



# Media Reality ✓ Check

A Regular Report on Major News Stories Distorted or Ignored □ [www.mediaresearch.org](http://www.mediaresearch.org)

*PBS Star Gives Publicity to Liberal Groups, But Won't Tell Viewers He's Underwriting Their Activism*

## Can Moyers Be an Anchor and a Funder?

In the wake of yesterday's FCC decision to loosen media ownership restrictions came another wave of concern over how Big Money supposedly ruins independence and quality in journalism. Media conglomerates motivated by profit are regularly denounced (sometimes accurately) as turning the news over to ratings-chasing murder trial dramas and celebrity fluff. But if money corrupts, why do the media care so little about how money affects PBS?

For decades, PBS omnipresence Bill Moyers has mounted his taxpayer-funded soapbox and beat his breast over the corrupting influences of money and politics. In the June 9 *Weekly Standard*, Stephen F. Hayes reports that Moyers is doing something no commercial network would allow. He's both the taxpayer-supported network's most prominent prime-time journalist, and he moonlights (or daylights) as the President of the Florence and John Schumann Foundation, a very activist liberal grantmaker.

Would CBS allow Dan Rather to operate a crusading liberal foundation on his free time? No. But PBS President Pat Mitchell is so enthralled with Moyers she pushed to create his weekly show *Now with Bill Moyers* after the September 11 attacks to raise his profile further.

Moyers doesn't do what the guardians of media ethics would recommend — outlining the conflicts of interests he may have when guests are also recipients of hundreds of thousands of dollars of his foundation's largess. NBC's Tim Russert has dutifully noted his labors for Democratic politicians Pat Moynihan and Mario Cuomo when they've appeared on his show. Hayes found that Moyers rarely does the same, even though he's promised repeatedly to uphold ethicists' expectations of disclosure.

"I'll be sure to do so," he told the PBS-insider newspaper *Current*. "We won't give our critics another chance to ignore journalism for their own purposes," he sneered to Associated

Press television writer Frazier Moore. After Hayes wrote about it last year, Moyers wrote back: "On the rare occasion it happens, and I know it, I make that fact public."

But Hayes demonstrates it's not rare. In fact, the Moyers-led foundation has given 4.8 million dollars to 16 leftist groups that have gotten free PR on *Now with Bill Moyers* in the past 16 months without any bothersome disclosure from Moyers. That included *The Nation* magazine, Friends of the Earth, Public Citizen, and the Sierra Club.

Then there are times that Moyers discloses incompletely.

Hayes notes that on October 18, 2002, when Moyers welcomed Charles Lewis from the liberal Center for Public Integrity, he disclosed "many years ago, when you were starting this center, the Schumann Foundation, which I head, was one of your important funders.

That's been some time now." Moyers didn't disclose that his foundation gave CPI \$500,000 in both 1999 and 2000.

Media critics and ethicists need to explore this new avenue of appearances of impropriety. Can a Schumann grantee offer Moyers his honest opinions on PBS, when Moyers controls millions of dollars that can make or break his group? Or does it heighten the liberal bias of the show, as guests try to please the boss like it was a job interview?

With his high and mighty condemnations of money's corrupting ways, Moyers deserves this scrutiny more than anyone else in the media. Critics shouldn't make the same mistake as PBS, and assume that if there's no greedy corporations, just aggressive liberal nonprofit groups and foundations, it's an ethics-free zone. — *Tim Graham*

*As Hayes noted, he used the MRC tape archive for his article.*

### ***If the Right Did It, Moyers Would Scream***

**"Imagine how Moyers would react if, say, Rush Limbaugh gave \$1 million to the Heritage Foundation and then repeatedly interviewed its experts for his nationwide audience, and did so over a taxpayer-funded medium, like NPR." — Stephen F. Hayes in the June 9 *Weekly Standard*.**

**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](http://www.mrc.org).