



Media Reality ✓ Check

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Media Worried Over “Big” Bush Tax Cuts, But Complain Endless Medicare Entitlement is “Not Enough”

New Senior Subsidies Won’t Make Deficits?

To the Washington press corps, budget economics is really very simple: Tax cuts are bad and threaten to flood the economy in a sea of deficits. New, potentially mushrooming social spending programs are always good, “finally” on their way to approval, and apparently have zero impact on the creation of deficits.

It doesn’t make sense. But that’s the double standard in network reporting on tax cuts versus a new prescription-drug subsidy pandering to reliably voting senior citizens. Here’s some recent examples:

ABC: On June 11’s *World News Tonight*, reporter Linda Douglass complained the bill was not an unlimited giveaway: “Senators voted earlier this year to limit the cost of any plan to \$400 billion over 10 years. So the Senate plan has limits.... Democrats complain that a third of seniors will still be stuck with big bills.” On the June 16 *Good Morning America*, weatherman Tony Perkins interviewed HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson: “Some have said this bill **doesn’t go quite far enough** — it’s more of a start than a long-term solution.”

CBS: On the June 10 *Evening News*, Dan Rather portrayed a new Medicare entitlement as long overdue: “In Washington today, for the **umpteenth** time, there’s talk of a possible compromise deal to provide **at least some** prescription drug coverage for people on Medicare. CBS’s Joie Chen reports what’s different this time as millions of older Americans wait for action.” Chen touted “some **badly needed help** may be on the way, a \$400 billion plan outlined today would give all seniors a prescription drug benefit.”

Minutes later, Dan Rather tied tax cuts to a rising deficit, but not the “badly needed” Medicare subsidies: “The Congressional Budget Office is upping its projection of the federal budget deficit by 33 percent, **largely because of the Bush tax cut**. The CBO now estimates a record American deficit of more than \$400 billion.”

NBC: On the June 11 *Today*, reporter Campbell Brown warmly greeted “New hope for the 40 million seniors on Medicare. Next week the Senate is expected to pass a bipartisan plan **finally** adding a prescription drug benefit.... The cost of the plan, \$400 billion. But advocates for seniors, like the powerful American Association for Retired Persons, say **it’s still not enough**.”

On the June 16 *Today*, news anchor Ann Curry suggested even a record expansion would leave some liberals thinking Congress was stingy: “The Senate begins debate today on what would be the biggest expansion of Medicare benefits in its history. If the bill passes, prescription drugs would be subsidized for all 40 million members for the first time. **Critics say the drug benefit isn’t enough**.”

Tired of Waiting for Taxpayers to Fork It Over

Reporter Linda Douglass: “**Seventy-one-year old Eva Baer-Schenkein suffers from hypertension and other health problems. She cannot afford the cost of her prescription drugs and is tired of waiting for Congress to help her.**”

Eva Baer-Schenkein: “**I mean, we’re not asking for diamond rings or cars or furs or anything. We’re just asking to have what we need to keep us alive.**” — ABC’s *World News Tonight*, June 11.

Left out of these stories were conservative policy analysts, such as the Heritage Foundation’s Stuart Butler. In a new report at www.heritage.org, Butler says the bill makes a mockery of sensible budget control. Even if it only costs the estimated \$400 billion in the next ten years, “it is not the next 10 years that matter. It is the years after that when the full force of the Baby Boom generation hits Medicare and Social Security. Within 15 years Medicare already faces a Niagara Falls of red ink. Adding a drug benefit without serious reforms and constraints on future spending means massive tax burdens on generations to come.”

On tax cuts, reporters went looking for “winners” and “losers.” That’s not used in stories on Medicare, where the old and rich will take money from younger, poorer families with children. — *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. For more on Medicare bias, see Cyber Alerts at www.mrc.org.