

# Kingdom Congress of Illinois

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## Position Paper on Hydraulic Fracturing: Media Mandate

Media is assigned the role of gathering information and disseminating that news through various formats, whether those are written, spoken, or broadcast. An effective media does due diligence to gather all pertinent facts, establish the legitimacy of the facts, and publish those facts without bias or misrepresentation. The Media also serves the public interest as society's eyes and ears in the manner of a watchdog by publishing exposés, which hold accountable individuals and institutions who are supposed to serve the public.

In order for the Media to properly fulfill its biblical mandate, the Media must:

- 1) Be cautious to insure that all reporting is truthful and accurate
- 2) Comprehend its role in helping to shape public decision and cultural consensus
- 3) Provide a reliable witness upon which reward and punishment is meted out
- 4) Guard against biased reporting
- 5) Maintain proper alignment with other cultural mountains or spheres of authority

### 1) Truthful and Accurate Reporting

Truth is the basis for all forward movement in life's endeavors. Truth is a key component in scientific discoveries, relational stability, and social structures. Postulated theories are tested in scientific laboratories to discover whether or not they are true. Philosophies are tried out in the laboratory of humanity's social order to reveal their viability. Over time, error is revealed and reality stands. Unreliable and inaccurate information is unprofitable and unsustainable in the arena of human experience.

The primary role of the Media is intrinsically tied to truth. Knowledge is imparted by facts. Ignorance is overcome and lies are combatted by truth. Truth does not bow under the influence of the powerful nor betray the needs of the weak. Proverbs instructs us to search out knowledge and understanding (Pr. 2:3), and quantifies these commodities as more valuable than gold and jewels (Pr. 8:10; 20:15). Though not costless to unearth, truth supplies the culture with immeasurable worth. Media has the commission, responsibility, and honor to communicate truth to the culture.

Early in the biblical narrative, the reader is exposed to a conversation between the serpent and the first woman. Eve received a report from the serpent, which included misrepresented facts on the nature of God, herself, her present situation, and her future. Assuming that the father of lies had information on par with the Father of Light, she made her decision based upon the Devil's op-ed (Gen. 3:1-7). Building her life and earthly culture from lies had disastrous results. Jesus warned that a house built on the sand of falsehood would fall into ruins (Mt. 7:26). Having forsaken the Author of Truth, Adam and Eve placed man upon a quest of the knowledge of truth.

On another occasion in scripture, King David was in exile due to a civil insurrection led by his son, Absalom. After a military engagement, a report came from the front to David that his son had been killed in battle. As the reporter was unable to verify the information by factual details, David considered the information unreliable and awaited another first-hand account. Only after full discovery and verification of truth did David act upon the news.

# Kingdom Congress of Illinois

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## Position Paper on Hydraulic Fracturing: Media Mandate

### 2) Cultural Consensus

Because information is a key component to decision making, facts must be grounded in truth before a just decision can be rendered. If information is shrouded by lies or deception, conclusions and actions will be skewed, as we have previously noted in the discourse between Eve and the serpent. The Media has the duty to verify its facts. It has the obligation to broadcast thoroughly analyzed and comprehensively examined news. The Media must comprehend its role in helping to shape public decision and cultural consensus

Based upon broadcasted news, society acts. The action might be emotional. When an exceptional deed of a hero is communicated, the populace rejoices. In scripture, when news spread that David had killed the Philistine giant, Goliath, the people sang songs heralding his triumph (I Sam. 18:20). Or, the action might be political. In the Bible, when the ten spies returned from scouting out the Promised Land, they reported on immense obstacles even though Joshua and Caleb broadcast a good report. The populace was persuaded by the mass media and voted to not enter Canaan.

News media is a powerful conditioner of the human spirit and will. Remembering the story of David and Goliath, we find that the giant was broadcasting a message of fear to the Israelites. The news shaped a cultural consensus of apprehension and inaction (I Sam 17: 1-11). A similar situation occurred during the reign of King Hezekiah when an Assyrian king named Sennacherib surrounded the cities of Judah with invading armies. The enemies began to taunt the citizens with doubt-filled words about Judah's ability to defeat their undefeated opponent. Sennacherib was seeking to shape public opinion by his fear-mongering (II Chron. 32:9-19).

