

Hispanic Media in the Balance

HOW UNIVISION AND TELEMUNDO NEWS COVERAGE
FAVORS LIBERALS, AND WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO CORRECT IT



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With a combined audience of approximately three million, the national evening newscasts of Univision and Telemundo have a viewership that rivals that of the top 10 cable news shows. Yet up until now, news coverage on these major U.S. Spanish-language networks has not been subject to consistent conservative engagement and scrutiny for fairness, accuracy and journalistic integrity.

For four months, from November 1, 2013 through February 28, 2014, the Media Research Center undertook just such scrutiny, analyzing nearly 1,000 U.S. and international issue-oriented news stories aired on the flagship weekday evening newscasts of Univision and Telemundo (*Noticiero Univision* and *Noticiero Telemundo*).

This study found a marked leftward tilt in both networks' news coverage, particularly in reporting U.S. domestic policy news, with Democratic, left-leaning sources overwhelmingly dominating U.S. coverage. In international news, however, both networks maintained a more critical and/or balanced stance in relation to governments in the region, as is the journalistic norm.

MRC's analysis examined, where applicable, three constitutive elements in the networks' coverage of each domestic policy topic: the conservative or liberal orientation of politicians and advocates cited; the conservative or liberal orientation of organizations cited; and the predominating tilt or "spin" (liberal or conservative) of the story.

The prevailing tilt of a story was determined by tallying all statements from journalists and quoted sources that articulated either a recognizably liberal or conservative point of view on a given subject. If the total of these comments were tilted in either direction by a

greater than three-to-two margin, then the story was scored as having either a “liberal” or “conservative” spin. Otherwise, the story was classified as “neutral” or “balanced.”

Among the major findings of the MRC’s first-ever study of the news on the nation’s top Spanish-language television networks:

Domestic Overview

- Out of 667 stories on U.S. domestic policy, more than six times as many tilted left/liberal (300 or 45%) as slanted in a right/conservative direction (43, or 6%). The remaining 324 stories (49%) presented a balanced or neutral discussion of U.S. policy.
- In coverage of U.S. domestic policy (667 stories), Democratic politicians and spokespeople for left-leaning/liberal advocacy organizations such as the ACLU, National Council of La Raza and various labor organizations were quoted nearly three times as often as Republican politicians and spokespeople for conservative counterpart organizations such as the Latino Partnership for Conservative Principles, the Heritage Foundation and the LIBRE Initiative (1,011 to 370 appearances and/or direct quotations) on Univision and Telemundo newscasts.
- The top three U.S. domestic policy topics covered by both newscasts were immigration law enforcement, immigration reform legislation in Congress and ObamaCare. The majority (170, or 59%) of Univision and Telemundo’s 288 stories on these three issues tilted left/liberal. Only 21 stories (7%) tilted towards the right/conservative, while the 97 remaining stories were neutral or balanced.
- None of the Obama administration’s various scandals (the IRS targeting of conservative groups; Benghazi; etc.) were even once mentioned during this four month study.

ObamaCare

- Despite ObamaCare’s problem-plagued rollout and controversial implementation, Univision and Telemundo reporting featured advocates of ObamaCare over its conservative opponents by a margin of nearly five-to-one (116-24).

Immigration

- On the subject of immigration reform, Democrats and spokespeople aligned with left-leaning pro-reform organizations made well more than twice as many appearances as conservatives and Republicans (287-135).
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- In news related to immigration law enforcement, the ratios were also lopsided, with Democrats and advocates for more liberal immigration law enforcement policy appearing four times as often as conservatives and law enforcement officers combined (184 to 45).

Venezuela

- On the other hand, Univision and Telemundo's coverage of Venezuela's socialist government was decidedly critical, with 39 of the stories about the situation in Venezuela favoring anti-government protestors, while just one tilted in favor of the government. Soundbites heavily favored the opposition by a two-to-one margin (154 vs. 73).

