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Media Rules in Favor of Judge Roberts

Study: 59% of Network, New York Times Coverage Favorable, Nominee Gets Softer Treatment Than Bork, Thomas

WASHINGTON, DC- Nearly three-fifths (59 percent) of the media coverage of Supreme Court nominee John Roberts has been positive since his nomination, according to a new study released by the **Center for Media and Public Affairs** (CMPA). The study also found the coverage to be less critical of Roberts than it was of previous Supreme Court nominees Robert Bork and Clarence Thomas at the same point in the nomination process.

These results are based on CMPA's scientific content analysis of 228 evaluations of Judge Roberts by sources and reporters in 95 stories that appeared on the ABC, CBS and NBC evening news and in Section A of the *New York Times* between July 20 and August 28. For information on our methodology, see <http://www.cmpa.com>.

MAJOR FINDINGS:

Networks Love Roberts, New York Times Likes Him: In the first 40 days after he was nominated, 69 percent of on-air evaluations of Judge Roberts on the network newscasts were positive, as were 57 percent of those in the *New York Times*.

No "Borking" of Roberts: Early coverage of John Roberts has been more positive than that given to previous controversial nominees Robert Bork and Clarence Thomas. In earlier studies of the three networks and the *Washington Post*, CMPA found that only 50 percent of Bork's pre-hearing coverage and 40 percent of Thomas's early evaluations were positive.

The Issues At Play: Four topics have dominated the coverage of the Supreme Court nominee: 23 stories have discussed his record in previous administrations; 17 stories investigated his views on abortion; 14 stories discussed the nomination process itself, and 10 stories examined the attorney-client privilege in relation to John Roberts' nomination.

Look Who's Talking: When party officials (spokesmen, officeholders etc.) were quoted, 95 percent of evaluations of Judge Roberts by Republican sources were positive, as opposed to only 38 percent from Democrats. Similarly, 87 percent of judgments by members of conservative interest groups (like the Family Research Council) were positive, while 98 percent of those from liberal interest group members (like MoveOn.org) were negative.

"Judge Roberts has shown keen analytical skill and a relatively light touch."
— Adam Liptak, *NY Times*, 7/21

"Liberal groups protested Roberts' nomination, insisting he will undermine abortion rights."
— Linda Douglas, *ABC*, 7/20