

Issue Advertising in the 1999-2000 Election Cycle



**A Project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center
of the University of Pennsylvania**

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With assistance from Natalia Gridina and Nicole Porter.

Dr. Kathleen Hall Jamieson directed this research. Dr. Jamieson is Professor of Communication, Dean of the Annenberg School for Communication, and Director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania. This research was funded with a grant from The Carnegie Corporation of New York.

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Additional information on issue ads can be found at www.appcpenn.org/issueads. For more information on this report, contact the Kathleen Jamieson at 215-898-7041 or Lorie Slass at 202- 879-6700.

Introduction

By Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Director, Annenberg Public Policy Center and Dean, Annenberg School for Communication.

For much of the last decade the Annenberg Public Policy Center has been tracking the growth of broadcast issue advocacy advertising. We began our study with the health care reform debate of 1993-4 where issue advocates spent over \$100 million, most of it to oppose the Clinton plan. In this single legislative engagement, more was spent by the issue advocates than was spent by the two major party nominees in the general election of 1992. The power of issue advocacy was again dramatically illustrated in 1998 when a \$40 million campaign by the tobacco industry helped thwart the McCain Tobacco Bill¹.

Over the last three election cycles the numbers of ads, groups, and dollars spent on issue advocacy has climbed. In the 1996 election cycle there were relatively few groups airing issue ads and only about 100 spots were tracked by the Policy Center, but even then big money was being spent -- an estimated \$135 million to \$150 million. In the next election cycle (1997-1998) we found 423 ads aired by 77 organizations costing between \$250 and \$341 million. In the 1999-2000 cycle we have tracked over 1,100 distinct spots by 130 groups. The Center estimates spending on issue advocacy for this cycle surpassed \$500 million. See page 3 of this report for our full update on spending on issue ads in this election cycle and comparisons with the past. In the appendix of our report we list all of the issue advocates we identified.

We have also tracked the content and tenor of issue ads. Some of the spots focus on legislative issues such as the Patients' Bill of Rights and prescription drug coverage for Medicare, but the majority make claims about candidates. In fact, we have consistently found that candidates appear in a majority of so-called issue ads and that the majority of these ads attack rather than defend a candidate's record. We have also found that the content of issue ads changes as federal elections approach. See page 11 for our description of issue ads and explanation of what they are.

Over the last three election cycles, the number of groups sponsoring ads has exploded, and consumers often don't know who these groups are, who funds them, and whom they represent. Among the groups that sponsored ads in the 1999 – 2000 cycle: American Family Voices, Americans for Job Security, Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities, Center for Reclaiming America, Citizens for Better Medicare, Coalition for Affordable Quality Healthcare, Republicans for Clean Air, Coalition for the Future American Worker, Committee for Good Common Sense, Taxpayers for Common Sense, and the Traditional Values Coalition.

The names of these groups do little to tell viewers who the sponsors of the messages are. In some cases, they are misleading. For example, a name such as Citizens for Better Medicare gives viewers little insight into the fact that the organization is funded primarily by the pharmaceutical industry. Republicans for Clean Air was two businesspeople who supported the candidacy of George W. Bush.

Since issue advocacy groups are not required to disclose either their identity or expenditures, tracking their efforts is difficult. Because of the difficulty in tracking issue ads it is probable that we have missed some (particularly radio ads and ads airing in smaller markets).

¹ *Everything You Think You Know About Politics...And Why You are Wrong*, Beck & Jamieson, Chapter 16.

After analyzing hundreds ads over a seven year period some conclusions emerge:

- 1) The amount of money spent on “issue advocacy” is rising rapidly.
- 2) Instead of creating the number of voices Buckley v. Valeo had hoped, issue advocacy allowed groups such as the parties, business and labor to gain a louder voice.
- 3) The distinction between issue advocacy and express advocacy is a fiction.
- 4) Issue advocacy masks the identity of some key players and by so doing, it deprives citizens of information about source of messages which research tells us is a vital part of assessing message credibility.
- 5) As issue advocacy over the McCain tobacco bill demonstrated, when it comes to issue advocacy, money is indeed speech, with the largest bankroll having the loudest voice and the voice of those with limited means effectively drowned out.

This report attempts to catalog the ads, groups and the spending on issue advocacy in the 1999-2000 cycle. We hope that the information in this report will facilitate discussion on the role of issue advocacy.

Spending on Issue Advocacy in the 2000 Cycle

By Lorie Slass, Director, Washington Office, Annenberg Public Policy Center

An Inexact Science

Tracking spending on issue advocacy is far from an exact science. Since organizations are not required to report their issue advocacy expenditures and stations are not obligated to make those expenditures public, much of the analysis of television and radio issue advertising spending has been based on anecdotal reports or estimates based on average costs of spot time.

For the past three election cycles the Annenberg Public Policy Center has tracked spending on radio and television issue advertising. In previous cycles, the Center developed a method for tracking issue advocacy spending through reports – either in the media, or by the organizations themselves. Included in the totals were an organization’s total budget for issue advocacy during the cycle or expenditures for a series of ads or for just one flight of ads. While this method is not precise, it provided a snapshot of expenditures. In fact, it probably underestimated expenditures, since, in some cases, organizations were unwilling to reveal how much they were spending and the numbers contained in the analysis only included expenditures for those ads researchers could tie to spending reports. So, for example, there could be reports on expenditures for one of an organization’s advertising buys, but not another. Finally, for some organizations that sponsored issue ads, researchers were unable to locate reports for ad expenditures.

During the 1999-2000 last election cycle, the Policy Center contracted with the Campaign Media Analysis Group (CMAG) to obtain their spending and schedule reports on television issue advertising after Super Tuesday (March 8, 2000 through November 7, 2000). CMAG provided the Policy Center with their estimates of the cost of air time for issue advertising in the top 75 media markets in the United States. Their cost estimates were based on the average costs of television spots for that time period. Cost estimates for these reports are based on historical cost per spot data and do not factor in such other parameters of a buy as increases in costs as election day approached, buyers’ commissions or production costs.

For purposes of this analysis, the Annenberg Public Policy Center will report two different spending totals. First, the overall spending for the 1999-2000 cycle based on reports in the media, by the organizations themselves and the CMAG data. For each organization’s totals we have used a combination of CMAG data, journalistic reports, and/or organization self-reports. This total will be compared to the APPC analysis of spending in the 1996 and 1998 cycles. The second set of totals, an analysis of television issue ad spending for air time after Super Tuesday (the last eight months of the Campaign 2000), is based entirely on CMAG data.

A note about spending. The spending analyzed in this report references the two major parties’ and outside groups’ soft money spending. It does not include express advocacy (or independent expenditure) spots – ads that explicitly call on the viewer to vote for, vote against, support, etc. While some groups and the political parties aired millions of dollars worth of independent expenditure ads, those spots are not included in this analysis. We are in other words focused on soft money issue advocacy advertising.

