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# “Job Killers” in the News: Allegations without Verification

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## **“Job Killers” in the News: Allegations without Verification**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **“Job Killers” in the News: Allegations without Verification**

“...there’s a simple rule: You say it again, and you say it again, and you say it again...and about the time that you’re absolutely sick of saying it is about the time that your target audience has heard it for the first time.”<sup>2</sup> -- Frank Luntz, Republican pollster

A comprehensive study analyzes the frequency of the “job killer” term in four mainstream news media since 1984, how the phrase was used, by whom, and—most importantly—whether the allegations of something being a “job killer” were verified by reporters in their stories.

The study’s key findings include the following:

- Media stories with the phrase “job killer” spiked dramatically after Barack Obama was elected president, particularly after he took office. The number of stories with the phrase “job killer” increased by 1,156% between the first three years of the George W. Bush administration (16 “job killer” stories) and the first three years of the Obama administration (201 “job killer” stories).
- The majority of the sources of stories using the phrase “job killer” were business spokespersons and Republican Party officials. Republican officials (41.7%) and business sources (18.6%) were responsible for 60.3% of the “job killer” allegations. In 17% of the stories, news organizations used the phrase in articles and editorials without attributing the phrase to a source.
- The *Wall Street Journal* was the most likely of the four news organizations to deploy “job killer” as conventional wisdom, with no attribution. *The Wall Street Journal* generated sourceless “job killer” allegations in 45 stories (about 30% of its 151 total stories), the *New York Times* did so in 8 stories (14.5% of its 55 stories), the *Washington Post* 5 times (about 8% of its 60 stories), and the AP in 5 stories (about 4% of its 115 stories).
- Most of the stories with the phrase “job killer” focused on federal (65%) or state government (12%) policies to regulate business, including environmental, tax, labor, and consumer protection measures. During the 28-year period, the top-ranked issues portrayed as “job killers” are 1) the environment, including climate change, 2) tax policy, 3) health care reform, and 4) wage laws (typically laws to raise the minimum wage).
- In 91.6% of the stories alleging that a government policy was or would be a “job killer,” the media failed to cite any evidence for this claim or to quote an

authoritative source with any evidence for this claim. With little or no fact checking of “job killer” allegations, Americans have no way to know if there is any evidence for these claims.

- There is no correlation between the frequency of the phrase “job killer” and unemployment rate. Instead, “job killer” allegations correspond much more closely with political cycles.
- The “job killer” allegations can have a significant ripple effect across the news media. For example, the Associated Press news feeds serve 1,700 newspapers and 5,000 television and radio news organizations in the U.S., and more internationally. A single allegation of “job killer” from a significant news source can snowball into thousands of results in a Google search. One 2010 AP story in which Republicans “slammed” a bill as a “job killer,” yielded at least 12,800 web publications.
- The news media, by failing to seek to verify allegations made about government policies and proposals, typically act more like a transmission belt for business, Republican, and conservative sources than an objective seeker of truth when it comes to the term “job killer.”

### **The Study**

We analyzed all stories in which the phrase “job killer” appeared from 1984 to 2011 in four major news organizations—the Associated Press, *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Washington Post*. There were 381 total stories written that contained the phrase “job killer” and its variations. The Associated Press news service had 115 stories, the *New York Times* 55 stories, the *Wall Street Journal* 151 stories, and the *Washington Post* 60 stories.

## **“Job Killers” in the News: Allegations without Verification:**

In the fourth year of President Barack Obama’s administration, it is apparent to any political observer that there is a pitched battle between liberals and conservatives over the direction of government policy, particularly with regard to the economy. That is a discussion worth having.

One important aspect of that debate is the controversy over government regulation of business. Any American paying attention to that debate will by now be familiar with the term “job killer.” It has frequently been deployed to suggest that government regulation of business hurts economic growth. Five examples illustrate the ways in which the term “job killer” is used in contemporary political discourse.

"From our perspective, raising the minimum wage is a **job killer**," says [Chairman and CEO of Domino’s Pizza] Mr. [David] Brandon, whose company pays that wage to about 60,000 pizza-delivery drivers, who account for more than half of its work force. – *Wall Street Journal*, November 16, 2004<sup>3</sup>

In a recent interview on CNBC, the next House majority leader, Eric Cantor of Virginia, said the American people want and expect Republicans to cut off financing for Dodd-Frank, adding that the law is a **job killer**. – *New York Times*, December 27, 2010<sup>4</sup>

. . . Republicans and business groups . . . complained the [financial market] overhaul push would **kill jobs** and weigh down a struggling economy.  
--*Wall Street Journal*, March 16, 2012<sup>5</sup>

Now [Sen. Orrin] Hatch [R-Utah] emphasizes his view that Obama’s health care overhaul is a monstrous **job killer** that would raise taxes and threaten liberty.  
—Associated Press, February 17, 2011<sup>6</sup>

John Engler, the former Republican governor of Michigan who heads the National Association of Manufacturers . . . added that when it comes to stricter smog standards, “these are real **job killers**.” – *Washington Post*, July 20, 2011<sup>7</sup>

During the current presidential race, the term “job killer” has been a boilerplate metaphor for business lobby groups, Republican candidates and elected officials, and conservative pundits.

For example, on January 5, 2012, two days after his narrow victory in the Iowa Caucus, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney took the stage at the Boys & Girls Club of Salem, New Hampshire for a morning town hall meeting. Flanked by Sen. John McCain, who was there to endorse him, Romney told the audience “This president is a crony capitalist. He’s a job killer,” reported the *Boston Herald*.<sup>8</sup> The *Herald* article printed the article without any investigation of Romney’s “job killer” charges or his statement that “businesses are finding it more attractive to go elsewhere.” Nor did the paper seek out sources within the Obama administration or campaign, or among academic economists, to challenge Romney’s view and provide readers with another perspective. *Bloomberg Businessweek* reported that the next day (January 6, 2012) in Charleston, South Carolina, Romney made the same “he’s a job killer” charge about President Obama. Like the *Boston Herald*, *Bloomberg Businessweek* reported Romney’s charge without providing any supporting evidence or any opposing view.<sup>9</sup>

By the end of the day on January 8, 2012, just four days after the first of Romney’s two unsubstantiated charges of “he’s a job killer” – the media had repeated the phrase so often that readers and views could be excused for believing that it was an accurate description of the impact of government policy. With the aid of journalists and Internet media, Romney’s utterance of the “job killer” meme generated about 27,600 “hits” – mainstream news accounts, blogs, and videos. (We searched Google on January 8, 2012, using a custom range of dates from January 5-8, 2012). Searching with the same terms and time parameters on January 14, 2012, the number of Google hits had expanded to more than 111,000 results.<sup>10</sup> In these results, replication – i.e., repeating the original charge with no fact checking – was the norm.

During this presidential campaign season, there also have been a number of stories challenging Mitt Romney’s claims about the number of jobs he created while at private equity firm Bain Capital. Criticisms started by rival Republican candidates are now being echoed by Obama campaign. These accusations—which deserve scrutiny by journalists, like any accusations—run counter to major thrust of “job killer” allegations of the past 28 years. Our study demonstrates that the vast majority of “job killer” allegations from 1984 to 2011 have not been about corporate layoffs, but instead have targeted government policies and Democratic proposals and emerged from business and Republican sources.

Mass communication researchers have long identified the role of the news media in shaping public opinion and influencing political debate. This is known as the media’s *agenda-setting* effect, when persistent coverage puts issues on the public agenda.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the news media can put interpretive spin on the issue through the way in which it *frames* the narrative.<sup>12</sup>

Political communication consultant Frank Luntz observes that the key to framing an issue, or a candidate, in the popular mind is constant repetition. According to Luntz, "...there's a simple rule: You say it again, and you say it again, and you say it again...and about the time that you're absolutely sick of saying it is about the time that your target audience has heard it for the first time."<sup>13</sup>

Political scientists find that the use of "continual engagement and repetition of themes" reinforces the public's opinions about those themes and keeps them from weakening.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, getting that message repeated without any competing themes further strengthens the message. As political scientists Dennis Chong and James Druckman explain, "if one side can establish the relevant terms of debate over an issue, it can successfully persuade individuals to support its position."<sup>15</sup>

To understand how and why the phrase "job killer" has entered the political discourse and repeated so frequently that it almost becomes conventional wisdom – thus setting the agenda of discussion and framing the debate -- this study analyzes the frequency of the "job killer" term in four mainstream news media since 1984, how the phrase was used, by whom, and—most importantly—whether the allegations of something being a "job killer" were verified by reporters in their stories

In the last few years – especially since 2009 -- charges of "job killer" have been used against an ever-increasing list of federal policies and policy proposals including:

- environmental clean air regulations
- financial reform
- National Labor Relations Board rules
- public health and safety regulations by the Environmental Protection Agency, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and the Consumer Product Safety Commission
- voluntary healthy food marketing guidelines proposed by the Federal Trade Commission
- tax code changes
- health care reform
- minimum wage increases
- student loan reforms

In the world of news, sources sometimes make false statements. Ideally, journalists' job is to verify what the newsmakers say. Are they telling the truth or not? According to Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel in *The Elements of Journalism*, verification is "the essence of journalism." It is what separates journalism from propaganda, "which selects facts or invents them to serve the real purpose: persuasion and manipulation."<sup>16</sup> Verifying the truth – getting the story right – is the standard by which journalism can be defined as credible, and should be done despite pressures to publish immediately to beat the competition, or

publish just because others have already done so, Kovach and Rosenstiel explain. Similarly, first on the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) Code of Ethics list is to “see truth and report it,” with the directive to “Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error.”<sup>17</sup>

Yet, as our findings illustrate, allegations about public policies and programs being “job killers” were unsubstantiated in 91.6% (349) of stories in four major national news organizations from 1984 to 2011. Moreover, stories alleging “job killer” policies and programs are on the upswing in recent years. More than half (52.75%, or 201 stories) of the 381 stories using the phrase “job killer” (or a variation)<sup>18</sup> from 1984 to 2011 occurring in just three years – 2009-2011. This study finds that over 28 years – a period from the midpoint of Ronald Reagan’s presidency, through the administrations of George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and the first three years of Barack Obama—“job killer” has changed from an occasional accusation to a politically charged bludgeon swung predominantly by Republicans and business groups and used to try to weaken support for government policies and proposals that regulate business, primarily to protect consumers, employees, public health, and the environment.