Catholic Church

- The majority of both networks' coverage of the Catholic Church was favorable, as 49 of the 95 stories (52%) favored the Church, compared with 30 (31%) neutral/balanced and 16 (17%) that tilted against the Church. Talking heads in these stories were mostly prelates or other pro-Catholic sources, who outnumbered critics by a greater than three-to-one margin (145 to 40).

Conclusion

This study of the news programming on America's leading Spanish-language television networks coincides with the launch of MRC Latino, an operational arm of the Media Research Center that will conduct ongoing analysis of these networks, with the objectives of improving conservative participation in this segment of the media's news programming, as well as holding these outlets accountable to the same standards expected of other major networks, for comprehensive, fair and accurate news coverage.

Our first examination shows America's top Spanish-language news networks are failing to fully live up to their journalistic vocation when they let their domestic news content be dominated by partisans on one side of the ideological spectrum. This situation will only improve to the extent conservatives are more successful in making their voices heard, and the networks do a better job of including conservative voices and views in their coverage of the news. Just like the rest of America's news consumers, viewers of U.S. Spanish-language networks deserve news coverage that is comprehensive, fair and accurate, adhering to the highest standards of journalistic integrity.

Hispanic Media in the Balance

How Univision and Telemundo News Coverage Favors Liberals, and What Needs To Be Done to Correct It

BY KEN OLIVER-MÉNDEZ, DIRECTOR OF MRC LATINO
AND RICH NOYES, MRC RESEARCH DIRECTOR

Every weekday evening, millions of people throughout the United States tune in to Spanish-language television to receive their news. The nightly newscasts of segment leaders Univision and Telemundo currently reach approximately three million viewers per week. While that is far behind the 22 million viewers of the flagship evening newscasts of the ABC, CBS and NBC, it certainly rivals that of many top-rated cable news shows.

From November 1, 2013 to February 28, 2014, the Media Research Center conducted its first analysis of the weekday evening newscasts of Univision and Telemundo. In doing so, the MRC applied the same scrutiny for balance, bias and journalistic integrity that it has applied to the nightly newscasts of ABC, CBS and NBC, among other networks, for over 25 years.

During the period under study, MRC examined nearly 1,000 U.S. and international issue-oriented news stories aired on the flagship evening newscasts of both networks (*Noticiero Univision* and *Noticiero Telemundo*). The study included every story about government, politics and public policy-related issues (both in the U.S. and abroad), excluding non-policy topics such as celebrities, sports, the weather, etc.

This study found a marked leftward tilt in both networks' news coverage, particularly in reporting U.S. domestic policy news, with Democratic, left-leaning sources overwhelmingly dominating U.S. coverage. In international news, however, both networks maintained a more critical and/or balanced stance in relation to governments in the region, as is the journalistic norm.

In all, our analysts reviewed 989 stories, totaling 29 hours 38 minutes of coverage. The lion's share of our analysis will focus on the 667 stories (19 hours, 21 minutes) which focused

on U.S. politics and policy topics. [*Note:* A story about U.S. relations with, for example, Venezuela, Cuba or Mexico was tagged as a U.S. policy story. Stories about internal political developments in those or other countries were analyzed separately.]

