



# Media Reality Check

A Twice-Daily Analysis of Network Convention Coverage Monday Morning, August 14, 2000

## Good Morning!

Welcome to the Media Research Center's morning examination of Democratic convention coverage delivered by fax, e-mail and posted on our Web site. This edition concentrates on coverage from over the weekend.

This afternoon a second daily issue will look at today's morning shows.

For the complete collection of these issues, including those published during the Republican convention, please go to <http://www.mrc.org> and click on "Campaign 2000." You'll be able to access issues as regular HTML files or view them as Adobe PDF files.

Don't miss the video clips posted each day to illustrate the documented bias: Check the MRC home page and the "Campaign 2000" page for the latest.

For the MRC's analysis of liberal bias by the networks at past conventions, click on "Convention History."

Media Reality Check Staff:

**Publisher:** L. Brent Bozell III

**Editor:** Brent H. Baker

**Senior Editor:** Tim Graham

**Afternoon Editor:** Rich Noyes

**Media Analysts:** Geoffrey Dickens, Jessica Anderson, Paul Smith, Brian Boyd, Brad Wilmouth, Ted King

**Communications Director:** Liz Swasey

**Web Operations:** Andy Szul, Eric Pairel, Brandon Rytting

**Intern:** Ken Shepherd

Contacts:

To update your fax number or to be added to the e-mail distribution list, please e-mail:

cyber@mediaresearch.org  
Or, call: (703) 683-9733

## Cheney Grilled on Votes, Lieberman by CBS About Cheney's Pay Lieberman Let Off Easy Sunday Morning

Two weeks ago Republican VP pick Dick Cheney was portrayed on ABC's *This Week* and CBS's *Face the Nation* as too conservative to attract independent voters or women and was quizzed about past votes on everything from fighting gun control to voting against the Older Americans Act to opposing abortion. But this Sunday, while network hosts on all five interview shows pressed Democratic VP nominee Joe Lieberman about his policy differences with Al Gore, none demanded he explain his positions on issues where he is just as far to the left as Cheney is to the right.

Back on the July 30 *Face the Nation*, CBS's Gloria Borger wondered "what do you bring to this ticket with this kind of very conservative voting record?" She assumed women would be turned off: "Going back to your record, you voted against the Equal Rights Amendment; you have a stronger position, if you will, against abortion than Governor Bush, with no exceptions. And the question is, I guess, why would women voters be attracted to this ticket?"

An ABC News/*Washington Post* poll reported in the August 12 paper revealed that when informed Lieberman "voted to keep late-term or partial birth abortions legal," 57 percent of registered voters had a "less favorable" view of him while 37 percent had a "more favorable" view. But no Sunday show raised that issue with Lieberman, and on Sunday's *Face the Nation* Borger instead focused three of her four questions on Cheney's finances:

■ "Senator Lieberman, we learned yesterday that Dick Cheney has received a retirement package from his energy company totaling some \$20 million and he has not given up his stock options in that company yet. Do you see anything wrong with that?"

■ She followed up: "Senator, Governor Bush says that he will not ask Dick Cheney to recuse himself on issues relating to the oil industry. What do you think about that?" Keeping her emphasis on the Republican ticket, Borger next inquired if Lieberman thought George Bush and Dick Cheney should "release their tax returns?" □

## Quote of the Weekend

Elizabeth Vargas: "Why does he keep speaking so publicly about something so painful?"

George Stephanopoulos: "He was with his pastor in a church and I think, you know, to coin a phrase, the spirit moved him."

— Exchange about Bill Clinton's "confessional," Friday's *Good Morning America* on ABC

## Inside

2 Case Studies in Dan Rather's Liberal Bias

3 More Time for Cheney Pay Than *Playboy*

3 Fox News Uniquely Raised Topics

## Liberal Realizes Pro-Lieberman Media Bias

On Saturday's CNN *Capital Gang* liberal columnist Mark Shields conceded the media held Dick Cheney to a different standard than they applied to Lieberman: "The press has been in Joe Lieberman's pocket. I mean let's be honest about it. Let's just point one thing out: All of us commented, myself among them, on Dick Cheney's student deferments. I mean, I have seen one story written on Joe Lieberman's student deferments and his lack of military service."

