Artemis Allison

HU3621

Module 8 Comparative News Analysis

By the end of class on Tuesday, the election will be just two weeks away. On Monday, the United States Supreme Court ruled, through a 4-4 tie in votes, that Pennsylvania may allow ballots received up to three days after Election Day to be counted, as the deadlock means that the ruling goes to the lower court. This was reported on by NPR, the Washington Post, and Fox News, among other news organizations, with both Washington Post and Fox News mentioning right away in the title that this was originally blocked through an attempt by the GOP in Pennsylvania. In fact, out of the three, the Washington features the longest title of the three, including key details such as the fact that Pennsylvania is a key state in this election – as it was in 2016, too.

Out of the three articles, Fox News is by far the shortest, briefly covering all the details, as well as the fact that the Supreme Court will now also be hearing cases related to Trump’s immigration policies. Fox news, as a right-leaning organization with mixed factuality per most fact checking sources such as Media Bias/Fact Check, does not seem to actually be reporting anything nonfactual when cross-checked with the other two sources, who both usually are seen as left-leaning and factual; however, the lack of information presented definitely makes it feel as though Fox News might be trying to downplay how much of an impact this might have on the election. Last election cycle, the state had been won by only 44,000 votes, and in a year where 16,000 ballots had arrived too late to be counted in the primaries, it’s an important fact to note that it feels like Fox is deliberately trying to leave out.

Between the Washington Post and NPR, meanwhile, the two diverge after being remarkably similar in the beginning: the Washington Post focuses on the impact that this decision has on Pennsylvania in particular and the lawmakers who’d made the decision that lead to this being brought up to the Supreme Court, while NPR diverts to instead focus on other states, such as Wisconsin, Michigan, and North Carolina had a similar issue with wanting to accept ballots late so long as they were postmarked by Election Day. A detail the Washington Post brings up in their divergence, as well, is that Republican officials and lawyers, including the former governor of Pennsylvania, was that they disagreed with the Republican attempt to get the Supreme Court to allow the block to go through, even though the Republican judges still agreed with the state party’s attempt.

Perhaps it’s my own bias showing in that I think this is an obvious attempt to disenfranchise voters, but even then, why would the Republican party go through and do such an obvious attempt to make sure as many votes as possible aren’t counted, especially in the midst of a pandemic that’s seen mail sorters deliberately deactivated? Was Fox News’s underreporting – even with the most reporters assigned to this article – a deliberate attempt, or is it just something like what Reuters does in that expect readers to be able to research themselves? And though NPR covered that other states were facing similar problems, what does this mean for those states – are they forced to follow the Pennsylvania decision, even though federal courts may have ruled differently for Wisconsin and Michigan?

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