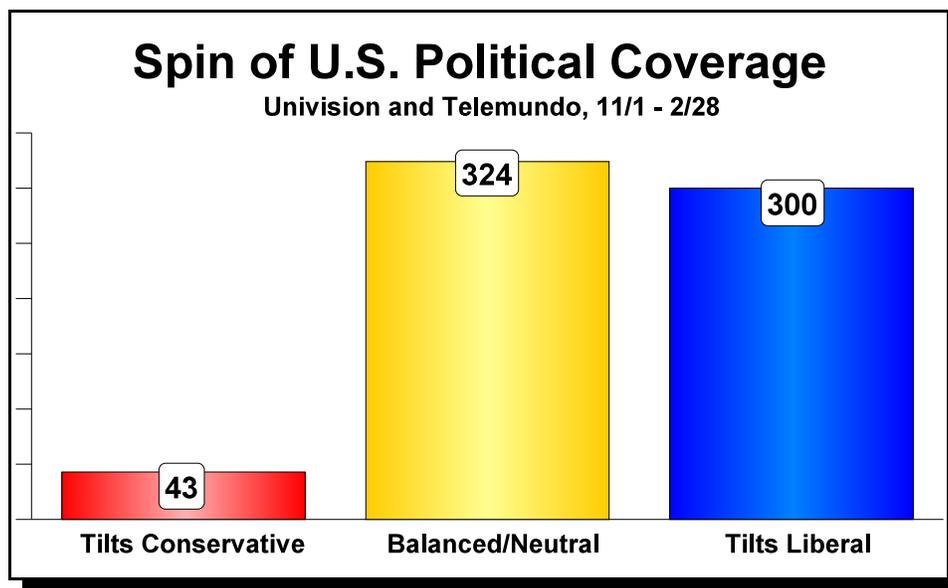
Methodology

The MRC examined, where applicable, three constitutive elements in the networks’ coverage of each topic: the conservative or liberal orientation of politicians and advocates cited, the conservative or liberal orientation of organizations cited, and the predominating tilt or “spin” (liberal or conservative) of the story.

The prevailing tilt of a story was determined by tallying all statements from journalists and quoted sources that articulated either a recognizably liberal or conservative point of view on a given subject. If the total of these comments were tilted in either direction by a greater than three-to-two margin, then the story was scored as having either a “liberal” or “conservative” spin. Otherwise, the story was classified as “neutral” or “balanced.” (Note that an anti-conservative spin was counted as “liberal,” and vice versa.)

Overall U.S. Results

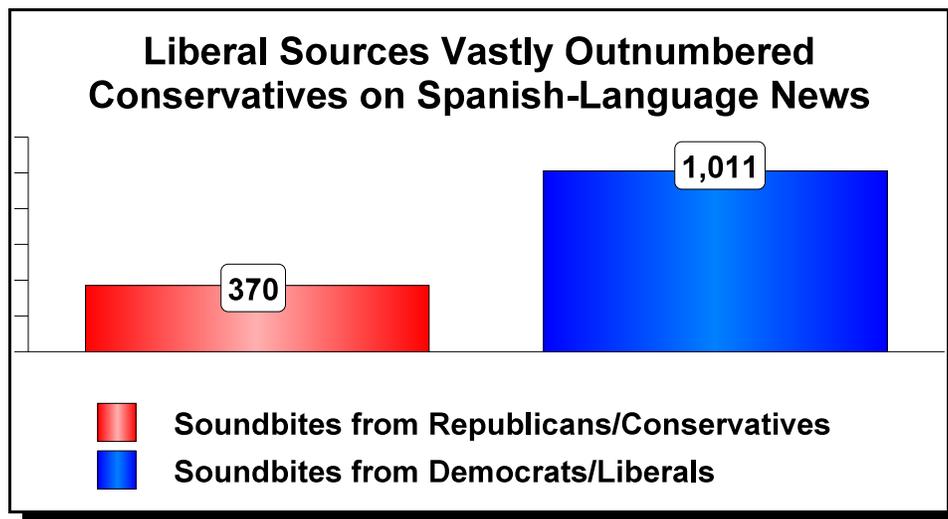
Employing this methodology to examine all stories focused on U.S. politics and policy, our analysts found that out of 667 stories, more than six times as many tilted left/liberal (300 or 45%) as slanted in a right/conservative direction (43, or 6%). The remaining 324 stories (49%) presented a balanced or neutral discussion of U.S. policy.



The prevailing leftward tilt was more pronounced on Univision, with 168 (50%) of 339 U.S. political/policy stories tilting leftward, 146 (43%) neutral/balanced and 25 (7%) right/conservative. Some 178 (54%) of Telemundo's 328 stories were neutral/balanced, 132 (40%) tilted left/liberal and 18 (5%) tilted right/conservative.