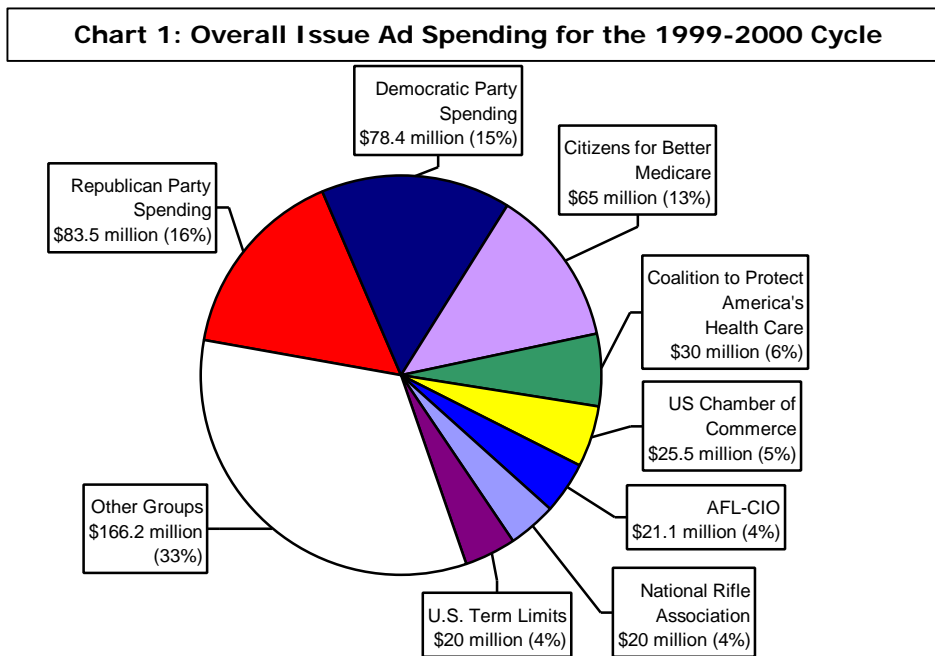
Overall Spending on Issue Ads in Campaign 2000

In the 1996 cycle, the Annenberg Public Policy Center tracked between \$135 million and \$150 million in spending on issue advocacy advertising. In the 1998 cycle that estimate jumped to between \$250 million and \$341 million. Using the same methodology the Center has used in previous cycles, the spending for the 2000 cycles surpasses spending for the last two cycles combined.

In the 2000 cycle we estimate that more than \$509 million was spent on issue advocacy television and radio advertising. The Republican and Democratic parties accounted for almost \$162 million (32%) of this spending².

The top overall, non-party spenders were: Citizens for Better Medicare, spending an estimated \$65 million on their issue advocacy campaign³, the Coalition to Protect America's Health Care, committing \$30 million to their campaign⁴, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce which spent approximately \$25.5 million⁵; the AFL-CIO which committed \$21 million⁶ and the National Rifle Association⁷ and U.S. Term Limits^{8,9}, which each committed \$20 million to the 1999-2000 Cycle. These groups and the two major parties account for two out of every three (67%) dollars spent on issue ads in the 2000 cycle.

Three of the top six non-party spenders, Citizens for Better Medicare, the Coalition to Protect America's Healthcare and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce accounted for almost one-fourth (24%) of the issue ad spending for the cycle. These groups all represent business interests.



² Party spending includes state parties and national party organizations including the DNC, DSCC, DCCC, RNC, RSC, RCCC. Estimates for the party spending are based almost entirely on the CMAG analysis. Unfortunately, this probably underestimates party spending because CMAG analysis does not include media markets where there were contested races.

³ *Newsweek*, "Flo's Big-Dollar Backers," September 25, 2000

⁴ *Buffalo News*, "Hospitals' Campaign Seeks Relief from Balanced Budget Act," July 25, 2000.

⁵ *Deseret News*, "Businesses and trial lawyers square off over bill limiting Y2K lawsuits," April 25, 1999; *USA Today*, "Interest Groups Crank up Issue Ads," March 17, 2000; *Wall Street Journal*, "Drug Firms Underwrite US Chamber's TV Ads," October 6, 2000.

⁶ *The Hill*, "AFL-CIO Airs Ads Supporting Health Bill," July 14, 1999; *American Healthline*, "Patients' Rights: House Passes Access Bill," October 7, 1999; *Business Week*, "Issue Ads: Free Speech or End Run," February 28, 2000

⁷ *Washington Post*, "Everybody Can Get Into the Act With Issue Ads; Some Complicate Campaign Efforts," September 19, 2000.

⁸ U.S Term Limits also includes spending from Americans for Limited Terms.

⁹ *The Hotline*, "House Race Hotline Preview: Nethercutt Battle Goes Nat'l," March 11, 1999.

Other big spenders included the Business Roundtable which spent more than \$17 million -- \$6 million on candidate issue ads¹⁰, \$10 million on its China most favored nation campaign¹¹ and at least \$1.3 million on ads focuses on patient's bill of rights debate in 1999¹². The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) committed \$12 million¹³ to its issue advocacy advertising budget for the cycle.

Six groups and the two major parties accounted for two-thirds (67%) of the spending on issue advocacy advertising during the 1999-2000 cycle.

For almost all of the organizations that ran issue ads during the 1999-2000 campaign we were able to discover some ad spending information. But for some groups that ran ads, no expenditure information could be found. The groups for which no spending could be found were: Alliance for Florida Economy, Americans for Economic Growth, Antitrust Coalition for Consumer Choice in Health Care, Competitive Broadband Coalition, Cuban American National Foundation, Education Reform Alliance, Hands off the Internet, Healthtrack.org, Natural Resources Defense Council, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, and Solutions for a New Century. For some of these groups we could not even locate any contact information – a working phone number or address.

Television Spending after Super Tuesday

For the first time the Annenberg Public Policy Center was able to track specific television spending on issue ads using data from the Campaign Media Analysis Group (CMAG). This data allowed us to track television issue ad spending for TV airtime in the top 75 media markets in the country beginning March 8, 2000 (the day after Super Tuesday). **All of the analysis that follows is based on these data and not the overall spending estimates at the beginning of this chapter.**

In the top 75 media markets, from March 8 – November 7, 2000, more than 339,000 television ads aired at a cost of almost \$248 million dollars in air time.¹⁴

Some markets were saturated, others ignored.

One out of every ten issue ads that aired in the last months of the campaign aired in three markets – Detroit (14,884 spots), Kansas City (12,028) and Seattle (11,065). In addition to these three markets, three other markets Louisville, Lexington and St. Louis, saw more than 10,000 issue ads.

