

So Much for ‘Whistleblower’ Coverage at ABC and CBS

Rival networks join forces to punish disclosure.

In the 50 days since news consumers were told that a federal whistleblower was expressing his disapproval of a presidential phone call, CBS News has aired or published more than 100 stories on President Donald Trump and Ukraine. Counting stories from local affiliates, the number rises above 200. That’s according to the Dow Jones Factiva news archive.

But CBS hasn’t come close to the wall-to-wall coverage offered by rival ABC News. A Factiva search of ABC stories about Mr. Trump and Ukraine yields 687 results for the last 50 days.

More than 300 of the ABC stories specifically include the term “whistleblower”. And roughly all of the stories are derived from the original allegations formulated by the unnamed government employee in consultation with the office of Rep. Adam Schiff (D., Calif.). Mr. Schiff publicly denied that such consultation had occurred but later acknowledged the fact as his falsehood was exposed.

Usually, news organizations like ABC and CBS at least pretend to spend their days trying to report previously non-public information. But they recently decided not to report the name of the federal “whistleblower.” Ironically, the entire impeachment case hinges on an assumed political motivation by Mr. Trump for comments on a phone call that were not illegal. Yet by maintaining a blackout on the identity of the “whistleblower,” news outlets are impeding the public’s ability to learn about the possible political motivations of Mr. Trump’s accuser.

Not that the public can’t make a pretty good guess, given this January 2017 tweet from the alleged whistleblower’s lawyer, Mark Zaid:

#coup has started. First of many steps. #rebellion. #impeachment will follow ultimately. #lawyers

And then there’s this Zaid instant classic from July of 2017:

It’s very scary. We will get rid of him, and this country is strong enough to survive

even him and his supporters. We have to.

But it seems that the sudden reverence for the imagined Constitutional right of an alleged whistleblower to remain anonymous doesn't extend to people releasing information from non-Trump organizations like ABC and CBS. In fact, these organizations have joined together to punish disclosure and forcefully deter any future whistleblowing within their news divisions.

The New York Post's Sara Nathan reported this morning:

CBS News has fired a female staffer believed to have had access to the tape of Amy Robach raging against ABC News, Page Six understands.

We reported on Wednesday that ABC News chiefs discovered a former employee could be behind the leak of the damning footage of Robach slamming the network for shelving her interview with Jeffrey Epstein's "sex slave" Virginia Roberts Giuffre. Sources told Page Six that a former staffer had access to the footage of Robach as she aired her frustrations over a hot mike — and that employee was now believed to be working at CBS.

A TV source told us later on Wednesday that the woman was let go from CBS after ABC execs alerted the rival network.

ABC sources confirmed to us that they'd informed counterparts at CBS about the staffer "as a courtesy."

This afternoon the Associated Press also is reporting that CBS has fired the employee. How lovely that two giant news organizations are willing to set aside their competitive differences and extend to each other the "courtesy" of helping to limit disclosure and dissent. And they say civility is dead!

On Wednesday Jeremy Barr noted in the Hollywood Reporter that ABC was making a serious effort to pull the mask off its internal whistleblower:

ABC News on Wednesday confirmed that it is pursuing the "source" of a leaked video that showed anchor Amy Robach expressing frustration with the network for not broadcasting an interview she conducted in 2015 with one of Jeffrey Epstein's chief accusers.

"We take violations of company policy very seriously, and we're pursuing all

avenues to determine the source of the leak,” the network said in a statement provided to The Hollywood Reporter.

On Tuesday, the conservative advocacy group Project Veritas published the video... On Wednesday, journalist Yashar Ali reported that ABC has identified the individual who accessed the Robach video.

And now it seems that CBS, which as far as this column can tell hasn't been harmed at all by the employee, has fired her on the principle that whistleblowing must not be tolerated—unless it damages people like Mr. Trump.

How to Enjoy “Medicare for All”: Don't Get Cancer

What will happen to Democratic support for presidential candidates Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders when voters find out the two senators plan to abolish health plans covering most Americans?

The Journal's Stephanie Armour reports that polls “show many voters don't fully understand Medicare for All. Many wrongly believe they would be able to keep their private insurance, according to polling from Kaiser and Navigator Research.”

A Journal graphic shows the remarkable Navigator finding that only 40% of respondents overall and only 27% of Democrats are aware the Warren/Sanders plan will eliminate private health coverage.

Meanwhile, Journal columnist William Galston does a public service in noting just how many patients rely partially or entirely on non-government coverage:

According to the most recent government statistics, more than 218 million Americans now participate in private health-care plans, of which 179 million are employment-based.

Not that patients in government plans wouldn't also see radical changes in care. Darin Selnick, former senior adviser to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs writes in The Hill:

Although Medicare for All would leave the government-run portion of the VA

system intact, it would eliminate the Department of Defense's TRICARE program, a network of private providers and military hospitals that provide health care for 9.4 million U.S military personnel, retirees, their families and some members of the reserves.

Through TRICARE, service members and retirees have 11 plans to choose from, allowing them to tailor their coverage to their unique needs. The dismantling of TRICARE would almost certainly hurt military morale, retention, and recruitment.

Even Medicare itself will be replaced by the new Warren/Sanders plan, despite the misleading title. Meanwhile, the latest results from Britain's single-payer health system are not encouraging. The House of Commons Library reports, "Cancer waiting times are the worst on record." As of August, more than 20% of UK cancer patients were still waiting for their first treatment more than 60 days after an "urgent" referral from a general practitioner.

It could happen here.

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(Teresa Vozzo helps compile Best of the Web. Thanks to Charles Davis, Peter Coffey, Tony Lima, Wes Van Fleet and Monty Krieger.)

Mr. Freeman is the co-author of "Borrowed Time," now available from HarperBusiness.

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