



Outrage as Media Exposed Allowing Romney, Obama Camps to Censor News

In a startling [front-page report](#) published this month, the *New York Times* openly admitted that reporters from virtually every national media outlet were letting the administration, as well as the Barack Obama and Mitt Romney presidential campaigns, alter the quotes in news stories before publication. Analysts, the alternative media, and even some establishment figures promptly lambasted the controversial practice, sparking something of an international scandal while leading to demands for an immediate end to what opponents called “censorship.”



Several establishment media outlets have already announced that they would no longer permit the practice. Others promised to offer readers full disclosure if sources were allowed to review and approve their statements before publication. But the uproar over the news is still growing, and it is likely to shake the bizarre — critics say “corrupt” — U.S. media culture to its core.

“Quote approval is standard practice for the Obama campaign, used by many top strategists and almost all midlevel aides in Chicago and at the White House,” [wrote](#) Jeremy Peters in the explosive *Times* article, noting that the Romney camp engages in similar censorship. “It is also commonplace throughout Washington and on the campaign trail.”

Obama, of course, touted himself as the pro-transparency candidate. Voters almost certainly did not have censorship in exchange for information in mind when they voted for him. The administration and the Obama campaign, perhaps ironically, refused to comment on the record when asked by reporters about the practice.

According to the *Times*, it was difficult to find any news outlet that did not agree to let officials approve and edit their comments before publication. Bloomberg, the *Washington Post*, Reuters, and even the *New York Times* were among the establishment media services that had consented to interviews under those terms, Peters reported.

Needless to say, despite years of engaging in what critics said were severe ethical violations, none of those media outlets informed their readers of these practices — until now, at least. Similarly, they also failed to inform their audiences that they were [receiving ObamaCare funds while reporting on the subject](#).

Of course, critics — especially conservatives — have long [blasted the mainstream media for its anti-liberty bias](#) and its lack of ethics, most recently exposed when ABC News recklessly tried to link the Aurora, Colorado shooter to the Tea Party based on nothing. But now, even the *Times*’ managing news editor Dean Baquet admitted to the practice of allowing officials to review and approve quotes — and expressed his lack of enthusiasm for it.



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on July 25, 2012

“We encourage our reporters to push back,” Baquet was quoted as saying in the *Times* report. “Unfortunately, this practice is becoming increasingly common, and maybe we have to push back harder.”

While the notion of letting sources review, edit, and approve quotes before publication is hardly a new phenomenon — especially in dictatorships and, apparently, Washington, D.C. — the *Times*’ disclosure was unprecedented. Still, more than a few media professionals quoted in reports said the Obama administration had entrenched the Orwellian practice, which accelerated under former President George W. Bush.

“There have always been sources that tried to win these terms, and lately more and more have succeeded,” New York University journalism professor Jay Rosen [told](#) the U.K. *Guardian*. “What was new and significant in the *Times* story was that quote approval is now the norm for a whole layer of campaign sources; most of the reporters working the beat had already come to terms with that.”

The outcry has gone up around the world, with even Iranian media outlets [ridiculing the U.S. press](#) after the practices were exposed. But in America, well-known figures in the establishment media also slammed the recently unmasked deception, too.

“Any way you look at it, this is a jaw-dropping turn in journalism, and it raises a lot of questions,” [wrote](#) famous news anchor Dan Rather in a column for CNN, wondering if reporters and media outlets engaging in the practice could be trusted. “Let us mark well this Faustian bargain. It is for the benefit of the politicians, at the expense of readers, listeners and viewers. It is not in the public interest; it is designed to further the candidates’ interests.”

In an editorial, the *Washington Examiner* also [blasted the practice](#), noting that with current trends, it was not hard to imagine a day when “story approval” by officials became an accepted condition for interviews. The paper promised never to allow political campaigns or government officials the power to review, veto, or edit the quotes it plans to use — even if that means it is denied interviews. Other news organizations were urged to do the same.

Unsurprisingly, the revelations led to a particularly fierce uproar among alternative media outlets. “All I can say about these people I once considered ‘colleagues’ is that I am so ashamed of them. I am mortified. They are humiliating themselves and a vital institution for any free society,” said author Joseph Farah, editor of WorldNetDaily and a longtime newsman. The piece was entitled “[Proof! Establishment Media Controlled](#)” — a widespread sentiment among commentators.

“It seems the biggest threat to the American tradition of a free and independent press is not government coercion,” he continued. “It’s the willing submission of the press to being handled and managed by government and politicians.”

Bloggers across the political spectrum were outraged, too. “If you see a quote in the newspaper from someone in the federal government then it is safe to say that a gatekeeper has almost certainly reviewed that quote and has approved it,” [noted](#) a piece on the liberty-minded American Dream blog, calling it “disgusting” and contrary to what the press is supposed to stand for. “This is another sign that ‘the free and independent media’ in this country is a joke.”

It is also one of the reasons that the establishment media’s credibility is at record lows, according to the popular blogger’s analysis. And it is likely part of the reason why so many people are ditching what critics call the “dinosaur media” or the “lamestream media” — controlled by just a handful of controversial mega-corporations — in favor of other sources, especially online.



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“What we get from the mainstream media is a very highly filtered form of propaganda, and that is one reason why Americans are turning away from the mainstream media in droves,” the blog post continued, pointing out that journalists have been exposed working for the CIA and that the press today is tightly controlled by a tiny group of firms. “People want the truth, and more Americans than ever realize that they are not getting it from the mainstream media.”

The *Times*’ explosive revelations have already led more than a few media organizations to prohibit quote censorship. Many more are currently engaged in [discussions](#) about what sort of policies to adopt, with more changes undoubtedly in the pipeline.

For the sake of the American people, however, critics of the controversial practice are hoping that media outlets stand together and reject official efforts to manipulate the press in such a manner — not to mention the news itself, and by extension, public opinion. More than a few analysts, though, even said it was time to reject the establishment press once and for all.

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