



Bryan White <zebrafactcheck@gmail.com>

Debt Shenanigans, PolitiFact contradicts itself

1 message

Bryan White <zebrafactcheck@gmail.com>
To: truthometer@politifact.com

Thu, Aug 1, 2019 at 1:26 AM

Dear Truth-O-Meter,

Your [July 23, 2019 item on presidential deficit numbers](#) missed the mark. It also contradicted an earlier PolitiFact item it cited.

First item: PolitiFact was fact checking a tweet designed to encourage the notion that Republicans carry more responsibility for the federal deficit than do Democrats. But instead of focusing on that point, the fact check put its focus on whether the numbers were correct. But obviously using the deficit numbers at the beginning and end of executive administrations serves as an extremely poor method of measuring party impact on the federal budget.

The fact check acknowledges as much:

| The president does affect the budget by negotiating and signing appropriations bills. But there's a lot more to it.

The fact check goes on to summarize the missing information (such as Congress' role in controlling the purse strings) by saying the tweet lacked nuance. That's an exceptional understatement. The argument in the tweet is downright crazy when taking the missing information into account, not the least of which is the way the Obama administration's frontloading of deficit spending allowed it to increase the debt ([federal debt held by the public](#)) more substantially as a percentage of GDP than any other president mentioned in the tweet PolitiFact fact checked.

Second item: The July 23, 2019 fact check dings the tweet for saying the Obama administration inherited a \$1.2 trillion deficit from that of George W. Bush. The fact check prefers the figure of \$1.41 trillion.

But the July 23, 2019 fact check cites [a PolitiFact/PunditFact fact check from August 27, 2015](#) that said the \$1.4 trillion figure was an exaggeration, given that the 2009 stimulus bill passed by Congress and signed by President Obama added approximately \$0.2 trillion to the FY 2009 budget--the last year credited to Bush.

Can both figures be correct for representing the Bush administration share of the FY 2009 budget? I trust you will agree they cannot and will take steps to make your reporting on that point consistent.

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Sincerely,

Bryan W. White
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