



## Research Briefing

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# THE FACTS ABOUT AL FRANKEN

## FRANKEN IS AN ANGRY, MEAN-SPIRITED & DIVISIVE PARTISAN

**Star Tribune: "There Are Few Political Celebrities On The National Scene As Divisive As Author, Actor, Radio Host And Possible Senate Candidate Al Franken."** (Colin Covert, "To Franken Fan Or Foe, Film Is Fair," *Star Tribune*, September 20, 2006)

**Franken Attacked Senator Coleman As "Butt Boy."** "Publicly, Franken says he won't announce until next year; privately, he's said to have decided already to stand against the Republican Norm Coleman... Coleman, says Franken bluntly, is 'one of the administration's leading butt boys.'" (Sholto Byrnes, "US Elections: Franken On The Airwaves, And The Hustings," *New Statesman*, October 30, 2006)

**Franken Jokes About Executing Karl Rove & Scooter Libby.** "'The President's father...has said that outing a CIA agent is treason....What it looks like is going to happen is that [Lewis] Libby and Karl Rove are going to be executed....I don't know how I feel about it because I'm basically against the death penalty, but they are going to be executed.'" (CBS's "Late Show with David Letterman," October 21, 2005)

**Franken To Karl Rove: "I Hate You."** "At a black-tie dinner in Washington last spring, Franken says, Karl Rove ribbed him for standing when the president entered the room. But Rove remembers it differently. Franken, he says, came over to him and said, 'I'm Al Franken. I hate you and you hate me.' Rove says he was taken aback." (Weston Kosova, "Live, From the Left, It's..." *Newsweek*, March 29, 2004)

**Franken Hates Rush Limbaugh.** Q: "Do you really hate Limbaugh or is he just an easy target?" A: "Both." (Jennifer Senior, "Al Franken, Democrats' Favorite Comic Is Politically Incorrect," *The Hill*, August 25, 1996)

**Watch Franken Lash Out At Film Critic Michael Medved.** ("God Spoke" Movie Trailer, <http://www.godspokefilm.com/>, Accessed February 13, 2007)

## FRANKEN OUT OF TOUCH WITH MINNESOTA

**Franken Claims "Midwest Values"; Franken PAC Funded By Super Rich Hollywood Liberal Elites.** "The list of contributors to comedian Al Franken's political action committee reads like a celebrity who's who: singer Barbra Streisand, writer-director Nora Ephron, actor-writer Larry David and actor Jimmy Smits. ... His leadership PAC, Midwest Values PAC, raised \$500,000, according to a

review of campaign finance reports. ... Among the contributors to the PAC were actor Larry Hagman, directors Christopher Guest and Barry Levinson, and writers Harold Ramis and Aaron Sorkin. 'Curb Your Enthusiasm' star Larry David said he couldn't refuse Franken." (Frederic J. Frommer, "Al Franken Getting Celebrity Support," *The Associated Press*, July 28, 2006)

**Franken Acknowledges Being Out Of Step With Public.** "Once comics make it big and get their own TV show, the jokes stop resonating with the mass public. Al Franken, a former *Saturday Night Live* writer and performer who now stars in his own sitcom, *Lateline*, admits as much. 'My complaints wouldn't get a lot of sympathy,' he says. 'You know, the driver wasn't there right away. The travel agency paying to fly me first class failed to book my (frequent-flier) miles. I frequent the New York-L.A. American Airlines thing and I'm getting tired of the same caviar, lobster tail, chateau briand when I travel outbound. I don't think my complaints will win a lot of friends.'" (Michael Diamond, "Something To Laught About – Trips From Hell Are Manna From Heaven For Comedians," *USA Today*, September 22, 1998)

**Franken: "I'm A Bit Of A Shill For The Clinton Administration."** "Al Franken called. ... It's true, he said, that 'I'm a bit of a shill for the Clinton administration, which has its perks. I was invited to all the inaugural balls.'" (Jeff Simon, "Even After Paula, The Story Has A Life Of Its Own," *Buffalo News*, April 7, 1998)

