

Voting in the Dark:
An Analysis of 2004 Campaign Coverage
by Cleveland's Local TV News

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Abstract

Although local television stations make millions of dollars from election advertising, their news programs do a poor job of educating viewers on election issues. The result is that local news viewers get a majority of their insight into candidates and issues from one-sided ads.

This study analyzed the late-night newscasts of all five of Cleveland's major TV stations over the last 15 days of the campaign of 2004. It measured all election ads and stories and classified each according to its geographical focus and content. Among the major findings were these:

- Most of the election news involved the presidential campaign, while local and state issues and candidates were ignored.
- Election advertising, however, overwhelmingly represented local and state races.
- The presidential-race news was dominated by sound bites and celebrity appearances.
- State and local election news rarely provided any insight into the candidates and issues, focusing instead on voter registration controversies and candidate scandals.

Local TV stations did show some innovative coverage of the study period, including looks at the election from the perspectives of youth, investors, and nursing-home residents. But they were few and far between. More important, most of them involved the presidential race, which is already covered on national news programs.

Cleveland's TV stations owe it to the community to devote more time to coverage of local and state issues and candidates. Regular analyses of these campaigns, along with archiving them on the stations' web sites, would go a long way toward improving not only local TV news's credibility but its popularity as well.

Elections are good business. But if you watched local TV news in the run-up to the 2004 election, you already know that. You saw hundreds, maybe thousands, of ads telling you to vote one way or another. National, state, or local. Candidate, issue, or constitutional amendment. If it was on the ballot, you probably saw an ad for it. In just the final two weeks of the election, Cleveland late-night news watchers saw more than 6.3 *hours* of election ads—earning local TV stations an estimated \$750,000 in ad revenue. And that’s just the tip of iceberg. These ads ran all day, every day, for many weeks.

What did local TV news give us in exchange? One station regularly presented its ongoing election coverage under the banner “You Decide 2004,” implying that their news provided the knowledge we would need to cast an informed vote on November 2. But did this station or any of the others do that? Or did they just let the incessant, one-sided ads help us do the “deciding”?

This study is the result of trying to answer that question. Surveys show that large numbers of us consume late-night local news programs regularly, perhaps more so than any other news source. So I wondered how educated a prospective voter would be about issues and candidates if that was his/her *only* news option. Along the way, I wanted to learn what kinds of news and ads this voter would see and how that news was delivered. The answers are in the paragraphs that follow.

Study Design

I examined late-night (beginning usually at either 10 or 11 p.m., depending on the station) local newscasts over the final 15 days before the election: October 18 through November 1, 2004. I studied all five major network stations serving the Cleveland area: WKYC (Channel 3), WEWS (Channel 5), WJW (Channel 8), WOIO (Channel 19), and WUAB (Channel 43). Channel 19 provides news for Channel 43, but because their newscasts are distinct, I treated them separately.

Ten volunteers videotaped the newscasts, resulting in 74 programs and some 46.5 hours of taped program time. Due to recording errors, not every minute of every newscast was caught on tape; in one case (WUAB’s October 23 broadcast), an entire program was

missed. The taped result therefore represents more than 93% of the late-evening local news over that period. For that reason, most statistics provided herein are percentages. Raw numbers, when presented, should be read with these limitations in mind.

The point of the study was to examine *only* the election news and advertising watched in the course of each newscast. However, with the popularity of voice-over teasers and partial-screen images, it's often hard to discern just when the program preceding the news ends and the actual newscast begins. So for this study each newscast was measured from its opening credits through to the final "good night" of the newspeople. Ads framing those times, or editorials coming afterward, were not included. The same goes for Channel 43's 15-minute "Sports Extra," which concludes each night's newscast. Although these sports segments were loaded with election ads, there was little chance of viewers getting any election *news* from the segments. So to fairly represent proportions of news and ads, "Sports Extra" was not included.

Data Collection

Although I watched each of the taped programs in their entirety, I evaluated only those stories or ads that involved the election. These spanned all manner of races—local, state, and national—and could be as serious as the two presidential candidates commenting on terrorism to as silly as a contest to carve pumpkins in the candidates' images. All were included under the banner of "election coverage."