In some markets, very few ads were aired. In Wichita only six issue ads aired; Greensboro and Baltimore saw less than 100 ads and eleven markets (Wichita, Greensboro, Baltimore, San Antonio, Oklahoma City, Phoenix, Birmingham, Austin, Raleigh, Houston and Knoxville) saw fewer than 1,000 spots.

¹⁰ *Washington Post*, "Flush with Cash, Business Groups Going on Air to Tout GOP Hopefuls, Mostly," October 15, 2000.

¹¹ National Journal Group, *Ad Spotlight*, "Chinese Reverent Urges China Trade," May 25, 2000.

¹² National Journal Group, *Ad Spotlight*, Business Roundtable Says Thanks, December 9, 1999; *Inside Politics*, CNN, July 16, 1999.

¹³ *National Journal*, "The Money Train," May 6, 2000.

¹⁴ These totals include national cable and network TV.

Table 1: Media Markets* Airing the Most Spots After Super Tuesday

MARKET	SPOT COUNT
1. DETROIT	14,884
2. KANSAS CITY	12,028
3. SEATTLE	11,065
4. LOUISVILLE	10,380
5. LEXINGTON	10,289
6. ST. LOUIS	10,179
7. ORLANDO	9,976
8. SPOKANE	9,854
9. WILKES BARRE	9,262
10. PHILADELPHIA	9,131

* Among the top 75 in the country.

Table 2: Media Markets* Airing the Fewest Spots After Super Tuesday

MARKET	SPOT COUNT
1. WICHITA	6
2. GREENSBORO	51
3. BALTIMORE	61
4. SAN ANTONIO	270
5. OKLAHOMA CITY	292
6. PHOENIX	323
7. BIRMINGHAM	349
8. AUSTIN	545
9. RALEIGH	766
10. HOUSTON	911

* Among the top 75 in the country.

Of course it is cheaper to buy a spot in Kansas City than it is in New York or Philadelphia. That is why the spending estimates on the media markets that saw the most spending differs from the markets that saw the most ads. Detroit, with an estimated \$16.9 million in issue ad spending still tops the list, but Philadelphia (at \$16.1 million) and New York (at \$12.9 million) are among the markets with high dollar buying of issue ads. Almost one in four issue ad dollars (23%) was spent in four media markets: Detroit, Philadelphia, New York, and Seattle.

Table 3: Media Markets* With the Most Issue Ad Spending After Super Tuesday

MARKET	EST. SPENDING (in millions)
1. DETROIT	\$16.9
2. PHILADELPHIA	\$16.1
3. NEW YORK	\$12.9
4. SEATTLE	\$11.6
5. WASHINGTON	\$11.6
6. LOS ANGELES	\$9.9
7. MIAMI	\$8.8
8. CHICAGO	\$7.1
9. ST LOUIS	\$7.0
10. MINNEAPOLIS	\$6.9

* Among the top 75 in the country.

Twenty-three media markets had less than \$1 million in spending on television issue ads in the final months of the campaign, and five media markets (Wichita, Greensboro, Baltimore, Birmingham and San Antonio) saw less than \$100,00 in spending.

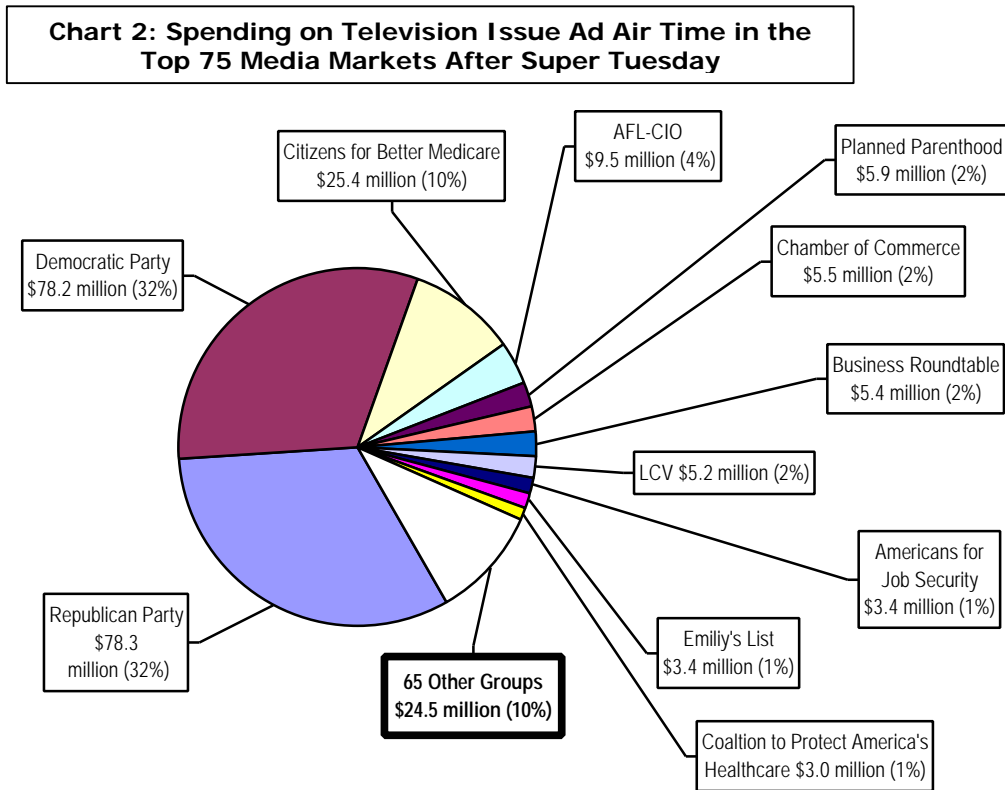
Who Bought the Television Spots After Super Tuesday?

Of the more than 339,000 television ads costing \$248 million after Super Tuesday, the Democratic and Republican Parties purchased more than 65% of the spots and spent nearly \$157 million (63% of the spending).

The two major political parties and one other group, Citizens for Better Medicare, account for almost three out of every four dollars (74%) spent on television issue advertising after Super Tuesday.

Despite the fact that more than 70 groups ran television spots during this period, spending on issue advertising was dominated by a small number of groups. In fact, the two parties and nine groups (Citizens for Better Medicare, the AFL-CIO, the Business Roundtable, the US Chamber of Commerce, the League of Conservation Voters, Planned Parenthood, Americans for Job Security, Emily’s List, and the Coalition to Protect America’s Healthcare) accounted for 90% of the spending on issue ads. Sixty-five other groups account for only ten percent of the spending.

Nine groups and the two major parties accounted for 90% of the spending on television issue ads in the top 75 media markets after Super Tuesday.



In addition to the nine groups listed above, eight other groups spent over \$1 million on television issue ads: the Alliance for Quality Nursing Home Care (\$2.2 million), Handgun Control (\$1.9 million), the National Rifle Association (\$1.6 million), Prochoice Decision (\$1.6 million), the Sierra Club (\$1.4 million), the National Abortion Rights Action League (\$1.3 million), the Pharmaceutical Research & Manufacturers of America (\$1.2 million) and the National Shooting Sports Federation (\$1.1 million).

