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Networks to Candidates: "Get Lost!"

TV Election Campaign Coverage Down 44 Percent; Hillary Clinton Tops All Presidential Contenders

WASHINGTON, DC—Network evening news coverage of the presidential campaigns during the 1999 "preseason" fell 44 percent when compared to the airtime given to presidential candidates in 1995, according to research conducted by the Center for Media and Public Affairs (CMPA). CBS led the networks' decline by cutting coverage 55 percent from the previous pre-election year.

According to CMPA President Dr. Robert Lichter, "The broadcast networks became niche players in preseason campaign news, ceding much of the story to the 24-hour cable news networks. The drop-off is especially surprising, because both party's nominations are being contested this year, while Clinton's renomination in 1996 was a foregone conclusion."

This is CMPA's first ElectionWatch report of Campaign 2000. ElectionWatch will provide regular updates of how the broadcast networks are covering the candidates, the issues and the campaign. This report examines the 294 stories broadcast on the ABC, CBS or NBC evening news throughout 1999.

OTHER MAJOR FINDINGS:

- **Networks Were Down on Election News**—The broadcast network evening news shows devoted 7 hours, 45 minutes of coverage to the presidential race during 1999, compared to 14 hours, 2 minutes in 1995—a drop of 44 percent. The decline was steepest on CBS (down 55%), followed by ABC (-39%) and NBC (-37%).
- **GOP Coverage Chasm**—George W. Bush (96 stories) nearly quadrupled the coverage given to his main rival, John McCain (26). On the Democratic side, Al Gore (77) edged out Bill Bradley (56) by a far narrower margin. Among the remaining candidates, only Pat Buchanan (18) and Steve Forbes (13) received more than 10 stories in 1999.
- **First Lady First**—Hillary Clinton's emerging campaign for the NY Senate seat received more coverage (110 stories) than any Presidential candidate in 1999. Her likely opponent—New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani—received scant attention (10 stories).

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1999 Total Coverage of Presidential "Preseason"

Network	1995 Coverage	1999 Coverage	% Decline
ABC	230 minutes	141 minutes	-39%
CBS	320 minutes	144 minutes	-55%
NBC	292 minutes	184 minutes	-37%
Total	14 hours, 2 min. 842 minutes	7 hours, 49 min 469 minutes	-44%

1999 Total Amount of Coverage, All Major Candidates*

Candidate	Amount of Coverage (Stories)
Hillary Clinton**	110
George W. Bush	96
Al Gore	77
Bill Bradley	56
John McCain	26
Pat Buchanan	18
Steve Forbes	13
Rudy Giuliani**	10
Donald Trump	8
Gary Bauer	3
Warren Beatty	3
Orrin Hatch	2
Alan Keyes	0

* More than one candidate may be featured in a story.

** Candidates for the New York Senate seat vacated in 2000 by Sen. Daniel Moynihan.

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ElectionWatch is published regularly during the primary and general election season by the **Center for Media and Public Affairs (CMPA)**, a nonpartisan and nonprofit research and educational organization. Future ElectionWatch reports will contain statistical updates on the amount, topics and tone of the media's coverage of Campaign 2000. Results of **CMPA** research will be posted weekly on its daily online magazine, **NewsWatch**. Located at <http://www.NewsWatch.org>, the publication critically examines the content of print and broadcast news.