I recorded the length of each newscast as well as the length of each election segment (ad or story). I then classified each segment according to the following criteria:

Type—whether the segment was an ad or story.

Scope—whether the segment's message was of national, state, or local concern. For example, I would categorize a story about a George W. Bush stump speech as "national," an ad for Ohio Supreme Court Justice hopeful Nancy Fuerst as "state" (because she was to be elected by all Ohio voters), and a story about the Cleveland Public Schools levy as "local." By the same token, however, I would categorize a re-election ad for U.S.

Congressman Steve LaTourette as “local.” Even though he serves in a national legislative body, he is elected by only local voters. Readers should note that a few segments in the study did not fit any of these categories—for example, a local election in another state.

Target—whether the segment concerned a candidate (presidential, judicial, etc.) or a ballot issue (school levies, constitutional amendments, etc.). I used this category only for ads, reserving a similar category (see “Focus” below) for stories.

Focus—whether the segment was driven by issues, news, or the election “horse race.” As mentioned above, this criterion only applied to non-advertising segments. Some insight into the three categories:

Issues. I defined an “issues” story as any that would help the viewer make a voting decision—anything from a candidate’s sound bite on healthcare to a celebrity event on a candidate’s behalf. Whatever could be construed as influencing the viewer to vote one way or another was considered an “issues” story. I did, however, exempt from this category any story that simply showed footage of a candidate while a reporter or anchor talked in generalities—for example, “The president spoke in Akron today about the war on terror.”

News. I defined “news” as any segment that concerned the election but could not be seen as directly influencing voting. News stories in this study therefore encompassed such subjects as voter registration, poll worker training, upcoming presidential candidate visits, and so on.

Horse Race. This category applied to stories that simply reported poll results. Occasionally, this would bleed over into “issues” or “news” stories; in such a case, I divided the segment into two or three parts and classified them appropriately. A viewer could, I suppose, consider poll results in his/her voting decision. But for this study, this type of story gets its own category.

Comments—notes about the story or ad. These involved a story’s subject as well as its presentation and were useful in analyzing election news coverage.

Overall Findings

The Numbers. In the two weeks covered by the study, Cleveland late-night viewers saw roughly equal amounts of election news (12.5% of the total newscast time) and election ads (13.5%). Those numbers could be much higher or lower, depending on the night and the station. On average, though, a viewer could have expected about a quarter of any late-night news broadcast to be devoted to the upcoming election.

These numbers translate, on the news side, to some 5.8 hours of election-oriented stories over the period. Over half of that (54%) was dedicated to the presidential election, while local and state election news accounted for 35% and 11%, respectively.

Along with those stories, viewers digested 6.3 hours of commercials. Spots for local candidates (and to a much smaller degree, local issues) made up the largest share (48%) of that, with presidential candidate ads at 37% and state candidate and issue ads at 15%.

In terms of ratios, viewers got roughly the same amount of news and of advertising for state candidates and issues (11 vs. 15%). President-wise, late-night news watchers got much more news than ads (54 vs. 37%). But that turned around for local races, with viewers seeing quite a bit less news than ads (35 vs. 48%).

The numbers start to get clearer when you look at the breakdown of those 5.8 hours of news stories. (See Figure 1.) For election news of national consequence, over three-quarters of it was issue-driven (that is, it presented information you could consider in your voting decision), while 20% was simply news and 4% focused solely on poll results. Statewise, only 31% of the stories provided any usable issue information. The remaining 69% was simply news, much of it focused on statewide voting efforts. For local races, viewers got little useful information as well: only 30% of the news fit the “issues” category. The remaining 70% was simply news, much of it also having to do with local voting and registration efforts.