Concerning the subject of Hydraulic Fracturing, the Media is charged to exhaustively investigate allegations of environmental contaminations and big business fraud. If news reports unfounded speculation that produce a cultural consensus of fear, private individuals, businesses, and the marketplace could be 'voted out' of legal gain. If, on the other hand, the news fails to expose corruption of any type and at any level within the industry, private individuals, businesses, and the marketplace could, likewise, be harmed. Unsubstantiated reporting and failure of watchdog reporting are likewise harmful and contrary to the mandate of the Media.

### 3) Witness and Reward

Having declared that society will come to a consensus and 'vote' based upon facts, which are communicated, brings us to another revelation. The Media serves the people in the same way a witness serves the courts. Within the scope of civil justice, courts are convened to discover truth. Again we must examine the importance of truth. The accused stands to be exonerated or punished based upon the provability of information. The judge or the jury listens to all the data that must be substantiated by witnesses, who can have first-hand knowledge or can be experts in a particular field. Only after all witnesses have spoken is the verdict rendered. Blessings and cursing alike are doled out on the basis of witnesses.

# Kingdom Congress of Illinois

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## Position Paper on Hydraulic Fracturing: Media Mandate

Scripture declares that truth and judgment are established on the grounds of witnesses. “At the mouth of two or three witnesses let every word be established” (Mt. 18:16; Deut. 17:6; 19:15). A true witness will ensure that the fruit of a man’s deeds, whether that fruit is good reward or painful loss, is conferred upon the man. In the Ten Commandments, commandment number nine states, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (Ex. 20:16). Any attempt to lie about our neighbor, his character, or his actions is an attempt to change the reward he is due based upon his earned reputation and his ethics.

The Bible tells the story of a man named Naboth who owned a vineyard. The king, Ahab, wanted to buy the land; but Naboth declined to sell. Jezebel, the evil queen and wife of Ahab, hired false witnesses to testify that Naboth worshipped false gods, which was a crime punishable by death. Found guilty based upon lying testimony, Naboth was executed; and his estate was seized by the wicked monarchs. He merited life and personal property rights, but the reward he was due was denied him. False testimony changed his reward.

The foundation of all righteous reward is based upon the faithfulness or veracity of the witness. This precept is true when applied to the courts, to the home when siblings are fighting over who’s to be blamed for the misdeed, or to the sports arena when the referees make a call based upon their view of the play. This precept is, likewise, true when the Media testifies. Reporting the news is testifying. Media must be found to be a faithful witness or the outcome of reward and punishment will be contaminated.

One more biblical admonition is important to note when considering the principle of witnessing. A false witness is penalized with the same punishment that would be applied to the accused if found guilty (Deut. 19:16-19). In the story of Naboth and Ahab, false witnesses may have been hired but the actual lying neighbors were the king and queen. The prophet Elijah exposed their untrue report and sentenced them to the same kind of death that Naboth had suffered. Elijah gave a faithful testimony, and God executed the sanction that the monarchs’ ethics had earned (I Ki. 21:19, 23; 22:38; II Ki. 9:36).

The Media is mandated to be finders of truth, reporters of truth, and guardians of truth. Based upon the new outlets’ faithful witness, cultural judgments are formed. Persons and corporations, the powerful and the underprivileged, the famous and the ignoble all have a chance to live in the reputation they have earned and receive the reward which they deserve. A Media propagating a lie releases perverted conclusion and unjust assessments. Good careers can be ruined; evil men can prosper. Reputations can be altered; people can be harmed. Ultimately, a Media purveyor that habitually perverts justice might find itself under the judgment that God ascribes to an unfaithful witness.

In the matter of Hydraulic Fracturing, the Media has weighed in heavily. Much reporting has been done on the evils of the industry and the environmental harm that has been reported to have occurred where ‘fracking’ has been used. Upon closer examination of the evidence and more exhaustive research, many initial reports have been challenged and, in some cases, proven to be false. The Media must follow the trail of truth-finding and continue to bring current reports before the eyes of the nation. If indeed evidence proves the viability of the industry without

# Kingdom Congress of Illinois

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## Position Paper on Hydraulic Fracturing: Media Mandate

yielding harm to the earth, the Media must report those findings. Hydraulic Fracturing offers opportunity for economic blessing for the businesses and the people engaged in 'fracking' and offers the nation the use of a natural resource. Caution should be exercised by the Media to witness accurately so as not to change a just reward.