Where Did The Two Major Political Parties Buy Television Spots after Super Tuesday?

The political parties (including the national party groups such as the RNC, DNC, DSCC, DCCC, NRCC, RSC and the state parties) accounted for over two-thirds of the television spending after Super Tuesday. They aired spots focused on the presidential campaign and key Senate and House races. Where the parties chose to spend their money was a barometer of the areas key to winning those races. Michigan, a battleground state for the Presidential race and a state with a strongly contested Senate race, saw at over \$24 million in television issue ads in the last months of the campaign. Over half (59%) of the ads were sponsored by the Democratic or Republican Party.

Keep in mind that these totals do not include independent expenditure or express advocacy advertising by the parties – ads that explicitly call on the viewer to vote for, vote against, support, etc. While the parties did air million of dollars worth of independent expenditure ads, those spots are not included in this analysis.

The five media markets in which the political parties aired the most issue ads are relatively similar. Kansas City, Detroit, Tampa and Orlando are among the top five for both parties. Seattle is in the top five for the Republicans and Flint is in the top five for the Democrats.

The media market in which Republicans spent the most on their issue ads was Los Angeles, where they spent \$6.6 million – outspending Democrats by more than 2:1. Most of this was spent in the last few weeks of the campaign as George W. Bush tried to gain a foothold in California. Democrats spent the most in New York (\$7.1 million) with much of this coming before the Clinton/Lazio agreement to not air issue ads.

Interestingly, while the Democrats aired more ads than the Republicans, the Republicans spent slightly more on their ads. The Republicans either aired more ads in more expensive media markets than the Democrats or chose to buy more expensive airtime.

In nine media markets Democrats bought spots and Republicans did not (Albany, Buffalo, Dallas, Greenville, Houston, Raleigh, Rochester, San Antonio and Syracuse). In one media market Democrats did not buy time and the Republicans did (Sacramento).

A Look At Detroit

Detroit, the media market with the greatest number of ads and the greatest spending on airtime had 25 different groups and the two major parties airing television issue ads after Super Tuesday. The Republican and Democratic parties accounted for over half (52%) of the spending on the spots. The Chamber of Commerce, in a campaign targeting Senate Candidate Debbie Stabenow, spent \$1.7 million in Detroit and accounted for 10% of the issue ad spending in the market. Citizens for Better Medicare and the AFL-CIO were the other top spenders in the market, each spending over \$1 million. These three groups and the two parties accounted for 74% of the spending on issue ads in Detroit.

What Issues Were Addressed In the Television Spots That Aired After Super Tuesday?

A variety of issues were addressed in the television spots that ran after Super Tuesday. But one issue dominated the issue ad field: healthcare. Over \$85 million was spent on issue ads that addressed health care. This accounts for 34% of all spending on issue ads. Groups running healthcare issue ads are not limited to those representing pharmaceutical companies such as Citizens for Better Medicare and health care providers such as the Alliance for Quality Nursing Home Care, but groups with diverse interests such as the AFL-CIO, the political parties and the Chamber of Commerce.

This total may underrepresent the extent to which healthcare was part of the issue advocacy in campaign 2000. The category of ad spending in second place of expenditures was the candidate spot. In fact, ads that mentioned candidates accounted for over \$44 million in spending (18%). Although the candidate spots focused on the candidates, they often raised specific issues as well. Many of these candidate spots raised the issue of health care.

Education ranked third, with over \$23 million spent on ads, accounting for 10% of the spending.

Table 4: Television Spending* On Issues During the Final Months of the Campaign

Issue	\$ Spent (in millions)	Percent of Total Spending
Healthcare	\$85.4	34%
Candidate/ No Issue/Multiple Issue	\$44.1	18%
Education	\$23.9	10%
Social Security	\$20.4	8%
Environment	\$19.5	8%

*Among the top 75 media markets.

The Disparity in the Numbers

The Annenberg Public Policy Center research tracked more than \$500 million in advocacy advertising during the 2000 cycle, while the CMAG data after Super Tuesday tracks only \$247 million in television air time. What accounts for the difference?

Cost "Estimates"

CMAG determines cost estimates based on historical cost per spot data and do not factor in other parameters of the buy. So, for example, if a party or group wanted to air an ad in the final days of Campaign 2000 and the station upped the rates, that increase in cost would not be reflected in the CMAG numbers. In addition, the spot estimates do not take into account other costs related to airing a television spot: production, consultant percentage, etc. Overall ad budgets or reported expenditures per buy track some of this information.

Missing Media Markets

CMAG is only able to track spending for airtime in the top 75 markets in the country. A number of key House and Senate races were in markets outside of the top 75. For example, the entire state of Montana is left out of the CMAG analysis. Two contested races Dennis Rehberg v. Nancy Keenan in the House and Conrad

Burns v. Brian Schweitzer in the Senate had a great deal of issue advocacy but were not included in the CMAG numbers. Among the groups that ran issue ads in Montana during the 1999-2000 cycle: the Sierra Club, Citizens for Better Medicare, Montanans for Common Sense Mining Laws, Project Abolition, Alliance for Quality Nursing Home Care, and the DSCC.

In Missouri, another state with a very close Senate race between Carnahan and Ashcroft, St. Louis was included in the analysis, but Springfield, Paducah, Quincy and Joplin were not. Florida, where there was not only a number of contested House races and a strong Senate race between Bill Nelson and Bill McCullum, but was also a battleground for the Presidential race. Florida media markets not included in the CMAG analysis include Tallahassee, Gainesville, and Fort Meyers.

Local Cable

Media buyers, if they choose, can purchase advertising on local as opposed to national cable. So, for example, a buyer could place an ad on the cable system in a particular market and not on the national cable station. Local cable buys are often more cost effective in that they can target a specific group of constituents. CMAG does not track local cable buys.

Radio

Unfortunately, there is no service that tracks political radio ads. CMAG analysis and numbers do not include radio spots. The Annenberg Public Policy Center collected more than 118 radio spots that aired across the country. How many times they aired or how much was spent on these ads is not included in the CMAG analysis but the Policy Center attempted to capture some of that information through reports in the media.

The Entire Cycle

The CMAG analysis tracks the television spending after Super Tuesday (March 7, 2000). But, in 1999, there was a great deal of issue advocacy on issues ranging from the Patients' Bill of Rights, to Y2K legislation, to Medicare reimbursements and China. Hundreds of ads airing prior to March 8, 2000 have been collected by APPC and are not accounted for in the CMAG data.