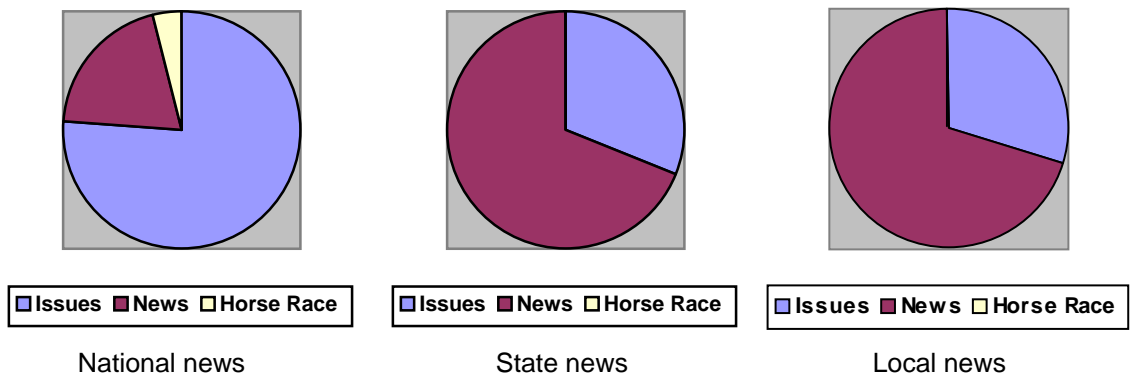


Figure 1. Focus of news stories in study

Analysis. This next section deconstructs the numbers even further. For simplicity’s sake, I address national, state, and local coverage separately.

National Election News. On its face, the local stations’ coverage of the national election race looks pretty meaty: viewers got considerably more news than ads, and 76% of the news stories fell under the “issues” classification. But looks can deceive.

First, the majority of these stories were brief, nightly bits of video showing a candidate on a podium making a brief statement about an issue. Because of their very nature, these little items lack context. They tell the viewer, for example, that the candidate has a plan to deal with terrorism but never what that plan might be. Further dampening the effect of these dueling sound bites—they usually came in pairs, one from each candidate—was that they almost never had to do with the same subject. So on a given night you had Kerry talking about Ohio jobs while Bush countered with a statement about Iraq. Not useful to a voter who’d like to compare apples with apples.

Another big chunk of the “issues” news pie went to celebrity events on behalf of candidates. Some 13% of the study period’s total presidential-race news focused on actors, musicians, and other well-known faces stumping for candidates. But rather than use these events to educate viewers about the candidates’ differences, local TV news managed to dilute the stars’ messages or ignore them altogether—focusing instead on the

celebrities themselves. See “Observations and Commentary” near the end of this report for more on this phenomenon.

It’s too bad that so much of local TV’s presidential stories dwelled on sound bites and celebrities, because the remaining stories in this category often provided useful, imaginative looks at the race. Among the most interesting were these:

- a look at the contest through local investors’ eyes, which was particularly interesting because it debunked the simplistic assumption that investors always vote Republican
- a local view of the supposed contradiction between Catholics following their faith and supporting Kerry (because of his pro-choice stand)
- an analysis of some of the misleading statements in President Bush’s stump speeches
- a look at the role of local youth in the presidential race
- an interview with one of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, demanding defense of their ad campaign against Kerry
- an examination of when/if nursing home residents should be considered incompetent to vote

State Election News. As noted earlier, Clevelanders got a disproportionate amount of their information about statewide races from ads. And of the little state *news* that was covered, most of it had to do with board-of-election preparation, poll watchers, and voter registration scandals. Not even a third of the news coverage contained anything a voter could use in the voting booth. And almost all of that focused on State Issue 1, especially Ohio Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell’s controversial stumping in support of it. See “Observations and Commentary” at the end of this report for more on Issue 1 coverage.

To believe the ads that ran nightly, however, Ohio voters were to decide some pretty important Supreme Court races November 2. But in the tapes studied for this project, there was not *one* story on these contest or their candidates. The closest any station came to that was a brief story about doctors demonstrating in favor of laws to limit malpractice awards. This, of course, was one of the key issues in the fight for

Supreme Court seats. The demonstration attempted to raise the issue, but the reporter missed the opportunity to help viewers put it in context.

Another important state race was the contest for U. S. Senate. Viewers saw endless ads promoting incumbent George Voinovich over the study period but not one from his less well-funded opponent, Eric Fingerhut. But voters couldn't depend on local TV to help them make a choice; only one story over the two weeks even mentioned this race.

