

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2009

## Fact-Checking the "Fact-Checkers"

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### **By the Editors**

File this one under "Quit Making Stuff Up." It took us all day, but we assembled the definitive debunking of the 11 Associated Press "fact-checkers." Might we suggest a new profession for these folks?

As the always brilliant Mark Steyn [pointed out](#):

That's 11 writers for a 695-word report. What on? Obamacare?  
The Iranian nuke program? The upcoming trial of Khalid Sheikh  
Mohammed?

No, the Associated Press assigned 11 writers to "fact-check" Sarah  
Palin's new book...

Hey, don't be too hard on the AP. CNN is also into fact-checking... SNL skits that are "mean" to Obama.

Here's some real fact-checking. Fasten your seat belts...

### **On Governor Palin's 2006 Campaign Financing**

**AP "FACTS":** *"Of the roughly \$1.3 million she raised for her primary and general election campaigns for governor, more than half came from people and political action committees giving at least \$500, according to an AP analysis of her campaign finance reports. The maximum that individual donors could give was \$1,000; \$2,000 for a PAC.*

*Of the rest, about \$76,000 came from Republican Party committees."*

**THE TRUTH:** Had the AP looked more closely at those "Republican Party" contributions, it might have discovered that most of the money came from eight different Alaska Republican women's clubs – in other words, grassroots donors. The Republican women's groups conduct year-round grassroots fundraising, from monthly luncheons to garage sales, and it was completely understandable that they would support a Republican woman gubernatorial candidate.

The Alaska Federation of Republican Women and seven different state women's clubs (in Ketchikan, Sitka, Juneau, Kenai, Mat-Su, Fairbanks, and two in Anchorage) contributed \$44,500 total. The remainder of the AP's quoted \$76,000 was money returned to the party chairman, contributions from district Republican organizations, and \$20,000 from "in-kind" contributions/support from the state party.

The Governor's campaign filed 31 financial reports with the Alaska Public Office Commission – all accurate and on time. It's telling that the AP has the time to pour through tens of thousands of individual transactions line by line in the various reports, but fails to note these facts.

### **On Governor Palin's Position on Bailouts and the Stimulus**

**AP "FACTS":** *"Palin is blurring the lines between Obama's stimulus plan – a \$787 billion package of tax cuts, state aid, social programs and government contracts – and the federal bailout that Republican presidential candidate John McCain voted for and President George W. Bush signed.*

*Palin's views on bailouts appeared to evolve as McCain's vice presidential*

running mate. In September 2008, she said 'taxpayers cannot be looked to as the bailout, as the solution, to the problems on Wall Street.' A week later, she said 'ultimately what the bailout does is help those who are concerned about the health care reform that is needed to help shore up our economy.'

During the vice presidential debate in October, Palin praised McCain for being 'instrumental in bringing folks together' to pass the \$700 billion bailout. After that, she said 'it is a time of crisis and government did have to step in.'

**THE TRUTH:** Apparently she is being slammed for supporting something that most people supported at the time because we were all told by almost every economist that if we didn't support it the sky would fall and the country would look like that 2012 movie trailer. Oh yeah, and she was McCain's running mate at the time too -- would have been just ducky to have his VP on TV saying, "Maverick Two disapproves of what Maverick One is supporting."

As for the stimulus, Governor Palin has consistently voiced her disapproval of the "porkulus" and she got hammered relentlessly for turning down stimulus dollars. Her veto of those dollars was eventually overturned by the legislature. She took a principled stance all along, and no one can re-write history on that.

In regards to bailouts after TARP, this is what Governor Palin [told Wolf Blitzer on November 14, 2008](#):

"...the federal government must play an appropriate role in shoring up some of these industries that are hurting and will ultimately hurt our entire economy and the world's economy if there aren't some better decisions being made. But we also have to start shifting some debate here in our country and start talking about personal responsibility and responsibility of management in some of these corporations and companies so that from henceforth it's not assumed that the federal government is going to be bailing out everybody who is going to soon line up, Wolf, for more taxpayer assistance."