Ad Content

By Erika Falk, Researcher, Annenberg Public Policy Center

Introduction

In the early 1990's political players began using what are known as issue advertisements for political communication. Despite the name, the content of these ads varies. Sometimes they relate to important issues pending before Congress at other times they focus on candidates. As the role of issue ads in political communication has grown so has the debate over their use and the burgeoning spending associated with them. The Annenberg Public Policy Center has been monitoring the growth of issue ads for much of the last decade and in this section of the report we explain what an issue ad is and analyze the content of ads broadcast during the last election cycle (from January 1999 through Election Day, 2000). Specifically we cover the different types of issue ads (candidate, legislative, and image), the various arguments made in the ads (attack, advocacy, and contrast), the issues covered by the ads, and the sponsors.

What is an Issue Advertisement?

In the early 1970's Congress passed campaign finance reform legislation that limited both spending and contributions related to federal elections in what was called the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA 1972-1974). In 1976 the Supreme Court in the case of Buckley v. Valeo restricted the scope of FECA by eliminating spending limits related to campaigns and severely curtailing limits on contributions. The Court determined that limits on spending in federal elections were a significant infringement on the right to free speech and was therefore unconstitutional. Limits on contributions were determined to be constitutional but only under very limited circumstances.

FECA had been written with a broad intent by Congress to limit all contributions "with respect to" and "in connection with" any election for federal office. The Court determined that that language was "too vague." It argued that great specificity was needed when regulating First Amendment rights (which it believed the legislators were doing in limiting contributions), and determined that the statute could only apply to communications "that in express terms advocate for the election or defeat of a clearly identified candidate for federal office."

In a footnote in the Buckley decision, the Court elaborated on what it meant by *express advocacy*: "communications containing . . . words . . . such as: 'vote for,' 'elect,' 'cast your ballot for,' 'Smith for Congress,' 'Vote against,' 'defeat,' 'reject.'" Thus, if the communication did not use these words, it could not be regulated. Money could therefore be raised without limits to pay for communications related to federal elections as long as the ads did not include these words.

Money that is not subject to FECA contribution limits is called *soft money*. Advertisements that don't use the magic words identified by the Court in Buckley are called *issue ads*. An issue ad can be related to a federal campaign and it can be for or against a candidate. As long as the advocacy is not explicit, it is legal to use soft money to pay for these ads. These ads and this spending, which fall outside of federal regulations (and are not subject to disclosure requirements), are the subject of this report.

Data

Data included in this section refer to percents of distinct, federal (including House and Senate) broadcast (radio and television) issue ads. We have coded all broadcast advertisements related to federal elections or issues -- not sponsored by the candidates themselves and not calling for the express election or defeat of a candidate. Advertisements for state offices (such as Governor) and ballot initiatives were not included. We counted distinct ads (e.g., when the same ad was asking viewers to call different members of Congress we treated the ads as a single ad).

We found 1,139 distinct issue ads, sponsored by 130 different organizations that ran at least once between January 1, 1999 and November 7, 2000. Of these, 90% were television ads and 10% were radio ads.¹⁵ There were 689 unique ads aired in the two months before the election. Thus, 60% of all distinct issue ads broadcast in the two-year election cycle occurred between September and November. Throughout this report we compare this ad data to our findings from previous years.

This year for the first time, we also took into account how many times the television ads were aired after Super Tuesday – March 7, 2000 (or during the last eight months of the campaign). For example, after March 7, television issue ads aired about 340,000 times and of those over 230,000 (68%) aired in the last two months before the election.

To distinguish the two methods of calculating the data, I refer to *distinct (or unique)* issue ads, when we looked at the full two-year cycle without taking into account the number of times the ad aired. When we looked only at television ads that aired between March 8, 2000 and November 7, 2000 (after Super Tuesday) and took into account the number of times each spot was broadcast I refer to *broadcast television spots*.

It is important to keep in mind that the two types of data give us different types of information. Looking at the number of times an ad aired is more helpful in gauging the overall effect of an ad. However, since we only have broadcast air data from after Super Tuesday, the unique ad data, which covers the full two-year election cycle can also give insights into what issue ads were out there. This method also provides a means of comparing to previous years. These two types of calculations at times may appear to provide contradictory information, however, it is important to remember that we are measuring two different data sets. The unique issue ads cover both radio and television ads while the television spots data cover only television. The time periods compared are different (the unique ad data cover almost two years of issue advocacy while the spot data cover just the ads aired after Super Tuesday), and the unique data do not take into account how many times an ad aired while the spot data do. We continue to report the results of our study on unique ads because that enables us to compare to previous year and cover a wider time frame. That said, even the number of times a spot aired is not the whole picture since some spots (spots with higher rating points for example) reach a wider audience. The organizations that ran the most ads did not necessarily reach the widest audience. It is important to keep these factors in mind when reading the report. The number of unique ads, spots aired, and money spent (covered in the previous section) are all components of understanding the landscape of issue advertisements.

In addition, it is important to remember that in this report we look only at issue ads. Millions of additional dollars were spent on spots that did explicitly call for the election or defeat of a candidate, were sponsored by the candidates or their organizations, or were related to state offices and issues. These ads are not included in this report.

¹⁵ Though there may be more television issue ads than radio ads, the disparity in our collection is in part due to the fact that we hired a firm to electronically track all broadcast television issue ads and no such service was available for radio ads.

Types of Issue Ads

Candidate-Centered

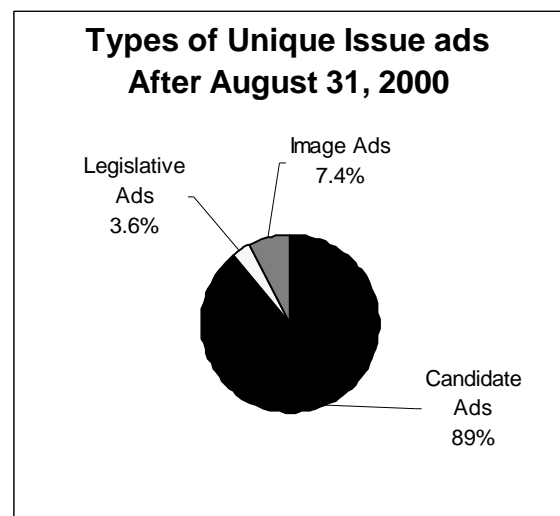
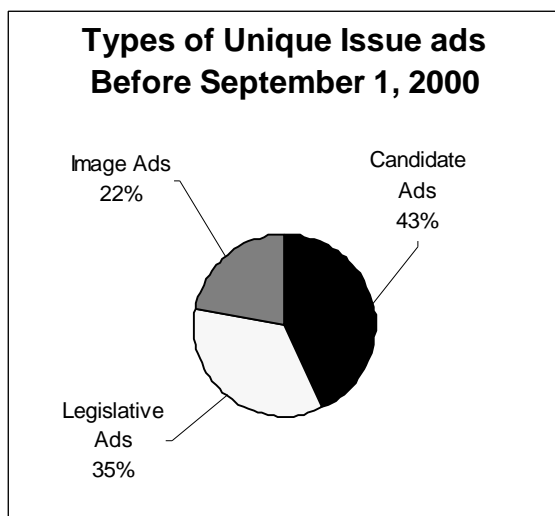
Legally, all issue advertisements are alike in the sense that they are categorized as non-election activity. However, issue advertisers put them to very different uses. Candidate-centered advertisements make a case for or against a candidate but do so without the use of the ten words delineated in Buckley. These ads usually present a candidate in a favorable or unfavorable light and then urge the audience to contact the candidate and tell him or her to support the sponsoring organization's policy position. Though the intent of these ads is to encourage voters to favor or oppose a candidate, because they do so implicitly instead of explicitly, these ads fall outside the current regulatory jurisdiction of federal election law. In a recently released report, Magleby (2000) found that citizens were not able to distinguish between true candidate ads (those sponsored by the candidate themselves) and candidate-centered issue ads (a finding consistent with work done at the Annenberg School). Moreover he found that "respondents saw candidate-centered issue ads as more about the election or defeat of a candidate than the candidate's own commercials" (p. 13). Critics of the issue ad loophole argue that candidate-centered issue ads are attempts to affect the results of elections and therefore should be regulated to prevent corruption (or the appearance thereof) and create a fair political environment. Supporters maintain that First Amendment concerns prevent regulation of this type of activity.