Local Election News. Local races received negligible coverage as well. A few school issue stories appeared over the two-week period, but *not one* newscast covered any of the many state senate, state representative, and judicial races. There were ads aplenty for these contests but no news or analysis to help viewers sort them out.

The one exception to this dearth of local issues news was the race for the U.S. House of Representatives between incumbent Steve LaTourette and newcomer Capri Cafaro. But the majority of the coverage of this race came from one station, and virtually all of it focused not on the candidates' views but rather on a controversial videotape Cafaro tried to trick the station into broadcasting. See "Observations and Commentary" for more on this coverage.

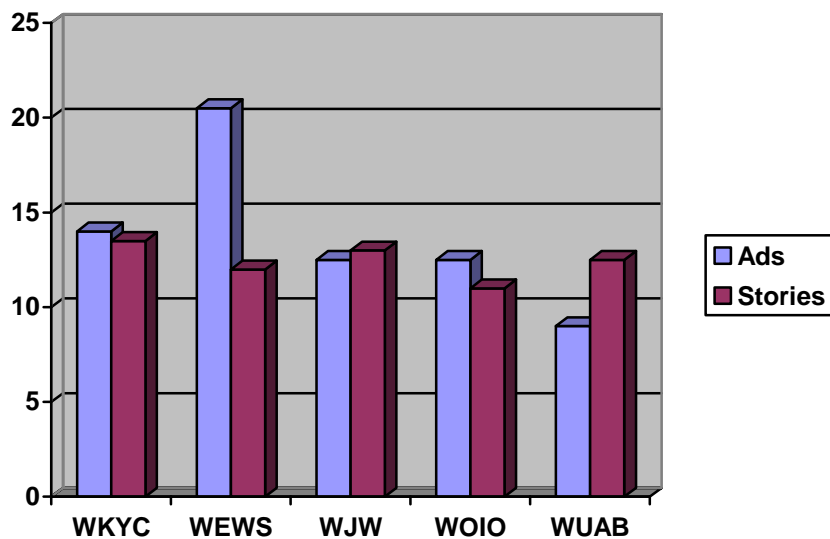


Figure 2. Percent of total newscasts devoted to election ads and stories

Individual Station Results

As Figure 2 shows, the five TV stations varied in how much election news and advertising they ran over the two weeks. This section takes a closer look at each station and what's behind their numbers.

WKYC. Channel 3's late-night newscasts over this period provided about an equal amount of news and ads having to do with the upcoming election. The vast majority of that news (69%) was national in scope (vs. 27% for local and 4% for state). Channel 3 devoted two-thirds of this national news to issues coverage (i.e., news voters could use at the polls), but the majority of it was of the sound-bite variety.

WKYC was among the study's leaders in offering a wide variety of presidential stories, however. These included looks at the candidates from the perspectives of youth, investors, local Latin and Arab minorities, and even local sports stars. Few of these were in-depth, but the producers showed some imagination in this reporting. The station also ran two stories culled from an exclusive interview with President Bush, as well a snippet of an interview with Kerry a few nights earlier.

In its coverage of local and state races, however, Channel 3 did not distinguish itself. Not only did it give state and local election news little time, but only 2.5 minutes of this coverage provided any insight into local and state races. This is especially troubling considering that the station spent roughly the same amount of time reporting on how much ad money was being spent on Cleveland media this election. The irony of this will not be lost on readers of this report.

Over the study period, then, late-night viewers of Channel 3 got a decent peek into the issues behind the presidential race. But for local and state races, these viewers had to depend on the ads.

WEWS. Channel 5 presented an extremely ad-heavy two weeks of late-night news prior to the election. Over one-fifth of its entire program time went to election ads, nearly twice that devoted to election *stories*. In just the weekend before the election (Friday through

Sunday nights), WEWS late-night news watchers digested 71 campaign ads—28 minutes' worth.

On the news side, Channel 5 devoted the largest chunk (69%) of its election news to the presidential race (vs. 14% for local races and 17% for state campaigns). But much more than its competition, it reported the “horse race.” Nine out of the 15 nights included a story focusing on presidential poll results, including one night with *two* such stories. WEWS watchers certainly knew who was ahead of whom and by how many points, but over these two weeks they did not learn much to distinguish the candidates. Brief sound bites and, in many cases, silent video of the candidates waving or gesturing took the place of any useful news. Especially earlier in the study, many nights went by with one issues-oriented election story or none at all. A notable exception to this coverage was a 40-second series of “man-on-the-street” interviews about upcoming election preferences.

