

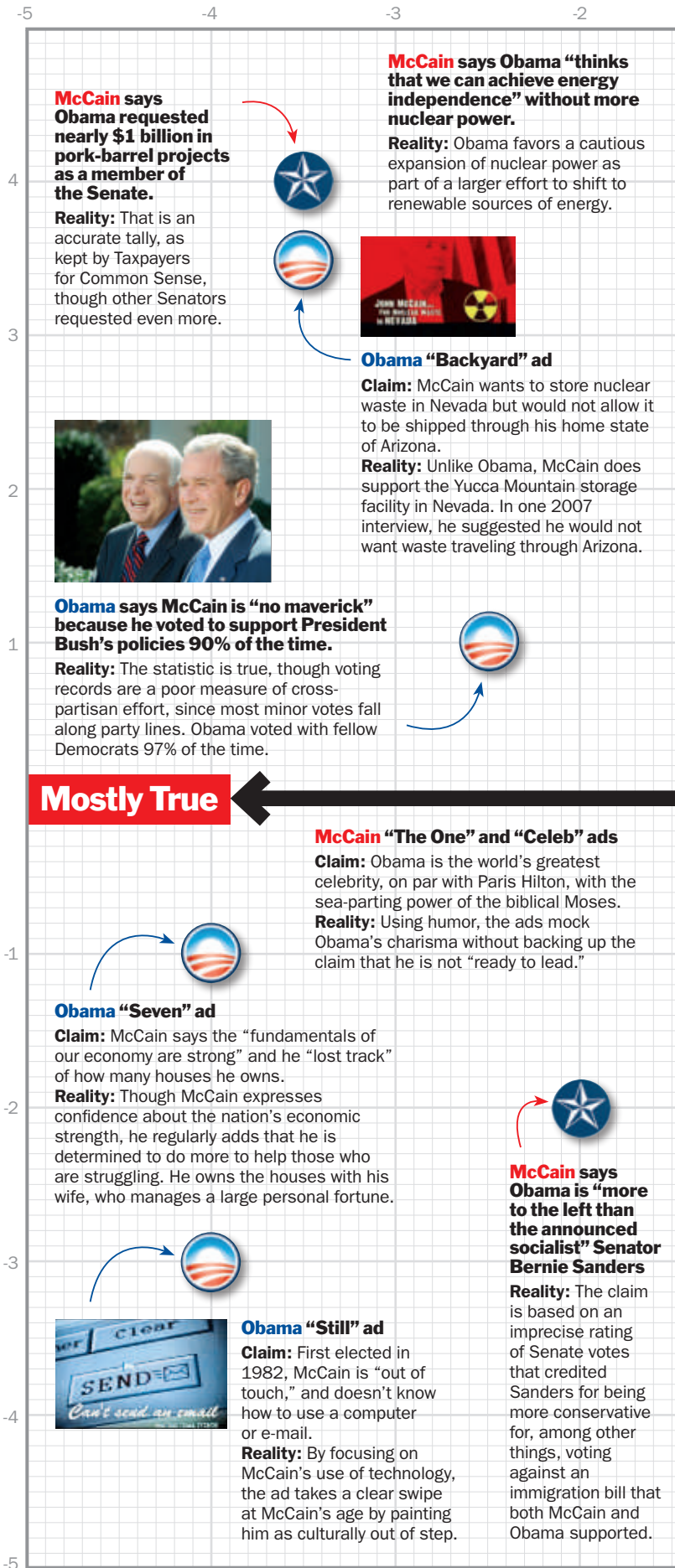
Facts, Fables & Fibs

Both candidates say they want to run a clean campaign. In reality, they are tossing mud in every direction

BY MICHAEL SCHERER AND JAMES CARNEY

SENATORS JOHN MCCAIN AND BARACK Obama have built their political careers—and then laid claim to the White House—on the idea that each disdains and would not practice the gutter partisan politics of the past. Yet what was once expected to be a more high-minded campaign has quickly eroded into something disappointing and familiar. Both candidates have trampled the truth, overlooked the details, trashed their rival's records and then hijacked each other's words miles away from the proper context. And each has made a minor specialty of attacks that have more to do with character than with any new direction the nation needs to go. Obama's ads systematically portray McCain as old, forgetful and out of touch; McCain's present Obama as a lightweight "celebrity" who will stop at nothing to win.

Who's the best at the worst in politics? Like squabbling children, each campaign seeks to justify its behavior by pointing fingers and insisting that the other team lied first. But in the main, McCain has been far quicker to throw the truth overboard—both in advertisements and on the stump. There are so many charges and countercharges about who distorted things first that we decided to spread the highest profile allegations, good and bad, across a grid measuring both accuracy and substance so you can be the judge. —WITH REPORTING BY JAY NEWTON-SMALL



Serious



McCain "Original Mavericks" ad

Claim: Sarah Palin "stopped the 'bridge to nowhere.'" **Reality:** She supported nearly \$200 million in federal pork this year and backed the infamous bridge until after Congress had objected to the project.



Obama says McCain favors "ideological policies" that would resist regulation of financial markets in the face of the current economic crisis.

Reality: While less enthusiastic of regulation than Obama, McCain has proposed new regulatory steps to deal with the mortgage meltdown.



Obama "Pocket" ad

Claim: Instead of taxing oil companies' "windfall profits," McCain wants to give Big Oil \$4 billion in tax breaks. **Reality:** McCain wants to eliminate some business tax loopholes and provide a tax cut for all corporations.

Obama says he will "pay for every dime" of his spending proposals "by closing corporate loopholes and tax havens."

Reality: Independent analysts say Obama's plans call for a net reduction in taxes and rise in spending, increasing the budget deficit.



McCain says "Senator Obama will raise your taxes. I won't."

Reality: Obama has proposed a decrease in federal taxes for most Americans making less than \$250,000 a year.



Obama "It's Over" ad

Claim: Two key McCain campaign advisers currently lobby for special interests. **Reality:** Both advisers, Charlie Black and Rick Davis, are former lobbyists, not current ones.

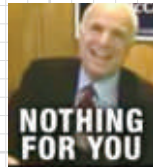


Mostly False



Obama "Honor" ad

Claim: McCain is running a "disrespectful" campaign of "smears," and "deception is all he has left." **Reality:** Without providing any factual basis, the ad uses quotes out of context from columnists who are critical of McCain's campaign strategy.



McCain "Disrespectful" ad

Claim: Obama and Joe Biden have been "disrespectful" of Palin since her nomination, calling her a "liar" who is "good looking" and who "was doing what she was told." **Reality:** The quotes are taken out of context. They suggest a sexist assault by Obama and Biden for which there is no clear evidence.

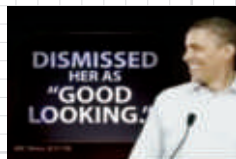
Obama "Embrace" ad

Claim: McCain is "Washington's biggest celebrity" who would help corporations but give "almost nothing for families like yours." **Reality:** McCain would lower taxes for the wealthy and provide larger tax credits to most parents and many seeking health insurance.



McCain "Kindergarten" ad

Claim: Obama wants to teach kindergarten students about sex before they learn to read. **Reality:** Obama supports "age appropriate" sex education for all grades but not teaching sex to 5-year-olds.



McCain "Lipstick" ad

Claim: Obama called Palin a "pig." The spot also quotes CBS anchor Katie Couric describing sexism in the campaign. **Reality:** Obama used the common cliché "lipstick on a pig" to describe McCain's policies, not Palin; CBS demanded that YouTube remove the ad.



Silly