The term “job killer” has become a powerful political weapon. In 2011, the Republicans in Congress even embedded the phrase in the name of actual legislation. On January 5, 2011, in one of the first official acts of a new Republican majority in the U.S. House of Representatives, Majority Leader Rep. Eric Cantor (R-Va.) introduced H.R. 2, titled, “Repealing the Job-Killing Health Care Law Act,” the first time that “job-killing” (or a variant) has ever been used in the name of a bill in Congressional history. The bill passed two weeks later on a mostly party-line vote.

A study by the Institute for Policy Integrity at New York University School of Law found that the introduction of H.R. 2 was part of a concerted effort by the new Republican majority in the House in 2011 to focus attention on Democratic-sponsored legislation and policies that allegedly killed jobs and undermined economic growth. “During roughly the first twenty days the 112th U.S. House of Representatives sat in session, congressional committees scheduled at least twenty separate hearings on the purported link between regulations and the nation’s job woes, the study reported”<sup>19</sup>

Leading into the 2012 presidential election, the news media – both mainstream outlets and opinion magazines and blogs – continue to deploy the term, primarily by reporting what Republicans, business lobby groups, and conservative pundits say about Democrats and their policy proposals. (During the GOP primary seasons, Republicans occasionally leveled similar charges at other Republicans).

To compare themselves to Democratic “job killers,” Republican candidates and their supporters began using the term “job creators” with reference to businesses and business leaders. The Republican effort to utilize and popularize the term “job creators” is similar to their deployment of the term “job killers.” In 2011, Bernie Marcus, co-founder and former



CEO of Home Depot and a major GOP funder, created, along with other corporate leaders, a Dallas-based group called the “Job Creators Alliance.” The group’s goal is to promote deregulation, lower corporate taxes, unregulated trade, opposition to health care mandates, and pro-carbon-based energy. Toward that end, it pledged to deploy “our spokespeople in every type of media...to generate constant message repetition.”<sup>20</sup>

**This study found that the news media, by failing to seek to verify allegations made about government policies and proposals, typically act more like a transmission belt for business, Republican, and conservative sources than an objective seeker of truth when it comes to the term “job killer.”**

## The Historical Context

Our study sought to understand how the term “job killer” evolved during this period. As with any analysis of journalism and politics, the historical context is important. Although the phrase didn’t catch on until later, “job killer” has been part of American political discourse at least from the beginning of the twentieth century, as business (and later its allies in the Republican Party) sought to promote a pro-business agenda to counter Progressive Era and New Deal policies and the rise of labor unions and, beginning in the 1970s, environmental and consumer groups.<sup>21</sup>

Ironically, “job killer” began as an expression among workers complaining about their managers at factories and similar working environments.

The earliest published use in a newspaper comes from the *Los Angeles Times* in a 1922 article headlined “Description of an Efficient Job Killer,” in which the author identifies a job killer as the wrong kind of corporate boss: “The job-killer is an executive who ruthlessly fires men on the pretext of retrenchment and economy, but really in order to ingratiate and intrench [sic] himself more firmly in the good graces of his own superiors.”<sup>22</sup> The ‘job-killer’ was differentiated from the “prudent executive” who fires employees based on “a sincere study of the business interests intrusted [sic] to him.”

The next use of the term in a major media outlet came in 1931, in the early part of the Great Depression, in a letter to the editor called “The Job Killers.”<sup>23</sup> The writer lambastes the Los Angeles Department of Public Works for establishing a fixed wage scale, as well as the California legislature for raising their own salaries and those of judges: “Work will not be done on many projected buildings... [Times] are hard, anyhow; with such prices for labor when most people are glad to get work of any sort at any price... We are in a crisis, that will involve reduction in salaries of public employees and officials” (p. A6).

Seven years later, in 1938, Raymond Moley, a close advisor to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, used the term. In a speech laying out his plan for recovery, Moley mentioned repealing “two particularly oppressive, job-killing taxes.”<sup>24</sup> Several newspapers in the following months picked Moley’s phrase up and attributed it to him.<sup>25</sup> This seems to be the

first use of the term in the modern context. So, ironically, Moley, one of FDR's so-called "brain trusters" who invented the term "New Deal," is also in a certain sense the inventor of the "job killing" meme.<sup>26</sup> In a similar context, a *Los Angeles Times* editorial in 1938 castigated FDR for vetoing "an act designed to alleviate punitive, job-killing, misery-creating forms of taxation."<sup>27</sup>

The two senses of "job killer" – on the one hand, an immoral individual who causes others to be unemployed, and on the other hand a government regulation of business (at this point associated with the New Deal) – come together when Henry Wallace, the Secretary of Agriculture in FDR's administration, was called a "job-killer" due to the limits he set on agricultural production—including cotton—in order to raise the prices of farm commodities during the Depression. Syndicated columnist Mark Sullivan pilloried Wallace for blaming unemployment in part on the development of automated farm machinery (for example, Wallace estimated that 15,000-20,000 farm laborers were thrown out of work in Iowa due to the mechanical corn-picker). Sullivan instead accused Wallace of putting people out of work by limiting farm production:

Are you trying to make people believe that invention destroys jobs? ...You, Mr. Wallace, are the real job-killer in the United States. When you limit the quantity of cotton raised, you by that act limit the number of jobs ginning cotton, spinning it, weaving it, carrying cotton and cotton goods on freight trains. You are not only the Herod of the little pigs, you are the Attila of industry, the scourge of trade.<sup>28</sup>

On the other side of this issue, Congressman Edward Crump, a Tennessee Democrat, worried that "negroes will have nothing to do and millions of them will be idle," called for the ban on the mechanical cotton-picking machine, which he described as a "job killing monster."<sup>29</sup>

In the 1960s and early 1970s, the term "job killer" occasionally appears in relation to new technologies and the import of foreign goods. For example, in 1962 the *Los Angeles Times* described a railroad workers strike in Chicago as the result of "the job-killing effects of modernization."<sup>30</sup> At the same time, business leaders and newspaper editorials were identifying other factors – particularly government regulations – as job killers. In 1962, for example, the *New York Times* reported that Ralph C. Gross, executive vice president of Commerce and Industry Association of a New York, criticized a city commission's recommendation of establishing a \$1.25 minimum hourly wage as "incredible and shocking" and a "job-killing law." (A majority of the city's citizen commission supported the minimum wage.)<sup>31</sup> In 1965, a *New York Times* editorial claimed that a bill to increase New York State's minimum wage would "destroy thousands of jobs. This job-killing effect undoubtedly would have been pronounced on work opportunities for youngsters... It would also bear heavily on Negroes and Puerto Ricans."<sup>32</sup>

In most stories, newspapers identified the job killer as a policy or a phenomenon (like trade or technology), but occasionally it was a person, almost always a Democratic politician. In

1972, for example, Sen. Lowell Weicker (R-Conn.) called George McGovern, that year's Democratic presidential nominee, "George, the job-killer." Weicker cited McGovern's National Health Insurance plan, which he said would affect the jobs of tens of thousands insurance workers in Connecticut, and McGovern's opposition to the Trident submarine and a NASA program, which would affect the state's ship-building and space industries.<sup>33</sup>

The increasing use of the phrase "job killer" by business groups, business-friendly elected officials, and business-friendly academics and think tanks should be seen in the context of a self-conscious effort by business groups and conservatives to change the nation's political debate that began in the 1970s and accelerated in the 1990s. In the 1970s, conservatives sought to recover from the dramatic defeat they had suffered when Lyndon Johnson won a landslide victory over Republican Barry Goldwater of Arizona, the movement's standard-bearer, in the 1964 presidential elections. They also worried about the upsurge of consumer and environmental activism, and the declining trust in business reflected in public opinion polls.

In August 1971, Lewis Powell, a prominent attorney and member of the boards of eleven corporations (who later that year would be appointed to the Supreme Court by Richard Nixon), wrote an influential memo to the US Chamber of Commerce, "Attack on the American Free Enterprise System," calling on the business community to go on the attack against threats to the free enterprise system. He warned of a growing threat to the business establishment posed by consumer advocates, environmentalists, labor unions, and other voices and of the declining public support for business as reflected in opinion surveys. He particularly pointed to the growing liberalism on college campuses, in the media, and in the courts, which had become increasingly receptive to class-action lawsuits against big corporations. Powell argued that the American capitalist system was under attack. The changing mood, he warned, could ultimately threaten business's ability to operate freely and to generate adequate profits to survive. .<sup>34</sup>

In its October 12, 1974 issue, *Business Week* argued that business groups needed to persuade the American people that a healthy economy required a significant increase in business profits and less influence among consumers and unions. "It will be a hard pill for many Americans to swallow – the idea of doing with less so big business can have more," the magazine wrote. "Nothing that this nation or any other nation has done in modern history compares in difficulty with the selling job that must now be done to make people accept the new reality."<sup>35</sup>

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other business organizations like the National Association of Manufacturers and the National Federation of Independent Business took this advice to heart. They coordinated and ramped up their lobbying efforts. They began funding a network of organizations designed to shift public attitudes and beliefs over the course of years and decades. In 1972, the CEOs of General Electric and Alcoa founded the Business Roundtable, a lobby group made up of the heads of the nation's 200 largest corporations. Inspired by the Powell memo, Joseph Coors, the conservative head of the

large brewery company, wrote a large check to establish a think tank called the Heritage Foundation to enlist academics and journalists to come up with conservative policy proposals. The memo inspired the creation of other conservative policy and lobby groups such as the American Enterprise Institute, the Manhattan Institute, the Cato Institute, Citizens for a Sound Economy, Accuracy in Academia, and other opinion-shaping institutions. In 1973, the California Chamber of Commerce launched a conservative nonprofit law firm, the Pacific Legal Foundation, the first of about a dozen conservative litigation groups to battle environmental and business regulations.

Other organizations were founded to advocate a business and conservative agenda. In 1973, a conservative political operative, Paul Weyrich, started the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) to provide a forum for state legislatures to share ideas for laws against abortion and in favor of school prayer. Within a few years, however, big corporations—including Coors, Amway, IBM, Ford, Philip Morris, Exxon, Texaco, and Shell Oil—began donating funds to ALEC, and the group shifted its focus toward promoting state legislation to limit government regulation of business. William Simon, former treasury secretary under Nixon, became head of the John M. Olin Foundation and began providing universities with donations to hire conservative faculty members and to fund conservative student organizations. Other corporate-funded foundations, such as the Scaife, Koch, Smith Richardson, and Bradley Foundations, soon followed Olin's example.

