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76th KZGN News Talking Points Editorial
By: Tom Wiknich

What does fair and balanced in news mean to you?

First, some comments from Tuesday’s editorial titled: Why does this administration enforce some laws, and ignore others? Ethan felt I wasn’t being fair and balanced in this editorial. After he posted a few articles giving reference to other administrations doing just what Obama’s administration is doing, he posted this. It’s kind of lengthy, but I posted the whole comment because last time, due to time constraints, I didn’t have time to include all of his comment. Ethan wrote, “And let us not ignore the most recent republican administration who picked and choose which laws they wanted to enforce and which ones they would not.  Now, I am in no way excusing this current administration. Let me say that again I am not excusing this current administration.  Any president, regardless of party, should be expected to uphold and enforce the laws of this land.  As I have said and I will keep saying over and over again, be fair and balanced in your research and editorials. If you want your word to be taken seriously you must be willing to critique and call out those who more closely resemble your political thought instead of always reserving your outrage for the other side. To do anything less diminishes your credibility as an objective news person. How can you be trusted to tell the truth when your political narrative is so visible? You may ultimately say you do call out conservative politicians but I somehow missed that ‘fair and balanced’ portion in this particular editorial.” That was Ethan’s complete statement. In it, he is again accusing me of not being fair and balanced. My reply to him on the Facebook discussion group was as follows, “Thanks for the postings. By your postings, you again think I’m not being fair. My statement: I object to any president that purposely issues executive orders to change a law. Because a previous president may have used them wrongly, does not make it ok for the current president to use them wrongly. If Bush and other presidents before him did wrong, it does not make it ok now. If someone does 50 mph in a 25 mph zone and gets away with it, it does not make it ok for the next guy to do 50 in a 25 zone. For clarification, my editorial has to do with enforcement of laws that are in place. Laws determined legal and enforceable. State and county elected officials blatantly ignore and refuse to enforce the law, with blessings from the top by White House officials, based on ideology. Suzy posted an error that I made in the actual editorial. Suzy said, “Kim Davis is a county clerk, not a city clerk, making $80k per year.” Thanks for the correction, Suzy.

Ethan’s comments gave me today’s topic: What does fair and balanced in news mean to you? Let’s talk about fair and balanced reporting. As a point of reference, to do an editorial, most of the time I do these editorials the morning of the show. This is to make sure the editorials are relevant to what is happening right now. I literally have about two hours to write the editorial, with no going back later to change it. There are really two scenarios that have to be considered. The first being if the report is billed as a news story. The second is if the report is labeled an editorial or opinion story, the rules are different for those two scenarios. If what I’m saying is part of the regular news segment, then I have a duty to report the facts, on both sides of the issue, and I try and do that. However, if the story is political in nature, especially from the state or federal level, I have a hard time finding anyone with an opposing comment. I’ll google search for comments, but often cannot find opposing views. I do try, but often, there is nothing I can get. I have done news stories where I have included both sides of a controversial issue. My earlier story about assisted suicide in today’s news cast had comments on both sides of the issue. Do reporters sometimes insert a little slant into their news stories? Heck, read any newspaper in the country, and you’ll find examples of that happening sometimes. When it comes to editorial or opinion stories, I have more latitude to emphasize my opinion. That’s why it’s labeled: “editorial”. I try and take something that is relevant to the day’s events, and hopefully encourage discussion of the topic by you and others. It is through discussion that solutions are brought about. To all of you watching this editorial or reading it later when it gets posted to the KZGN discussion group, I only have a certain amount air time allotted for these editorials. As a point of reference, these editorials are usually average about 1,000 words filling about 3 minutes of air time. That is not a lot of time. Again, just because I do not comment on a past person doing something I object to, doesn’t mean that I think it’s ok. Since many of my editorials involve political issues, it’s just impossible to start going back through history to site all the others than may have done something wrong. There just isn’t enough air time to allow that. Finally, I repeat this comment, as this seems to be the big problem with some viewers. Just because I may criticize a current official for wrong doing, that does not mean I condone it for being done in the past. I am tired of many Obama supporters immediately deflecting any criticism of him, by saying Bush did it too. When everyone started criticizing Hillary for her email wrong doing, her first response and her supporters’ responses were Powell did it and so did others. So what! I don’t care if Washington or Lincoln did it. That doesn’t mean it’s ok for current politicians to do. If it’s wrong, it’s wrong. I don’t have to include history of others wrong doings in every editorial criticizing the Obama administration. If their actions are wrong, they are wrong. It makes no difference is a predecessor did it too. Fair and balanced would only be appropriate when I might criticize someone doing something wrong now, and excusing someone else doing the same thing now.

In conclusion, fair and balanced applies to news reporting. Editorials allow me to express my opinions on issues. However, in the interest of fairness, I will bring back opposing views on the next segment if they are submitted. I have proven that I will even provide comments that criticize me. I have also posted corrections provided to me if I make a mistake. I consider that being fair.

I’m Tom Wiknich, and that’s what I think. I’d like to know what you think. If you have any comments about this editorial, or would like to discuss or recommend a topic, I’d like to hear from you. Please email them to info@kzgn.net.