Local and state news suffered even worse at the hands of WEWS. Voter registration problems made up most of the non-national reporting. Other than a brief glimpse of U. S. Representative Dennis Kucinich at a trendy Cleveland nightclub and the requisite Issue 1/Blackwell story, viewers saw nothing on local and state races. They could look only to the incessant ads for information.

WJW. Channel 8 showed roughly equal amounts of election ads and election stories during the two-week study. It was the only station in the study to devote most of its stories to local races (51%), compared to national (35%) and state (14%). It was also, however, the station that provided the lowest amount of usable issue and candidate information.

Both of these distinctions result almost totally from coverage of one news event: a local voter-registration worker allegedly being paid in crack cocaine. Channel 8 devoted nearly 21 minutes, spread over four nights, to this story. Many of the follow-up stories were just rehashes of first one, most with the same video clips. To devote this much time to one election story, to the ignorance of most other issues and candidates, seemed a waste—especially considering that other stations barely mentioned it. Over the first week of the study, however, *WJW* provided little election news other than this exclusive. On

many of these nights, the station showed no *presidential* news at all—an oddity in this study—let alone anything on local and state races.

Once the excitement over this story faded, however, WJW’s producers displayed more imagination than much of their competition in election coverage. The station covered three different debates (two for U.S. House seats and one for U.S. Senate), it was the only station in the study to even mention the Medina school levy, it ran several Issue 1 stories, and it produced the aforementioned excellent story on the voting competence of nursing home residents. Also to WJW’s credit was their choice not to waste valuable news time on reporting poll results.

It’s important to remember, however, that with a newscast nearly twice the length of most of its late-night competition, Channel 8 has more room for such innovation. It also apparently has more room for silliness, as indicated by its “stories” on Bush political adviser Karl Rove’s jumping up and down at seeing something in the distance and on President Bush’s being scared by a loud noise at a rally.

All told, Channel 8’s 110 minutes of election news coverage over the two weeks yielded little for northeast Ohioans to take to the voting booth. As with the other stations, WJW let its ads tell the story.

WOIO/WUAB. Although Channels 19 (WOIO) and 43 (WUAB) share the former’s Action News team, the newscasts are of different length and somewhat different content. So our look at these two stations presents separate statistics for the two but, for the most part, lumps its reporting achievements together.

Channel 19 presented roughly equal amounts of election news and ads over the study period. Channel 43, however, was the only station in the study to give considerably more time to election stories (12.5%) than to election commercials (9%). Content-wise, the two stations had similar mixes of national, local, and state stories, due no doubt to the fact that the news shows share the same crew. In both cases, stories of national scope dominated, followed closely by local stories and a mere 10% for state stories.

Action News may have a local reputation as more sensational than its rivals, but this study found that it also covered stories other stations ignored. As a result, it probably wound up surpassing the other stations in giving viewers usable election information.

Among the best of Action News's stories over the study period were the aforementioned Swift Boat Veterans interview, examination of Catholics' troubles with Kerry, and vetting of Bush stump statements. The station also devoted time to local campaigns ignored elsewhere in late-night TV news, including a property issue in Hudson, a Cleveland issue affecting police staffing, and a school levy other than Cleveland's (which got coverage on most stations).

Channel 19 outpaced its rivals in providing news of issues and candidates; three-quarters of its election coverage was of this type. Much of it, unfortunately, was devoted to the sensational series on the Cafaro videotape scandal. See the next section for more on this tempest in a teapot.

Observations and Commentary

I've saved this second last section of the report to make some overall observations about the reporting analyzed for this study.

Star Power. Television loves the rich and famous. And perhaps more in than any previous election, celebrities were apparent in this election cycle. But over these two weeks of newscasts, local stations put the spotlight on the celebrities, not the candidates they supported. And although these stars at least helped raise the issue of the importance of voting, the messages they intended to convey mostly got lost.