These long-term investments paid off. They laid the groundwork for the election in 1980 of Ronald Reagan, who had a “hands-off business” philosophy. With Reagan's election, conservatives began to displace moderates to gain control of the Republican Party, a trend that has accelerated in recent years. The new network of conservative organizations, including think tanks, lobbyists, and media, were on the ascendancy for decades to come.<sup>36</sup>

In this context, the phrase “job killer” evolved into a significantly powerful allegation for conservatives in their goal to shrink the federal government, deregulate the economy, and dismantle social programs, yet still appear to be on the side of average Americans concerned about jobs. The conservative message is that conservative policies promote jobs while liberal policies kill them.<sup>37</sup>

“Government is not a solution to our problem,” Reagan said in his first inaugural address in 1981. “Government is the problem.”<sup>38</sup> The political sentiment embraced by Reagan was that too many government regulations, too much taxation, and too many government employees stifled personal freedom and economic growth. The attack on “big government” and the notion of “getting the government off our backs,” once viewed as extreme conservative ideas, moved from the margins to the mainstream.

As political scientist Charles Noble explains, “the most important component of the business ideological offensive was its claim that society's interest in economic growth and capital investment was equal to, if not prior to, its interest in protection.”<sup>39</sup> In other words, they worked to convince Americans that economic growth—measured as “jobs”—should be

the paramount concern in any policy battle. By the 1980s, Noble added, the Reagan administration “took up the cause and made deregulation—by then a household word—a centerpiece of its conservative revolution.”<sup>40</sup>

During his first campaign for president in 1992, Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton observed that “the Reagan-Bush years have exalted private gain over public obligation, special interests over the common good, wealth and fame over work and family. The 1980s ushered in a Gilded Age of greed and selfishness, of irresponsibility and excess, and of neglect.” Clinton initially had bold plans to expand the New Deal and Great Society legacies. These hopes were quickly dashed. Early in the Clinton administration, the Republicans (led by minority leader Senator Bob Dole) and the Democratic majority in Congress thwarted the president’s efforts to enact a public investment plan to stimulate jobs, universal health insurance, and even a child-immunization program. After the November 1994 elections put a Republican majority in Congress, any significant progress on such matters was politically impossible. After a few years as president, Clinton proclaimed, echoing Reagan, that “the era of big government is over,” which he carried out by slashing welfare benefits for poor children.

The business-sponsored attack on government reached a crescendo during the eight-year administration of George W. Bush, who took office in 2001. During the Bush years, business lobby groups used their political influence to persuade Congress to further weaken regulations (already weakened during the Clinton years) designed to prevent banks from taking on too much risk or engaging in predatory practices. The conservative movement—led by corporate-backed think tanks, conservative media like Fox News, the Republican Party, and later the Tea Party, which emerged soon after Barack Obama’s election—effectively led an attack on government initiatives to address climate change, toxic air emissions, the financial crisis, and workplace hazards.

During the 28-year period we examined, the U.S. experienced the deindustrialization of the national economy, the acceleration of job outsourcing to other countries, the decline of labor union membership and political influence, attempts to dismantle environmental laws, campaigns for health care reform, rollbacks of taxes on the wealthy, and an unprecedented growth in wage and wealth inequality.<sup>41</sup>

As our study found, use of “job killer” surged during the Clinton administration and again – much more dramatically – during the Obama administration. This is a testament to the new focus on language to frame the debate by House Republican leader (and later Speaker of the House) Newt Gingrich and political consultant Frank Luntz, who was hired by the Republican National Committee to hone its communications capacity for the party’s “Contract with America” political strategy.

“The change in Republican language began with Newt Gingrich in 1994,” Luntz told PBS, although our findings chart the partisan deployment of “job killer” a year earlier.<sup>42</sup> Even before the “Contract with America,” Gingrich was focused on using words that demonized

opponents and their policies.<sup>43</sup> Gingrich was working on a communication framing strategy at least as early as 1990, when as House Republican Whip and chairman of GOPAC (a conservative political action group) he commissioned market research to formulate a list of “Optimistic Positive Governing Words” that could be used favorably for Republicans and a list of “Contrasting Words” to be used to undermine Democrats and their policies.<sup>44</sup> The findings were distributed to Republican candidates and politicians across the country in a memo titled “Language: A Key Mechanism of Control.” Although the memo didn’t contain the precise phrase “job killer,” the list of 64 “contrasting words” were of the same ilk, including:

- destroy
- impose
- liberal
- mandate
- welfare
- taxes
- bureaucracy
- unionized
- anti-(issue): flag, family, child, jobs

The memo instructed Republicans to “Apply these to the opponent, their record, proposals and their party.”

## **The Study**

We looked at four leading national news organizations – the Associated Press, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Washington Post* – that have full text archives for the entire 28-year period of study. (Having searchable full archives dating back to 1984 enabled us to analyze the use of the “job killer” term over time.)

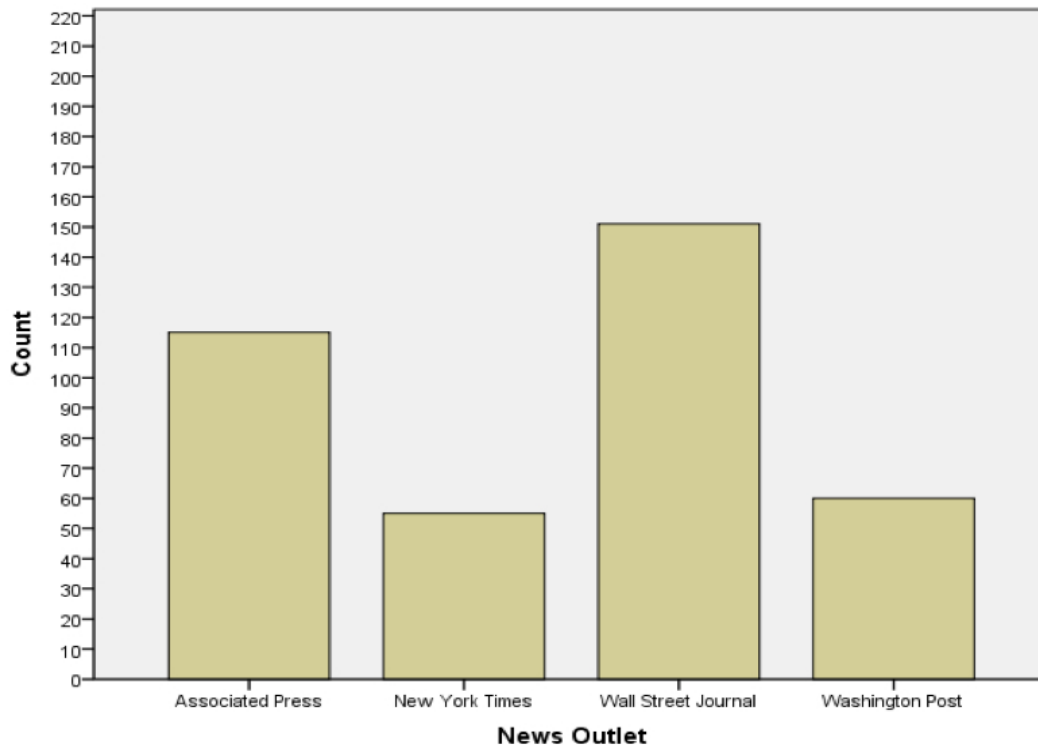
The Associated Press is a news wire organization that syndicates stories to thousands of other news sources. As a result of this ripple effect, AP stories reach more readers (and broadcast viewers and listeners) in more locations than any other news organization. According to the AP, “more than half the world’s population may read, hear or see news from The Associated Press.” AP’s national news stories are sent to the organization’s 1,700 newspaper members in the U.S.<sup>45</sup>

The *New York Times* is the nation’s most prestigious and influential newspaper. It maintained one of the highest national circulations during the period. The *Wall Street Journal* is the nation’s leading business newspaper, and has long had the largest national newspaper circulation. The *Washington Post* emerged from the 1970s as the leading newspaper in the nation’s capital, and has one of the strongest political reporting staffs over the period in review, as well as a large circulation.<sup>46</sup>

From 1984 to 2011, there were 381 stories by the four news organizations that contained

the phrase “job killer” and its variations, such as “kill jobs.”<sup>47</sup> AP had 115 stories, the *New York Times* 55 stories, the *Wall Street Journal* 151 stories, and the *Washington Post* 60 stories.

**Figure 1: Job Killer Stories Frequency by Four Major News Organizations**



### Key Findings

#### A. Increasing use of “job killer” phrase since early 1990s

The data reveal that use of the phrase “job killer” has increased dramatically in recent years. Its appearance is not random. Since 1984, the appearance of the phrase “job killer” in the mainstream media increases during election seasons and during Democratic administrations. The candidacy of Barack Obama triggered a dramatic increase in use of the term beginning in 2008. Business and Republican leaders consistently targeted Obama administration’s proposals and policies as job killers. (See Figure 2.) In charting the history of the use of the term “job killer” during the Reagan, Bush, Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations, one can see that the term was barely on the radar screen until Clinton took office, virtually disappeared during the eight years of the George W. Bush presidency, and skyrocketed in use once Obama was elected. The number of stories with the phrase “job killer” increased by 1,156% between the first three years of the George W. Bush administration and the first three years of the Obama administration.

Just 10 “job killer” stories (2.6% of our 28-year period of study) appear from 1984-1991, during Ronald Reagan’s second term and George H.W. Bush’s administration. (There were no uses of the term in 1984-86.) Beginning abruptly in 1993, the trend of “job killer” stories begins in earnest, resulting in 27.8% (106) of stories using the “job killer” term in our study appearing during the eight years of the Clinton administration (1993-2000). During the Clinton presidency, Republican leaders in the House of Representatives, including Newt Gingrich, John Kasich, Dick Armey, Rick Lazio, and Tom DeLay, and business figures like Charles DiBona, then-president of the American Petroleum Institute, led the “job killer” assault on the Clinton administration.

During the following eight years of the George W. Bush administration (2001-2008), the term appeared just 64 times, 16.8% of the 28-year study period. In contrast, during the first three years of Obama’s administration (2009-2011), sources deployed the “job killer” charge with a vengeance, accounting for 52.8% (201 stories) of all mentions in the four news organizations under study. Similar to our findings concerning the Clinton Administration, top House Republicans like Eric Cantor and John Boehner, Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, Business Roundtable president (and former Republican Michigan governor) John Engler, and former Speaker Newt Gingrich (by then a business consultant and media pundit) were leading sources of “job killer” charges against Obama.

