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Major errors in PolitiFact Wisconsin fact check

1 message

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

Tue, Mar 3, 2020 at 4:06 PM

Dear Truth-O-Meter,

The Feb. 28, 2020 PolitiFact Wisconsin fact check of Rep. Mark Pocan (D-Wisc) contains major errors.

Redoing the fact check from scratch will probably serve as the appropriate solution.

1) PolitiFact should heed (instead of dismiss) the explanation for Pocan's statement given by Pocan's spokesperson. That is the most reliable guide to Pocan's intent. The video ([you should link the video](#)) references Kenosha's lost history in automaking before Pocan mentions the wage comparison.

2) The fact check obscures real median wage growth in percentiles below the top 10 percent by describing it as "nearly flat" In fact, all the graph lines show a noticeable increase.

3) The fact check magnifies the preceding problem by comparing real median wage growth (that is, adjusted for inflation) to BLS figures for inflation. It's completely inappropriate to downplay real wage growth by comparing it to inflation growth. That procedure effectively double-counts the inflation rate. A fact checker simply cannot make that type of mistake.

The summary section highlights the blunder:

A quick comparison shows that wages today are slightly higher than what they were then, once inflation is factored in.

But the cost of everyday goods like rent, groceries and cars have outpaced that median wage growth, meaning a worker's 1990 weekly paycheck, at a \$10.43-an-hour rate, would have held more spending power than the \$23.33-an-hour rate does today.

Wages adjusted for inflation are "slightly higher than what they were then." But, inexplicably, "the cost of everyday goods" (drawn from the BLS article about inflation) has gone up far faster than inflation-adjusted wages. The fact check flatly contradicts itself.

In short, the new version of the fact check should fact check something akin to Pocan's true intent and do so without a glaring error. And link the video of Pocan's statement.

Thanks for your attention to this matter.

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Sincerely,

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