

# CENTER FOR MEDIA AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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October 18, 2000

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## **Bush Is Still Biggest Joke on Late Night TV** But Study Shows Gore Closing "Humor Gap"

WASHINGTON, DC—With a George W. Bush appearance on "The Late Show With David Letterman" looming, a new study finds that TV's late-night comics have told 44 percent more jokes about George W. Bush than Al Gore this year, according to the most recent "Laugh Tracks" report from **The Center for Media and Public Affairs (CMPA)**. But the study also finds that Gore has closed the "humor gap" in October, as the number of jabs has become more balanced.

This "Laugh Tracks" tally is CMPA's sixth **ElectionWatch** report of Campaign 2000. **ElectionWatch** provides regular updates of how the broadcast networks are covering the candidates, the issues and the campaign. "Laugh Tracks" examines "The Tonight Show," "The Late Show with David Letterman," "Late Night with Conan O'Brien" and "Politically Incorrect" from January 1, 2000 to October 16, 2000.

### **ADDITIONAL FINDINGS:**

- **Bush-whacked:** Bush has been the target of 465 jokes so far this year, over 44 percent more than Gore's total of 322. But so far in October, the jokes have been coming at both candidates' expense, as Bush (78 jokes) has been made fun of only 11 times more than Gore (67 jokes).
- **Chiding Cheney:** Late-night comics have told 106 jokes about Republican vice-president hopeful Dick Cheney. This is more than one and a half times more than his Democratic counterpart, Joseph Lieberman, the subject of only 41 jokes.
- **Battle of New York:** New York Senate candidate Hillary Clinton (118 jokes) has received a lot of attention this year from talk show hosts, with five jokes told for every one about her opponent Rick Lazio (25 jokes). Lazio still trails former GOP candidate Rudolph Giuliani, the target of 69 jokes.
- **Assail to the Chief:** Though much of the comics' attention has been turned towards the Bush-Gore matchup, President Clinton has been the butt of more jokes this year than each of the two presidential candidates—590 jokes on Clinton compared to Bush at 465 jokes and Gore's 322.

### **EXAMPLES:**

*"Earlier today, George W. Bush said that he has one goal for these debates. He wants to show the American people that he's presidentiable."*

David Letterman, October 3<sup>rd</sup>

*"You've gone from George Washington, who could not tell a lie, to Bill Clinton, who could not tell the truth, to Al Gore, who can't tell the difference."*

Jay Leno, October 12<sup>th</sup>

*For additional tables, data and more examples please contact Matthew Felling at (202) 223-2942*