

Inconsistent methodology at PolitiFact on literally true claims

Dear IFCN,

[PolitiFact's June 16, 2023 fact check of President Biden](#) in comparison to parallel Republican claims reveals an inconsistency of method that fails PolitiFact's commitment (under IFCN standards) to use the same methodological approach to its fact checks regardless of the subject's politics.

Literally true

President Biden claimed a homosexual couple in the United States might get married in the morning and legally kicked out of a restaurant for being gay that same evening. The claim is literally true.

[For comparison](#), Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-Iowa) claimed Democrats' "Women's Health Protection Act of 2022 allowed abortion up through delivery. That claim is also true, as the fact check notes ("A reading of the bill shows that H.R. 8296 permits abortion up until delivery, but only if it is deemed necessary to protect the life of the patient").

Anything left out?

President Biden neglected to mention most states already have the protections he would advocate to prevent a homosexual couple from getting kicked out of restaurants.

Miller-Meeks neglected to mention that abortions near the moment of birth happen extremely rarely.

The "Truth-O-Meter"

PolitiFact's subjective "Truth-O-Meter" gave President Biden a "Mostly True" rating for his claim. That's despite PolitiFact having such a difficult time finding examples supporting his claim that it listed a number of cases in its source list of cases from the 28 states already having protections in place. That not only shows the cases are rare, it shows that the protections don't appear to reliably solve the problem.

PolitiFact's subjective "Truth-O-Meter" gave Miller-Meeks a "Mostly False" rating. The information she left out apparently meant her claim "contains an element of truth but ignores critical facts that would give a different impression." Biden's omissions merely needed

clarification, in PolitiFact's eyes.

Does PolitiFact have objective justification for these disparate rulings? If so, PolitiFact should include the justification in the fact checks. But, to the contrary, PolitiFact describes Miller-Meeks literally true statement as containing merely "an element of truth." That judgment, to all appearances (and in alignment with Bill Adair's admission that every "Truth-O-Meter" rating is ["entirely subjective"](#)) is subjective.

Subjective judgments, by their nature, do not have firm objective foundations. If they did, they would be objective judgments instead of subjective judgments. This comparison just happens to represent an egregious example of the inconsistency that's baked into PolitiFact's methodology.

We requested a correction of the inconsistency from PolitiFact [on July 7, 2023](#). As of July 19, 2023 neither [the Biden fact check](#) nor [the Miller-Meeks fact check](#) featured any changes addressing or admitting the inconsistency. PolitiFact has also yet to contact us with the requested explanation for sticking with its (inconsistent) judgment.

Thus, this case would show PolitiFact failing commitments to consistency of methodology and open and honest corrections.

Thanks for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
Bryan W. White
Editor, Zebra Fact Check