

CENTER FOR MEDIA AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

2100 L Street, N.W. • Suite 300 • Washington, D.C. 20037 • (202) 223-2942

March 1, 2000

Contact: Matthew T. Felling 202-223-2942

MCCAIN GOES ON LENO, BUT BUSH IS TOP JOKE TARGET

GEORGE W. BUSH IS BRUNT OF 10 TIMES AS MANY LATE NIGHT QUIPS AS MCCAIN But Hillary Clinton Tops All Presidential Candidates In Jokes

WASHINGTON, DC—On the eve of Senator John McCain's appearance on "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno" a new study finds that TV's late-night comics tell 10 jokes about George W. Bush for every one about his GOP opponent. According to the most recent "Laugh Tracks" report from **The Center for Media and Public Affairs (CMPA)**, GOP Presidential candidate George W. Bush has been the target of 293 cracks in the past year, more than 10 times the amount of laughs at Sen. McCain's expense (29 over the same period).

According to CMPA President Dr. Robert Lichter, "The candidates are a big joke on the late-night talk shows, the frontrunners are the funniest of all. Bush may be rebounding in the primaries, but he's never lost any ground in comic value. If Leno and Letterman could pick the nominees, we'd see another Bush-Quayle ticket this year."

This "Laugh Tracks" tally is CMPA's fourth **ElectionWatch** report of Campaign 2000. **ElectionWatch** provides regular updates of how the broadcast networks depict the candidates, the issues and the campaign. This report examines "The Tonight Show," "The Late Show with David Letterman," "Late Night with Conan O'Brien" and "Politically Incorrect" from March 1, 1999 to February 25, 2000.

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS:

- **First Lady of Late-Night**—Hillary Clinton's highly-publicized candidacy for New York's Senate seat has yielded 329 jokes, more than any presidential aspirants. But this total still falls far short of her husband's astounding total of 1,189 (more than the four leading presidential contenders combined).
- **More Media Bias?**—Jokes about the leading contenders for the three highest profile political races—the Republican and Democratic presidential primaries and the NY Senate seat—have each produced about a 10 to 1 joke ratio between the two leading candidates. Bush received 293 jokes, ten times the 29 of McCain; Al Gore was the target of 275 jokes, compared to Bill Bradley's 28, while Hillary Clinton was popped 329 times compared to 30 Rudy Giuliani jokes.
- **Comics Can't Say 'Noe'**—Though he stepped aside early in the GOP nomination process, 162 late-night quips came at the expense of former Vice-President Dan Quayle—more than all other GOP hopefuls combined (145), with the exception of Bush.

More...

EXAMPLES:

"I've got a whole new respect for President Clinton. For years and years, I made fun of the guy... I spent a half-hour with Hillary. Look what happened to me!"

Letterman, 2/21/00 (*Upon returning from heart-bypass surgery*)

"Today, when they asked George W. Bush what he thought of Kosovo, he said, 'You know, I just shop at Price Club.'"

Leno, 11/8/99

"We're in the middle of the deadly cold and flu season... Here's good news, though. The folks who make Sudafed, a couple of weeks ago, introduced a brand-new non-drowsy Al Gore."

Letterman, 1/10/00

"Dan Quayle attended the 80th birthday party for Reverend Sun Myung Moon. He attended as a representative of the US and because he heard there was going to be a pony."

O'Brien, 2/14/00

"President Clinton, who yesterday was in Florence, today is in Sofia. I'm not kidding. This man is writing his own jokes now."

Maher, 11/22/99

A Year of Candidate Jokes March 1999-February 2000 Top Ten Targets

<u>Candidate</u>	<u>Total Jokes</u>
Hillary Clinton	329
George W. Bush, Jr.	293
Al Gore	275
Dan Quayle	162
Pat Buchanan	63
Steve Forbes	61
Donald Trump	59
Rudy Giuliani	30
John McCain	29
Bill Bradley	28

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

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, as well as jokes about the candidates on late-night television talk shows. Results of **CMPA** research are posted weekly on NewsWatch, its daily online magazine, located at <http://www.NewsWatch.org>. NewsWatch also critiques the content of print and broadcast news.