## THE WIT & WISDOM OF AL FRANKEN

**On Politics: "It's Fun To Watch" People "Savage Each Other And Lie."** "'I'm not concerned about politics for the good reasons,' said the 'Saturday Night Live' writer and performer Al Franken in a recent conversation. 'I'm interested for the bad reasons. I'm interested for the horse race. It's fun to watch these people savage each other and lie.'" (Anna Deavere Smith, "Cultural View; Inside The Political Mimic's Fun-House Mirror," *The New York Times*, August 16, 1992)

**Franken Compared Clinton's Impeachment Trial To Holocaust.** "Moments before they delivered the opening arguments in President Clinton's impeachment trial, the 13 House managers gathered around a conference table in a meeting room deep inside the cavernous Capitol.... On many days, there was a sprinkling of empty seats inside the Senate's visitor's gallery, where spectators included the likes of Whoopi Goldberg and comedian Al Franken. 'If you can get humor out of the Holocaust, I guess you can get it here,' Franken said." (Paul Schwartzman, "The Trial That Wasn't," *Daily News*, February 14, 1999)

**Franken Ridiculed Plight Of Afghan Women.** "The event, co-hosted at the W New York Hotel by Glamour magazine and the Feminist Majority Foundation, attracted such A-list women as Meryl Streep, Laura Dern, Melissa Etheridge, Marlo Thomas, Glamour editor in chief Bonnie Fuller and Al Franken, who bombed at the podium, especially with such jokes as, 'Why don't we focus on what Afghan women can do? They can cook, bear children and pray. As I recall, that was fine for our grandmothers.'" (Mitchell Fink With Lauren Rubin, "Liza Wants To Be A Hit, Just Not A Huge One," *New York Daily News*, October 20, 1999)

**Franken Plan To Reduce Debt: Blast The Elderly In Rockets Over Snake River And Put It On Pay-Per-View.** "Every Sunday, we put an elderly (or terminally ill-person) in a rocket, fire it over the Snake River, and put it on pay-per-view. The revenues go straight into reducing the debt." (Al Franken, *Rush Limbaugh Is A Big, Fat Idiot*, Island Books, p. 139, 1996)

**Racially Insensitive Franken Script Rejected.** “Franken, who taped one of those reminders to taxi passengers to buckle their seat belts, said the Taxi & Limousine Commission rejected one script where he said, ‘This is Al Franken. Your driver probably can’t understand what I’m saying ...’” (Bacall’s New Pal: Keith Richards, *New York Post*, August 22, 1999)

### **Franken Writes Of Delivering Condescending Commencement Address To Technical College Students:**

- **Graduates Are “The Nation’s Future Air Conditioner Repairmen.”** “When I was first asked to speak at Hartford State Technical College, I jumped at the opportunity. Because, you see, I thought I had been asked to speak at Harvard, which would have been quite an honor. But instead I am here with you, the nation’s future air conditioner repairmen.” (Al Franken, *Oh, The Things I Know!* Plume, p. 6-7, 2002)
- **Graduates Are “Already Dead” Because They Will “Live Useless Lives.”** “Goethe once said, ‘A useless life is an early death.’ In Goethe’s terms, most of you are already dead. Because most of you will live useless lives. You will, you will, and you will.” (Al Franken, *Oh, The Things I Know!* Plume, p. 6-7, 2002)
- **Speech Will “Probably Be Way Over” Graduates’ Heads.** “But back to Goethe, and please remember that I prepared this speech for Harvard students, so it will probably be way over your heads.” (Al Franken, *Oh, The Things I Know!* Plume, p. 6-7, 2002)

