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With Hours Left in Campaign 2002, CBS's 60 Minutes Races to Assist Lagging Liberal Campaigns

## Morley & Molly's Gift to Texas Democrats

Texas Democrat nominee Ron Kirk was asked what he thought of the national attention his U.S. Senate campaign had received. "I get to be on *60 Minutes*," Kirk smiled. "That's fun."

Kirk was in a giddy mood because CBS decided that the weekend before the 2002 midterm elections was a perfect time for Morley Safer to promote two Texas Democrats on *60 Minutes*. And Safer decided that the only "expert" worth interviewing was a left-wing opinion columnist who enjoys disparaging conservatives and Republicans, whom he dubbed, "the oracle of all things Texan, Molly Ivins."

Molly assured Morley that Democrat Kirk was really a conservative, and Republicans were using dishonest campaign tactics. "He's a conservative businessman, he's been a conservative mayor. So what you do is you say he's a liberal, he's liberal, a liberal," she told Safer, drawing out the word "liberal" in a low, mocking whisper. "And then," she sneered, "you do the worst thing of all: You put in a little picture of Hillary Clinton at the bottom of your ad!"

Safer played an ad from Republican nominee John Cornyn that pointed out Kirk and Clinton shared liberal anti-missile defense views. But instead of asking Kirk about his stance on the issue, he asked Cornyn about the picture that offended Ivins: "What does Hillary Clinton wearing a Yankees ball cap got to do with the Texas election?"

Smarmy tactics and big spending are the only way the GOP can beat a candidate of Kirk's quality, Safer suggested: "Republicans are outspending Kirk five-to-one in an attempt to keep the seat. They're perfectly aware of Kirk's appeal."

"I actually heard a major player in the Democratic party making a money call on behalf of Kirk," Ivins revealed. "He said, 'Look, we get Ron Kirk elected to the United States Senate and he's going to have more clout on the day he walks in as the youngest, most junior-est Senator of them all, because everybody is desperate for new black political leadership.' Ron is smart, Ron is articulate, everybody's

going to want him on television, everybody's going to want him to be their speaker, and he'll be our Senator."

When they got to the governor's race, Safer implied the liberal Ivins was a non-partisan analyst: "Molly Ivins says [incumbent Republican Rick] Perry's biggest political problem has been a habit of just saying no." He then allowed Ivins to condemn Perry's ethics:

"Perry vetoed 87 bills, which is an absolute by far biggest record ever for a Texas Governor. And he also collected \$1.2 million in campaign contributions from many of the very people who wanted certain bills vetoed," she scornfully recounted. "That was a little eye-opening even by Texas standards."

**Is this CBS's idea of objective reporting? Morley Safer let liberal opinion columnist Molly Ivins trash Republicans and trumpet the virtues of liberal Democrats on an election-eve *60 Minutes*.**

"And [Democrat] Tony Sanchez wasted no time in accusing the Governor of being a bag man for special interests," Safer continued, as he ran a damning quote from the Democrats' TV ad.

But "Rick Perry counters with accusations that Tony Sanchez laundered drug money through one of his banks on the Mexican border." Perry was never allowed to counter Ivins and Sanchez's charges, but Safer made sure that Sanchez could rebut Perry. And — surprise, surprise — the "oracle" Ivins once again condemned Perry, accusing him of using racist tactics: "'You know those Chicanos, they're all involved in drug traffic down there,' you know, that's a common stereotype," she scolded.

If they wanted a local perspective, CBS could have talked to dozens of political reporters who could have given an objective view of the Texas race. Or, they could have balanced Ivins' liberal advocacy with a Texas conservative. Apparently, however, balance wasn't on the *60 Minutes* schedule this Sunday. — *Rich Noyes*

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