

Submitted Sept. 20, 2018

PolitiFact [has taken no discernable action regarding a complaint of error in its Aug. 29, 2018 fact check](#) of President Trump.

The fact check concerned Trump's claim about media bias in Google's search results. PolitiFact seem to have blatantly mischaracterized the reasoning backing that research, twice repeating its error in the text of its fact check.

We sent the following message to PolitiFact (truthometer@politifact.com) as per PolitiFact's statement of principles (The best way to contact us for general questions, complaints and praise is through our email account, truthometer@politifact.com):

Dear Truth-O-Meter,

An [August 29, 2018 fact check of President Trump](#) uses an apparently false claim in its reasoning, and repeats that false claim in its summary paragraph.

First occurrence (bold emphasis added):

The chart is not neutral evidence supporting Trump's point, and it **labels anything not overtly conservative as "left.** In the "left" category are such rigorously mainstream outlets as the Associated Press and Reuters.

Second occurrence (bold emphasis added):

This figure is based on a non-scientific study from a conservative website that **categorized any media outlet not expressly conservative as being part of the "left."**

With the above, PolitiFact flatly claims that the chart categorizes all websites that are not expressly conservative as "left." Yet the chart has a number of media companies straddling the line between left and right, among them [C-SPAN](#), UPI and [RealClearPolitics](#). Does PolitiFact intend to impute that the companies straddling the chart's center line are overtly conservative?

The fact check offers no evidence, not even via citation from what we can tell, that any of the three just mentioned are identified as "expressly conservative."

Moreover, McClatchy and the [Christian Science Monitor](#) occur to the right of the chart's center line. Where would we find any solid evidence at all that they are "expressly conservative"?

We think it improper for PolitiFact to state that these outlets count as overtly or expressly conservative without providing a shred of proof supporting its claim. The claim is false on its face.

We hope PolitiFact will see its way toward implementing a prompt correction for this misinformation.

For PolitiFact's claim to count as true, we think it follows that every media organization from the middle of the chart and to the right need to count as overtly or expressly conservative. We do not see how that can apply to organizations like McClatchy, the Christian Science Monitor or Real Clear Politics (among others).

PolitiFact's description appears flatly false, and we are unable to find any support for it either in the text of the fact check or in the source list PolitiFact provides alongside the story.

We have detected no change in the false reporting and no response from PolitiFact addressing the issue. As a result, we pass along our experience to the IFCN as evidence PolitiFact seems to fall short of the ideal for executing its corrections policy honestly and transparently.

Did our message of complaint reach PolitiFact?

While we cannot absolutely verify that any employee at PolitiFact read our message, we can at least report that we received an automated email from PolitiFact assuring us that the message was received and would receive a thorough reading:

Thanks for writing to PolitiFact! Your ideas and suggestions are what drive our website, so please know we'll read every last word. We will respond, act or forward as needed.

Did PolitiFact agree that it made an error?

The lack of response appears to imply that PolitiFact does not agree that it reported falsely. We find the error clear and unambiguous when taking PolitiFact's language at face value. We cannot imagine what would reasonably stop PolitiFact from correcting its error.

Thanks.

Bryan W. White
Editor
Zebra Fact Check