



# Campaign 2004 Media Reality Check

## QUICK TAKE

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UNDER DEMOCRATS, SLOWER GROWTH WAS SEEN AS GOOD NEWS

## ***HOW WILL MEDIA SPIN BEST PRE-ELECTION GROWTH IN 25 YEARS?***

This morning's report of 3.7 percent economic growth in the third quarter was the best pre-election growth rate in at least the last quarter century, better than in 1980, 1984, 1988, 1992, 1996 and 2000. Coupled with the creation of nearly two million jobs since the Bush tax cuts took full effect in the summer of 2003, the robust growth should make it impossible for the liberal media to maintain their pessimistic mantra of economic weakness.

Maybe, or maybe not. On CNN this morning, business reporter Andy Serwer described the numbers as "good news, bad news. The good news is the number was 3.7 percent; that's higher than the second quarter, which was 3.3 percent. The bad news is economists were looking for 4.3 percent."

Weaker economic growth reports in 1996 and 2000 were painted as good news for the incumbent Democrats. "The economy was slow but steady going into the last quarter," was how NBC's Tom Brokaw characterized a 2.2 percent growth report that came out right before Clinton's re-election in 1996. "Many economists were encouraged by that, because it means inflation is under control and interest rates will stay low."

Four years later, CBS's Dan Rather was pleased with a 2.7 percent growth rate reported right before the 2000 election. "There is a school of thought that says this is overall good for the economy to keep it from overheating," Rather spun.

But in 1992, a 2.7 percent growth rate issued right before the election was seen as poor. ABC's Peter Jennings called it "more than economists had projected but, in many cases, less than meets the eye." Reporter Bob Jamieson warned that "many economists say the report is not proof the economy is taking a sharp turn for the better." After that election, revised figures showed that the economy was performing even better than first reports indicated — but by that time, Bill Clinton was already President-elect.

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***To schedule an interview with an MRC spokesman, please contact Tim Scheiderer at (703) 683-5004***