Both taken as a whole, as well as by individual subject, the results of MRC's study show that left/liberal bias in the coverage of U.S. domestic news on the leading national Spanish-language networks is a real problem.

Overall, Democratic politicians – led by President Obama, Obama administration officials and congressional Democrats – along with spokespeople for left-leaning advocacy organizations – were quoted nearly three times as often as their Republican and conservative counterparts (1,011 to 370 appearances and/or direct quotations) on Univision and Telemundo newscasts.

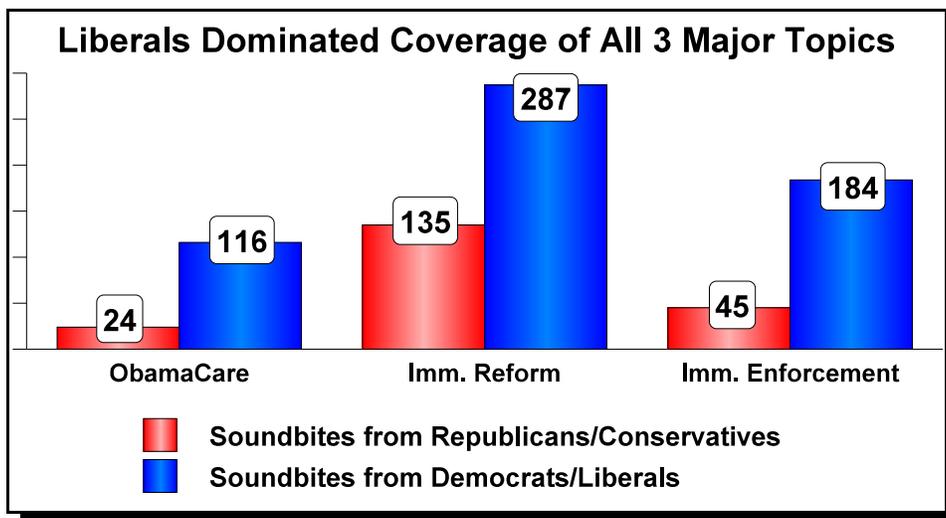


Based on MRC analysis of 667 Telemundo and Univision evening news stories about U.S. politics and policy, November 1, 2013 to February 28, 2014.

The three U.S. domestic news topics to which Univision and Telemundo dedicated the most coverage were matters related to immigration law enforcement, pending immigration reform legislation in Congress and the implementation of ObamaCare. Altogether, the networks dedicated 288 stories to these three topics.

The majority (170) of Univision and Telemundo's 288 stories on these three issues tilted left/liberal. Only 21 stories tilted towards the right/conservative, while the 97 remaining stories were neutral or balanced.

In their coverage of the three topics, left/liberal-leaning sources and advocacy groups such as the ACLU, the California Endowment, the National Council of La Raza and various labor organizations were cited or referenced 587 times, nearly three times as often as the 204 citations of conservatives or conservative counterpart organizations.



Based on MRC analysis of 288 stories about ObamaCare, immigration reform and immigration enforcement on Telemundo and Univision evening newscasts, Nov. 1, 2013 to Feb. 28, 2014.

ObamaCare: Publicity-Infested Coverage

Self-respecting media outlets and journalists are careful to avoid being used as pawns of public relations or publicity campaigns, by either public or private-sector entities. Yet this is what largely appears to have happened at Univision and Telemundo in their coverage of ObamaCare.