**Figure 2: “Job Killer” Stories Published in Four News Organizations, 1984-2011**

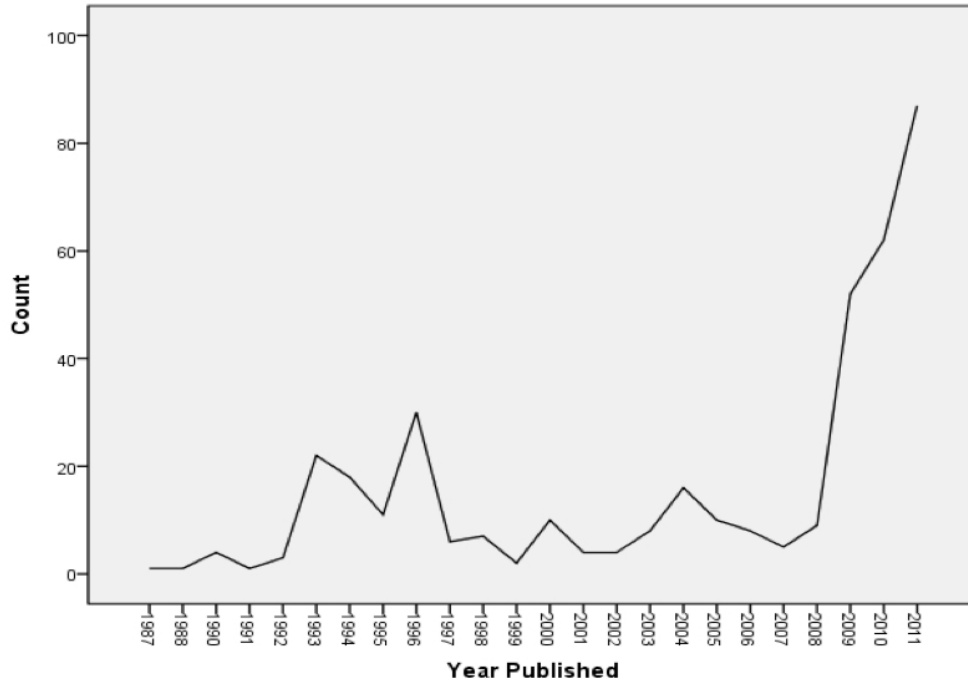


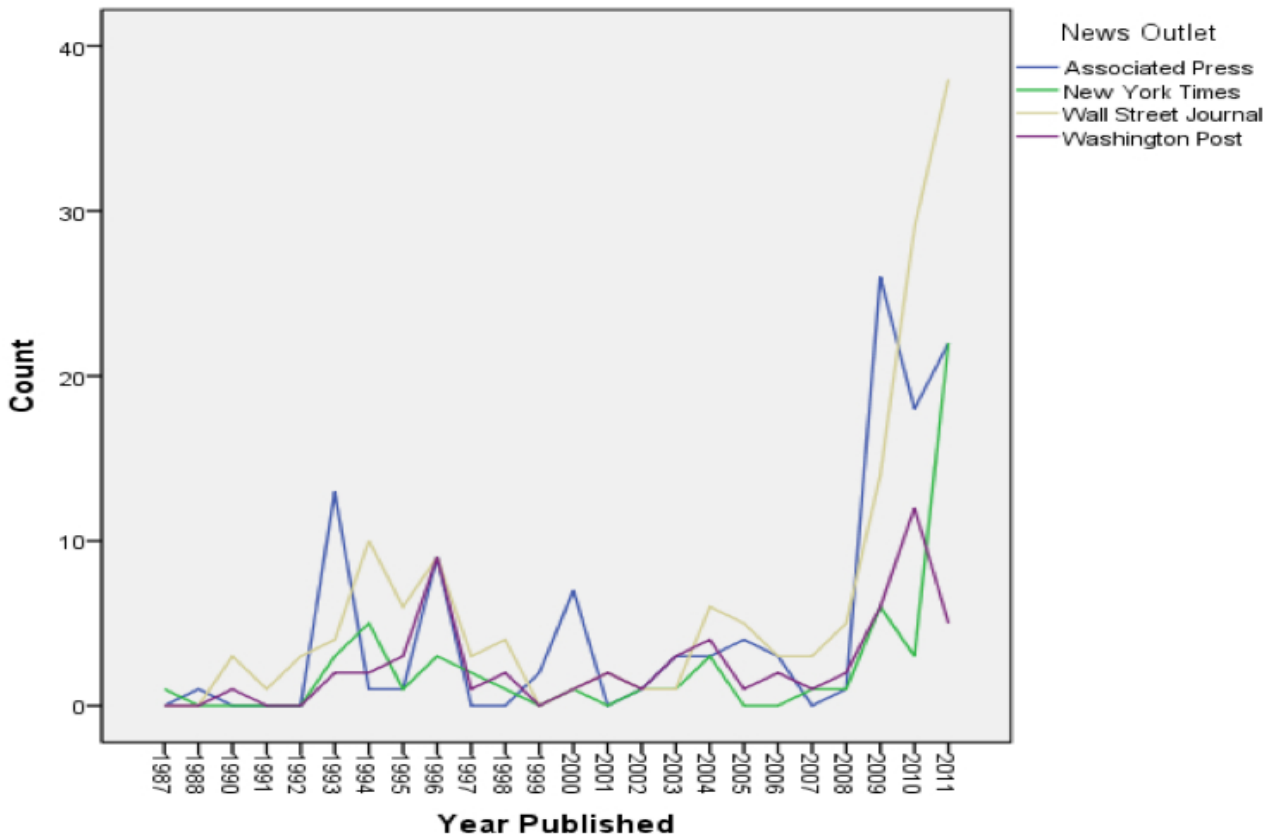
Figure 2 clearly links the frequency of the deployment of the “job killer” term to periods when Democrats controlled the White House. Moreover, each of the four news



organizations under study—the Associated Press, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Washington Post*— showed a similar pattern.<sup>48</sup>

As Figure 3 (below) illustrates, all four of the news organizations climbed to new heights in “job killer” stories beginning in 2008, with the Obama candidacy and even more so after he took office. This reflected the reality that these news organizations’ key sources were deploying the term more frequently. Interestingly, while frequencies of “job killer” stories for the AP and the *New York Times* subsided somewhat during Obama’s first three years, the trajectory of the *Wall Street Journal*’s frequencies climbed consistently and sharply from 2008 to 2011. The difference is that the *Wall Street Journal* had a high number of stories in which the source of the “job killer” was the news organization itself; that is, the *Wall Street Journal*’s editorials, columns and reports deployed “job killer” as conventional wisdom, with no attribution. *The Wall Street Journal* generated sourceless “job killer” allegations in 45 stories (about 30% of its 151 total stories), the *New York Times* did so in 8 stories (14.5% of its 55 stories), the *Washington Post* 5 times (about 8% of its 60 stories), and the AP in 5 stories (about 4% of its 115 stories). The *Journal*’s editorial allegations of “job killer” policies are consistent with other studies identifying the *Journal* as a key component of the conservative media echo chamber.<sup>49</sup>

**Figure 3: “Job Killer” Stories Published, by News Organization, 1984-2011**

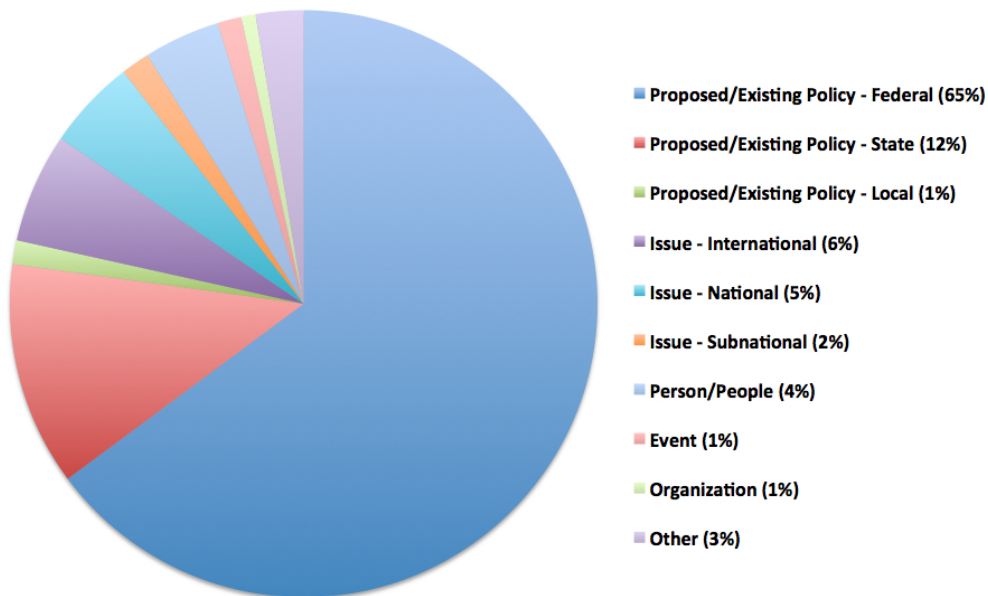


## B. “Job killer” deployed in battles over federal and state policies

As Figure 4 indicates, the phrase “job killer” was used most often – in 65% of the 381 stories examined – to criticize proposed federal policies. For example, in February 2009, then-House Republican Leader John Boehner alleged that President Obama’s proposed federal budget was a “job killer, plain and simple,” as reported in an AP story.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, a front-page *Washington Post* story on November 5, 2009 noted that “critics of the [Democrats’] climate-change legislation before Congress say it would be a job-killer.”<sup>51</sup> The story failed to name who these opponents were or what evidence, if any, they provided to back up their “job killer” accusation. Both stories, in other words, focused on political scorekeeping resulting from the allegation rather than treating the charge as something to be fact-checked in the larger narrative of a proposed policy. Readers were not given any information to help them understand whether the charge of “job-killer” was accurate, or even whether the proponents of the policy had rebuttals to the charge made by the opponents.

In the 28-year period analyzed, rarely has “job killer” been lobbed at an individual (4% of the stories), an organization (1%), or an event (1%). Even international, national, and subnational issues—such as a strong Chinese yuan, credit checks on job applicants, or liquor license delays for restaurants—were infrequent targets as “job killers.” Rather, more than three-quarters (78%) of the “job killer” charges were targeted at proposed or existing government policies at the local, state, and federal levels.

**Figure 4: Job Killer Stories by Target of Allegation**



At the state level, California has been a hotbed of “job killer” allegations. Since 2003, the California Chamber of Commerce has annually released a list of “job killer” bills, along with

a continuous campaign of media communications and lobbying against those bills.<sup>52</sup> Almost all of these bills are proposals to regulate business, increase taxes, improve worker safety, defend workers' rights, or protect consumers and the environment.

