Many in the "mainstream" news media have decided that their principal job is to elect Democrats. If some facts must be ignored, and others distorted in order to bring this about, so be it.

The Los Angeles Times discarded what shreds remained of its reputation for journalistic integrity in its efforts to keep Gov. Gray Davis from being recalled. The electioneering efforts of the LA Times consisted principally, but by no means exclusively, of its front-page story, the Thursday before the election, in which six women -- four of them anonymously -- accused Republican frontrunner Arnold Schwarzenegger of having groped them.

The story was criticized less for its content than for its timing, and for the clear double standard the LA Times employed. California's largest newspaper had downplayed much more serious -- and better factually grounded -- allegations of sexual misconduct by President Clinton, and had ignored altogether credible charges of (nonsexual) abuse of female staff members by Davis.

The "late hits" on Schwarzenegger failed. Davis was recalled handily, and Schwarzenegger crushed Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante in the second part of the ballot. But what we saw in the recall election is merely a preview of what President Bush can expect next year. To be re-elected, Bush has to contend not only with whomever the Democrats nominate, but with most of the media as well.

Bush has a harder row to hoe than Schwarzenegger did. Efforts by the news media to influence the election in California failed chiefly because Californians live in California. They know what they are thinking, and pretty much what their neighbors are thinking.

But Bush never said Saddam posed an "imminent" threat. In his address to the United Nations in September 2002, and in this year's State of the Union address, he said precisely the opposite. Because weapons of mass destruction are so dangerous, the United States cannot afford to wait to act until a threat becomes imminent.

In a story about the "outing" of CIA operative Valerie Plame, Elisabeth Bumiller of The New York Times refers to the "insupportable claim [in Bush's State of the Union Address] that Iraq had sought to buy uranium from Niger." But what Bush said was that the British had learned that Saddam was trying to buy uranium in Africa, of which Niger is only a small part. And since Kay has found evidence Saddam did try to buy uranium elsewhere in Africa, the claim is hardly "insupportable."

A falsehood is only a lie if the teller of the falsehood knows it to be false at the time he or she tells it. Lumpkin, Bumiller, et. al may merely be incompetent, incapable of so simple a task as looking up the State of the Union address to see what it was that Bush actually said. But as the falsehoods mount, so does the likelihood that the falsehoods are deliberate.