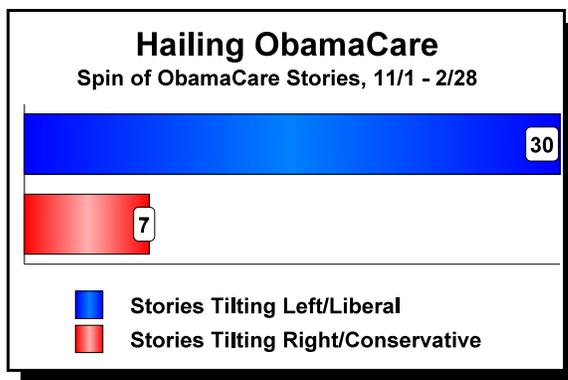
Despite ObamaCare’s problem-plagued rollout and controversial implementation during the period under study, Univision and Telemundo featured liberal advocates of ObamaCare over the law’s conservative opponents by a margin of nearly five-to-one (116-24).

In addition, left/liberal spin dominated more than half of the ObamaCare stories on Univision and Telemundo (30 of 59), coverage which was not infrequently bracketed by anchor-read promotional tie-ins and commercial breaks that contained ads, featuring (in the case of Univision) network morning show talent promoting enrollment in ObamaCare.

Further, conservative, ObamaCare-opposing sources of information, such as the LIBRE Initiative or Heritage Foundation, were cited as sources only seven times, compared with 37

direct references to pro-ObamaCare sources such as Families USA, the California Endowment, and government departments within the Obama administration.

The data point to the extent to which Univision and Telemundo coverage was influenced by both networks' high-profile partnership with the Obama administration in promoting ObamaCare. As reported by Kaiser Health News in August of 2013, the California Endowment alone signed a \$20 million deal with Univision for its ObamaCare campaign.



The above images were frequently used as publicity tie-ins during Univision's ObamaCare coverage, such as the reports described below on November 19 and December 31.

Emblematic of the pro-ObamaCare spin of much of Univision reporting during the period under study was a November 19 report by Luis Megid. During the report, Megid stated outright that "the states where ObamaCare is working are those that have cooperated with the reform and have created their own exchanges to sell insurance. Where ObamaCare isn't working is in those that haven't cooperated with the program."

A two minute and thirty-four second ObamaCare look-ahead piece on December 31 featured enrollment publicity tie-ins on both ends. During a January 13 update on ObamaCare sign-ups, Telemundo anchor José Díaz-Balart referred those interested in subscribing to ObamaCare directly to the Telemundo news website.

Though Univision reaped the most from its ties to the ObamaCare marketing budget, Telemundo also received its share. President Obama himself hailed the partnership among the networks during a June 2013 visit to the Golden State, saying "these leaders from

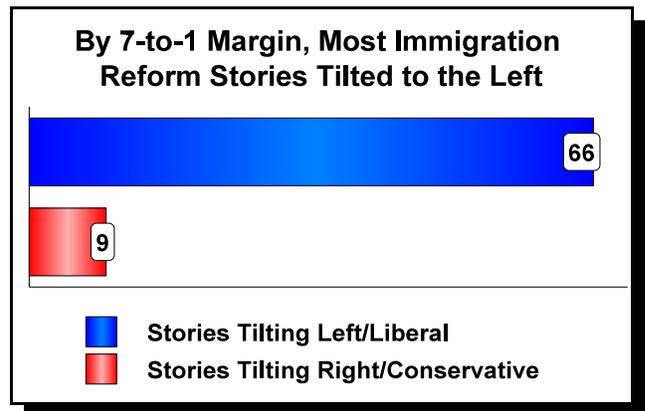
California’s government, the California Endowment, and major Spanish language media outlets have joined together to help implement the Affordable Care Act.”

Outside the period of this study, on March 6, 2014, as the initial enrollment campaign wound up, the networks once again joined forces with the Obama administration, holding a joint town hall on ObamaCare in Washington, hosted by Univision and Telemundo anchors.

Immigration Reform: Lopsided Debate

In Univision and Telemundo coverage of developments related to immigration reform legislation in Congress during the period under study, Democratic politicians and spokespeople aligned with left-leaning pro-reform organizations appeared more than twice as often as Republicans and conservatives (287-135).

