

Media and Governance

Reasons for open government:

- Government controls many aspects of lives.
- Government taxes us.
- Citizens (voters) need to make a difference.

Media's responsibility

The news media need to provide information that is

- > useful
- > sufficient
- > trustworthy
- > aware of their audiences

Media's responsibility

Public needs to know about workings of government

Public needs to know about candidates' positions and character

Media's responsibility

Public needs useful election coverage

Discussions of candidates' policies are often crowded out by discussions of the "horse race"

- > latest poll results
- > how voters will react to off-the-statement or confused answer
- > how ads will affect voters

John Steward on "Cross Fire"
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aFQFB5YpDZE>

Media's responsibility

Public needs useful election coverage

Public needs to know when candidates stray from the truth

- > at political rallies and during debates
- > in news releases
- > in political advertising

Types of candidate's ads

- > biography ads
- > position (comparison) ads
- > attack ads



The screenshot shows the FactCheck.org website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, About Us, Privacy, Copyright, and Contact Us. The main content area features the article title "Obama's False Medicare Claim" dated October 20, 2008. A sub-headline reads "He accuses McCain of proposing to cut benefits. Not true." Below this is a "Summary" section. The summary text states: "In a TV ad and in speeches, Obama is making bogus claims that McCain plans to cut \$880 billion from Medicare spending and to reduce benefits." It then lists two bullet points: "A TV spot says McCain's plan requires 'cuts in benefits, eligibility or both.'" and "Obama said in a speech that McCain plans 'cuts' that would force seniors to 'pay more for your drugs, receive fewer services, and get lower quality care.'" The article concludes with the text: "These claims are false, and based on a single newspaper report that says no such thing. McCain's policy director states unequivocally that no benefit cuts are envisioned. McCain does propose substantial 'savings' through such means as cutting fraud, increased use of information technology in medicine and better handling of expensive chronic diseases. Obama himself proposes some of the same cost-saving measures. We're skeptical that either candidate can deliver the savings they promise, but that's no basis for Obama to accuse McCain of planning huge benefit cuts." At the bottom of the article, the word "Analysis" is visible.

Year	Total*	Candidate Pair
2008**	\$1,324.7	Obama-McCain
2004	717.9	Bush-Kerry
2000	343.1	Bush-Gore
1996	239.9	Clinton-Dole
1992	192.2	Clinton-Bush
1988	210.7	Bush-Dukakis
1984	103.6	Reagan-Mondale
1980	92.3	Reagan-Carter
1976	66.9	Carter-Ford

* in millions
 ** as of Oct. 20, 2008
 source: OpenSecrets.org
 Center for Responsible Politics

Media's responsibility

Public needs to know what its military is doing

It needs accurate information on:

- Why we put Americans in harm's way
- The outcome of a military confrontation
- Casualties on both sides

Journalist's responsibility

Social Justice,
 or civic journalism (aka public journalism)

Encourages journalists and media to help solve society's problems rather than just report about them

Advocates letting the general public help determine the news content of the paper

Proponents say it help reporters connect with audience.

Attempts to control the media

● **Spin doctors**

- people who try to interpret the politician's message for the media
- create right background images for the politician

● **News leaks**

- unattributed information
 - > used as trial balloons for policy changes
 - > used by whistle blowers
 - > used as informal communication

● **Sound bite**

- short statement just the right length for TV news clip
 - > has little substance

● **Terrorists**

- should news media give them voice to air their grievances and demands?