

New York Times Shareholder Meeting Question
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I'm Jeff Stier, a senior fellow with the National Center for Public Policy Research, representing my colleague at the National Center, Amy Ridenour, who is a shareholder.

In his final column as public editor, Arthur Brisbane wrote in 2012 that the paper's departments "share a kind of political and cultural progressivism" that "virtually bleeds through the fabric of the Times."¹ Last August, the paper's current public editor Margaret Sullivan said complaints that the Times has a liberal bias are "a reasonable criticism."² Sullivan has also criticized the paper's coverage of the Benghazi and IRS scandals, noting that "[m]any on the right ... do not think they can get a fair shake from The Times. This coverage won't do anything to dispel that belief."³

According to a September 2013 Gallup poll, 55 percent of Americans have little or no trust in the mass media, defined as newspapers, radio and television together.⁴ When consecutive public editors of the Times call out the paper for liberal bias, it is not hard to see why so many people lack trust. But as a shareholder, this is distressing.

Gallup polls for the last 22 years show that nearly twice as many Americans -- on average, 40 percent to 20 percent -- identify as conservative than identify as liberal.⁵ So about 40 percent of our potential customer base looks at us as out-of-touch with the values that are important to them.

It seems that liberal ideology is being placed ahead of shareholder value.

My question is this: why does the New York Times continue to intentionally alienate so many potential readers? Can you explain the business rationale for rejecting 40 percent of potential subscribers? What, if anything, has been done to address the bias concerns from your own public editors? And why do we not add several truly conservative writers to our opinion pages to enhance our appeal to 40 percent of the market?

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¹ <http://www.politico.com/blogs/media/2012/08/ny-times-public-editor-progressive-worldview-bleeds-133188.html>

² <http://m.newsbusters.org/blogs/noel-sheppard/2013/08/18/new-york-times-public-editor-admits-paper-has-liberal-bias>

³ <http://www.mrc.org/articles/ny-times-public-editor-soft-irs-benghazi-coverage-lends-credence-conservative-criticism>

⁴ <http://www.gallup.com/poll/164459/trust-media-recovers-slightly-time-low.aspx>

⁵ <http://www.gallup.com/poll/166787/liberal-self-identification-edges-new-high-2013.aspx>