In the 103 stories the networks devoted to the topic, left-leaning pro-reform sources of information, such as America’s Voice, the National Council of La Raza, United We Dream and the Coalition for Human Immigrants Rights of Los Angeles, were frequently featured – so much so, that the spin of these stories was heavily slanted to the liberal/Democratic point of view on immigration reform, with 66 of them tilting in favor of liberal arguments, vs. nine that tilted towards a Republican or conservative point of view.



Emblematic of the under-representation of conservative voices on immigration reform was a November 20 report by Univision Washington correspondent Lourdes Meluzá on pressure on Republicans to act on immigration reform, following President Obama’s statement that he was open to working with the House on a piece-by-piece approach to the legislation.

The three minute report on the subject included 49 seconds of soundbites articulating the perspective of four Democrats and liberal policy advocates on the subject (White House Domestic Policy Council Director Cecilia Muñoz, Congressman Luis Gutiérrez, Congressman Xavier Becerra and America’s Voice Executive Director Frank Sharry) compared with only one 14-second soundbite from Republican Congressman Mario Díaz-Balart.

Similarly, a two minute and nine second December 10 Telemundo report by Carlos Botifoll on immigration reform activists threatening targeted opponents in Congress with political consequences included 35 seconds of soundbites from four different liberal policy leaders (Clarissa Jiménez of the National Council of La Raza, Héctor Sánchez of the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, Jorge Mario Cabrera of the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles and Ben Monterroso of Mi Familia Vota). Not one conservative voice or perspective in response to the attack was included.



A December 10 report on Telemundo included soundbites from four liberal activists, but not a single conservative.

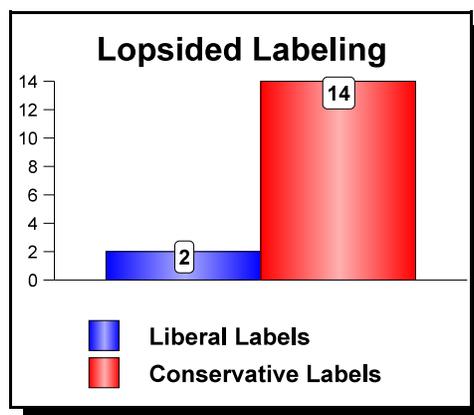
Lopsided Labeling

Asymmetric use of ideological labels is another sign of slanted news reporting, and was evident in the coverage during the period under study. Univision and Telemundo used ideologically-charged labels such as “conservative,” “hard line” “radical” and “ultra-conservative” 14 times in their reporting of U.S. domestic policy news between November 1 and February 28.

Setting up a November 6 report, for example, Univision anchor María Elena Salinas referred to that week’s elections as a setback for “the ultra-conservative Tea Party.” In the subsequent story, Univision’s Enrique Acevedo referred to “radicals” within the GOP: “Far from resolving the sharp differences inside the Republican Party between the radicals and the moderates, yesterday’s results could have made them even worse.”

Similarly, reading a brief item on January 15, Telemundo anchor María Celeste Arrarás described California Republican gubernatorial candidate Tim Donnelly as “an ultra-conservative who has gained notoriety for promoting strong laws against the undocumented, such as the repeal of the DREAM Act.”

In contrast, Telemundo never once used a “liberal” label to describe any U.S. politician or group, while Univision used the “liberal” label twice – once to describe the newly-elected New York City Mayor Bill DeBlasio, another to describe the group MoveOn.org. There were



no references to “ultra-liberals” or “hard line” leftists during the four months of coverage the MRC examined.