The news media often simply repeat the Chamber's own label of these proposed bills as "job killers" without providing any scrutiny or analysis. For example, in an Aug. 28, 2011 story on a bill introduced to ban the dispensing of food in polystyrene containers in California, the Associated Press wrote "The California Chamber of Commerce has labeled the measure as one of its 'job-killer bills,' saying it threatens manufacturing jobs while increasing costs for restaurants that will have to spend more on alternative containers." The story had only the anecdotal evidence of one restaurant owner who estimated that biodegradable containers would cost more, and despite the story's own mention of "more than 50 California cities and counties" and other places across the nation with similar bans, it failed to check the Chamber's allegations against the experiences of those municipalities.<sup>53</sup>

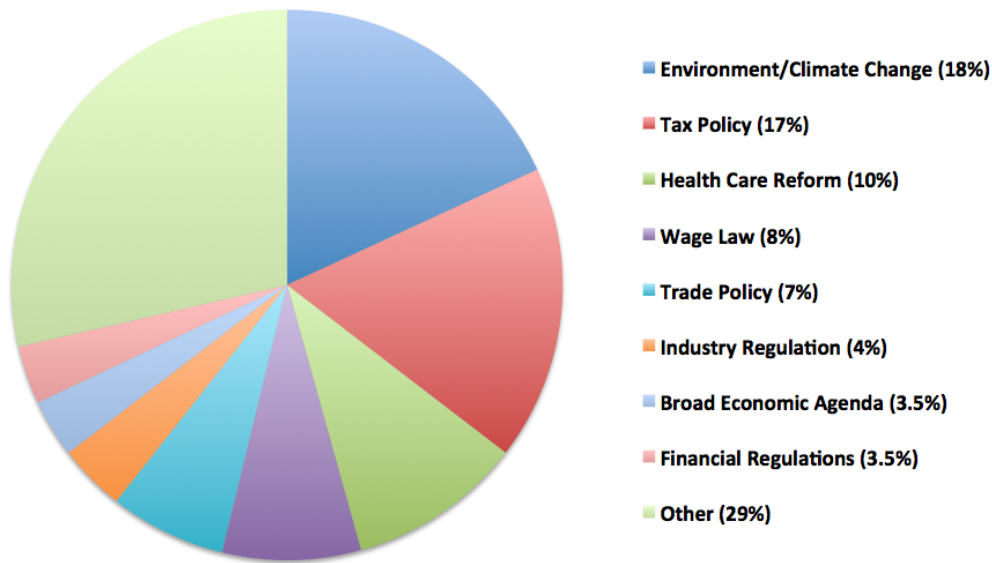
### **C. "Job killer" chiefly targets Democratic/liberal policies**

During the period under study, the vast majority of "job killer" accusations were published during Democratic presidential administrations and targeted at Democratic presidents and their policies.<sup>54</sup> Almost all of the job-killer allegations were targeted at policies supported by Democratic politicians and liberal organizations, such as unions, environmental groups, and consumer advocates. (The main sources of those allegations are noted below.) As Figure 5 illustrates, more than half (53%) of the media's "job killer" reports dealt with four issues, all proposed federal (and sometimes state) policies:

- Environment/Climate Change (18%)
- Tax policy (17%)
- Health Care Reform (10%)
- Wage Law (8%)

Trade policy (7%), general industry regulation (3.9%), financial regulations (3.5%), and broadly defined economic policy agendas (3.5%) were the next most important issues identified in news reports as job killers. These eight issues accounted for 71% of the issues identified as job killers from 1984 to 2011.<sup>55</sup>

**Figure 5: Issues Identified as “Job Killers” in News Stories**



A few of the 381 news stories cited multiple issues as “job killers.” (For those stories, we counted the most important or first-cited issue in the data above.) Twenty-four of the stories (6%) had a second issue, six stories (1.5%) cited three issues, two stories (0.5%) cited four issues, and one story (0.2%) cited five job killer issues. Of these, health care, the environment/climate change, tax policy, energy policy, and welfare/unemployment insurance, were cited as an additional issue in more than one instance.

**D. Republicans and business organizations are the main sources of “job killer” allegation**

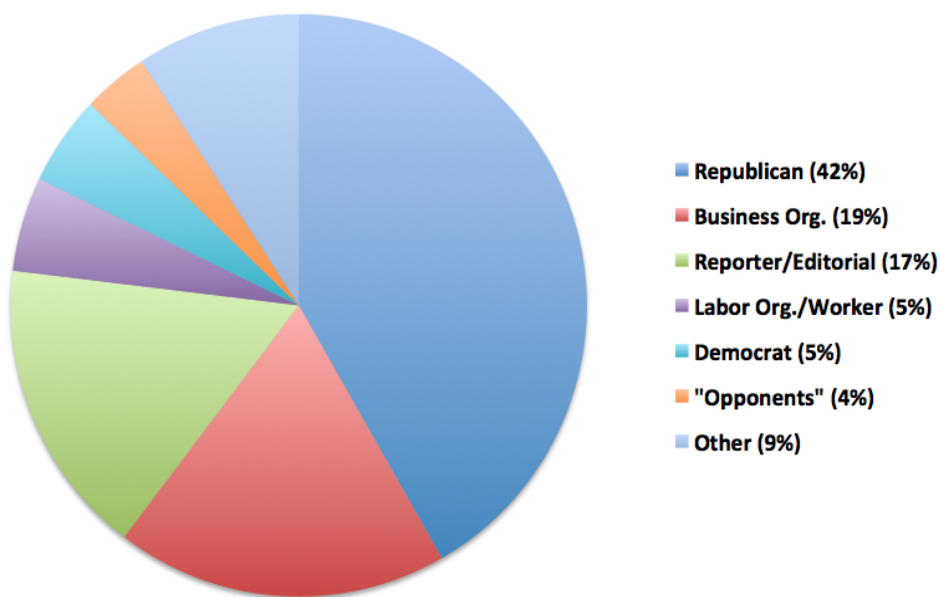
Figure 5 illustrates that, as reported by news organizations, the source for the phrase “job killer” is mostly Republicans (42%) and business organizations (19%). Together, they were responsible for 61% of the “job killer” charges reported by the four news organizations under study (see Figure 6, below).

In 17% of the stories, news organizations used the phrase in articles and editorials without attributing the phrase to a source. In other words, the news organization used the “job killer” allegation as conventional wisdom, with no proof or even attribution. Given the history of the use of “job killer” in the past three decades to disparage policies deemed anti-business, it isn’t surprising that business spokespersons and organizations and Republicans are the leading sources for “job killer” charges. But when news organizations utilize the “job killer” charge without attributing it to any source at all – which accounts for 17% of all stories under examination – they are effectively adopting the stance of business groups and Republicans.

Labor union representatives or workers accounted for 5% of the “job killer” references and Democrats accounted for another 5% of the charges. Unidentified “opponents” of policies or issues were responsible for about 4% of the mentions, and “other” sources (such as academics, advocacy organizations, citizens, and religious organizations) for another 9%.

**Figure 6: Sources of “Job Killer” Allegations in News Stories**

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**E. News organizations fail to seek evidence for “job killer” allegations**

Earlier in this report, we noted that the “job killer” was embedded in a Republican-sponsored House bill (H.R. 2) in 2011 called the “Repealing the Job-Killing Health Care Law Act.” In this case, at least one journalism organization, the *Tampa Bay Times*’ Pulitzer Prize-winning PolitiFact.com, fact-checked the allegation in the bill’s name.<sup>56</sup> The writers concluded that the Republican charges about “job-killing” misrepresented an analysis of the health care reform law by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office report:

Republicans have used the "job-killing" claim hundreds of times -- so often that they used the phrase in the name of the bill. It implies that job losses will be one of the most significant effects of the law. But they have flimsy evidence to back it up.

The phrase suggests a massive decline in employment, but the data doesn't support that. The Republican evidence is extrapolated from a report that was talking about a reduction in the labor supply rather than the loss of jobs, or based on measures that weren't included in the final health care law. We rate the statement False.<sup>57</sup>

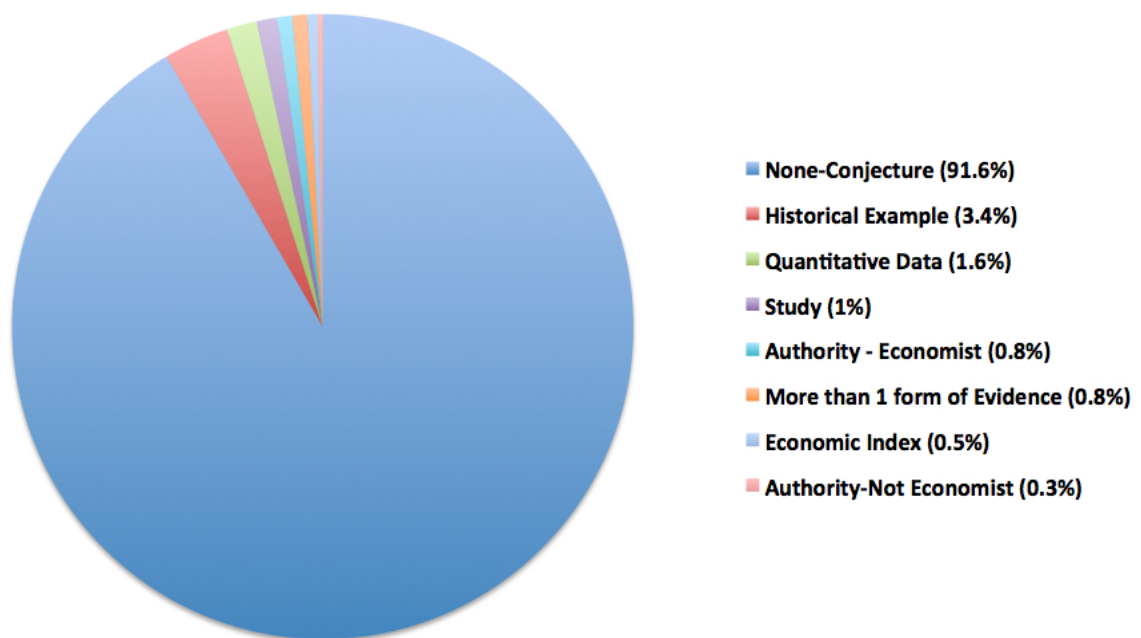
Our analysis confirms PolitiFact’s study. In 91.6% (349 of 381) news reports analyzed, news organizations provided no evidence to support the "job killer" claim. (See Figure 7.) Even in the 8.4% (32 of 381) of the stories in which some evidence was supplied, it’s not clear whether or not journalists investigated the veracity of the evidence cited.

