

CENTER FOR MEDIA AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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Bush, Clinton Also Lead TV's Humor Race

President Bush and Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton have been targeted for the most jokes by TV's late night comedians this year, according to a new report by the Center for Media and Public Affairs. (CMPA)

As part of the CMPA's study of TV election news, researchers are tallying all jokes about the presidential candidates on the "Tonight Show" and "Late Night with David Letterman." From January 1 through Super Tuesday (March 16), President Bush was the front runner with 97 jokes, more than double the 46 jokes aimed at runner-up Bill Clinton. They were followed by Pat Buchanan with 35, Paul Tsongas with 28, and Jerry Brown with 26. Overall 142 jokes were aimed at Republicans and 116 at Democrats. CMPA will continue its joke watch throughout the election.

Sample Jokes:

George Bush

All the candidates agree that President Bush is responsible for the recession, which I think is unfair. Come on, he wasn't even in the country when it was going on. (Leno, 3/3)

President Bush said he is going to do to the recession what he did to Saddam Hussein. Oh, great, what does that mean -- he's going to keep it around for another year? (Leno, 2/4)

Both Bush and Buchanan say they have a plan for reviving the economy. You ever get the feeling that the only Republican who ever had a recovery program that worked was Betty Ford? (Leno, 3/10)

Bill Clinton

People are saying Bill Clinton wouldn't be a good president because he was afraid to go to war. I think that's unfair. He has a much greater chance of getting shot here at home by a jealous husband. (Leno, 2/11)

The latest reports indicate that Bill Clinton is on top. I have no idea how he is doing in the primaries. (Letterman, 2/18)

There is something wrong with the Democratic party when you have three bachelors running for President of the United States, and the only one who can get a date is the married guy. (Leno, 2/4)

Pat Buchanan

Pat Buchanan wants to build a fence on the border with Mexico to scare illegals. A better way to do that would be to put Pat Buchanan at the border. (Carson, 2/20)

In Germany there is a big debate over what to do with Adolph Hitler's bunker. One group wants to destroy it, the other wants it preserved as a historical landmark, and Pat Buchanan wants to lease it as a campaign headquarters. (Leno, 2/28)

Paul Tsongas

Tsongas was turned down for secret service protection, on the basis that no one could pick him out from a crowd. (Leno, 2/25)

Tsongas' critics say he is unelectable. I thought that was the main requirement to be a Democratic candidate. (Carson, 3/4)

Jerry Brown

All the candidates carry a beeper to get important messages, except for Jerry Brown. He has a ouija board with call waiting. (Carson, 2/21)

Jerry Brown says he doesn't need secret service protection. You see, he's wearing a crystal. (Leno, 3/3)

You couldn't miss the candidates last weekend. Bush was on "Meet the Press", Clinton was on "This Week with David Brinkley", and Jerry Brown was a guest on "Wayne's World." (Carson, 3/4)

(In some cases the wording of jokes has been altered slightly for brevity.)

The Center for Media and Public Affairs is a non-partisan, non-profit research organization that conducts content analysis of news and entertainment media. Results of our ongoing analysis of late night humor appear periodically in the Media Monitor newsletter, and in press advisories such as this one. Please feel free to contact CMPA for further information.