#### **On Governor Palin's Assertion that Reagan Faced A Worse Recession and Reagan's Prescription for Getting Out of Recession**

**AP "FACTS":** *"The estate tax, which some call the death tax, was not repealed under Reagan and capital gains taxes are lower now than when Reagan was president.*

*Economists overwhelmingly say the current recession is far worse. The recession Reagan faced lasted for 16 months; this one is in its 23rd month. The recession of the early 1980s did not have a financial meltdown. Unemployment peaked at 10.8 percent, worse than the October 2009 high of 10.2 percent, but the jobless rate is still expected to climb."*

**THE TRUTH:** [According to Richard Rahn](#), a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and chairman of the Institute for Global Economic Growth, "President Reagan inherited an economic situation even worse than the one President Obama has. When Reagan took office, the economy had been in recession for about a year, the unemployment rate was almost identical to today's, but the labor force participation rate was smaller, and inflation was out of control."

Mr. Rahn has also [noted](#): "Both President Reagan and President Obama inherited an economy suffering from a year of no growth, along with rising unemployment. (The numbers are almost identical.) But Mr. Reagan faced a far direr situation in that inflation was in the double digits and the prime interest rate was at 20 percent. In contrast, Mr. Obama inherited an economy in which inflation was falling (in fact, inflation has been close to zero for this year) and

inflation was falling (in fact, inflation has been close to zero for this year) and interest rates were very low."

The unemployment rate in November 1982 was [10.8%](#). Our current unemployment rate is 10.2%.

The first quarter of 1982 was the worst of the Reagan recession as the economy shrank [6.4%](#). So far, the economy has shrunk [6.3%](#) in the fourth quarter of 2008 and [5.7%](#) in the first quarter of 2009.

Governor Palin believes in Reagan's supply side policies of cutting taxes and reining in spending. She never said anything about Reagan and the death tax. She was speaking about solutions to today's economic troubles using the supply side lessons of the Reagan years.

#### **On Governor Palin's Natural Gas Pipeline (AGIA)**

**AP "FACT":** *"Palin characterized the pipeline deal the same way before an AP investigation found her team crafted terms that favored only a few independent pipeline companies and ultimately benefited a company with ties to her administration, TransCanada Corp. Despite promises and legal guidance not to talk directly with potential bidders during the process, Palin had meetings or phone calls with nearly every major candidate, including TransCanada."*

**THE TRUTH:** This AP story from the last election was completely debunked by [Alaska media](#) and rightfully referred to as a "hit piece" by a Democrat lawmaker who supported the Alaska Gasline Inducement Act (AGIA). AGIA was a bi-partisan effort that passed by a 58-1 vote. It was open, transparent, and the guidelines were very clear.

#### **On Governor Palin's Administration**

**AP "FACT":** *"Palin ignores her own 'revolving door' issue in office; the leader of her own pipeline team was a former lobbyist for a subsidiary of TransCanada, the company that ended up winning the rights to build the pipeline."*

**THE TRUTH:** Many of the Governor's gasline team drew upon private sector experiences to bring great insight to their roles in government – whether through economic, legal or development issues. The suggestion here is that the previous jobs held by the Governor's staff influenced decisions. They did not. And in fact the Governor and her gasline team ensured a thoroughly objective process by providing researched recommendations made with public input while leaving all decisions in the hands of the legislature. Those decisions were overwhelmingly approved.

Additionally, the Governor personally witnessed from the previous administration the dangerous pattern of having state employees go immediately from handling state negotiations into private sector jobs concerning the same subjects, and she moved to put an end to that practice among staff, including those who worked on the gasline.

#### **On Governor Palin's Days on the Wasilla City Council**

**AP "FACT":** *"As Wasilla mayor, Palin pressed for a special zoning exception so she could sell her family's \$327,000 house, then did not keep a promise to remove a potential fire hazard on the property."*

*She asked the city council to loosen rules for snow machine races when she and her husband owned a snow machine store, and cast a tie-breaking vote to exempt taxes on aircraft when her father-in-law owned one. But she stepped*

*away from the table in 1997 when the council considered a grant for the Iron Dog snow machine race in which her husband competes."*

**THE TRUTH:** When the Palins purchased their prior home in Wasilla, it was already in violation of the "special zoning" rule. Such rules have always been only loosely enforced in Alaska. The home wasn't in violation of any zoning regulation when it was originally built, but subsequent construction around it changed that. The Palins applied for a setback variance in order to sell their home. This is very common in Wasilla and elsewhere. There was nothing at all out of the ordinary about it, and it certainly did not involve any favoritism. The "potential fire hazard" in question was a carport that the Palins offered to tear down, but the new owner wanted it left alone.

