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February 9, 2009

Ms. Kerry Smith
Senior Vice President of Editorial Quality
ABC News
77 West 66th Street
New York, New York 10023

Dear Ms. Smith,

Thank you for responding to my letter addressed to ABC President David Westin regarding the controversy surrounding George Stephanopoulos.

I am pleased to see that ABC did not choose to ignore my concerns nor those of the multitude of viewers who called your network last week to voice their disapproval. However, it is unfortunate how inadequately, disingenuously and indeed dishonestly you chose to respond and remove focus on the matter at hand by accusing me of intentional deceit in this serious matter.

First, it's the original Politico story that reported that for 17 years Mr. Stephanopoulos has been participating in regular strategy calls with fellow Democrats. To quote from the story, "... in any given news cycle, it is quite likely that Washington's prevailing political and media interpretation — at least on the Democratic side — is being hatched on these calls."

That is not my willful and knowing distortion; it's the Politico's reporting. If you believe the story is false, then you have a fight with Politico, not me.

Second, you claim ABC "reached out to the MRC to make it abundantly clear that you had totally mischaracterized the Politico story written by John Harris last Tuesday." That is simply not true. The only proactive outreach on behalf of ABC was offered by Senior Vice President of Corporate Communications Jeffrey Schneider. He called our publicist to offer denials. When our publicist offered to bring his statement to my attention, he instructed her not to do so, stating "the last thing I want to do is get up in Brent Bozell's hornet's nest about this." So much for ABC's outreach to me.

Finally and most importantly is the matter at hand – the damaged institutional memory at ABC News, especially apparent among you senior executives. You suffer from collective amnesia. Mr. Stephanopoulos, Mr. Begala, Mr. Emanuel and Mr. Carville ran the 1992 Clinton campaign and labored together as Democratic strategists and message makers both before and after Clinton's election. To not even address this fact, and how there just might be even an appearance of impropriety, suggests your institutional memory only goes back to the day Mr. Stephanopoulos came aboard.

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You are saying with a straight face that since that day Mr. Stephanopoulos became a born-again journalist, his old self had been washed away. Yet, here he is still on a daily early morning calls with the same Democratic strategists as the new administration begins its service.

If Fox News Sunday had handed its news anchor chair to Karl Rove, and it was subsequently learned Mr. Rove was having daily strategy calls with a Republican White House Chief of Staff and other top officials with whom he'd worked at the Bush campaign, it would be the lead story on ABC World News, with Charles Gibson calling into question the propriety of these daily calls. But have a conservative question a liberal engaging in this exact behavior and the complaint becomes "false and based on a willful and knowing distortion."

It is especially rich – and telling – that this statement came from you, ABC's Senior Vice President for Editorial Quality. You are, according to the Bacon's media database, "responsible for maintaining the journalistic integrity and editorial standards of ABC News."

Most sincerely,



L. Brent Bozell III
Founder and President