### Hopeful Thinking?

Clinton's so-called "confessional" is good for the Al Gore campaign? ABC's Terry Moran outlined in a Friday *World News Tonight* story how Clinton keeps "overshadowing" Gore with his remarks which reminded people of the Lewinsky scandal and his planned fundraising over the weekend in the L.A. area. Moran concluded: "Some Gore staffers see a silver lining to all this. As one aide put it, Bill Clinton is the best political mind in a generation, so he must know what he's doing."

### Sam: Bush & Gore Good

"I think we have two fairly good choices," ABC's Sam Donaldson asserted on the August 9 *Late Show with David Letterman*. "This year if you elect one or you elect the other it may be bore and boringest, but still I think the country would be in good hands."

## Introduced Republicans With Attacks; Democrats With Own Spin Case Studies in Dan Rather's Bias

Sunday night Dan Rather led the *CBS Evening News* by stressing Al Gore's plan to help "mainstream" Americans, but two weeks earlier on the night before the GOP convention opened he emphasized how Dick Cheney "was dogged by questions" about "his very conservative voting record."

**August 13:** "Starting here tomorrow it's the Democrats' turn to present their version of a tightly scripted convention television show. **Al Gore says it will be long on specifics, including in-depth proposals on health care and other help targeted to mainstream middle income Americans.** Today's pre-convention script also had a big speaking role for running mate Senator Joseph Lieberman. CBS's John Roberts begins tonight's coverage of the road to Los Angeles."

**July 30:** "The stage is set down below and right behind me for a well-orchestrated, pre-scripted, week-long infomercial designed to sell the Republican presidential ticket **and get corporate donors to pony up more for the fall campaign.** Expect much the same from the Democrats later in August. **But as George Bush's running mate Richard Cheney arrived here today, he still was dogged by questions about what Newt Gingrich says is his very conservative voting record in the Congress. Cheney says he might vote differently today on some issues. Abortion rights is not among them.** Republican delegates here and George Bush himself out on the road, are playing from the same script: accentuate warm and fuzzy. No ad-libbing please and no controversy. Against that backdrop CBS's Bill Whitaker is covering Governor Bush's pre-convention barnstorm through key and closely contested states, including today's stop in Ohio."

■ The night of the official Dick Cheney VP announcement Rather relayed the negative Democratic spin against the GOP ticket. But two weeks later Rather highlighted the Democratic ticket's boasts about themselves with a sly dig at Bush-Cheney:

**August 8:** "Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore officially introduced his history-making running mate today, Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut. History-making because Lieberman is of Jewish heritage and faith. The two started running right away. **In their first joint appearance they gave a preview of the Gore-Lieberman fight-back, come-back strategy. Their message: They represent the future, not the past, and they are the ticket of high moral standards most in tune with real mainstream America.**"

**July 25:** "In the presidential campaign, the official announcement and first photo-op today of Republican George Bush and his running mate Richard Cheney. **Democrats were quick to portray the ticket as quote 'two Texas oilmen' because Cheney was chief of a big Dallas-based oil supply conglomerate. They also blast Cheney's voting record in Congress as again quote, 'outside the American mainstream' because of Cheney's votes against the Equal Rights for Women Amendment, against a woman's right to choose abortion – against abortion as Cheney prefers to put it – and Cheney's votes against gun control.** Republicans see it all differently, most of them hailing Bush's choice and Cheney's experience. CBS's Bill Whitaker in Austin Texas has the context on choosing Cheney." □

Watch videos of the two contrasts. Go to [www.mrc.org](http://www.mrc.org) and click on "Campaign 2000"