The most glaring example of this was Bruce Springsteen's musical introduction to John Kerry's election eve speech in Cleveland. Who could blame the stations for showing the striking image of Springsteen on stage while thousands of Clevelanders cheered? But the local coverage focused on the musician, not the message or the candidate. One station devoted five minutes—a huge chunk of time for a local newscast—to Springsteen's playing a song but a mere 90 seconds to Kerry's subsequent stump speech. And most of that time was devoted to Kerry's waving and thanking Springsteen for his support.

Other celebrities' messages didn't get out because the stories managed to de-politicize their appearances. Perhaps this was driven by the stations' attempt to appear nonpartisan, but they often seemed to be going out of their way to remove any indication

of the celebrity's cause. The results were sometimes baffling, as in the case of one station's footage of actor Paul Newman's thanking and encouraging a roomful of local supporters. What he was thanking them for was never clear, because the reporter failed to mention the object of this support. Only upon repeated viewings of the segment did I notice a blurry Kerry sign in the background of the crowd. It shouldn't be that hard to get the story.

What's particularly ironic about all this "celebritization" of politics is that it can actually *decrease* the amount of useful information the voter gets—at least as covered by local TV news in this study. First, by devoting time to the celebrity, the stations lessened the time available for the politician's message. Second, the stars' events wound up skewing the balance newspeople try to strike. Take, for example, the Springsteen event, which all stations covered. Because of the focus on the entertainment, all a voter could learn from the stories was that Springsteen endorses Kerry. In trying to provide balance, however, the stations then gave roughly equal airtime to Bush, whose entertainer-less sound bites were devoted to issues. At the end of the night, then, viewers had a clearer idea of Bush's platform than Kerry's.

Newspeople as Newsmakers. Perhaps the only thing worse than reporters focusing on celebrities is reporters focusing on themselves. I noted many instances in this study of newspeople injecting themselves into stories. Sometimes it was relatively innocuous, as with a WKYC anchor being shown looking proud and starstruck sitting aboard Air Force 1 interviewing President Bush. Other times it was more blatant and self-serving, as with WOIO/WUAB making its reporters and editors the center of the Cafaro story. Most often these incidents took the form of little, offhand comments made before or after a story, such as one newswoman's following a report on a voter-registration effort with a smirk and the comment that the group behind it was nonpartisan "but they lean a little left."

When newspeople *become* the news, the viewer loses out. The reporters then cede their role of impartiality and become analysts, at best. Not that there's anything inherently wrong with that. I would welcome more news analysis on local TV news, so long as the stations label it as such and provide both sides of issues. But reporting ought to be just the facts.

Objectivity. In a similar vein, newspeople pride themselves on being objective—“fair and balanced,” as one network famously claims. And at least in terms of their coverage of the presidential race, the local TV newspeople did a decent job of achieving that in this study. Often this was simply because they didn’t provide any information at all—just pictures. But when the stations did present issue coverage of one candidate’s message, they usually gave roughly equal time to his opponent. Certainly when one of the candidates was in town, he got a bit more coverage. The same was true when reporters got an “exclusive,” such as WKYC’s Air Force 1 interview with Bush, parts of which ran over two different newscasts. But, as noted earlier, the station tried to offset that with a brief Kerry interview on another night.

A glaring exception to this balance in presidential news coverage was Channel 43’s story pointing out fallacies in Bush’s stump message. Although it was among the most insightful examinations of issues over the study period, the station did not hold John Kerry to the same standard—at least not in the two weeks of tapes studied. Nothing I saw over that period convinced me that the station was pro-Kerry, but I can see where a suspicious viewer would get that idea from this story.

Local TV news was not as careful, however, about objectivity in reporting state and local races. Local school and parks issues, for example, got only positive coverage. I realize that the stations probably did this in the name of the public good, but there must have been legitimate arguments *against* these issues as well. Judging by how soundly the Cleveland Public Schools levy was defeated, there was apparently plenty of opposition to that issue. Local TV news ignored it.