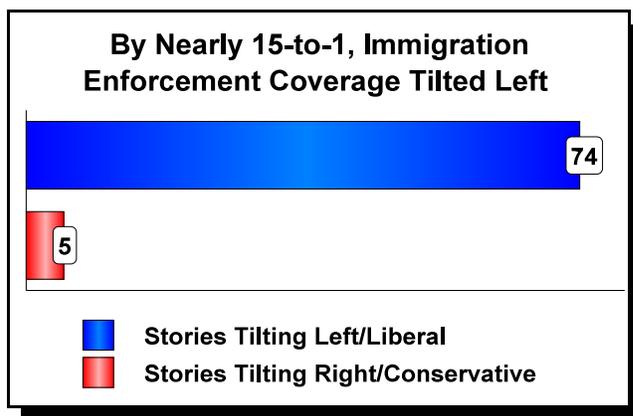
Coverage Tilted Against Law Enforcement

News related to immigration law enforcement — such as protests against deportations, Border Patrol actions, Detention Center incidents, and Immigration Court stories — received more attention than any other U.S. domestic policy topic during the period under study.

In 126 stories on the subject, Democratic politicians and left-leaning policy advocates were featured 184 times, compared with just 45 appearances or direct quotations by law enforcement officers and/or conservative policy advocates.

Similar to the coverage of immigration reform, spin in favor of more liberal policy on the issue dominated in the reporting narrative of 74 of the 126 stories.

Conservative spin drove the narrative of only five stories, principally in coverage of a human trafficking case and when several Democratic congressmen denounced a group of Dreamer students for going too far in their tactics.



Also as in coverage of immigration reform, left-leaning sources of information, such as the Coalition for Humane Immigrants Rights of Los Angeles, National Day Laborer Organizing Network and National Immigration Law Center, were cited 47 times in the reporting, compared with only 13 citations of law enforcement and conservative policy organizations.



Liberal spin against law enforcement dominated in the majority of stories on the subject. An exception occurred on November 5, when Congressman Luis Gutiérrez denounced the tactics of the National Immigrant Youth Alliance.

Overt liberal spin was also exemplified by Univision correspondent Luis Megid’s November 25 report on pressure on President Obama to use his presidential powers to halt deportations. In addition to only including soundbites of those who favor a halt to deportations, Megid cited a Public Religion Research Institute poll results showing that 63% of Americans favor immigration reform with a path to citizenship in order to close his report with the statement, “Now what’s needed is for

Washington to reach an agreement, in order to make the wishes of the majority a reality.” A January 27 report by Telemundo’s Rogelio Mora-Tagle on pressure on the President to stop deportations was similarly one-sided, only featuring soundbites from proponents of this posture.

Other U.S. Topics

Other major U.S. policy topics covered also tended to be drawn from a left-leaning policy agenda. The issue of illegal drugs and drug legalization was discussed in 19 stories. Eight of those stories favored liberal arguments on the subject, versus two that struck conservative themes (with the rest balanced or neutral).

Likewise, poverty and inequality were featured in 17 stories. None of those could be scored as favoring conservatives, versus 14 that favored a liberal policy approach. Soundbites in these stories also favored Democrats/liberals over Republicans/conservatives by a six-to-one margin (23 to 4).

For example, a January 9 report by Univision’s Jamie García on President Obama’s poverty initiative featured President Obama’s announcement at the White House, file footage of President Lyndon Johnson announcing the “war on poverty” 50 years ago, and various expressions of support by men and women on the street in a targeted Los Angeles neighborhood. No conservative or critical voices were included in either that report, or subsequent reports on the same subject during the period.

Same-sex marriage was a topic in 17 stories. Once again, none of these stories favored conservative arguments, vs. 12 that favored liberal policy objectives.



Coverage of President Obama’s poverty initiative, announced in the context of the 50th anniversary of LBJ’s “War on Poverty,” contained no conservative or critical voices and perspective.

Selective Silence?

None of the Obama administration’s various scandals (the IRS targeting of conservative groups; Benghazi; etc.) were even once mentioned during this four month study.

Scandals involving Republicans (most notably, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie’s “Bridgewater” affair, but also then-Florida Congressman Trey Radel) were featured in 15

stories totaling 22 minutes of airtime, vs. just four stories and seven minutes for scandals involving Democratic politicians (New Jersey Senator Bob Menéndez and California state senator Ronald Calderón).