## Seven Times More Time for Cheney Pay Than Playboy Fundraiser ABC News Cultivated Cheney Controversy

After extensive pressure-tactics from Democratic officials, Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez gave in and canceled her fundraiser for Hispanic candidates set to take place at the Playboy Mansion, but ABC's *World News Tonight* cared a lot more about how much money Dick Cheney will receive from the company he ran. Saturday's show dedicated three minutes and ten seconds to Cheney, but a piddling 24 seconds to Sanchez even though there were plenty of angles to explore, such as Democratic hypocrisy in keeping Hugh Hefner's donations.

Anchor Aaron Brown opened: "By tomorrow the political focus will turn to the Democrats and their convention in Los Angeles. Tonight the spotlight remains on the Republican ticket and sometimes the spotlight is uncomfortable. Republican vice presidential nominee Dick Cheney will receive roughly a \$20 million retirement package when he formally leaves the oil services giant Halliburton next week. That's \$4 million for each year he ran the company and appears to be much more than the company was obligated to pay."

John Cochran tried to create a controversy: "While Cheney's aides confirm that his retirement package is roughly \$20 million, other questions remain. Did Cheney get a special deal? Many companies require executives to work until age 62 before they can get full retirement. Cheney is 59 and will still get full benefits...."

Cochran concluded by predicting the Bush campaign will "be fairly comprehensive in revealing the details" of the final package since "they know this is a big problem. They know that the Democrats are going to be harping on this." Democrats don't have to. The media are doing the harping for them. □

---

## Fox News Reporters Raised Points Ignored by Other Networks Tony Snow Pressed Quotas & "Inclusiveness"

Fox News raised issues over the weekend not addressed by other networks.

■ Gore counts Bush years in economic boasts. In an interview on FNC's August 11 *Special Report with Brit Hume*, Jim Angle told Al Gore: "You count in the longest expansion that you often mention, the longest expansion in American history, you count 21 months of the Bush administration."

■ Democratic delegate quotas and how Senator Joseph Lieberman's religion contradicts "inclusion" were both raised on *Fox News Sunday*:

► Host Tony Snow to Senator Joe Lieberman after Lieberman insisted the Democrats, unlike the Republicans, will show real diversity: "But isn't it also true that for your convention you have quotas?"

► Snow to Gore campaign chairman Bill Daley: "There's a lot of talk about inclusiveness this week. Mr. Lieberman is an Orthodox Jew. Orthodox Judaism mandates the separation of sexes in synagogue, it doesn't support the mixture of sexes in the military, it opposes homosexuality, does not recognize so-called mixed marriages, that is marrying outside the religion. My question to you is what's inclusive about that?" □

## "Unguarded Moment" in Front of TV Cameras

NBC's Claire Shipman opened a Friday *Today* profile of Al Gore by showing him swinging his grandson on a hammock as she gushed: "An unguarded moment with Al Gore, utterly relaxed in the company of his one-year-old grandson. It's a side the public doesn't get to see much, but family has always been a haven for the reserved Gore, a place that both sustains him and helps explain him..."

## CBS: "Snipers Wanted"

Only FNC picked up Thursday night on CBS's apology for a joke which advocated the killing of George W. Bush. It aired Friday, August 4, on the *Late Late Show with Craig Kilborn*. Fox Report anchor Shepard Smith, over video of the graphic, reported:

"A bit of convention humor that lacked a lot of it. So unfunny a major television network, CBS, issued an apology. The other night on the *Late Late Show*, host Craig Kilborn was doing one of his fake news segments on the Republican convention and beneath the picture of George W. Bush at the podium, a graphic with the words 'Snipers Wanted.' There you see it, right across the bottom of the screen. CBS apologized, calling the joke quote, 'inappropriate and regrettable,' a Bush spokesperson saying the candidate accepts the apology."

To see this story and the CBS graphic, go to the MRC Web page and click on "Media Bias Videos."