Similarly, in only 6.8% (26) of the 381 stories did reporters provide an alternative claim. In most issues, there are at least two sides to a story. In the case of “job killer” allegations,

news organizations typically report only one side. Even in the stories that carried alternative claims – in other words, that reported that some organization or expert challenged the “job killer” allegation – reporters provided evidence to back up challenges to the “job killer” claim in only 8 stories. Thus, in 18 of the 26 alternative claim cases, there was just a competing claim with no supporting evidence.

The net result of presenting the allegations without evidence is a weak “journalism of assertion,” rather than a robust “journalism of verification,” to use the terms of veteran journalists Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel in their book *The Elements of Journalism*.<sup>58</sup>

**Figure 7: Evidence Supporting “Job Killer” Claim in News Stories**



Our data reveal that in 93.7% of the cases, the “job killer” claim had no precise qualifier or estimate of the number of jobs being killed. In 1.0% of the cases, it was “thousands” of jobs. In 0.3% of the cases, it was “millions.” In only 5% of the cases were the allegations linked to a specified or estimated number of jobs lost, created, or saved.

Most typical was the assertion of “job killer” without any evidence to quantify. For example, in regard to a 2011 law that limited public employee collective bargaining rights in the state, a spokesperson for Republican Gov. John Kasich said “It is a tool that will enable localities to not have to raise taxes and kill more jobs.”<sup>59</sup> Rare was the story that could accurately quantify actual jobs killed. An Associated Press story on March 6, 2009, called the “Recession as Job Killer,” cited U.S. Department of Labor data that counted “4.4 million: Net job cuts since recession began in December 2007.”<sup>60</sup>

The news media's chronic lack of fact-checking has only encouraged ramped up use of the "job killer" allegation as a political strategy against the Democrats in recent years. For example, in 2010, Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell charged that *everything* the Democrats proposed was a job killer: "Virtually every bill they [Democrats] pass adds more burdens on the very people we need to get us out of the recession and create jobs. If a bill doesn't kill jobs or make it harder to create them, they're not interested."<sup>61</sup>

Newt Gingrich, who started the rhetorical attack with his political memo in the early 1990s, similarly revealed how Republicans should use the "job killer" concept to undermine Democrats' ideas. He told the *Washington Post* in 2010: "To win this fall, win the jobs issue. Job killers will be defeated. Job creators will be elected. When the choice is clear, the outcome will be decisive."<sup>62</sup>

How would the public know who are job killers and job creators? The Associated Press reported the Republican Party's strategy in 2010:

Republican operatives believe the complexity of the [financial industry reform] bill gives them an advantage.

"This bill, in the minds of most Americans, is just a big amoeba," said John Feehery, a Washington-based GOP strategist. "Because this bill is so complicated, it makes it easier for Republicans to oppose it, and by opposing it, call it a job killer."<sup>63</sup>

Even when Republican officials openly admit to cynically deploying charges of job-killer, it did not compel more journalistic scrutiny. In fact, the year 2011 was the biggest year yet for "job killer" allegations.

With no journalistic fact-checking, the job killer meme has become political propaganda that can go through the entire news cycle unscathed, and then become even more powerful propaganda as the original allegations get re-circulated by political sources as credible "news."

For example, House Speaker John Boehner utilized this strategy in 2011. In an interview with NBC News on Jan. 6, 2011, he called health care reform "the biggest job killer we have in America today." (NBC news anchor Brian Williams ignored Boehner's "job killer" pronouncement about health care, even as he asked Boehner to defend two other allegations he had made.) The next day, Boehner's political blog posted the NBC video with the story headline "On NBC Nightly News, Speaker Boehner Calls 'Obamacare...the biggest job killer we have in America today'." Thus, Boehner's political point emerged intact, with the extra luster of being featured on the national platform of the leading network television newscast.<sup>64</sup>

Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the House and recent Republican presidential candidate, was a pioneer in using the "job killer" allegations as part of a political strategy. First, he circulated "job killer" allegations about Obama's tax plan on April 13, 2011. The story got

picked up by the Associated Press, which reported Gingrich said “Obama's new proposal to couple spending cuts with tax hikes on the wealthy was ‘a job-killing big-government defending avoidance of responsibility.’” The AP story did not question or investigate the veracity of Gingrich’s claims.<sup>65</sup> Then, Gingrich used AP story on his own campaign web site under the “News” menu, filed the story under the heading “AP: Gingrich calls Obama’s tax plan a job-killer.”<sup>66</sup> Gingrich’s unsubstantiated claim now seemed like it must be true, since it was printed as “news.”

Thus, the meme continues to spin through the political discourse.

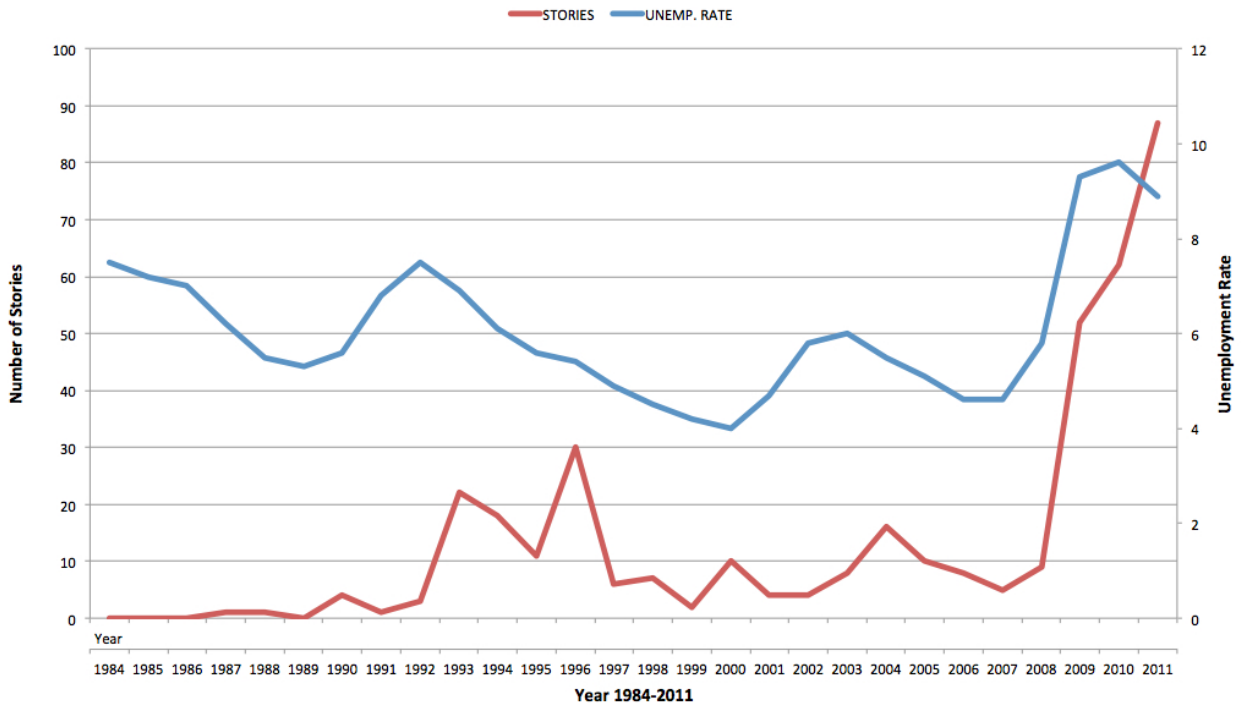
#### **F. No correlation between the frequency of the phrase “job killer” and unemployment rate**

When Americans are suffering from a high unemployment rate, it is understandable that they might be wary of proposals from politicians to strengthen regulations on business if they believe that doing so will prolong or worsen the economic hard times. Thus, one might expect the use of the phrase “job killer” to increase during periods of high unemployment. This hypothesis turned out to be wrong, as Figure 8 reveals.<sup>67</sup> When unemployment was high in the mid-1980s and early 1990s, allegations of “job killers” were minimal. When the unemployment slid in the mid-1990s, allegations of “job killers” had two significant peaks. As the unemployment rate began to rise in 2000, allegations of “job killers” fell. In 2008, allegations of “job killers” rose faster than the unemployment rate, and continued to increase even as the unemployment rate began to decline.

This data suggests that “job killer” allegations correspond much more closely with political cycles. Allegations go up during Democratic administrations, and down during Republican administrations (except in years of presidential campaigns). Given that Republicans and business organizations were the leading sources of “job killer” allegations, this political explanation makes sense.



**Figure 8: Rates of “Job Killer” Stories and Unemployment, 1984-2011**



**G. The ripple effect of a single unverified “job killer” allegation**

Although our sample looks at just four leading news organizations, in the instance of “job killer” allegations, a single unverified statement can reverberate thousands of times through the news media. For example, a July 22, 2010 Associated Press story by Matthew Daly reported on the failure of the Senate to pass Obama’s energy bill that featured a “cap and trade” plan to reduce carbon emissions. The story’s fifth paragraph stated:

Republicans slammed the bill as a "national energy tax" and jobs killer, arguing that the costs would be passed on to consumers in the form of higher electricity bills and fuel costs that would lead manufacturers to take their factories overseas.<sup>68</sup>

This was one of the stories that provided no evidence to support the conjecture that the energy plan would kill jobs (nor was there any evidence to quantify the number of jobs that would be allegedly harmed). Associated Press stories have great resonance, as the organization’s news feeds serves 1,700 newspapers and 5,000 television and radio news organizations in the U.S., and more internationally.<sup>69</sup>

The “job killer” allegation in the July 22, 2010 story was repeated almost verbatim in an AP news brief the same day

Republicans slammed the bill as a "national energy tax" and jobs killer, arguing that the costs would be passed on to consumers in the form of higher electricity bills and fuel costs that would lead more manufacturers to take their factories offshore.<sup>70</sup>

An AP story on July 23 (by the same author, Matthew Daly), updated activities in U.S. Senate, and included the same original Republican allegation about the bill being a "jobs killer."<sup>71</sup>

An AP story on July 27 by another writer, Julie Pace, about Obama and climate change legislation, again used the *same original sentence* from Matthew Daly, repeating the same unverified allegation.<sup>72</sup>

As the thousands of Associated Press clients used these stories, and then web sites and blogs (and the AP itself, again) excerpted or repeated them, the original unsubstantiated allegation was further multiplied. A Google search of the sentence's beginning phrase -- "Republicans slammed the bill as a 'national energy tax' and jobs killer" -- yielded at least 12,800 web publications.<sup>73</sup>

Such is the power of a single allegation of "job killer," published with no fact checking.