International News

Coverage of developments in neighboring Latin American countries — countries of family origin and close family relations for many viewers — is a prominent part of both networks' nightly news programming.

In fact, 133 stories featured news related to Mexico, more than any single U.S. domestic or other foreign news topic. The intensification of conflict related to drug trafficking and the arrest of Mexico's most notorious drug trafficker no doubt contributed to the spike in Mexican news coverage during the period.

In contrast to their coverage of U.S. domestic policy news in general and the incumbent U.S. administration in particular, the network newscasts displayed a more critical approach in their coverage of foreign governments, particularly those in the region.

A major regional development that took place during the period was escalating social unrest and political repression in Venezuela. Univision and Telemundo devoted 63 stories to this topic, compared with a total of just six stories by ABC, NBC and CBS during the same period.

Univision and Telemundo's coverage of Venezuela's socialist government was decidedly critical. Analyzing all statements from journalists and quoted sources that articulated either a recognizably pro or anti-government point of view, 39 of the stories about the situation in Venezuela favored anti-government protestors, while just one tilted in favor of the government. Specifically, soundbites heavily favored the opposition by a two-to-one margin (154 vs. 73).



Government censorship in Venezuela was denounced

Among the many examples, a November 20 story on Univision entitled "With all the Powers" on the subject of the expanded governing powers of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro focused on the anti-business climate and worsening product shortages in the country as a result of the Maduro government's statist policies.

Catholic Church Coverage

The majority of both networks' coverage of the Catholic Church was favorable. Analyzing all statements from journalists and quoted sources that articulated either a recognizably favorable or critical point of view, the majority of the networks' 95 stories (49, or 52%) were tilted in favor of the Church, compared with 30 (31%) neutral/balanced and 16 (17%) that tilted against the Church.



Coverage of both the Venezuelan opposition and the Catholic Church (image of Univision report on Venezuelan opposition leader Henrique Capriles meeting with Pope Francis) was decidedly favorable.

Talking heads in Catholic Church stories were mostly Church prelates or other pro-Catholic sources, who outnumbered Church critics by a greater than three-to-one margin (145 to 40). Univision's lead story on December 25 was emblematic of the networks' consistently extensive coverage of the Catholic Church and its leader, no doubt due in large measure to the heavily Catholic religious affiliation of its audience.

The lead story that evening was a lengthy 3 minute and 20 second report on the Pope's Christmas message, including incisive analysis by Argentine papal biographer Evangelina Himitian. In a similar vein, the December 11 Telemundo newscast included a three-minute faith-affirming report on Virgin of Guadalupe celebrations, in which the anchor openly praised the Virgin Mary's miracles.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study confirms that bias – by both commission and omission – in the news coverage of the top Spanish-language television networks is a real problem. Just like the rest of America's news consumers, viewers of U.S. Spanish-language networks deserve news coverage that is comprehensive, fair and accurate, adhering to the highest standards of journalistic integrity.

Our first examination shows America's Spanish-language news networks are failing to fully live up to their journalistic vocation when they let their domestic news content be dominated by partisans on one side of the ideological spectrum. This situation will only improve to the extent conservatives are more successful in making their voices heard, and the networks do a better job of including conservative voices and views in their coverage of the news.

In the light of the findings of this study, remedial action is necessary on both the source and editorial sides of the journalistic equation. In a constructive spirit and toward that end, the following recommendations are offered:

1. In order to better get their message across to viewers of this important media segment, it is incumbent upon more conservatives to effectively engage and make themselves available to these networks, with relevant and compelling content.
2. On the editorial side, the networks need to allow all major sides of a debate to speak in news stories, not just voices that management and staff may sympathetically promote. All sides of an issue deserve tough, skeptical coverage, too.

News Analyst Jeffrey Meyer provided invaluable assistance with this report.

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