### 4) Unbiased Reporting

A faithful witness cannot have any other agenda but that of telling the truth. Agenda-free reporting is often difficult. Every person holds to certain presuppositions or worldviews that serve as a filter through which circumstances are viewed, analyzed, and then communicated. Broadcasters are challenged to objectively report the news and the facts. When opinion is injected, the piece should be labeled as either an editorial or an op-ed.

According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, a bias is "a tendency to believe that some people, ideas, etc., are better than others that usually results in treating some people unfairly." Self-promotion, envy, and jealousy can be found at the root of some types of bias. Bias can also be caused when a bribe, whether offered in the form of power or money, is taken. Thus, the motivation of the reporter is perverted.

Scripture provides several examples of the spread of misinformation because of a biased, hidden agenda of those transmitting the stories. Three men – Korah, Dathan, and Abiram – published the opinion that Moses' rule was self-conferred because they were threatened by their own loss of prestige and power (Num. 16:1-35). Council rooted in jealousy caused contemporaries of Daniel to advise King Darius in a course of action that would ensnare Daniel and remove him from office (Dan. 6:1-24). During the trial of Jesus, the population was stirred due to the propagation of false reports by the Jewish leaders who were protecting their establishment against the rising popularity of Christ (Mt. 27:20-25; Mk. 15:7-15).

Media must guard against bias whether it arises from worldviews or self-interests. In a free market, Media runs the risk of selling the truth to the highest bidder. The news that attracts the consumer, the headline that appeals to the shopper, and the circulation numbers that draw the advertiser can all create a bias as to which story gets told and how the story is 'spun.' Those reporters seeking promotion, notoriety, or popularity must guard against prioritizing their personal self-interest over truth-finding and truth-telling. Conversely, in a totalitarian civil structure or when the government underwrites the news outlets, reporting can turn into propagandizing and watchdog reporting can be compromised because of a civil bias, namely government regulations and stipulations.

Media has an obligation to insure that reporting on Hydraulic Fracturing is not viewed through any bias. If the vogue and popular trend in the world is strongly influenced by the environmental community, subjects like mining, drilling, and other methods of extracting resources that can generate power tend to be viewed through a pre-conceived bias. From Hollywood stars to governmental power brokers, those whose faces are known and voices are heard help to generate a bias that can influence the Media. Standing against any cultural trend and reporting news contrary to any popular opinion requires an unbiased Media that is committed to truth.

# Kingdom Congress of Illinois

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## Position Paper on Hydraulic Fracturing: Media Mandate

### 5) Proper Alignment

Media provides checks and balances into the other institutions of society. As stated in the opening paragraph of this paper, Media serve the public interest as society's eyes and ears in the manner of a watchdog. Truth-filled reporting holds accountable institutions and individuals who are supposed to be serving the public. Exposés serve to expose or reveal corruption, shine the light of truth upon deeds done in darkness, and aid in uprooting malfeasants.

If Media forms a bond, league, or union with another institution, it forfeits its ability to be objective. Big business that spends large sums of money in advertising can threaten to withhold marketing money, or big government can threaten to damage Media by passage of certain kinds of legislation. Threats of these kinds can draw news outlets into unholy alliances. When Media loses its proper and independent alignment with other institutions in culture, the truth-telling role of Media is jeopardized.

Scripture informs us of John the Baptist, who reported on the adultery of Herod with Herodias, His brother's wife (Mk. 6:17-28). John was executed by decapitation. Many prophets were persecuted for speaking truth when the society around them was not inclined to hear it. Although the prophets were spokespersons for the messages of God, the principle of reporting truthfully when the report runs against the social fabric remains applicable. Truth-telling can result in loss of popularity, loss of power, loss of revenue, and even loss of life.

In a time when the subject of Hydraulic Fracturing is being promoted by drilling companies while contested by environmentalist groups, developed by engineers while interrupted by lawsuits, heralded by proponents while decried by its adversaries, the job of the Media is critical. Reporting must remain free of improper alignment with industry and government. It must remain true to its mandate to gather all pertinent facts, establish the validity of the facts, and publish the facts without bias or misrepresentation.

This Position Paper was written by Dr. Patti Amsden