

Washington Post Shareholder Meeting Question
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Thank you for recognizing me. I am David Almasi, representing the National Center for Public Policy Research, a free-market think-tank.

Twenty-three years ago this week, then-Washington Post ombudsman Richard Harwood chastised this newspaper's reporters and editors. He said the Post's pervasive coverage of a pro-abortion rally and almost complete ignorance of a similar anti-abortion rally "left a blot on the paper's professional reputation." About the same time, then-managing editor Len Downie reportedly took staff "to the woodshed" over the lavish coverage afforded to Earth Day and an "animal rights" rally while a pro-life event drawing hundreds of thousands of people received minor coverage that was published in the Metro section.

Fast-forwarding to today, what has the Post learned? This past January 25, a day after hundreds of thousands once again converged on the capital for the annual March for Life, only a small article appeared on the bottom of the Metro section's front page, accompanied by a photo of pro-abortion counterprotesters. This lack of coverage alone is worthy of complaint in itself, but it's compounded by the fact that the Metro section contained an article of similar length the very next day about a gun control rally that – by the Post's own reporting – numbered under 1,000 people. It featured two photos, neither of which contained an opposing view. Less than three weeks later, another rally against the Keystone XL pipeline, also smaller than the March for Life, was covered on page A5. It featured three photos of supporters.

The big difference between now and 23 years ago is that the Post has abolished the position of ombudsman. What remains is a culture Harwood described as "a social class whose magnetic pole is the metropolitan East Coast."

In late February, a Rasmussen Reports poll found only six percent of the public found the news media "very trustworthy." That's worse than the congressional approval rating!

From your coverage of protests, I can see the reason for the skepticism.

What are you going to do about this still-unchecked bias at the Post? You've got a credibility problem that's obviously hurting your bottom line. With the public politically-divided, you do not serve the shareholders well when you alienate half the people all of the time. It's not a winning business model.

My organization posed this question to Bob Iger of Disney this March, and he was willing to admit his ABC News was "guilty of making mistakes." Are you willing to make the same admission? More important, are you willing to do something about it?

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