Legislation-Centered

A second type of issue ad is legislation-centered. These advertisements seek to mobilize constituents or policy makers in support of or in opposition to pending legislation or regulatory policy. They usually mention specific, pending legislation. Supporters argue that legislation-centered issue ads are a protected type of free speech and should not be regulated. Opponents point out that often the amount of spending on one side of an issue is far greater than the other side and that this results in an unbalanced political playing field.

General Image-Centered

Finally, there are general image-centered ads. These ads are more broadly written to enhance the visibility of an organization or its issue positions, but are not tied directly to a pending legislative or regulatory issue.



Breakdown of Ad Types

Unique Ads

The type of issue ad that dominated depended greatly on how close we were to the general election. During the two-year election cycle 71% of distinct issue ads were candidate-centered, 16% were legislation-centered, and 13% were general-image centered. However, distinct ads from before the final two months of the election were 43% candidate-centered, 35% legislation centered, and 22% general-image oriented. That picture flipped when looking at unique ads from the last two months of the election. In that case fully 89% of unique ads were candidate-centered, while just 3.6% were legislative centered, and 7.4% were general-image issue ads. In other words candidate-centered issue ads became much more prominent as the election approached.

Broadcast Television Spots

When we took into account how many times these ads aired and not just the number of different ads, we found an even greater percent were candidate-centered. Television spots airing after Super Tuesday were 87% candidate centered, 9.5% legislative-centered, and 3.6% image oriented. By breaking that time period down further and looking only at spots that aired September to November, we found that there was a greater percentage of candidate-centered ads in the last two month of the campaign than in the last eight. Fully 94% of issue ads aired after August made a case for or against a candidate. Just 3.1% were legislative ads, and 2.3% were general image ads. Though candidate-centered issue ads always made up a majority of issue ads, as the election approached the percent candidate-centered spots increased and the percent of legislative and image ads decreased, such that by the last two months before the election almost all televised issue spots made a case for or against a candidate.

In the two months before the election 94% of televised issue spots made a case for or against a candidate.

Candidates in Issue Ads

Since most issue ads focus on candidates, it is not surprising that candidates are featured in the majority of unique issue ads and ads that aired. It is also not surprising that candidates become more prominent as the election approaches.

All Candidates

Unique Ads

In all years we have monitored, the candidates appeared in a majority of distinct issue ads and were more likely to be mentioned than pictured. In this election cycle 73% of all unique ads mentioned a candidate and 58% (of TV ads) pictured one. In the 1995-1996 election 87% of distinct issue ads mentioned a candidate or official,¹⁶ and 57% (of TV ads) pictured one. In 1997-1998, 53% of all ads referred to candidate and 26% of TV ads pictured one.

¹⁶ Note that in 1995-1996 we coded for the presence of a candidate or an official and after that we only noted if a candidate were present in the commercial. This may account for the drop when comparing current data to 1995-1996.

Broadcast Television Spots

Candidates play an even greater role examining the number of times spots aired in the last eight and two months of the campaign. Between March 8 and August 31 candidates were less likely to appear in aired television spots (72% mentioned, 55% pictured). After August the percents increased and 95% of television spots mentioned and 79% pictured a candidate. From March 8 – November 7, 87% of television mentioned and 71% pictured a candidate. Thus as the election approached the candidates became more prominent in issue ads.

Presidential Candidates

Unique Ads

Presidential candidates made a regular showing in the distinct issue ads. They were mentioned in 16% of all ads and 22% of ads that mentioned a candidate.

Broadcast Television Spots

When accounting for the number of times an ad aired, presidential candidates were more likely to get play than when counting unique ads. When looking at television spots that aired in the last eight months of the election presidential candidate appeared in 42% of spots.

Attack, Advocacy, and Contrast in Candidate-Centered Issue Ads

Ads advocate for a candidate by only promoting the aspirant's merits, or attack by only mentioning harmful information, or contrast two candidates by mentioning helpful information about one candidate and harmful information about the other. These last kind of advertisements contain both attack and advocacy components. It is not fair to assume that all attack ads are good and all advocacy ads are bad. When fair and accurate, each type can provide voters with important information.

APPC's analysis of issue ads in 1996 found them to be distinctly more attack-oriented than any other form of political discourse – candidate advertisements, candidate debates, free air time, or news coverage (See "Issue Advocacy Advertising During the 1996 Campaign," Annenberg Public Policy Center Report No. 16, September 1997.).

