



Media Reality ✓ Check

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Networks Recycle Liberal Group's PR Spin, Pound Bush for Not Giving Tax Cuts to Non-Taxpayers

Among the Tax Cut Losers: Biased Journalists

What is the purpose of the new tax cut President Bush signed this week? Is it designed to perk up the economy? Or is it designed to provide welfare checks for poor people who don't pay taxes?

Last night and this morning, the networks fervently picked answer #2. Yesterday, *The New York Times* published a front-page article by reporter David Firestone that largely served as a press release for the paleoliberal Center for Budget and Policy Priorities. The CBPP told the *Times* that most families with incomes from \$10,500 to \$26,625 will not see any "tax relief," including 11.9 million children.

The networks picked up this story and ran with it, telling the traditional class-war sob story about how the poor won't get any cash, while the rich don't need any. Left out or played down: **that most of these taxpayers with kids pay little or no income tax**, so "fully refundable" checks would be welfare payments, not tax cuts.

ABC: Peter Jennings began: "On *World News Tonight*, the tax cut surprise. Some of the people who need it most will benefit the least." In the top story, reporter Linda Douglass found office messenger Rhonda Williams to lament that she would have used the money to send her kids to a "nice college." Near the end, Douglass admitted: "Many low-income families do not pay income taxes but are entitled to a portion of the child credit."

CBS: Substitute anchor Jane Clayson began the *Evening News*: "Millions of U.S. taxpayers won't get the rebate they're expecting." CBS was the oddball in not making this the top story, but reporter Bill Plante found a woman who wanted to pay for Pampers and "won't be getting that refund check the president says is in the mail." Plante's last sentence allowed the White House "points out that many of the families who will miss out on the \$400 child tax credit already pay little or no income tax."

CNN: The afternoon show *Inside Politics* began with an announcer: "The check may not be in the mail. This family is looking forward to the new child tax credit. But, surprise. Millions of low-income families won't get it." In the top story, Kate Snow totally ignored the angle that most of those "left out" don't pay income taxes. On Wednesday's edition of *NewsNight*, anchor Aaron Brown warmly previewed the Firestone story and said it proved "why *The New York Times* is a great newspaper."

NBC: Tom Brokaw began *Nightly News*: "Cut out. Why millions of lower-income families may not be getting the help they expected from President Bush's new tax cut." Brokaw described an "embarrassing omission," that Bush left out low-income families in the tax cut. In the top story, reporter Campbell Brown even scolded Democrats, "who only spoke up about it in response to a *New York Times* report today."

"Big Losers" Who Don't Lose Anything?

Diane Sawyer: "Okay, the President had his big \$350 billion tax cut. Who actually won the most and who lost the most in that?"

George Stephanopoulos: "...Big loser, though, not hot news this week for low-income families earning right around the minimum wage. If you earn between \$10,500, \$26,000 a year, you don't get the \$400 child tax credit that almost all other families get. That could affect about 11 million children." — Exchange today on ABC's *Good Morning America*.

On CNBC's *The News with Brian Williams* last night, Williams echoed Brokaw's "embarrassing omission" line, and ran the same Campbell Brown report. Both shows had the "embarrassing omission" of the non-taxpayer angle.

The bias even extended to the White House briefing yesterday. NBC's David Gregory incorrectly insisted a "large group of people" won't get "their money." ABC's Terry Moran proposed to Ari Fleischer he should agree with his summation: "I just want to make sure that you are saying that the White House agreed to make the choice to leave these children behind." For more on this very biased night, see today's Cyber Alert. — *Tim Graham and Brent Baker*

L. Brent Bozell III, Publisher; **Brent Baker, Rich Noyes, Tim Graham**, Editors; **Geoffrey Dickens, Jessica Anderson, Brad Wilmouth, Brian Boyd, Ken Shepherd**, and **Patrick Gregory**, Media Analysts; **Kristina Sewell**, Research Associate; **Liz Swasey**, Director of Communications. See past Media Reality Check reports in the archive at www.mrc.org.