

Ethics of Editorial Boards' Endorsement of Candidates

Anasha Stevens

Georgia State University

Abstract

News media's role in the 2016 election might have been the most prominent of any election to date. While part of news media's major role is due to new technology and social media, one practice that brought controversy was newspapers' endorsements of candidates by their editorial boards. Though editorial boards endorsed candidates in many elections prior to the most recent one, some politicians, citizens, and news media professionals find it an unethical practice that had potentially negative, confusing effects on the coverage of the 2016 election. While some do not correlate news with what is written in the opinion section by editorial boards, others believe that the newspaper's objectivity is compromised if endorsements run too closely to news reporting. Endorsements made by editorial boards potentially reinforced an existing skepticism and distrust toward newspapers, regardless of whether their content is print or Internet based. In "Ethics of Editorial Boards' Endorsement of Candidates" I use the ethical decision-making process and outside scholarly resources to evaluate the ethics of this news media tradition. I explain the dilemma as related to the 2016 presidential election and consider the continuation or cessation of this practice through multiple ethical theories, journalism codes of ethics and other journalistic sources. As a result of evaluation, two resolutions to the dilemma are presented and continuing the practice of endorsing presidential candidates is deemed the most ethical option.