

FactCheck.org and the Annenberg Public Policy Center present:

Pants on Fire:

Political Mendacity and the Rise of Media Fact-Checkers

Nov. 9., 2007

National Press Club, Washington DC

Program

- 9:00 am:** Welcome: Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director, Annenberg Public Policy Center
- 9:05 am:** Introductions & Overview: Brooks Jackson, director, FactCheck.org
- 9:10 am:** Report on Newspaper Trends: Justin Bank, FactCheck.org
(New data on frequency of ad watch and fact check stories in 34 large U.S. newspapers, 1992-2007)
- 9:20 am:** Report on Broadcast Trends: Bob Papper, Hofstra University
(Data from a new nationwide survey of news departments of U.S. TV stations)
- 9:30 am:** Journalist panel, followed by audience Q&A
- Bill Adair, Washington bureau chief, *St. Petersburg Times* (“PolitiFact.com”)
 - Colin Benedict, news managing editor, WISC-TV, Madison, Wis.
 - Michael Dobbs, *Washington Post* (“The Fact Checker”)
 - Mark Matthews, political reporter, KGO-TV, San Francisco
 - Jake Tapper, senior national correspondent, ABC News
- 10:20 am:** Coffee break
- 10:30 am:** Political consultant panel, followed by audience Q&A
- Anita Dunn, Squier Knapp Dunn Communications
 - Ladonna Lee, Foley & Lardner LLP
- 11:30 am:** Adjourn

Participant Profiles:

Bill Adair is the Washington Bureau Chief for the St. Petersburg Times and the editor of PolitiFact.com. He established PolitiFact.com in August, 2007 in cooperation with Congressional Quarterly, a sister company of the Times. He has been in the Washington Bureau since 1997 and covered the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections and the Florida recount. As bureau chief, he wrote frequently about the White House and the Supreme Court, but now spends most of his time on PolitiFact. He is the author of *The Mystery of Flight 427: Inside a Crash Investigation* (2002, Smithsonian Press). He is the winner of the Everett Dirksen Award for Distinguished Coverage of Congress and the Society of Professional Journalists Sigma Delta Chi Award.

Justin Bank earned both his B.A in Political Science and Public Communication and his M.A in Applied Politics at American University. He joined the Annenberg Public Policy Center in October, 2005 with various experiences across the public affairs spectrum. He has worked in the newsroom at the New York Post, assisted the Director of Communications for the AFL-CIO affiliated seniors advocacy group the Alliance for Retired Americans, and has worked for a boutique public relations firm specializing in health care policy.

Colin Benedict is the news managing editor of WISC-TV in Madison, Wisconsin. Previously, as the station's political reporter, he established the "Reality Check" feature for the station, regularly assessing the accuracy of claims made in political ads and elsewhere. The segment proved to be one of the most popular features for the CBS affiliate. Benedict was the lead reporter on three high-profile races for governor and covered presidential politics in the battleground state before taking a role in news management in 2007. He is originally from Stevens Point, Wis. He is also a University of Wisconsin-Madison graduate.

Michael Dobbs launched The Fact Checker feature at the Washington Post in September 2007. Born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, he began working full-time for the Post in 1980, witnessed the collapse of communism in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union as bureau chief in Warsaw and Moscow, and was in Beijing during the Tiananmen Square upheavals. During the 2004 election, he fact-checked the claims of Swift Boats Veterans for Truth and John Kerry's record in Vietnam, and also reported on the controversy surrounding President Bush's military service and the use by CBS News of unverified, probably fraudulent, memos. In December 2004, he was on vacation in Sri Lanka, swimming in the sea, and filed a memorable, eyewitness dispatch on the Asian tsunami. He has published three books and a fourth, about the Cuban missile crisis, is scheduled for release in June 2008. He has held fellowships or visiting professorships at Harvard, Princeton, the U.S. Institute of Peace, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

Anita Dunn is a Democratic political consultant with Squier Knapp Dunn Communications. Her 2004 clients included Sen. Evan Bayh and Rep. Lloyd Doggett, both of whom won by wide margins in normally Republican territory. In 2001-2002, she was senior political advisor to Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle as well as a consultant to the Senate Democratic Caucus when they gained the majority. She joined the firm in 1993 from Sen. Bill Bradley's office, where she had been chief of staff. She was also chief strategist for Bradley's 1999 presidential campaign. She was communications director for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC) for both the 1988 and 1990 election cycles, while Democrats had a net pickup of three seats. She was communications director for U.S. Rep. Bob Edgar's 1984 congressional and 1986 senatorial campaigns; served as a press assistant on Senator John Glenn's 1984 campaign, and began her career in politics working for White House Chief of Staff Hamilton Jordan under President Jimmy Carter.