Ohio’s contentious Issue 1 (the so-called “anti-gay-marriage amendment”) got lots of local television coverage, but it could have had been better balanced. Most stories managed to provide pro and con on the idea of gay unions, but the newspeople let Secretary of State Blackwell and other amendment supporters get away with framing the issue as one solely having to do with gay marriage. It was not as simple as that, and the newspeople should have given an Issue 1 opponent an opportunity to explain that.

Local and state candidates were mostly ignored, so balance wasn’t a problem there. The exception, of course, was WOIO/WUAB’s three-nights-running assault on

Congressional hopeful Cafaro. It tried to be edgy and impertinent but wound up pretty much throwing editorial balance out the window in the process. Granted, Cafaro's campaign allegedly had tried to trick the station into airing a videotape of her opponent, Steve LaTourette, leaving a tryst with his lobbyist girlfriend. But their sneering, needlessly disrespectful reporting and blatant editorializing were among the low journalistic points in the two-week period. The most ironic aspect of this coverage is that in telling the story of how the stations refused to run the videotape, the reporters spent much of the stories' combined 14 minutes showing the video again and again.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As the preceding paragraphs show, the 2004 election cycle's last two weeks contained little late-night TV news content that a prospective voter could take to the booth. He/she might have some idea of where the presidential candidates stood on some issues, but not in any depth. That voter also probably knew that there was an issue about gay marriage on the ballot but didn't really know the details. He/she may also have learned that a Congressional hopeful named Cafaro was dishonest in her campaign but not have a clue as where she and her opponent stood on issues. Other than that, that voter was pretty much helpless to decide among the countless remaining races.

At the same time, he/she was subjected to hundreds of commercials that made it quite clear who or what to vote for—or, at least, who to vote against (many negative ads, especially those involving local candidates, never bothered to name their opponents). But if a candidate wasn't lucky enough to get news coverage and couldn't afford ads, his/her voice was effectively mute. Ask U.S. Senate hopeful Eric Fingerhut about that. With only one story mentioning him over the study period and no ads representing his views, many northeast Ohioans probably entered the voting booth scratching their heads at who this guy was who was running against the well-known, well-financed George Voinovich.

Should people depend on late-night TV news for all their voting information? Probably not. Nightly news should be just that—the news of what happened that day. And prospective voters ought to be looking in many places for information that will help them cast their votes. But in the run-up to an election, races and the issues that frame

them *are* newsworthy. And as long as local TV programs are going to accept campaign ads, I believe they owe it to their viewers to provide some help in weighing the claims those ads make. This could take the form of regular examinations of the commercials (similar to what Channel 43 did in its analysis of Bush's stump statements) or simply through enhanced reporting. Most stations took a tentative step in this direction, but viewers deserve much more of this issue-clarifying reporting.

That's especially true for local and state races, where unfiltered information is harder to get. Presidential candidates can get their messages across on national news, as well as local, but not so for state legislators, judges, and so on. And with the great deal of money spent on these campaigns—remember, ads for state and local races in this study far outpaced those for the national election—stations particularly owe it to viewers to provide some independent information on these candidates. Brief, balanced, nightly looks at the different sets of candidates would be a welcome, and thoroughly workable, option. Archiving those stories and linking them to the stations' websites would be the logical next step.

Local TV stations have nothing to lose in adopting such ideas. In this past election, they profited greatly from ads for state and local races. Putting a bit of that back into sending reporters out to cover local and state races would not break the bank. Moreover, I'm enough of an optimist to believe that if a station had a healthy database of election information on its web site, it would reap a windfall of hits and enhance the station's reputation and popularity at the same time.

Technically, however, these stations really have little say in the matter. The airwaves on which they broadcast are still owned by the public, and their programming is still answerable to us. We can demand better election coverage from the stations, by petitioning them and their advertisers. We can and should also let them know when they do things right. If they ignore our comments, we can send letters to the FCC. These are reviewed when stations file for re-licensing.

Yes, elections are good business. They certainly were for TV stations here in northeast Ohio last fall. According to an election-season article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Cleveland was the country's number-1 market for national political advertising. But I don't begrudge them a cent of the millions they make off political campaigns, so long as they help us viewers make good election decisions. At least for the last two weeks of this past election, that didn't happen.