

MEDIA FAIRNESS CAUCUS

A Look at Media Bias

Rep. Lamar Smith (R-TX), Chairman

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‘Occupy Congress’ March Fizzles, AP Tries to Spin It Away 01.24.12

From the NewsBusters...

“Less than a year from its inception, the far-left Occupy Wall Street movement is already sputtering. Many liberal big-city mayors have ejected protestors from their campsites and their donations have dried up. **To top it off, a big event touted to “Occupy Congress” fizzled big-time Tuesday in Washington, D.C. That didn’t stop the Associated Press from trying to spin away the march’s failure.**

Instead of headlining its report from the event with the big news that a march expected to bring in up to 10,000 protestors ended up drawing in far less than that, the wire service headlined it with the matter-of-fact headline ‘Several hundred Occupy protestors rally at Capitol.’ While reporter Ben Nuckols did mention the failure to meet expectations, his story didn’t mention the other big news that OWS is almost out of money.

Several hundred protestors affiliated with the Occupy Wall Street movement converged on the West Lawn of the Capitol Tuesday to decry the influence of corporate money in politics and voice myriad other grievances. Organizers had touted the rally, known as **Occupy Congress, as the largest national gathering of Occupy protestors to date and secured a permit that would have allowed up to 10,000 people to participate. By mid-afternoon, the protest appeared to have fallen far short of those goals....**

Now that the Occupy Wall Street is seriously beginning to run out of steam, expect even more of these stories where reporters and editors try to downplay the bad news for the lefties, a stark contrast to how many “Tea Party is dead” stories we’ve seen in the past few years.”

NYT’s Asks Readers: “Should The Times Be a Truth Vigilante?”

From the NYT Public Editor Arthur S. Brisbane...

I’m looking for reader input on whether and when New York Times news reporters should challenge “facts” that are asserted by newsmakers they write about.As an Op-Ed columnist, Mr. Krugman clearly has the freedom to call out what he thinks is a lie. My question for readers is: should news reporters do the same?...

This message was typical of mail from some readers who, fed up with the distortions and evasions that are common in public life, look to The Times to set the record straight. They worry less about reporters imposing their judgment on what is false and what is true.

Is that the prevailing view? And if so, how can The Times do this in a way that is objective and fair? Is it possible to be objective and fair when the reporter is choosing to correct one fact over another? Are there other problems that The Times would face that I haven’t mentioned here?

Throughout the 2012 presidential campaign debates, The Times has employed a separate fact-check sidebar to assess the validity of the candidates’ statements. Do you like this feature, or would you rather it be incorporated into regular reporting? How should The Times continue a function like this when we move to the general campaign and there’s less time spent in debates and more time on the road?

Please feel free to leave a comment below or send me an e-mail at public@nytimes.com with the subject line: Readers Point the Way: Correcting Untruths.

*Distributed by Congressman Lamar Smith. For regular e-mail updates, please visit <http://lamarsmith.house.gov>
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