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Virginia Press Raises Kaine

Study: Democrat Gets Better Press in Virginia Governor's Race, Coverage Focuses on Issues Over Horserace

WASHINGTON, DC - News and opinion coverage of the Virginia gubernatorial race between Timothy Kaine (D) and Jerry Kilgore (R) is more favorable towards Kaine, according to a **George Mason University** study. The study also found the coverage to be focused mostly on the issues at the heart of the race rather than the thin margin separating the two candidates.

The 2005 CMPA Old Dominion Election Study

These results from the **Center for Media and Public Affairs at George Mason University** are the first findings from an ongoing scientific content analysis of 123 news and opinion pieces covering the 2005 Virginia Gubernatorial Race as featured in the *Washington Post* and the three largest papers in Virginia - the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, *Roanoke Times* and *Virginian-Pilot* of Norfolk - as well as the local evening news on the four Washington network affiliates from October 1st to October 15th. Visit CMPA.com for more information about our methodology.

MAJOR FINDINGS:

Kaine Bests Kilgore — A majority of all evaluations of Democratic gubernatorial candidate Timothy Kaine were positive (51 percent), while two of every three views of Republican candidate Jerry Kilgore were negative (68 percent).

News/Opinion Divide — The news coverage favored Kaine only slightly – 48 percent of his evaluations in news stories were positive, compared to 41 percent positive evaluations for Kilgore. However, opinions appearing within signed columns and unsigned editorials leaned sharply towards Kaine, with 65 percent positive comments, as opposed to only 20 percent positive (i.e. 80 percent negative) comments about Kilgore.

Substance Over Style — Policy issues are the attracting the most news coverage in the Governor's race, garnering 32 percent of the coverage, with 26 percent of the coverage examining the candidates' tactics. Despite the contest being a neck-and-neck race, only one percent focused on the campaign horserace angle.

Death and Taxes — Of the issues, capital punishment is receiving the most attention (20 percent of coverage), followed by taxes (16 percent) and transportation (14 percent).

Richmond Times-Dispatch Least Balanced: The widest gap between the level of positive coverage of the candidates – in both the news and opinion coverage – was seen at the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. Evaluations of Tim Kaine in news coverage were 10 percentage points higher than those of Jerry Kilgore (49 percent to 39 percent) and the views of Kaine expressed in opinion columns or editorials were 54 percentage points more positive than those of Kilgore (90 percent positive for Kaine, 36 percent positive for Kilgore.)