Todd Palin's old snowmachine store was located in Big Lake, which is 20 miles outside of the Wasilla city limits. Governor Palin's father-in-law lives in Dillingham, which is about 450 miles away from Wasilla. The plane in question was not even registered in his name.

#### **On Obama's Cap-and-Tax Plan**

**AP "FACT":** *"She correctly quotes a comment attributed to Obama in January 2008, when he told San Francisco Chronicle editors that under his cap-and-trade climate proposal, 'electricity rates would necessarily skyrocket' as utilities are forced to retrofit coal burning power plants to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.*

*Obama has argued since then that climate legislation can blunt the cost to consumers. Democratic legislation now before Congress calls for a variety of measures aimed at mitigating consumer costs. Several studies predict average household costs probably would be \$100 to \$145 a year."*

**THE TRUTH:** As even the AP notes, Governor Palin correctly quoted Obama's statement that "electricity rates would necessarily skyrocket."

And despite how the AP would like to spin it, the Waxman-Markey Cap-and-Trade Bill would make prices skyrocket. As Ben Lieberman of the Heritage Foundation [notes](#):

"...the higher energy costs kick in as soon as the bill's provisions take effect in 2012. For a household of four, energy costs go up \$436 that year, and they eventually reach \$1,241 in 2035 and average \$829 annually over that span. Electricity costs go up 90 percent by 2035, gasoline by 58 percent, and natural gas by 55 percent by 2035. The cumulative higher energy costs for a family of four by then will be nearly \$20,000.

But direct energy costs are only part of the consumer impact. Nearly everything goes up, since higher energy costs raise production costs. If you look at the total cost of Waxman-Markey, it works out to an average of \$2,979 annually from 2012-2035 for a household of four. By 2035 alone, the total cost is over \$4,600."

#### **On the Exxon Valdez Decision**

**AP "FACT":** *"That response is at odds with her reaction at the time to the ruling, which resolved the long-running case by reducing punitive damages for victims to \$500 million from \$2.5 billion. Environmentalists and plaintiffs' lawyers decried the ruling as a slap at the victims and Palin herself said she was 'extremely disappointed.' She said the justices had gutted a jury decision favoring higher damage awards, the Anchorage Daily News reported. 'It's tragic that so many Alaska fishermen and their families have had their lives*

*put on hold waiting for this decision,' she said, noting many had died 'while waiting for justice.'"*

**THE TRUTH:** Governor Palin writes in her book: "As governor I directed our attorney general to file an amicus brief on behalf of plaintiffs in the case, and, thanks to Alaska's able attorneys arguing in front of the highest court in our land, in 2008 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the people. Finally, Alaskans could recover some of their losses."

That is correct. Alaskans were able to recover some of their losses. However, it was also a tragedy of delayed justice. Alaskans had waited for nearly 20 years, and the Court reduced the amount of punitive damages for the victims.

Governor Palin voiced her support for the \$2.5 billion in punitive damages in a press conference with the victims of the Exxon Valdez spill the day before oral arguments were heard. Naturally, she was disappointed that the Court reduced the amount to \$500 million – which was especially painful coming as it did after many years of litigation in which some of the victims passed away without ever receiving justice. Even after the Court gutted the punitive damages award, Exxon argued that they shouldn't have to pay interest on it.

However, it is a matter of record that the Supreme Court did, in fact, rule "in favor of the people." The "disappointment" was in the reduction of the award and in the delay in justice.

Governor Palin's immediate reaction to the decision expressed this frustration and disappointment. She said: "I am extremely disappointed with today's decision by the U.S. Supreme Court. While the decision brings some degree of closure to Alaskans suffering from 19 years of litigation and delay, the Court gutted the jury's decision on punitive damages. It is tragic that so many Alaska fishermen and their families have had their lives put on hold waiting for this decision. My heart goes out to those affected, especially the families of the thousands of Alaskans who passed away while waiting for justice."

