



PolitiFact Is The Liar Of The Year

by [HANS BADER](#) on *DECEMBER 14, 2012* · [0 COMMENTS](#)

in [ENVIRONMENT](#), [GLOBAL](#)

[WARMING](#), [HEALTHCARE](#), [LEGAL](#), [REGULATION](#)

PolitiFact [falsely depicted](#) Michael Cannon, the director of health policy studies at the Cato Institute, as suggesting that state law overrides federal law, erroneously attributing to him a radical claim that he never made (that states can forbid the federal government from setting up health insurance exchanges). Cannon merely observed that state law in 14 states forbids “**state employees**” to set up Obamacare health insurance exchanges, and he never said that **federal employees** could not set them up. (Under the Supreme Court’s [Printz decision](#), the federal government cannot conscript state officials to administer even perfectly constitutional federal laws.)

After falsely putting words into Cannon’s mouth, PolitiFact then [rated the claim he never made “false,”](#) and prominently attributed it to him. PolitiFact cheerfully ignored the fact that it had wrongly maligned Cannon, a legally knowledgeable expert on health care regulation, even after its error was [brought to its attention](#) by Jonathan Adler, a leading law professor at Case Western Reserve University.

PolitiFact has also made [repeated false claims](#) about the Supreme Court’s Ledbetter decision that echoed [false Democratic talking points](#) against the Supreme Court in the campaign. PolitiFact resisted fixing its erroneous claims even after lawyers and law professors repeatedly pointed out and documented the falseness of its claims, people such as [Professor Adler](#), and a former Justice Department lawyer at the [Heritage Foundation](#).

After dragging its heels, PolitiFact finally corrected some of its false claims after criticism of its falsehoods spread beyond legal circles to the general public, drawing scrutiny from people like [Megan McArdle](#) of *Newsweek*/*Daily Beast*. (Their criticism of PolitiFact for making obvious factual errors put its (undeserved) credibility at risk if it failed to belatedly correct the most blatant of the errors they cited.)

In 2012, slanted, dishonest PolitiFact made [innumerable false claims](#) in the course of branding people as liars or giving them “pants on fire” ratings. Some of the worst are described in a November [2012 Forbes commentary](#). It [rated](#) claims that were incontrovertibly true as false, especially when they were uttered by Republican Senate candidate and Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel. [For example](#),

In [an October 10 Plain Dealer story](#), Washington correspondent Sabrina Eaton introduced Mandel’s [accurate] claim that [Senator] “Sherrod Brown missed over 350 official votes” with two paragraphs repeating Democrat allegations that Mandel has shirked his duties as Ohio Treasurer. Prominently featured in the online post was a “Truth-o-Meter” graphic indicating Mandel’s statement had been ruled “Mostly False.” [The full PolitiFact Ohio ruling](#) was headlined by the statement in question, “We need a Senator who shows up to work. Sherrod Brown missed over 350 official votes.” In the 14th of 18 paragraphs, Eaton admitted, “There is an element of truth in Mandel’s claim: The ad correctly says that Brown has missed over 350 official votes.”

Incredibly, despite acknowledging the exact Mandel claim from the ruling’s headline was true, Eaton ruled the statement “Mostly False” after spending over a dozen paragraphs

revisiting Democrat criticisms of Mandel, explaining Brown's absences, and adding context to dispute what Mandel implied.

How could the factual accuracy of the specific claim being "fact-checked" be treated as merely "an element of truth"?

PolitiFact routinely rated claims that were entirely true, indisputable, and not misleading, as "half-true" because they failed to include additional "context," i.e., [liberal spin](#). For example, Senator "Ted Cruz claims national debt is bigger than the nation's GDP. Yes, our national debt absolutely, incontrovertibly exceeds the nation's GDP. But claiming that gets you a 'Half-True' because Politifact's Gardner Selby" thought that saying that was mean-spirited. Similarly, PolitiFact [said it was "misleading"](#) and dishonest for a conservative politician to make the true factual observation that Obama "refuses to recognize Jerusalem" as Israel's capital, even though that fact was concededly true, because the politician did not provide additional context that PolitiFact wanted: namely, that Obama is not the first president to take this position.

As [Forbes pointed out](#), PolitiFact found "Mostly False a Romney campaign claim that women account for 92.3 percent of jobs lost under Obama because context makes it not his fault. Admitting that the 'numbers are accurate', they are nonetheless 'quite misleading' because "in every recession, men are the first to take the hit, followed by women. . . There is a small amount of truth to the claim, but it ignores critical facts that would give a different impression." Meanwhile, PolitiFact rated claims that were false, or involved wild conjecture, as "true," when uttered by liberal politicians, in one case under the stated rationale that the Obama campaign deserved "[wiggle room](#)" when coming up with a figure out of thin air.

[PolitiFact ignored the most basic economic law](#), the [law of supply and demand](#), in claiming that cap-and-trade legislation, which is designed to limit energy consumption and increase the price of energy from non-renewable sources, could actually result in "[an average lower cost for consumers](#)." Even the supporters of such legislation, such as President Obama, have [admitted](#) that such legislation increases energy costs to consumers. In a January 17, 2008, interview with the [San Francisco Chronicle](#), Obama said that "[electricity rates would necessarily skyrocket](#)" under his cap-and-trade plan to fight global warming. Similarly, a [CBS analyst pointed out](#) that a Treasury Department analysis estimated the cost of the Obama administration's cap-and-trade plan at \$1,761 per year for the average American household.

As [Forbes noted](#), PolitiFact repeatedly treated true or genuinely debatable claims by Republican Senate candidate Josh Mandel as provably false, based on laughable reasons, like the fact that Mandel's opponent had made contrary claims about his own subjective mental intentions:

"If Ohio's Politifact outfit is to be believed, everything [Mandel] says is a lie, including this statement. <http://vlt.tc/jw6> Perhaps this is due to the [PolitiFact] writer being a longtime Obama supporter? <http://vlt.tc/fgq> Or that the wife of Mandel's opponent, Sen. Sherrod Brown, used to work in the office? <http://vlt.tc/jw7> But whatever the reason, consider this fact check as a typical entry in the genre: <http://vlt.tc/jw8> A Mandel ad which criticizes Brown for "supporting the job-killing cap-and-trade plan" is fact-checked. For proof, the Mandel campaign points to a statement from Brown: 'I'm an environmentalist. I want cap and trade. I just want to make sure that . . . manufacturing doesn't get crippled.' The ad is deemed False."

Confronted with a political ad containing only true facts, PolitiFact would simply invent "[a novel new interpretation of the ad's meaning](#)" — one surprisingly absent from

the ad itself — in order to judge it false. Hot Air gives additional [examples](#) of plainly true statements that PolitiFact somehow managed to deem false by distorting what the speaker said, in an ideologically hostile way. PolitiFact’s inaccuracy, blatant double standards, and hypocrisy, are chronicled at a [blog called PolitiFact Bias](#). That blog [comments here](#) on PolitiFact’s peculiar decision to brand as the “lie of the year” a literally true — but misleading — Romney campaign ad, when so many more obviously false claims were made by both candidates. In light of PolitiFact’s own record, I would classify *it* as the “liar of the year.”