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Arena Ref: [David Mark](#)

Media in the tank for Obama?

[Roger Pilon](#) | Vice President for Legal Affairs, Cato Institute :

Is the mainstream media "[in the tank](#)" for Obama? Just when we get a MSM story documenting that, what do the targets of the story do? [They shout "bias"!](#) At that point, one is tempted to say "it's all in the eye of the beholder." But it's not, as [serious studies](#) repeatedly show.

POLITICO's Jim VandeHei and Mike Allen should be credited, then, with documenting the case once again, not condemned, as the Washington Post and New York Times rushed to do when their story came out. Take the *Post's* recent coverage. Last Thursday, for example, we find [this headline](#) on page-one, above-the-fold: "In Mass., Romney reversed his reform: Governor backtracked on nonpartisan system of judicial appointments," which continues over the entire back page of the A section under the headline "As governor, Mitt Romney backtracked on promised reforms in appointing judges." Well into the story we learn that in making judicial appointments Romney had to deal with a Governor's Council, all of whose members were Democrats, which alone goes far toward explaining why Romney "backtracked." Most readers will not go that far into the piece, of course. Nevertheless, the headlines will serve nicely to seat the impression the *Post* seems to want to convey. And the piece appeared on the very morning that the Obama campaign turned its attention to Romney's record as governor, with [David Axelrod speaking](#) from the steps of the Massachusetts capitol. A coincidence? Perhaps.

If this were an isolated lapse from even-handed reporting in this election year, one could dismiss it as such. But it closely follows [Jason Horowitz's infamous 5,000-word "haircut" story](#) and many others in the same vein, all of which stand in stark contrast with the *Post's* far gentler treatment of Obama, as VandeHei and Allen point out. Add to that the "Outlook" section's two recent page-one Norman Ornstein/Thomas Mann pieces, the first headlined "[Let's just say it: The Republicans are the problem](#)," Robert Kaiser's [glowing](#)

[review](#) of their new book, plus so much more, and it hardly surprises that even POLITICO felt the need to take note of it, and no one can charge POLITICO with being in the tank for Romney. So yes, the mainstream media is tilting against Romney. To quote the Post: "Let's just say it."