#### **On Alaska's Earmarks**

**AP "FACT":** *"Alaska is also one of the states most dependent on federal subsidies, receiving much more assistance from Washington than it pays in federal taxes. A study for the nonpartisan Tax Foundation found that in 2005, the state received \$1.84 for every dollar it sent to Washington."*

**THE TRUTH:** There is no question that as a very young state Alaska requires more help with infrastructure funding to catch up with the rest of the Lower 48. However, Governor Palin was not governor in 2005. As governor, she [reduced](#) Alaska's earmark requests by nearly 85%.

#### **On Governor Palin's Frugality in Her Personal Expenses While in Office**

**AP "FACTS":** *"Although travel records indicate [Governor Palin] usually opted for less-pricey hotels while governor, Palin and daughter Bristol stayed five days and four nights at the \$707.29-per-night Essex House luxury hotel (robes and slippers come standard) overlooking New York City's Central Park for a five-hour women's leadership conference in October 2007. With air fare, the cost to Alaska was well over \$3,000. Event organizers said Palin asked if she could bring her daughter. The governor billed her state more than \$20,000 for her children's travel, including to events where they had not been invited, and in some cases later amended expense reports to specify that they had been on official business."*

**THE TRUTH:** The AP proves Governor Palin's point by noting that she "usually opted for less-pricey hotels."

The First Family's travel was processed by the Administrative Services Department, whose director served under the previous governor. Governor Palin followed the same protocol that past governors had followed. The one obvious difference, however, is that Governor Palin and her family spent [less than her two predecessors](#). In fact, she spent [over \\$913,000 less](#) on personal expenses in her first two years than former Governor Frank Murkowski did his last two years.

"Amending" the reports was not done to hide anything. It was standard practice for Governor Palin's security personnel to submit the initial trip requests with the basic details of the trip to the Administrative Services Department. Later, the rest of the trip details would be added by the Governor's personal staff.

And, by the way, perhaps someone could tell us how to find a cheap and safe hotel in New York City. And does anyone think she took a 9 hour flight to the east coast and didn't do any other business. Riiight. Maybe we can ask Andree McLeod for the Governor's calendar for that day, seeing as how Andree wasted hundreds of hours of work time of state personnel for her FOIA requests of the Governor's emails, calendars, and, ah... we don't know... Piper's finger paintings.

The simple fact is that Governor Palin and her family spent significantly less than the prior two administrations despite having a much larger family. That is a fact. Clearly frugality was important to her.

#### **On Governor Palin's Interview with Vogue**

**AP "FACT":** *"Says she tried to talk about national security and energy independence in her interview with Vogue magazine but the interviewer wanted her to pivot from hydropower to high fashion."*

*THE FACTS are somewhat in dispute. Vogue contributing editor Rebecca Johnson said Palin did not go on about hydropower. 'She just kept talking about drilling for oil.'*

**THE TRUTH:** Governor Palin wanted to talk about resource development. The Vogue contributing editor confirms this. Hydropower is one of many alternative sources of energy used in Alaska. "...hydropower to high fashion" is used as a turn of phrase. Are they really this obtuse?

#### **On Governor Palin's "Ambitions"**

**AP "FACT":** *"Few politicians own up to wanting high office for the power and prestige of it, and in this respect, Palin fits the conventional mold. But 'Going Rogue' has all the characteristics of a pre-campaign manifesto, the requisite autobiography of the future candidate."*

**THE TRUTH:** We didn't realize writing a book was a declaration of anything other than the desire to tell one's story.

#### **Oh yeah, and one more thing...**

We got a tip from our very own reliable anonymous source. Apparently the McCain campaign racked up legal costs in Alaska and said repeatedly it would pay for them. When the bill was discussed and submitted, according to the campaign's wishes, it was turned down after the election and officials said the campaign would have paid if the campaign had won. Among the dollars - nearly \$50,000 for vetting. Charming. Again, we ask you folks to consider this: When has the McCain staffers *ever* behaved honorably or honestly to this woman? Never.

We'll keep you posted of more facts.

...to keep you posted or more news.

Oh yeah, be sure to [read her book](#). We believe in letting her speak for herself without these McCain "staffers" playing their CYA games. They ran the worst campaign since... well, Bob Dole (nah, Dole was better. At least he had Kemp). The only bright spot during the last election was Sarah Palin. We voted for her, and only for her.

*\*Post bumped up.*