**Franken On Janet Reno: For A \$25 Contribution To DNC She’ll Give You A Lap Dance.** “We’ve seen the writing on the wall for Miss Reno for weeks. Al Franken, the comic whose stale material cracks ‘em up at the White House and who (he says) works out of there when he’s in town, retailed a howler at Miss Reno’s expense at the recent dinner of the White House Press Photographers Association. ‘The Democratic National Committee is coming up with a novel way to raise money,’ he said. “For \$50,000 you can get a waltz with the first lady. For \$25,000, you can dance a tango with Tipper. And for \$25, the attorney general will come to your table and do a lap dance.” (Wesley Pruden, “A Curious Gallantry At The White House,” *Washington Times*, March 28, 1999)

## **WHEN AL FRANKEN ATTACKS**

**Franken Called President George H.W. Bush A “Dink.”** “And when the networks projected George Bush as the 41st president, comedian Al Franken took to the stage to cheer up the crowd. The Dukakis campaign has asked me to tell you that the views I express here tonight are not the views of the Dukakis campaign, but my own,’ deadpanned the “Saturday Night Live” entertainer-writer. ‘Now that I’ve got that settled, let me ask you ... ’ Long pause for effect. ‘ISN’T GEORGE BUSH A DINK?’” (Lois Romano, “Finally! The Fat Lady Sings; In Boston, The Dank Specter Of Defeat,” *The Washington Post*, November 9, 1988)

**Franken: Most Republicans Politicians Are Real Jerks.** “Franken quipped that people ask him why he’s a member of the Democratic Party when he’s wealthy enough to be a Republican. ‘I noticed that most Republican politicians are real jerks,’ Franken said.” (Margo Huston, “Franken Makes Off-Color Fun Of Scandal For Local Democrats,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 5, 1998)

**Franken: “Republicans Are Shameless Dicks. No, That’s Not Fair. Republican Politicians Are Shameless Dicks.”** (Al Franken, *The Truth (With Jokes)*, Plume, p. 58, 2006)

## FRANKEN ON HIS OWN CHANCES AS A CANDIDATE

**Franken: It Would Be A “Travesty” If “Even 50 People Voted For” Me.** “If I put myself on the ballot and even 50 people voted for me it’d be a travesty. So I wrote a book instead.” (Paul Duchene, “The Joke Stops Here: What If Al Franken Were President?” *The Oregonian*, February 22, 1999)

**Franken: “I’d Be Terrible” Because “I’m Very Indecisive.”** “Al Franken believes he would make a good political candidate, but a lousy office-holder. In fact, after writing his last political satire, *Rush Limbaugh Is a Big Fat Idiot*, the former Saturday Night Live writer and humourist says some people really did approach him about running for political office. ‘Saying “You’re fairly articulate, you’ve been married once, you’re very, very good looking,”’ he says with a straight face. ‘And I tried to explain to people that I’d be terrible because of the pressure. I’m very indecisive, as it is, in my own life and the idea of making decisions for other people that affect their lives, I would be crushed by the stress.’” (John McKay, “I Am Not A Political Satirist,” *London Free Press*, May 22, 1999)

**Franken: “I’d Be A Terrible Office Holder.”** “STENSLAND: Great to have us--ga--great to have you here. So, how did you first get the idea to write a book about an obscure person running for president and winning? Mr. FRANKEN: Well, first of all I’m not that obscure. But after I wrote th—‘*Rush Limbaugh Is A Big Fat Idiot*,’ a number of people came to me and said, ‘Why don’t’--and seriously said, ‘Why don’t you run for office? You’re--obviously, know a lot about politics, you’re fairly well spoken. You’ve been married once, you’re very, very good looking. Why not--why not run for office?’ And I sa-- I--I tried to tell people I’d be a terrible office holder. And--so that sort of gave me the idea of--of proving it. And--so I wrote this book, which is basically me running for president and--and this scathing satire of the American political system because I create a scenario in which I can win.” (Transcript, “Al Franken Discusses His New Book And The Impeachment Issue,” CBS “Saturday Morning” February 6, 1999)