Unique Ads

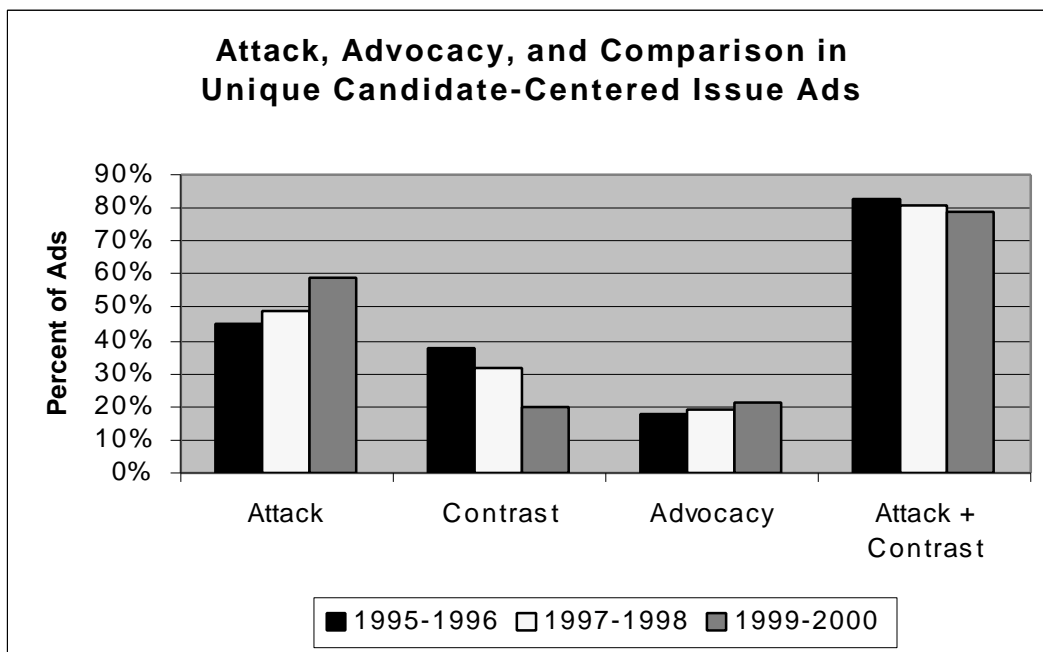
Comparing Previous Years. When we examined unique candidate-centered issue ads over the past three election cycles we found a slight increase in attack and advocacy ads, but a decrease in contrast ads. This year, as in the past, the plurality of candidate-centered ads attacked the opponent. However, this year 59% of ads attacked, a higher percent than in either of the previous two election cycles that we have monitored (49% in 1997-1998 and 45% in 1995-1996). Similarly there was an increasing percent of advocacy ads over this same period, though pure advocacy ads still make up a minority of ads (18% in 1995-1996, 19% in 1997-1998, and 21% in 1999-2000). Conversely the percent of comparison ads has dropped from 38% in 1995-1996, to 32% in 1997-1998, to 20% in 1999-2000.

The rise in unique attack ads might at first glance suggest that attack is on the rise, however, the overall level of attack as measured by any ad containing any attack (i.e., attack ads plus contrast ads) has dropped slightly from 83% in 1995-1996, to 81% in 1997-1998, to 79% in this last cycle.

The overall level of attack in unique ads, as measured by ads with any attack component (attack plus contrast), has dropped slightly over the last three election cycles.

Early and Late Ads. Unlike the previous election cycle, this year we found the percent of unique attack ads dropped in the last two months before the election. However this is because the percent of attack ads was unusually high before September not because the percent was low after August. The percentage of attack ads after August of this year was the same as in the last election. In both cases about 57% of unique ads mentioning a candidate from after August were attack ads. In this year, however, the percent of attack ads airing before September (63%) was much greater than in the previous election cycle (35%), resulting in a drop instead of a rise to get to about 57%.

Unique attack ads were more prominent early in this election cycle than last.



The rise in pre-September unique attack ads in this election cycle came at a cost to contrast ads, which were unusually scarce early in the campaign, accounting for just 5.5% of unique pre-September candidate ads. Prior to September of 1997-1998 contrast ads made up a much greater percent (38% of the unique ads).

Pure advocacy ads dropped as this election cycle advanced from 32% of unique ads that mention a candidate prior to September to 17% of unique ads after August. The same pattern occurred in 1998 with advocacy ads dropping from 27% to 13%.

Table 1: Percent of Various Types of Unique Ads that Mention a Candidate

Year Time Period	1997-1998		1999-2000	
	Before Sept.	After August	Before Sept.	After August
Attack	35%	58%	63%	57%
Advocacy	27%	13%	32%	17%
Contrast	38%	28%	5.5%	25%
Attack and Contrast	73%	86%	68%	82%

From March to August 2000 advocacy was the dominant type of argument in the televised candidate spots.

Broadcast Television Spots

When we examined the television air data we found that as a percentage attack rose and advocacy fell as the election neared. Fifty-six percent of spots that mentioned a candidate that aired in the two months before this election were attack ads, 15% were advocacy ads, and 28% were contrast ads. When looking at any ad mentioning a candidate with an attack component (attack ads plus contrast ads) the percent of television spots aired after August is very high (84%). However, between March and August 35% of the ads attacked, 52% advocated, and 13% contrasted. This suggests that after Super Tuesday and before August advocacy is the dominant mode of candidate-centered televised issue spots.

The finding that the percent of attack in televised spots increased when comparing the period March to August with the period September to Election Day may appear to contradict the finding that attack among unique ads dropped when comparing January 1999 through September 2000 to August through election day. There are several possible reasons for the disparity in these number. First the unique issue ads cover both radio and television ads while the television spots data do not cover both media. Second, the time periods compared are different the unique data cover almost two years of issue advocacy while the spot data cover just the ads aired after Super Tuesday (the last eight months of the campaign), and finally the unique data do not take into account how many times an ad aired. It gives equal weight to all ads whether they aired once or many times.

In the two months before the election fully 84% of televised candidate spots had an attack component.

Table 2: Percents of Various Types of Television Spots Airing that Mention a Candidate

1999-2000	March -- August	September -- Election Day
Attack	35%	56%
Advocacy	52%	15%
Contrast	13%	28%
Attack and Contrast	48%	84%

Note: March – August data start on March 8, 2000. September – Election data data start on September 1, 2000.

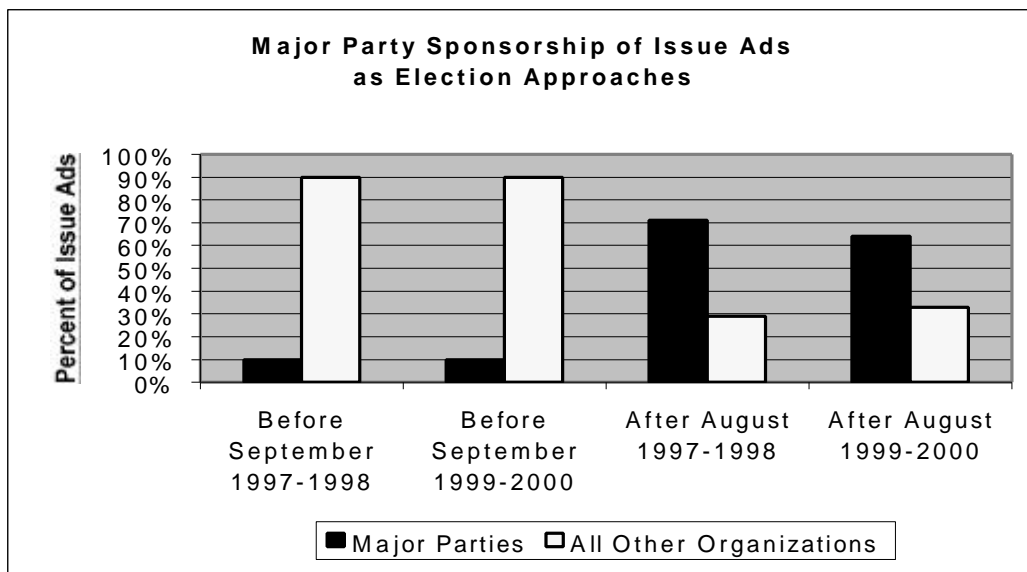
Sponsorship of Issue Advertising

Because issue ads are not federally regulated, sponsors are not subject to disclosure requirements. As a result, who paid for an ad may not be apparent to viewers when they see it. Some organizations do identify themselves in the course of an advertisement, but their names may be unfamiliar to viewers and/or deliberately vague. For example, “Citizens for Better Medicare” is not a grass-roots generated group of citizens, but an arm of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers Association (PhRMA). Please see Chapter 3 for our descriptions of the sponsors of issue ads. In this section we look at the top sponsors of issue ads.

