

SOCIETY OF “PROFESSIONAL” “JOURNALISTS” PROVES IT IS NEITHER

Via RawStory, I see that Bob Novak claims that Joe Wilson didn't warn him strongly against outing Valerie in his column.

Columnist Robert Novak said Saturday Ambassador Joe Wilson did not forcefully object to the naming of his CIA operative wife, Valerie Plame Wilson, when Novak spoke to him prior to the publication of a column that sparked a federal investigation and sent White House aide I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby to jail.

[snip]

Novak forcefully defended his handling of the column and the legal wrangling that surrounded the special counsel investigation in a seminar on the CIA leak case at the 2007 Society of Professional Journalists Convention.

Click through to RawStory to see Wilson's response. But before we ever get there, let's take a step back, shall we?

Novak made this claim—one he didn't make in his book and didn't make (as far as I know) under oath—at the conference of the Society for Professional Journalists. In other words, an organization that claims to abide by the following ethics...

- Seek truth and report it
- Minimize harm
- Act independently
- Be accountable

... invited Bob Novak to give a "super session" speech at their yearly convention. Novak, over the course of his reporting on this story, replicated the talking points given by the White House, ignored warnings from the CIA not to publish Valerie's name, ignored the CIA's explanation that Valerie did not initiate Wilson's trip in favor of (according to Novak's own story) an off-hand comment and a "confirmation" that wouldn't count as such if given to a diligent journalist. And Novak continues to underplay if not totally hide his conversation with Libby that occurred that week (it doesn't show in his book, for example). Bob Novak has broken every single ethical principle purportedly espoused by the SPJ. Yet they gave him a soapbox to tell his ever-changing self-exonerating story nonetheless.

The story here is not so much what Novak said. It's that the profession of journalism refuses to hold its own accountable to the ethics they like to wave around in answer to any criticism. The story is not what Novak said, but that the SPJ gave him an opportunity to say it at all.