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Life Under Campaign Finance Reform? Liberal Anchor Distorts Facts to Help Democratic Campaigns

CBS's Campaign Gifts to Liberal Candidates

It's late October in an election year and, as predictable as the World Series and Halloween, CBS anchor Dan Rather has begun twisting the Campaign 2002 story line to try to boost liberal politicians and impugn conservative candidates across the country. Details of last night's in-kind contributions to two Democratic campaigns:

■ **Minnesota:** While the rest of the political world zeroed in on Democrats' use of a televised memorial service for eight airplane crash victims as a way to rally Minnesotans behind Walter Mondale's Senate candidacy, Rather juxtaposed that with what he implied was an equally sinister GOP ploy: "In the Minnesota Senate race, what was supposed to have been a memorial service was made into a partisan Democratic rally, and **the Republican candidate poses for interviews in front of a plane like the one in which the Senator died.**"

"The new Senate race is less than a day old, but already knee-deep in controversy," CBS's Cynthia Bowers echoed. "It began this morning when the Republican candidate, Norm Coleman, set off on exactly the kind of fly-around, **on the same type of aircraft, that claimed the life of incumbent Paul Wellstone just last Friday.**"

So flying is disrespectful?

Only after painting the Republican as heartless did Bowers get to what everyone but CBS saw as the main controversy of the day. "It was last night's memorial service that has the whole state buzzing. Much of Minnesota, it seems, was watching the broadcast of the Wellstone memorial and many were caught off guard when the service took an unexpected turn from graceful tributes to, what some say, was disgraceful politicking." Only "some" say that?

■ **Georgia:** Rather said it was offensive — his exact words were "down" and "dirty" — that a U.S. Senator's vote

on a bill should be injected into a political campaign. "**In Georgia, the Republican challenger questions the patriotism of the Democratic incumbent, a decorated amputee war hero,**" he chastised.

Questioning a hero's patriotism? Bob Schieffer related that "[GOP candidate Saxby] Chambliss forces put Osama bin Laden's picture into one ad against [Democrat Max] Cleland because Cleland didn't support the President's version of homeland security legislation." Schieffer showed a soundbite from an indignant Cleland, "I volunteered to defend my country 35 years ago and served in the war in my generation.

The individual who made those attacks on me never served in the American military at all."

Actually, Cleland complained about the Chambliss TV spots more than two weeks ago, as was widely reported at the time. And Chambliss weeks ago clarified that Cleland's record is one of "unquestioned patriotism," but that the homeland security votes will hinder the fight against terrorists. But Schieffer structured the dispute exactly the way Democrats wanted: "It always

comes back to who loves the country more: **A veteran who lost his legs and an arm in Vietnam, and a non-veteran who votes with the President.**"

Schieffer and Rather have been enthusiastic champions of McCain-Feingold campaign regulations that would limit the ability of independent groups — but not the liberal media — to communicate with voters right before elections. So their late October donations to Democratic campaigns will be legal next time around, too. It will just be harder for outside groups to balance CBS's advocacy. — *Rich Noyes*

When Others Campaign, It's "Sleazy"

"Republicans kill the bill to clean up sleazy political fundraising. The business of dirty campaign money will stay business as usual....Legislation to reform shady big money campaign fundraising is dead in Congress. Republican opponents in the Senate killed it today. It was the latest in a long-running attempt to toughen loose laws that shield hidden donors with loose wallets and deep pockets. As CBS's Bob Schieffer reports, when it came to the crunch today on campaign finance reform, it was all talk and no action."
— Dan Rather, Feb. 26, 1998 *CBS Evening News*.

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