

July 11, 2005

Contact: Matthew T. Felling 202-223-2942

## No Second Term Media Honeymoon For Bush

### Network Coverage of 2nd “First 100 Days” Is Two-to-One Negative

WASHINGTON, DC — Two-thirds of President George Bush’s nightly news coverage was negative during the first 100 days of his second term, according to a study conducted by the **Center for Media and Public Affairs (CMPA)**. The study found that NBC’s coverage was most favorable and ABC’s was most critical, while the amount of coverage was down sharply from Bush’s first term.

These findings come from **CMPA’s** ongoing study of presidential coverage on the ABC, CBS and NBC evening news shows. The latest results are based on the 250 stories the networks devoted to covering the first 100 days of President Bush’s second term, from January 20<sup>th</sup> through April 29<sup>th</sup>. Coders analyzed all on-air comments by reporters and their sources—excluding representatives of the two parties—that evaluated the president’s policies, political skills and personal traits.

#### Major Findings:

- **Coverage: Less Is Lesser** 67 percent of President Bush’s evaluations were negative during the first 100 days of his second term, an improvement over the 71 percent negative evaluations he received four years ago, but worse than Bill Clinton’s 59 percent negative total in his first 100 days in 1993. The networks also paid less attention to President Bush’s second go-round, as his coverage fell from 619 stories in 2001 to 250 stories in 2005, a decline of 40 percent.
- **Signature Issues Slammed:** President Bush received better coverage of his foreign policies (58% negative) than his domestic policies (77% negative). But he got harsh treatment on the two issues that dominated his first 100 days — 78 percent of judgments about his proposals to reform social security were negative, as were 71 percent of comments regarding his policy toward Iraq.
- **NBC: Not Bush Critics:** ABC was the most critical of President Bush during the 100 days studied — 78 percent of comments aired on “ABC World News Tonight” were negative — while NBC was more balanced, with only 57 percent negative evaluations. The tone of CBS’s coverage was closer to NBC’s, with 71 percent negative comments.

#### **Examples:**

*“Without comment about how he felt taking the nation to war on such flawed assumptions, President Bush agreed it’s time to go to work.”*

**John Roberts, CBS, 3/31/05**

*“I’m in the working world, trying to make a living. Seems like he’s [Bush] screwing it all up.”*

**Voter, NBC, 2/3/05**