## Conclusion

Over time, the untested allegations can gain credibility just by having their claims regularly repeated. As Trudy Lieberman has noted in her study of the conservative news media, repetition creates a truth of its own: "If the public hears the same message multiple times, soon people will believe its veracity."<sup>74</sup>

Partisan allegations are to be expected in political discourse. But, a press that fails to fact-check partisan allegations does a great disservice to citizens seeking to understand what candidates and elected officials are saying about public policy alternatives.

The "routine" nature of harsh political rhetoric and allegations eventually exhausts political journalists, argues writer George Packer. "Certain forms of deterioration—like writers using "impact" as a verb, or basketball coaches screaming about every foul—become acceptable by attrition, because critics lose the energy to call them out. Eventually, people even stop remembering that they're wrong."<sup>75</sup>

With little or no fact checking of "job killer" allegations, Americans have no way to know if there is any evidence for these claims or whether they are simply a cynical political ploy used to discredit opponents' policy ideas.

Since the 1990s, and particularly since 2008, "job killer" has been an increasingly frequent allegation hurled by Republican and business sources at Democrats and liberal policies. In recent years, the Internet has magnified the impact of such allegations (which are unverified in 91.6% of the cases), as they experience a "ripple effect" through the media environment. When news organizations publish and broadcast such allegations without

verification (sometimes making the allegations even in their own editorials and columns, we found), they ultimately contribute to the deterioration of honest political discourse in the United States.

In other words, in the vast majority of news stories, the Republican and business sources that utilize the “job killer” accusation do so with impunity, because journalists fail to verify the allegations or give readers a balanced view of the issue. Rather than treat “job killer” as a matter of serious and contentious debate among economists, politicians, interest groups, and others, news organizations primarily serve as transmission belts for those who oppose government regulation of business. As a result, there are rarely consequences in the public record for sources committing misrepresentations, exaggerations, or outright lies. The cavalier nature in which the “job killer” allegations are reported suggests that term is used loosely by those who oppose government regulations, and they can get away with it because news organizations fail to ask—or at least report – whether they have any evidence for the claims they make, and also fail to seek opposing views to counter the “job killer” claims.

Meanwhile, on Jan. 12, 2012, the Public Editor of the *New York Times* wrote a blog entry asking for “reader input on whether and when New York Times news reporters should challenge ‘facts’ that are asserted by newsmakers they write about.”<sup>76</sup> Given our findings of so many unverified claims circulating in political discourse, we would answer the *Times* and all other news organizations with “yes, they should,” and “start immediately.”<sup>77</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Funding for the data collection portion of this study came from the Public Welfare Foundation and the Ford Foundation. The authors would like to thank Occidental College students Briana Cartwright, Michael Sin, and Teresa Eilers for their help with coding the articles.

<sup>2</sup> Frank Luntz, “The Persuaders,” PBS, November 9, 2004, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/persuaders/interviews/luntz.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Carol Hymowitz, “What top executives would tell Bush if they visited the Oval Office,” *Wall Street Journal*, November 16, 2004, p. B1.

<sup>4</sup> Editorial, “How to derail financial reform,” *New York Times*, December 27, 2010, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Damian Paletta and Randall Smith, “U.S. news: Wall Street loves as small banks win – Democrats’ financial overhaul would restrain big firms’ profits and require them to hold more capital,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 16, 2010, p. A6.

<sup>6</sup> Henry C. Jackson and Henry Freking, “Tea party out to defeat 3 longtime GOP senators,” Associated Press, February 17, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Juliet Eilperin, EPA urged to delay tougher ozone rules,” *Washington Post*, July 20, 2011, p. A15.

<sup>8</sup> Hillary Chabot, “Mitt Romney blasts President Obama as a ‘job killer’,” *Boston Herald*, January 5, 2012, [http://news.bostonherald.com/news/us\\_politics/view/20220105romney\\_blasts\\_obama\\_as\\_a\\_job\\_killer/](http://news.bostonherald.com/news/us_politics/view/20220105romney_blasts_obama_as_a_job_killer/)

<sup>9</sup> Greg Giroux, “Romney Looks Beyond New Hampshire to Next Set of Primaries,” *Bloomberg Businessweek*, January 6, 2012, <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2012-01-06/romney-looks-beyond-new-hampshire-to-next-set-of-primaries.html#>

<sup>10</sup> At 12 midnight Eastern Time (ET on Jan. 8, 2012, we used Google Advanced Search to search the terms “Romney” and his precise “he’s a job killer” quote for the four days from Jan. 5 to Jan. 8, 2012. The search yielded “about 26,700 results,” according to Google. At 2:30 ET on Jan. 14, 2012, we again searched with the same terms in quotations and the same time frame, yielding “about 111,000 results.”

<sup>11</sup> Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, The agenda-setting function of mass media, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36, 1972, 176-187.

<sup>12</sup> See T. Michael Maher, "Framing: An Emerging Paradigm or a Phase of Agenda Setting?" In Stephen D. Reese, Oscar H. Gandy, and August E. Grant, *Framing Public Life* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001) 83-94. Also see Joseph N. Cappella and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, "News Frames, Political Cynicism, and Media Cynicism," *The Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 546 (1), 71-84 (1996).

<sup>13</sup> Frank Luntz, "The Persuaders," PBS, November 9, 2004, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/persuaders/interviews/luntz.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman, "Dynamic Public Opinion: Framing Effects Over Time," September 9, 2008, <http://www.mendeley.com/research/dynamic-public-opinion-framing-effects-time/>

<sup>15</sup> Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman, "A Theory of Framing and Opinion Formation in Competitive Elite Environments," *Journal of Communication* 57 (2007) 99-118.

<sup>16</sup> Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007), 79.

<sup>18</sup> Valid search terms included *job killer*, *kill jobs* (including phrases with intervening descriptors, such as *kill many jobs* or *kill more jobs*, and *kill manufacturing jobs*).

<sup>19</sup> Institute for Policy Integrity, "The Regulatory Red Herring: The Role of Job Impact Analyses in Environmental Policy Debates," April 2012, New York University School of Law, [http://policyintegrity.org/files/publications/Regulatory\\_Red\\_Herring.pdf](http://policyintegrity.org/files/publications/Regulatory_Red_Herring.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> Job Creators Alliance, "Communications Team/Media Placement," <http://jobcreatorsalliance.org/About.aspx> (accessed January 1, 2012).

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

<sup>22</sup> J. Oakwood, "Description of an efficient job-killer," *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 1922, p. III43.

<sup>23</sup> Medicus Rusticus, "The job killers." *Los Angeles Times*, August 30, 1931, p. A6.

<sup>24</sup> "Moley Talks on Recover: Former Brain Truster Gives Five-Point Plan for Prosperity," *Los Angeles Times*, April 27, 1938, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> For example, see "The New Tax Act," *Los Angeles Times*, May 13, 1938, p. A4.

<sup>26</sup> Moley was also responsible for FDR's 'Forgotten Man' term, and he also wrote his first inaugural address, which contained the famous line: "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself." See Amity Shlaes, *The forgotten man: A new history of the Great Depression* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> "A New Declaration," *Los Angeles Times*, July 4, 1938, p. A4.

<sup>28</sup> Mark Sullivan, "Commentator Hails Wallace As Writer But Asks If Secretary Appreciates Business Effect Of Reduction Programs," July 23, 1938, *The Washington Post*, p. X7.

<sup>29</sup> J. S. Bealle, "Dixie needs no cotton picker," *Forum and Century*, 97(4), 1937: 224-229.

<sup>30</sup> "Rail Strike Hits 35,000 in Chicago," *Los Angeles Times*, August 31, 1962, p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> "\$1.25 Wage Scored by Business Leader," *New York Times*, August 10, 1962, p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> "Inescapable Veto," *New York Times*, April 19, 1965, p. 28.

<sup>33</sup> "Weicker Scores McGovern," *New York Times*, September 18, 1972, p. 21. Also see "Weicker Pins Job-Killer Label on McGovern," *The Hour* (Norwalk, Conn.), September 18, 1972, p. 2

<sup>34</sup> The Powell Memo, ReclaimDemocracy.org, April 3, 2004, [http://reclaimdemocracy.org/corporate\\_accountability/powell\\_memo\\_lewis.html](http://reclaimdemocracy.org/corporate_accountability/powell_memo_lewis.html). Also see Kevin Baker, "The Outsourced Party," *New York Times*, March 24, 2012, <http://campaignstops.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/24/the-outsourced-party/>

<sup>35</sup> "The Debt Economy," *Business Week*, October 12, 1974.

<sup>36</sup> David Brock, *The Republican Noise Machine* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2004).

<sup>37</sup> See Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2010).

<sup>38</sup> Ronald Reagan, "C-SPAN: President Reagan 1981 Inaugural Address," January 20, 1981, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpPt7xGx4Xo>.

<sup>39</sup> Charles Noble, *Liberalism at Work: The Rise and Fall of OSHA* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986) 105.

<sup>40</sup> Noble, 154.

<sup>41</sup> On the increasing inequality in wealth and income over that period, see: Congressional Budget Office (2011, October). Trends in the Distribution of Household Income Between 1979 and 2007. Congressional Budget Office, <http://cbo.gov/ftpdocs/124xx/doc12485/10-25-HouseholdIncome.pdf>; Thomas Piketty and Emmanuel Saez (2003). Income Inequality in the United States, 1913–1998. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 118, no. 1 (February), pp. 1–39; Sylvia Allegretto (2011). *The State of Working America’s Wealth, 2011: Through volatility and turmoil, the gap widens*. Economic Policy Institute, March 23, Briefing Paper #292, [http://epi.3cdn.net/2a7ccb3e9e618f0bbc\\_3nm6idnax.pdf](http://epi.3cdn.net/2a7ccb3e9e618f0bbc_3nm6idnax.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> Frank Luntz, “The Persuaders,” PBS, November 9, 2004, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/persuaders/interviews/luntz.html>.

<sup>43</sup> Tim Murphy and David Corn, “Newt in His Own Words: 33 Years of Bomb-Throwing,” *Mother Jones*, April 6, 2011, <http://motherjones.com/politics/2011/04/newt-gingrich-greatest-rhetorical-hits>.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Oreskes, “Political Memo; For G.O.P. Arsenal, 133 Words to Fire,” *New York Times*, September 9, 1990, <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/09/09/us/political-memo-for-gop-arsenal-133-words-to-fire.html>. Also see FAIR, *Extra!* Update, “Language: A Key Mechanism of Control,” February 1995, <http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=1276>.

