

# Presidential campaigns should be dictated by fact-checkers

Politicians have a reputation for either manipulating the truth or leaving out important details in order to better their image to American voters. We've seen these glaring exaggerations or falsities in political ads, speeches or campaign representatives throughout history, well



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into modern day, and neither side appears to be exempt from this rule.

When it comes to campaigning, it would make sense that facts, statistics and statements would have to be as accurate as possible, to earn the trust of American voters. And to make sure politicians are telling the truth as much as possible, fact-checking organizations, such as PolitiFact and FactCheck.org, track the statistics and comments made by politicians running for office with hard numbers to ensure accuracy.

Recently, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney has been caught telling lies in his speeches. One example is Romney's claim that President Barack Obama's welfare reform plan, released on July 12, would require no work or job training, just a welfare check in the mail. Romney has used this criticism of Obama in his political ads and speeches, claiming Obama "did not understand the power of work."

But FactCheck.org, sponsored by the nonpartisan Annenberg Policy Center, found Romney's statements to be false – that the Obama plan would not drop work requirements as Romney had said.

Additionally, Romney claimed Obama's plan would "gut" former President Bill Clinton's 1996 welfare reform legislation, which transformed welfare programs into state-run programs with federal guidelines, rather than keeping them as federal entitlements.

Clinton found ads with his name and image attached to this false statement as "especially disappointing," according to a recent Huffington Post article.

These factual flaws should be addressed immediately. But according to Neil Newhouse, chief pollster for Romney, he and fellow candidate aides were "not going to let (their) campaign be dictated by fact checkers."

Obama has also been caught exaggerating the truth, claiming Romney said it was "tragic" to end the war in Iraq. FactCheck.org found that Romney was actually speaking in regards to how quickly Obama pulled troops out of Iraq, not the war itself.

If a presidential campaign isn't going to be "dictated by fact checkers," then what will dictate the campaign? How can we trust presidential candidates if they aren't going to consider fact checking and accuracy as vital components to the political process?

The answer is, we can't. As American voters, we have the responsibility to ensure that what our candidates are presenting as fact is actually true. We must hold them accountable for lies, whether they are as large as welfare reform policies or as small as an exaggerated

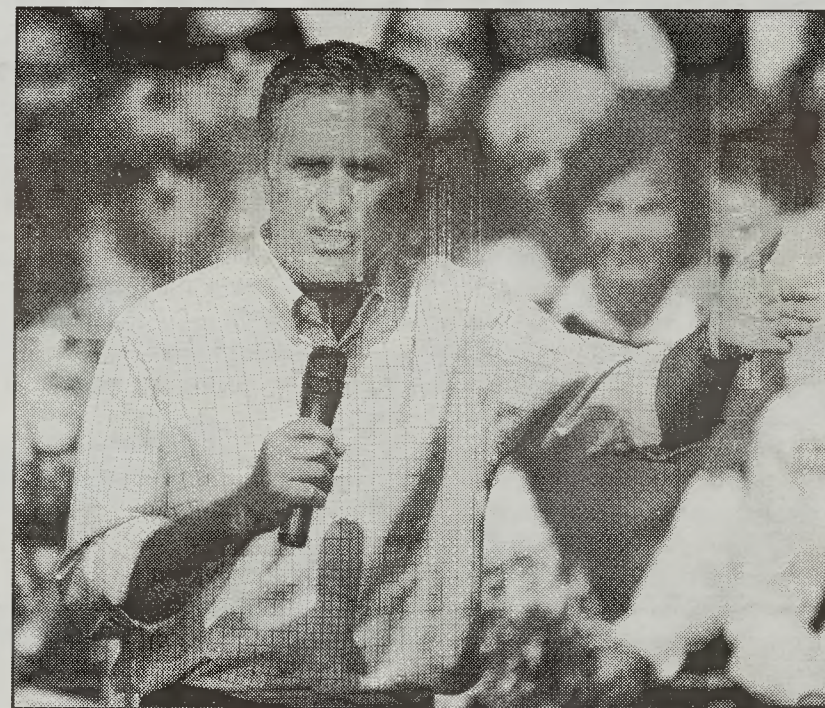


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The Romney campaign has been criticized recently for its inaccurate campaign ads.

athletic feat (see Republican vice presidential candidate Paul Ryan's claim that he ran a marathon in less than three hours, when he was found to have run it in four hours).

Fact-checking organizations may seem nit-picky, and perhaps some-

times they are. But in the end, picking out multiple inaccuracies stated by candidates from either party is an essential step to holding our candidates accountable for their actions, and informing American voters when politicians lie.

## First ladies captivate audiences with humanizing convention addresses

As millions of people watched the Democratic and Republican National Conventions on their



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televisions and computers, arguably the most buzzed-about speeches were not from the candidates themselves, but from their wives.

Now, party members believe in their presidential nominee, but they have also come to believe in his other half. Despite the highly divisive nature of this campaign, both

Michelle Obama and Ann Romney had the same goals when talking about their husbands. While the candidates are expected to focus on their

party's platform and to attack their opponents, the spouses can focus on less partisan topics, like morality and patriotism. They serve as glorified cheerleaders in political pep rallies.

Both Michelle Obama and Ann Romney emphasized their husbands' trustworthiness and compassion for everyday Americans.

"I see the concern in his eyes and hear the determination in his voice," Michelle Obama said of the presidential incumbent.

If each first lady (Ann Romney is the former first lady of Massachusetts) is to be believed, her husband is the only one who will preserve the American Dream, and both women offer a message along the lines of "Think of the children!"

A clear narrative emerged from each speech, one of a man who came from a good upbringing and ran for office to make his country a better place.

Each wife described humble beginnings early on as a young married couple.

According to them, Barack and Mitt are still the same men they were before getting into politics, and are still committed to their families.

Having significant others give speeches at conventions is a relatively new concept, so the level of rhetoric expected is not clearly established.

Even with similar messages, Ann Romney's speech was stylistically less formal than Michelle Obama's, which was praised in the ratings.

Since there is not much of a precedent to follow, neither first lady was doing it incorrectly. To be fair, Michelle Obama had the benefit of previous experience, having spoken at the DNC in 2008.

Both Michelle's and Ann's speeches fired up audience members in their respective

convention centers. Of course, these women wanted to give a shout-out to the female constituents.

"I love you women!" Ann Romney said with singsong enthusiasm. In an unexpected move, Michelle Obama made allusions to gay rights and marriage equality in her speech. Both ladies ended with the standard, "God bless you, and God bless America."

Many people found these speeches to be fascinating, because the candidates' spouses can emerge from the background and remind us that, at the end of the day, these politicians are real people with real families. Married couples are usually ideologically compatible, so chances are, if you like what one says, you will probably like what the other says.

Plus, if his own life partner doesn't support the campaign, who will?

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I recently came across a well-written article in the sports section authored by Zachary Homer. In this particular article, Mr. Homer interviewed two of my teammates in regards to their efforts to spread their religion with those on the Cross Country team. The article gave an in-depth view of the religious views that these two particular athletes have, both of whom I have the utmost respect for. In the wake of the article, I am uncomfortable with the new view that has been shed on the team. Our team, like any team, is made up of various races, religions and political ideologies. Truly great teams, not unlike our truly great nation, are made up of a wide variety of people. If we all were of the same race, religious background and economic status our team would have no spirit, no soul. Thus the point of my letter, I would like it known that our team is not homogeneous. Although some may pursue religion openly, it does not mean that they represent the rest of the team's views.

Nicholas Foley, Class of 2015