News Coverage Of Political Campaigns And It’s Negative Affects Essay, Research Paper

News Coverage of Political Campaigns

And it’s Negative Affects

Have you ever turned on the TV to watch the news during election year? News programs constantly bombard the public with campaign coverage that negatively affects the way people vote. The most noticeable effect the TV news media causes is a decrease in voter attendance at the ballot boxes. News coverage of political campaigns reduces voter turnout because of the negative campaign tactics used by candidates and their parties; exit polls that predict the outcome of an election; and the public’s perception that the media can be bought to influence people to vote for a certain issue or candidate.

Voter turnout has significantly dropped from 75 %-85% in during the 19th century to fewer than 55% in modern day elections as written by Pierce Lewis of American Demographics (Page 20). The result of low voter turnout reveals a broad dissatisfaction and unconcerning attitude towards politics from America’s citizens. The main cause for this public attitude in current voting is the news media. What better place is there to display all the events of pre-election activities?

The first and most effective discouragement to voting is exit polls that predict the outcome of an election or in modern terms “electronic forecasting.” Exit polling on or before Election Day has become the predominant method used by mass media in American politics for predicting outcomes of elections according to George Bishop and Bonnie Fisher of Public Opinion Quarterly (Page 568). In most recent elections exit polling has grown into an even more complex mass survey medium with institutions such as Voter Research and Surveys (VRS) of New York who provide polling results for massive television networks like ABC, CBS, and CNN. In addition to TV networks, many television affiliates, newspapers, and newsmagazines also use this polled data to inform the public. Since exit polls predict the winners of elections, vast numbers of citizens don’t even bother to vote because they already know who’s going to win and that their vote wouldn’t make a difference (Pages 568-589).

Another reason that causes low voter turnout is news media coverage that broadcast negative campaign tactics politicians and their parties use to attack to opposing candidate or party. According to Laurence I. Barrett of Time magazine, presidential candidates are sliding on their word of not using negative campaign tactics; in fact, negative advertising is becoming trendier among those running for election (Page 28). Negative campaigning in the news media is perceived by most as boxing ring where candidates can put on gloves and knock each others ideas or beliefs down. The most affecting aspect of negative campaign to the public is that candidates and parties only point out the opposing side’s flaws to uplift themselves and avoiding the issue at hand which often occurs in debates. Since negative campaigning causes a great deal of arguing between candidate and/or parties, a great percentage of the public tends to separate themselves from the political process (voting) because of the excessive attacks candidates inflict on one another. The public expects a degree of professionalism from running candidates that shouldn’t include negative tactics that only discourage the public’s outlook on voting participation.

Lastly, public perception of a bias and favorable media also contributes to a reduction in the voting population. As early as the 1960’s, public perception of a bias media was first noticed; ” however, current data suggest the American public views the media as increasingly less trustworthy?” as stated by Donna Rouner, a journalist for Newspaper Research Journal (Page 41). Partisanship of news factions also discourages people from participating in the political process because news groups may be supportive of one party and their beliefs giving only one side of an issue. More of the American population may be better influenced to vote if news groups would take a neutral position supporting only the facts and produce a non-bias broadcast. In addition to partisanship, the idea of media being bought by candidates or parties to influence the public can also diminish voter turnout. For example, a wealthy candidate can purchase large amounts of airtime trying to earn more of the public’s votes or simply a news affiliate that favors a candidate or party would donate more airtime to that candidate or party. The public’s view of news media coverage is one that is best described as bias which results in low participation from the would be voting public (Pages 41-50).

In closing, news media coverage of political events does in fact reduce voter turnout because the media acts as a playing field for candidates and their parties to childishly attack one another. The fact that predictions from exit polls broadcasted by the media discourage voting because the public already knows who is going to win so the general public feels that their participation doesn’t make a difference or isn’t necessary. All of the corruptness of news media coverage ultimately leads to a poor public perception of media and government resulting in an even less voter turnout.

If only news media were totally factual and neutral in their coverage of election events the voting population may begin to rise again promoting a true non-bias exercise of democracy

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