Vieira recounted how she was "running in the park on Saturday, in shorts, thinking this is great, but are we all gonna die?" On January 31, her co-host Matt Lauer referred to climate change as "a controversy over...what literally could be the end of the world as we know it."

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## TV's One-Sided Climate News (cont.)

The morning shows cited myriad left-wing activists to make the case that global warming is a real and imminent threat. ABC on April 6 quoted Brenda Ekwurzel of the Union of Concerned Scientists: "The evidence is quite strong, and the time for action is now." NBC's *Today* treated liberal activist (and *An Inconvenient Truth* producer) Laurie David to an interview on February 3. "It's now the time where we have to put the debate clearly behind us and we have to have action," David claimed.

Out of 90 soundbites and comments in interviews, nearly all (96%) came from liberal activists or those arguing the "climate crisis" position. Three of the skeptical soundbites came in stories on ABC and CBS recounting Gore's congressional testimony, showing Republicans Joe Barton and James Inhofe doubting Gore's science. On ABC, reporter Chris Cuomo quickly told viewers that the GOP doubts were unfounded: "Most mainstream scientists agree global warming is happening, and humans are the cause."

Only one story, reported by Anne Thompson on NBC's *Today* on April 7, actually quoted an expert dissenting from Gore's line on global warming. After detailing the array of disasters global warming will supposedly cause, Thompson offered a brief glimpse of the other side, citing one of the top U.S. meteorologists: "Hurricane forecaster William Gray disputes any link between man-made global warming and more hurricane activity." Gray then was shown saying: "We think that's been exaggerated tremendously." Those 11 seconds marked the only instance when a non-alarmist climate expert was cited by any network morning show.

### **CHEERING AL GORE, PLANET-SAVER**

Discussing Gore himself, the network journalists were cheering the ex-Vice President even as they discussed how his media-driven celebrity might be the basis for a future presidential campaign. On February 9, CBS's Harry Smith heralded Gore's partnership with Virgin Airlines founder Richard Branson, suggesting the two were "teaming up to

save the planet." Smith cast Gore's contributions in a biblical light, asking Branson: "Is Al Gore a prophet?" A couple of weeks later, CBS's Gloria Berger praised Gore as "an environmental evangelist....now considered ahead of his time."

Previewing that night's Academy Awards, ABC's Kate Snow narrated a gooey profile of Gore, "a former Vice President on a mission" whose "road show on global warming sold out as fast as a boy band would." Snow made time for the ubiquitous Laurie David to extol Gore's virtues: "He's our modern day Paul Revere."

### **Gore Wants Total Monopoly on Climate News: "Balance As Bias"**

"One of the principal reasons why political leaders around the world have not yet taken action [on global warming]...is more than half of the mainstream media have rejected the scientific consensus implicitly — and I say 'rejected,' perhaps it's the wrong word. They have failed to report that it is the consensus and instead have chosen...balance as bias. I don't think that any of the editors or reporters responsible for one of these stories saying, 'It may be real, it may not be real,' is unethical. But I think they made the wrong choice, and I think the consequences are severe." — *Al Gore speaking to a group of media ethicists at Middle Tennessee State University on February 27, as quoted in The Tennessean the next day.*

One-fourth of all global warming stories focused on Gore himself, and nearly all of those (91%) contained no suggestion of disagreement with Gore's position. Even stories that contained a hint of debate were still lopsided in Gore's favor. After touting how "supporters say this is a new Al Gore, more confident than ever....a man with a mission," NBC's Andrea Mitchell quickly admitted: "Some scientists complained recently that Gore's documentary exaggerated some of its claims. Still, no one questions that Al Gore is helping shape the debate over global warming."

Back in 1989, NBC's Mitchell admitted the networks' global warming coverage had crossed the line "where you'd have to call it advocacy." Nearly 18 years later, the networks have grown even more censorious. Writing in *Newsweek's* April 16 International edition, MIT climate expert Dr. Richard Lindzen outlined the side of the story the broadcast networks have suppressed: "Recently many people have said that the Earth is facing a crisis requiring urgent action. This statement has nothing to do with science. There is no compelling evidence that the warming trend we've seen will amount to anything close to catastrophe." Fair and balanced journalism would include Lindzen's expert perspective, whether Gore likes it or not. — *Rich Noyes*

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