Brooks Jackson is director of FactCheck.org, a project he launched in 2003 as a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center. The Web site has 65,000 subscribers and currently logs an average of more than 20,000 unique visits per day. Previously he was a reporter for The Associated Press (1967-1980), The Wall Street Journal (1980-1990) and a correspondent for CNN (1990-2003). At CNN he pioneered the "adwatch" and "factcheck" form of stories debunking false and misleading political statements, using visual techniques developed by Dr. Jamieson. His most recent book is *unSpun: Finding Facts in a World of Disinformation* (Random House, 2007), co-authored with Kathleen Hall Jamieson.

Kathleen Hall Jamieson is the Elizabeth Ware Packard Professor at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. She has written extensively on the press, politics, and presidential campaigns. Her research into deceptive political TV ads produced techniques that are now in common use in TV “adwatch” stories. Among the many books she has authored are: *Dirty Politics: Deception, Distraction, and Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 1992) and *Everything You Think You Know About Politics...and Why You're Wrong* (Basic Books, 2000).

Ladonna Lee was born into Republican politics. The daughter of a Colorado state legislator, she worked on her father’s campaigns and later ran the GOP’s county office, worked in the governor’s office and state legislature. In 1976, she was hired at the Republican National Committee and coordinated the political field office. She was as the political director of the 1980 John Connally for President campaign, and later deputy political director of the NRCC, where she worked on hundreds of campaigns. She was the general consultant for the campaigns of Senators Conrad Burns of Montana (1988, 1994, 2000 and 2006) and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska (2004). She was president and co-owner of Eddie Mahe & Co. until 2002, when it merged with Foley & Lardner, where she is currently a strategic communications consultant and vice chair of the firm’s government & public affairs practice. She counsels corporations, associations and coalitions as well as political candidates.

Mark Matthews is the political reporter for ABC7 News at KGO-TV, San Francisco, where his Fact Check features have become viewer favorites. After earning a BA in broadcast journalism at the University of Texas, Austin, he began his career as an investigative reporter at KSBY, San Luis Obispo and KERO, Bakersfield, both in California. More recently Matthews worked at KGTV in San Diego. During the late 80’s he reported on Pablo Escobar and the major cocaine cartels. Later he traveled to Nicaragua and Honduras to cover the war between the Sandanistas and the Contras. In the ‘90’s Mark spent 6 weeks in Israel reporting on the Gulf War. His reporting has uncovered graft, corruption and injustice, and in one case was directly responsible for freeing a wrongly imprisoned man and finding the person who actually committed the rape. He has won numerous Emmy and Golden Mic Awards as well as an Iris Award.

Bob Papper is professor and associate chair of journalism, media studies and public relations at Hofstra University. He oversees the Annual Radio Television News Directors Association/Hofstra University Survey on the state of radio and television news in the United States. He edits *Electronic News*, a journal of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. He worked as producer, writer and manager at television stations in Minneapolis (WCCO-TV), Washington, DC (WRC-TV), San Francisco (KPIX-TV), and Columbus, Ohio (WSYX-TV). He is author of the Broadcast News Writing Stylebook, the most widely-used book of its kind in the U.S. He received the 2005-2006 Ball State University Award as Researcher of the Year and a Distinguished Research Award for 2006 from the College of Communication, Information and Media.

Jake Tapper is senior national correspondent & senior political correspondent for ABC News, reporting for “Good Morning America”, “World News with Charles Gibson”, “This Week with George Stephanopoulos,” “Nightline” and ABC News digital platforms, to which he contributes a daily weblog and weekly podcast. During the 2004 Presidential election, Tapper reported on charges by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth against Sen. John Kerry and also manned the Fact Check desk during ABC News’ debate and election coverage. Earlier, he was Washington correspondent for Salon.com from March 1999 to March 2002. He is author of *Down and Dirty: The Plot to Steal the Presidency*, (2001, Little, Brown) a look at the Florida recount, and *Body Slam: The Jesse Ventura Story* (1999, St. Martin’s Press).