<sup>45</sup> Associated Press, FAQs, <http://www.ap.org/pages/about/faq.html#7> (accessed March 10, 2012).

<sup>46</sup> Because the focus of our study was longitudinal (i.e., to track the term “job killer” over time), we limited the study to these four major news organizations, which have available public archives for the 28-year period.

<sup>47</sup> After limiting our search to the news outlets below, we conducted a Lexis-Nexis search with the following terms: *job killer OR jobs killer OR job killers OR kill jobs OR kills jobs OR kill more jobs AND NOT top kill jobs AND NOT authority job kill! AND NOT kill you AND NOT job is killing AND NOT job killed AND NOT job of killing AND NOT jobs they are killing AND NOT (job w/5 killed)*. Most of these search terms were used for our search through ProQuest for relevant *Wall Street Journal* stories (the search engine is not as robust, so the last term could not be added). We limited our stories to uses of “job killer” by domestic (U.S.) sources, as our focus was on how the term is deployed in U.S. culture.

The data was gathered by five coders, each of whom were trained multiple times throughout the study in order to maximize intercoder reliability. Throughout the study, five reliability subsamples of 25 identical stories were given to each coder (without their knowledge that it was a control). This combined with retraining as necessary enabled us to achieve a level of agreement in excess of 80% throughout the study. Agreement is the most

important standard when dealing with categorical data. The categories themselves were produced inductively as the study went on. Every time any of the coders found something that did not fit in any current category, we discussed it and then added the new category to the codebook.

<sup>48</sup> The enormous rise in usage of the “job killer” term since 2008 is consistent with the conclusions of a similar study by the Institute for Policy Integrity at the New York University School of Law, which found “Between 2007 and 2011, use of the phrase ‘job-killing regulations’ in U.S. newspapers increased by 17,550%.” See Michael A. Livermore, “Use Of Phrase ‘Job Killing Regulations’ Increases 17,550% In Newspapers Since 2007,” ThinkProgress.org, April 24, 2012, <http://thinkprogress.org/climate/2012/04/24/469582/phrase-job-killing-regulations-increases-17000-in-newspapers-since-2007/>

<sup>49</sup> Jamieson and Cappella define an “echo chamber” as a “bounded, enclosed media space that has the potential to both magnify the messages delivered within it and insulate them from rebuttal.” It “creates a common frame of reference and positive feedback loops for those who listen to, read, and watch these media outlets.” See Jamieson, Kathleen Hall, and Joseph N. Cappella. *Echo Chamber: Rush Limbaugh and the Conservative Media Establishment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 76. Also see Dreier, P., and Martin, C.R. (2010). How ACORN Was Framed: Political Controversy and Media Agenda Setting. *Perspectives on Politics* 8 (3), 761-792.

<sup>50</sup> David Espo, “Obama budget gives Dems a roadmap, GOP a target,” Associated Press, February 27, 2009.

<sup>51</sup> Michael D. Shear and Paul Kane, “For parties, the soul-searching begins; ‘Do people think we’re tending to the things they care about?’” *Washington Post*, November 5, 2009, p. A01.

<sup>52</sup> CalChamber, “Job Killers,” <http://www.calchamber.com/governmentrelations/pages/jobkillers.aspx> (accessed January 3, 2012). Also see, Mitchel Benson, “The ‘Job Killer’ Scare: Can It Work Once More?” *Wall Street Journal*, July 2, 1997, p. C2.

<sup>53</sup> Sheila Kumar, “Calif. would be the first state to ban foam containers,” Associated Press, August 28, 2011.

<sup>54</sup> On rare occasions, however, labor unions leveled the phrase “job killer” at corporations for laying off workers or exporting jobs overseas. In 1996, for example, the Associated Press reported that the United Auto Workers viewed General Motors’ move to outsource production of auto parts to lower-wage suppliers as a “job killer.” (Actually, no labor source



was quoted saying those words; the AP reporter use the term to characterize the union's position: "The strike has focused primarily on outsourcing, the practice of buying parts from outside manufacturers to reduce labor and production costs. The union sees it as a job-killer, while GM says it needs that option to remain competitive.") [See James Hannah, "Experts say marathon GM talks indicate many differences," Associated Press, March 19, 1996.] Similarly, labor union sources sometimes tagged trade pacts (such as the North American Free Trade Agreement {NAFTA}, which passed Congress with bipartisan support in November 1993) as job killers. For example, in the month before NAFTA's passage, the Associate Press noted "Teamsters President Ron Carey said this week the administration efforts on behalf of the training program is an admission that NAFTA is a 'job killer.'" [See John D. McClain, "Reich says government won't spend all available retraining funds," Associated Press, October 21, 1993.]

<sup>55</sup> Issues cited as "job killers" in news stories and included in the "Other" category, in order of frequency, are: ballot issue (2.4%), outsourcing (2.4%), political slur [calling someone a job killer disconnected from any issue] (2.1%), energy policy [not related to climate change] (1.8%), management practices (1.6%), new technology (1.6%), pro-labor policy [not union issue or wage law] (1.3%), corporations (1.3%), financial industry (1.0%), recession (1.0%), immigration (1.0%), intellectual property rights (0.8%), economic stimulus (0.8%), currency/monetary policy (0.5%), insurance policy/workers compensation (0.5%), jobs bill/job creation policy (0.5%), union issue (0.5%), government healthy food policy (0.5%), employee behavior (0.5%), and – all at 0.3% (one story): agriculture, consumer protection, corporate malfeasance, credit/debt policy or issue, family leave, market changes, natural resources, workplace fairness, increased productivity, background checks, bureaucracy, budget deficit, group of people, uncertainty, airline regulations, litigation, internet regulation, unspecified regulation, corporate merger, environmental disaster, workplace safety rules, and private equity business.

<sup>56</sup> The *St. Petersburg Times* changed its name to the *Tampa Bay Times* effective January 1, 2012. See <http://www.tampabay.com/newname/st-petersburg-times-becomes-tampa-bay-times/>

<sup>57</sup> PolitiFact.com, *Tampa Bay Times*, January 20, 2011, <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2011/jan/20/eric-cantor/health-care-law-job-killer-evidence-falls-short/> The investigation by PolitiFact represents the best kind of work by journalists. [In fact, there has been pushback by some conservative opinion journalists who charge that fact-checking units like PolitiFact are "the liberal media's latest attempt to control the discourse." See Mark Hemingway, "Lies, Damned Lies, and 'Fact Checking': The liberal media's latest attempt to control the discourse," *The Weekly Standard*, December 19, 2011, [http://www.weeklystandard.com/articles/lies-damned-lies-and-fact-checking\\_611854.html](http://www.weeklystandard.com/articles/lies-damned-lies-and-fact-checking_611854.html).

<sup>58</sup> Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007) 86.

<sup>59</sup> Kris Maker, "U.S. News: Unions push to undo Ohio Law – Showdown looms over referendum to repeal public-employee bargaining limits," *Wall Street Journal*, June 3, 2011, p. A5.

<sup>60</sup> Christopher S. Rugaber, "Meltdown 101: Unemployment by the numbers," Associated Press, March 6, 2009.

<sup>61</sup> David Wessel, "U.S. News --- CAPITAL: Parsing an Ascendant GOP's Economic Prescriptions," *Wall Street Journal*, September 2, 2010, p. A2.

<sup>62</sup> Editorial, "Topic A," *Washington Post*, August 15, 2010, p. A11.

<sup>63</sup> Jim Kuhnhenn and Ann Sanner, "GOP sees political advantage opposing banking bill," Associated Press, July 15, 2010.

<sup>64</sup> Boehner's Blog, "On NBC Nightly News, Speaker Boehner Calls 'Obamacare...the biggest job killer we have in America today'" January 7, 2011, <http://www.johnboehner.com/blog/nbc-nightly-news-speaker-boehner-calls-%E2%80%9Cobamacare%E2%80%A6-biggest-job-killer-we-have-america-today%E2%80%9D> (accessed March 15, 2012).

<sup>65</sup> This is one of the many places the story appeared: Shannon McCaffrey, "Gingrich Calls Obama's Tax Plan a Job-Killer," Associated Press, April 14, 2011, <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory?id=13369574#.T2Kt08xiu7s> (accessed March 15, 2012).

<sup>66</sup> Newt2012, "AP: Gingrich calls Obama's tax plan a job-killer," April 13, 2011, <http://m.newt.org/news/ap-gingrich-calls-obama%E2%80%99s-tax-plan-job-killer> (accessed March 15, 2012).

<sup>67</sup> Unemployment data from Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Annual average unemployment rate, civilian labor force 16 years and over (percent)." February 3, 2011, [http://www.bls.gov/cps/prev\\_yrs.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cps/prev_yrs.htm) (accessed January 2, 2012).

<sup>68</sup> Matthew Daly, "Senate Democrats abandon comprehensive energy bill," Associated Press, July 22, 2010.

<sup>69</sup> Associated Press, FAQs, <http://www.ap.org/pages/about/faq.html> (accessed January 2, 2012).

<sup>70</sup> Associated Press, "AP News in Brief," July 22, 2010.

<sup>71</sup> Matthew Daly, "Senate Democrats turn focus to Gulf spill response," Associated Press, July 23, 2010.

<sup>72</sup> Julie Pace, "Obama says he still supports climate legislation," Associated Press, July 27, 2010.

<sup>73</sup> Google search for "Republicans slammed the bill as a "national energy tax" and jobs killer" conducted January 2, 2012.

<sup>74</sup> Trudy Lieberman, *Slanting the Story: The Forces that Shape the News* (New York: The New Press, 2000).

<sup>75</sup> George Packer, "Un-American Activities," *The New Yorker*, January 3, 2012, <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/comment/2012/01/santorum-and-the-republicans.html>.

<sup>76</sup> Arthur S. Brisbane, "Should The Times Be a Truth Vigilante?" *New York Times*, January 12, 2012, <http://publiceditor.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/01/12/should-the-times-be-a-truth-vigilante/>.

<sup>77</sup> At the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, political reporters are vigilantly checking political statements for veracity in the 2012 election season. As the *Columbia Journalism Review* on the Plain Dealer's work concluded, "even if fact-check stories don't persuade every reader, the research and digging that go into them—and that take the coverage past he-said, she-said—should be de rigueur." See T.C. Brown, "The *Plain Dealer* on a Potential Senator's 'Estrangement' from Truth," *Columbia Journalism Review*, March 29, 2012, [http://www.cjr.org/swing\\_states\\_project/the\\_plain\\_dealer\\_on\\_a\\_potential.php](http://www.cjr.org/swing_states_project/the_plain_dealer_on_a_potential.php).