

# Media bias sways potential voters

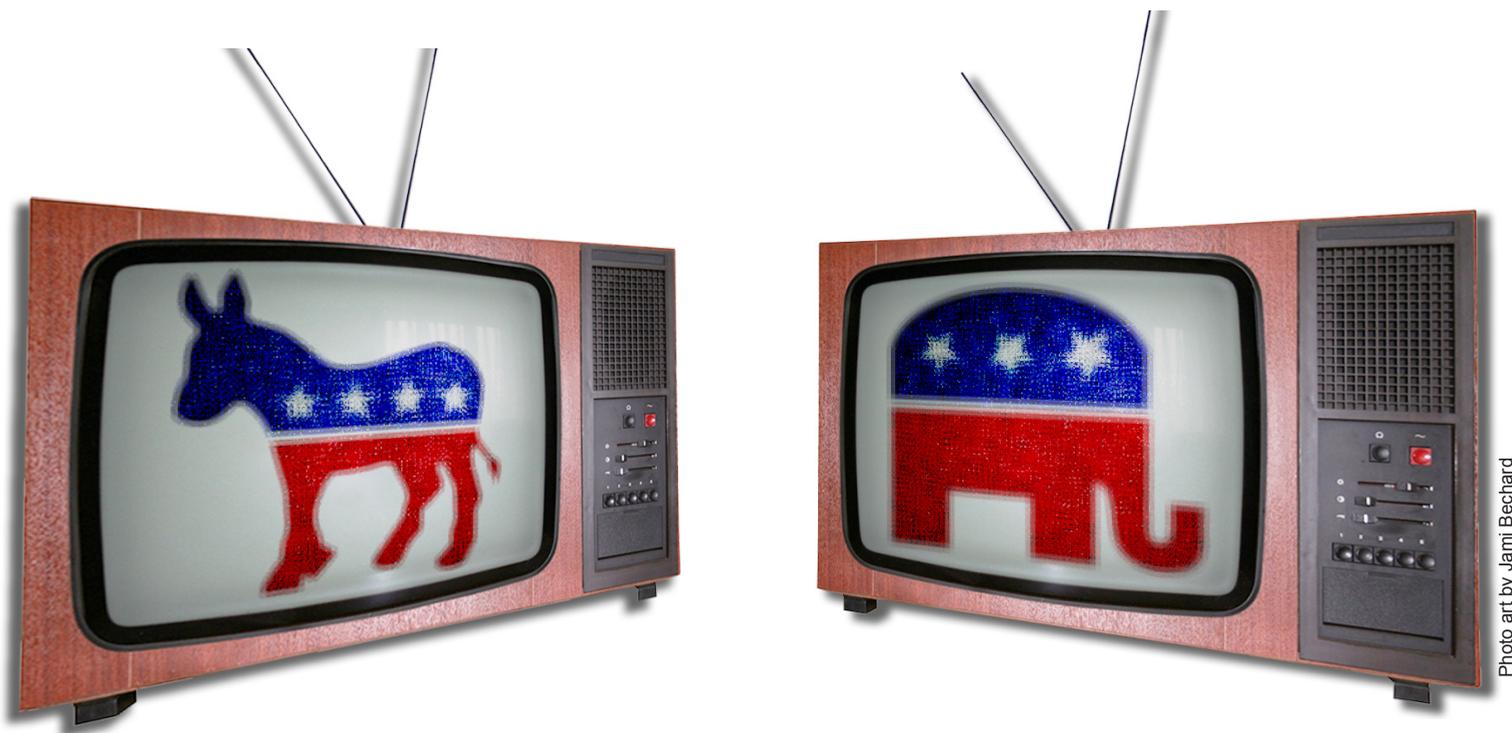


Photo art by Jami Bechard

## As GOP race heats up, future voters interpret opinions of candidates based on media

Thom Carter | Staff Writer

With the 2012 Presidential Election fast approaching, the race for the Republican nomination has become a heavily covered topic in the media and in Mason High School according to senior Austin Jackson.

Jackson, a self-proclaimed republican, said that many media outlets have portrayed these potential candidates unfairly and in a negative light that could potentially affect a voter's decision before casting their ballot.

"[The media] take[s] the worst of the worst things that [the candidates] say—like their mess up's and mishaps—and [the media] plays them over and over again...until all you can remember is [a candidate] blundering over a speech or messing up a word," Jackson said.

According to Jackson, who said he has been paying close attention to the few debates that these candidates have participated in, the focus on blunders could easily be avoided by the media.

"[The media] makes them seem so much more [idiotic] when they could take [their portrayal] the other way and only [use] smart, good [quotes] that [the candidates say]," Jackson said.

Jackson said that there is no actual publication—online or in print—that treats both sides of the political debate equally.

"If you're reading only The Huffington Post, you're only getting the most leftist view on everything, and if you only read the Drudge Report, you're only getting the most rightist [view]," Jackson said. "I don't think there's a truly [unbiased publication], so you have to

read a little bit of everything."

Senior Josh Wheaton, a self-proclaimed democrat, said he understands that much of the media today has a liberal bias, and said that their coverage can at times be unfair. However, according to Wheaton, he sees no particular problem with the media's leanings because of Fox News' dominant viewership.

"I think [the portrayal of the candidates] is a little unfair, but if you look at Fox News, they claim that they're the best in ratings, so I don't know what the problem is," Wheaton said.

Like Jackson, Wheaton said that in order to gain a better perspective on the potential candidates, it's necessary to look at and consider the views from all sides of the media, liberal or conservative.

"I look at everything, because they all have different [standpoints]," Wheaton said. "If you're watching MSNBC, they favor liberals more than they do conservatives, and if you watch Fox News, they most definitely favor conservatives."

Senior Mitchell Evans said he doesn't side with either political party and considers himself an independent. According to Evans, it's the media's ability to associate the candidates seeking the GOP nomination with names that may garner a negative response from potential voters that can impact an election.

"If you keep hearing from one side of the aisle that Rick Perry is the next George Bush, and if you don't have a positive view on George Bush, ...that's not going to influence your portrayal of him in a positive manner," Evans said. "[The] same [goes] for Obama; If you keep seeing him associated with [Adolf] Hitler or

whatever negative connotation you might find, people begin to associate that with him, consciously or not, and that's going to affect what turns out at the polls."

According to Evans, the stake that media influence has in Ohio is much greater than others. This directly correlates with Ohio's status as a swing state and the large pallet of political views that differ from region to region.

"[Ohio] is like a battleground," Evans said. "In the north you have Cleveland, which is pretty democratic. In the south of Ohio, you have Cincinnati which is pretty republican, and in the middle it really is a contest to see which side will win. I'd say we are a hotbed of political tumult."

Much of this tumult stems from the fluctuating presidential election results of the last two decades where, according to 270towin.com, from 1996 to 2008, Ohio has voted democrat twice and republican twice, also.

Despite added pressure from Ohio's large political stake and the differing views amongst different media outlets, Wheaton said that come Election Day, he's going to side with what he believes in, not the media.

"I know [the media] may say some things, and it's their opinion, and I will hold [their views] to some extent, but I'm going to go with what's in my heart."

According to Evans, it's up to voters who will be able to attend the ballots in the upcoming election to disregard the opinions of media, which can potentially sway the public's opinion.

"Whatever the media has to do with the election is insubstantial to the real point of [the election], which is to decide the policy of the country," Evans said.