



UNITED STATES SENATE
**REPUBLICAN
POLICY COMMITTEE**

Larry E. Craig, Chairman
Jade West, Staff Director

April 18, 2002

Republicans Agree!!

**Democrats Aren't Getting Their
Fair Share of Air Time**

Recently House and Senate Democrat Leaders Dick Gephardt and Tom Daschle wrote to the CEOs of three cable news companies complaining that their party is receiving insufficient media coverage compared to that accorded the Executive branch. (Seriously! – The text of the Gephardt/Daschle letter published by U.S. Newswire is appended to this paper.) Putting aside the fact that Congressional Republicans made no such complaint during eight years of Bill Clinton's (ab)use of the "bully pulpit," RPC is inclined to agree that Democrat "accomplishments" on Capitol Hill deserve more coverage. The following is a possible memo Republicans could have sent — but didn't!

Memo to Cable Executives – What Republicans *Might* Write

To: Roger Ailes, Chairman and CEO of Fox News
Erik Sorenson, Vice President and General Manager of MSNBC
Walter Isaacson, Chairman and CEO of CNN

From: Congressional Republicans

In light of the letter you've just received from our friends Dick Gephardt and Tom Daschle regarding their perceived lack of television coverage of leaders of the Democratic Party, we thought you'd like our views as well.

We agree with our Democrat friends. Yes, we acknowledge the President is Commander-in-Chief in a time of war, and his party constitutes the majority in one house, and a near-majority in the other, but still our colleagues on the other side of the aisle have a valid point. Surely, you don't want to deny your viewers the important stories precipitated on almost a daily basis by the Democrat party. And so we've taken the liberty of preparing a few news stories we feel perhaps your viewers would benefit from seeing.

"Democrats Make History With Budget Failure: Several leading Democrats have now admitted their party seems unlikely to craft a budget resolution that can pass the Senate. If that proves true, it will be the first time the Senate has failed to pass a budget resolution in the modern era. Without a budget resolution in place, congressional observers predict a chaotic congressional spending season ... "

"Democrats Support Gutting Last Year's Tax Cuts: When the House votes this week to

make last year's family tax relief permanent, it's expected few Democrats will cross the aisle to support. Senate Democrat leaders in both houses have come out strongly opposed to ensuring the family tax credits, death tax repeal, and other popular tax relief provisions remain in effect. While distancing themselves from efforts to actively repeal last year's tax cuts, the Senate Democrat leadership appears instead willing to take a more passive-aggressive approach of blocking efforts to make the tax cuts permanent ... ”

“Democrats Support an ‘Energy-Free’ Energy Bill: Demonstrating a decided lack of energy, both in pace and substance, Senate Democrats have led a month-long debate on their energy alternative notable for its almost complete lack of incentives for expanding proven energy sources. Confronted with crises in both the Middle East and Venezuela – two primary sources for crude oil – the Democrats’ legislation focuses instead on increasing American families’ electric bills while blocking exploration for oil in Alaska...”

“Democrat Blocks Bipartisan Border Security Bill: More than six months after the attacks of 9/11, a single Democrat Senator has slowed progress of a bipartisan bill to make our homeland safer ... ”

“Democrat-Run Judiciary Committee’s Judge-Approval Pace is Historically Slow: According to the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service, the current treatment of President Bush’s judicial nominees is worse than the treatment that prior Congresses afforded the judicial nominees of previous Presidents during their first two years ... ”

“Some in Congress Alleging Judge Voted Down Because of His Religion: Several members of both the House and Senate fear that religious bigotry played a role in the rejection by the Senate Judiciary Committee of Judge Charles Pickering....

“Democrats Block Free Trade Initiative: President Bush has requested Congress give him the same authority that other recent U.S. Presidents have had to aid in the negotiating of trade agreements with other nations, but this year, Senate Democrats' efforts to poison the well with costly, unwise provisions may spell a death knell for trade promotion. On the House side, when given an opportunity to vote on TPA, many self-described ‘free traders’ in the House Democrat conference voted no ... ”

“Do Senate Democrats Support More Regulation, Higher Costs for High Tech?: Will legislation introduced by Democrat Commerce Committee Chairman Fritz Hollings requiring federal mandates on digital copyright protection wind up slowing innovation and costing consumers? Industry insiders think the bill, also referred to as the "Disney" bill, will do just that ... ”

“Democrat Mismanagement Delays Farm Bill, Hurts Farmers: Farmers across America are lamenting the slow progress of the Farm Bill’s progress in Congress, due in large part to Democrats having rewritten the bill after it was reported out of committee, delaying its passage in the Senate and virtually assuring no final agreement will be reached before spring planting....”

Thanks for considering these story ideas. The American people will thank you. (The Democrat party, however, may not!)

Attachment

From U.S. Newswire:

April 15, 2002 Monday 12:51 PM

Letter from Democratic Congressional Leaders to Cable News Executives

The following was released today by the office of House Democratic Leader Richard A. Gephardt:

Enclosed is a letter from Democratic Congressional Leaders to Roger Ailes, Chairman and CEO of Fox News; Erik Sorenson, Vice President and General Manager of MSNBC; and Walter Isaacson, Chairman and CEO of CNN regarding the lack of television coverage of press events featuring elected leaders of the Democratic Party.

April 12, 2002

We are writing to bring to your attention an issue that has become more pronounced in recent months: the lack of television coverage of press events featuring elected leaders of the Democratic Party.

In the last few months, Democratic leaders have held dozens and dozens of press events, but received extremely little coverage from cable news channels. The White House, meanwhile, has received an extraordinary level of attention and coverage of their events. While some of this is clearly -- and rightfully -- attributable to the war on terrorism, the attached analysis shows that your networks have often chosen to cover live White House events that focus on domestic issues, while live events by Democratic leaders that focus on the war on terrorism still go uncovered.

The statistics we have demonstrate this disparity. Beginning January 1, 2002, according to one of the enclosed studies, CNN carried a total of 157 events live featuring Administration officials. Over the same time, the network carried a total of only seven events featuring elected leaders of the Democratic Party. Anecdotal evidence indicates that Fox News and MSNBC coverage follows the same pattern.

This difference is not due to a dearth of press activities. Virtually every day Congress is in session, either of us holds a press conference to field questions, and many of our colleagues will often appear publicly to discuss the issues of the day. While very few of these events get covered, CNN, Fox and MSNBC will often have live broadcasts of the White House press secretary's daily briefing.

Take, for example, the events of Wednesday, March 20. That day, House members were voting on the Republican budget while the Senate was busy with final passage of campaign finance reform. Both of us appeared at press events to articulate the Democratic viewpoint on these issues. Neither was covered. Instead, cable channels carried separate live appearances by the President, the First Lady, the White House Press Secretary, and the Attorney General.

Of course, Democrats understand that we command a majority in only one house of Congress, and that in the midst of war, the cable channels will focus on announcements by the White House regarding the war on terrorism.

We don't expect the cable news networks to use a stopwatch and a scale when it comes to determining their political coverage, but we are concerned that cable news coverage tilted toward the White House muffles the voice of the Democratic party, undermines our ability to communicate our ideas to our constituents, and undercuts the debate that is the heart of our democracy.

Both of us are hopeful that you will take a closer look at your coverage of live press events and attempt to strike a greater balance.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts on this issue.

Sincerely,

Tom Daschle

Senate Majority Leader

Richard Gephardt

House Democratic Leader