

## The World According to Univision

John Edwards has not taken a definitive position on abortion. Hillary Clinton's position on the issue is that "she will fight for the defense of children." And Barack Obama wants taxes to be "as low as possible."

Each of these statements is misleading, at best. Mr. Edwards and Mrs. Clinton support "a woman's right to choose" and Mr. Obama wants to repeal the Bush tax cuts. But on Univision, a Spanish-language TV network with an average prime-time audience of about 3.5 million viewers, these and other slanted statements about the presidential candidates are commonplace.

These statements appeared on Univision's Web site, but like much of the network's reporting, were missed by the mainstream media because they appeared only in Spanish. I have taken an extensive look at Univision and found that these are a tiny fraction of the biased views of American politics regularly presented by the network.

This is something all of us need to be concerned about. Earlier this week, Democrats participated in a Univision-sponsored presidential debate held in south Florida. The candidates used the forum to reach out to Hispanic voters and many Democrats have noted that only one Republican -- Sen. John McCain -- has agreed to participate in a similar debate for GOP candidates originally scheduled for this coming Sunday. Their aim is to portray Republicans as biased against Hispanics.

But context matters. Faced with an onslaught of biased reporting, Republicans are right to have reservations about Univision. They should, however, engage the network, as it is far too important to be ignored. Late last month, Nielsen began comparing Univision to other broadcast networks in a single viewer sample, and found that it is the most-watched TV network (ahead of Fox, ABC, CBS and NBC) for viewers 18-34.

If their views were presented fairly, it's likely that Republicans would connect with Hispanic voters. That may be why the network's news coverage often downplays issues that make Hispanics dislike Democrats (abortion, same-sex marriage, taxes) and sensationalizes the immigration issue as a way of demonizing Republicans -- even those who are not anti-immigrant.

Rudy Giuliani, who is attacked by some for making New York a "sanctuary city" for illegal immigrants during his time as mayor, was blasted as *anti-immigrante* in a recent op-ed by star reporter Maria Elena Salinas on Univision's Web site. Apparently the mayor earned the label because he was tough on crime and supports border security, notwithstanding the fact that he carried 43% of New York City's Hispanic vote (a bloc that tends to be heavily Democratic) when he ran for re-election in 1997.

Republicans must engage and demand fairness from Univision, rather than let it propagandize the most conservative segment of the Hispanic population -- the 40% who may speak English, but who are "Spanish-dominant" and consume their news in their native language. According to a July 2006 study of previous elections by the New Democratic Network, English-speaking Hispanics are more reliably Democratic, and "the movement towards Bush has come from the Spanish-dominant, as they have gone from 82%-18% Clinton-Dole in 1996 to 52%-48% Kerry-Bush."

Univision isn't alone. Bias is a problem throughout Spanish media. In South Carolina, Rep. Bob Inglis, a Republican and supporter of the failed comprehensive immigration reform bill, was surprised to see a December 2005 headline in *El Periodico Latino* that, when translated, read: "BAD NEWS FOR IMMIGRANTS: Congressman Inglis will support President Bush's position on immigration." Of course, the Bush plan was the most pro-immigration proposal on the table.

Univision is the largest and most important part of the Spanish-language media, yet it features some of the most unbalanced political news coverage on television and it continues its leftward drift. Marcela Salazar, a former staffer for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, was hired recently as the producer on Univision's new political show, "Al Punto," which is hosted by two left-wing journalists. A Democratic friend of mine, who works as a strategist for a Democratic presidential campaign, told me last week: "She'll do us a lot of good there."

As a group, Latinos are more pro-life and more supportive of traditional family values than non-Hispanic whites, less likely to divorce and three times as likely to have started a business in the past decade. Given that all of these are strong Republican identifiers, GOP strategists are asking themselves why they vote so lopsidedly Democratic.

The answer rests, in part, in the bias in the Spanish-language media. Republicans should counteract that by participating in Univision's debate, if only so they can speak over the heads of biased reporters and directly to the network's audience.

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