

How media influences our democracy

[Media](#), [Social Media](#)



America's strong belief in freedom of speech has allowed it to become the hub of political debate, criticism and ultimately – change. Being the “ go-to” source of information, the media plays a key role in shaping political ideas and thought. Most, if not all, of one's information comes from some sort of media, whether in the form of an online news article, journal, blog or news station. While it is obvious that the first amendment is core to our identity as American citizens, there is a fine line between what the media was designed to be and what it has evolved into. What should have ideally been an unfiltered source of information, the media has become corrupted into a corporate owned propaganda source posing a very dangerous threat to our democracy and well being. With the creation of the first amendment it was made clear that “ Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press.”

In an article titled “ Freedom of Speech and the Press” by professor Stone and Volokh it is described that the amendment clearly states that it restrains the government from any interference in what one has to say. In a time where countries had little to no freedom of speech, America became the bastion of democracy. Allowing for the press to openly criticize the government and their actions paved the way to a much more transparent and clear leadership. Dr. Zoran Milovanovich of Lincoln University writes how “ There is a direct link between freedom of speech and vibrant democracy”, indicating the importance between freedom of speech and how a country succeeds. What was clearly created to serve as a tool of transparency and information, the press (or media) has become increasingly polarized in both directions. While biases have always existed in some fashion, currently there

is a clear distinction between the media that is viewed by people in different ends of the political spectrum.

In an article titled “ Not Just News Corp” by Megan R. Wilson it is mentioned that “ The parent companies of six major media outlets have all donated anywhere from five to seven figures to political organizations during the 2010 election cycle alone”, indicating clearly the political interests that lie within them. In return, news stations have a firm grasp over it’s viewers depending on their affiliations with political leaders. For example, right wing conservatives often find themselves getting news strictly from Fox, Wall Street Journal or in some cases even Breitbart . Alternatively, left wing liberals tend to stay close to CNN, Huffington Post or Slate. One can recall how Fox news praised President Trump on his “ victory” when discussing possible negotiations with North Korea. Upon looking back, the same network attacked Barack Obama for simply stating that it is important to “ talk to our enemies”.

A key problem in the biases that are presented by these networks, is that the echo chamber becomes increasingly more comfortable to be in. For example, one who watches Fox news as their only source of information will likely be so engorged by what it being said that they will have little to no insight on leftist talking points and vice versa. As media’s biases grow bolder and stronger, it can often lead to non tolerance to their opposition only further increasing the divide already prevalent. It is not unreasonable to expect that news outlets should offer unbiased and transparent news, which has been shown to be clearly not the case.

Additionally the media has become increasingly more catered to corporate interests. Thriving on advertisers, news sources are often required to change their information to adhere to that their funders want. In an article titled “Media and Advertising” by Anup Shah it is recalled how: “On April 7, 2002, UK’s BBC aired a documentary called Century of the Self looking back at the rise of consumerism in the 20th century. In discussing the role of the media, it was pointed out how journalism also changed as big business started to gain more influence. Many, in order to get stories that would attract readers, would have to agree to editorial content being dictated by business, such as placement of specific advertising in the pictures, placing certain sentences and paragraphs, and mentioning key products related to the story, etc.” It becomes much easier to believe that political parties have clear affiliations with news outlets and require them to broadcast their propaganda. Most would agree that such a model hurts our democracy as the means in which one gets their information becomes muddled and unclear due to corporate interests. The implications of these numerous problems in the media can lead to devastating results. As more people become aware of corporate meddling and clear biases, the level of trustworthiness finds its way into the picture. For example, with the recent election of president Donald Trump, the term “Fake News” became a very popular buzzword for most right wingers. As the media became increasingly biased in their reports, the president himself was able to denounce them. While the media is not perfect by any means, there are still many ways in which one can get their information reliably. With such untrustworthiness at its all time high, it is becoming increasingly more difficult for news to be published without the

risk of being branded as fake or inaccurate – even when discussing legitimate news. Ultimately such skepticism leads to both sides of the political party to brand each other as fake and inaccurate, completely negating any argument or debate to even be considered.

In conclusion, the media has warped itself into a mass form of slander, bias, untrustworthiness and corporate sponsored “ news”. There is no doubt that the media – in all forms – does little but weaken our democracy. By catering to the public in such a way that they are able to hear what they want to hear, the media has formed a clear line in dividing the nation into many sides. Currently, there is not much that can be said about political media that is not negative. Unfortunately as these forms of mass media distribution need billions of dollars to succeed, it has become impossible for any major news station that are not forced into biases that support their funders. As corporate America firmly grasps on the media and it’s interests, there is not much that can be done by it either. Besides merely serving as a platform for political ideas and topics to be discussed the end result is often frighteningly the same: their side is always right.