

CENTER FOR MEDIA AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FOR MORE INFORMATION:
VINCENT SOLLITTO

PEROT POSITIVE PRESS MORE THAN DOUBLES DURING DEBATES

Study Finds Texan Goes from Last to First in Good Coverage

Bush Receives More Attention, Criticism Than Others

WASHINGTON, DC--**News coverage of Ross Perot became much more favorable after the start of the presidential debates**, taking him from last to first place among the candidates in their percentage of positive comments on the network newscasts, according to the latest update of the Campaign '92 study performed by the Center for Media and Public Affairs (CMPA). The Center, an independent research organization directed by Dr. S. Robert Lichter, examined 244 election stories aired on the ABC, CBS, and NBC evening newscasts from October 1 through October 19 (the last of the presidential debates).

Perot went from having the worst press of the three major candidates in early October (28% positive/72% negative) to the best (62% positive/38% negative) during the week of the presidential debates (Oct. 12-19). **Gov. Clinton's press also improved**, from 36% positive to 48% positive, **while President Bush's worsened**, from 63% negative before the debates began, to 66% negative during debate week. (Each candidate's score is based on explicit evaluations of his desirability for office by sources quoted on the newscasts.)

Example --"I think this country owes Ross Perot a great debt of gratitude, because he is saying some things that need to be said."

-- Voter, CBS News, 10/16

President Bush received the heaviest attention of the three contenders both before and during the debates. In the first 19 days of October, the three networks ran 135 stories about Bush, compared to 119 about Clinton and just 65 about Perot. (Some stories, esp. debate stories, featured more than one candidate.)

Since the debates began, 95% of network sources discussing the campaign "horse race" have expressed optimism about Bill Clinton's electoral chances, while 90% have expressed pessimism about Bush's chances. Ross Perot's perceived performance in the horse race improved from an overwhelming 83% negative prior to the debates, to just 58% negative after October 12. ("Horse race" comments deal with the candidate's standing in the race, or prospects for success, rather than his desirability for office.)

Example --"For the first time, some in the Clinton campaign are whispering not just about victory, but a mandate."

-- Chris Bury, ABC News, 10/16