The Major Parties

Unique Ads

When taking the election cycle as a whole, about half (55%) of all unique issue ads are sponsored by organizations and not the major parties (Democrats 23%, Republicans 21%). However, that picture changes dramatically if you divide the sponsorship of issue ads between those airing before August and after September.



This year the major parties sponsored about 10% of unique ads from before September 1st (Democrats 5.8%, Republicans 4.7%). Similarly in the 1997-1998 election cycle, only about 10% of unique ads from before September 1st were sponsored by a major political party (Republicans 7%, Democrats 3%). In contrast, this year after August, the major parties sponsored over two-thirds of unique issue ads (Democrats 33%, Republicans 31%, all other organizations 33%). Republicans and Democrats also sponsored the majority of unique issue ads after August in 1998. In that year Democrats sponsored 25%, Republicans 46% (71% combined), and all other organizations 29% of unique issue ads from after August.

Almost all of the unique party-sponsored ads include mention of a candidate (98%) and 88% pictured a candidate. Ninety percent of unique party ads are from the two months before the election.

Broadcast Television Spots

The percent of party sponsored television spots is about the same when we take into account the number of times the spots aired after Super Tuesday. Republicans and Democrats sponsored about two-thirds of the spots (Republicans 32%, Democrats 33%) and other organizations about one-third (35%). The distribution was about the same during the last two months of the campaign, though Republicans outpaced Democrats by a few percentage points instead of the reverse as found in the unique ad data (Republicans 36%, Democrats 32%, all other organizations 32%). When looking at the television air data from March through August, the Democrats and Republicans are much more prominent than the unique ads would suggest. Democrats sponsored 35%, Republicans 25%, and other organizations 40% of the television ads airing between March and August. Thus, the air data after Super Tuesday suggest that the major parties were already playing an important role in the sponsorship of issue ads as early as March and not just in the last two months before the election. It also shows that Democrats had a stronger presence earlier and Republicans later in the campaign.

After Super Tuesday the two major parties sponsored two-thirds of the broadcast television spots. Almost all of these ads mentioned a candidate and had an attack component.

Candidates in the Major Party Spots. Almost all (99.8%) of major party televised spots from the last two months of the campaign mentioned a candidate (compared with other organizations whose spots broadcast during this period mention candidates 84% of the time). Surprisingly, the major party ads were just as likely to mention a candidate from March to August as they were from September to November (99.8%). No matter when they are run party ads are almost always about candidates. In contrast, the non-party spots that ran from March through August were less likely to mention a candidate (31% of their ads) than their ads from later in the election cycle (after August, 84%).

Argument in the Major Party Spots. Of the television spots aired after August that mentioned a candidate, 44% of Republican, 66% of Democratic, and 63% of other organizations' ads attacked. During this same period, 6.0% of Republican ads mentioning a candidate advocated, while 11% of Democratic ads, and 31% of other organizations did so. Fifty percent of Republican ads, 23% of Democratic ads, and 6.0% of other organizations' ads contrasted two candidates. By adding the percent of aired spots that attack candidates to the percent of aired spots that contrast we see that the percent of ads that include any attack in the last two months is quite high. This is true more so for both the Republicans (94%) and the Democrats (89%) than for the other organizations (69%).

Table 3: Percent of Different Sponsors' Aired Television Spots that Attack, Advocate, and Contrast

Organization	Democratic Ads		Republican Ads		Other Organizations Ads	
	March-Aug	Sept-Nov	March-Aug	Sept-Nov	March-Aug	Sept-Nov
Attack	32%	66%	18%	44%	78%	63%
Advocacy	54%	11%	65%	6.0%	19%	31%
Contrast	14%	23%	16%	50%	2.6%	6.0%
Attack and Contrast	46%	89%	34%	94%	81%	69%

Note: March-Aug ads aired 3/8/00 through 8/31/00. Sept-Nov aired 9/1/00 though 11/7/00.

Attack was less common for the parties and more common for other organizations from March to August. Thirty-two percent of Democratic, 18% of Republican, and 78% of other organizations' ads attacked a candidate between March and August. Meanwhile, advocacy was more common early in the election for the parties and less common for other organizations (Democrats 54%, Republicans 65%, other 19%). Comparison ads airing on television by all groups were less common between March and August than after (Democrats 14%, Republicans 16%, other 2.6%).

Agenda Among the Major Party Ads. When looking at the Democratic spots that aired after Super Tuesday, healthcare was the dominant issue (32% of their spots). That was followed by candidate ads (that had no issues or no single issues) 26%, education 13%, and environment 11%. Candidates were the most common theme for Republican ads accounting for 22% of their ads, followed by Social Security (20%) healthcare (19%), education 16%, and taxes (9%).

All Other Organizations

Table 4: Organizations Sponsoring the Most Number of Non-Party Ads

March 8, 2000 – November 7, 2000		September 1, 2000 – November 7, 2000	
1	Citizens for Better Medicare 27%	1	Citizens for Better Medicare 20%
2	AFL-CIO 15%	2	AFL-CIO 14%
3	Business Roundtable 7.1%	3	Chamber of Commerce 10%
4	Chamber of Commerce 6.5%	4	Planned Parenthood 8.3%
5	Planned Parenthood 5.3%	5	Americans For Job Security 7.1%

Broadcast Television Spots

Our data set contains ads from 130 different sponsors. When the major parties are not included, Citizens for Better Medicare (an arm of the pharmaceutical industry) aired the most spots after Super Tuesday (27% of non-party ads). It was also the biggest sponsor of non-party ads aired in the last two months of the election (20%). The AFL-CIO (a labor union) was the non-party organization sponsoring the second most number of ads after March 7 (15% of non-party ads) and after August (14% of non-party ads). Business Roundtable (an organization that represents the CEO's of America's largest corporations) came in third for ads aired after Super Tuesday (7.1% of non-party ads). The Chamber of Commerce (a trade group for business interests) was fourth for spots aired after Super Tuesday accounting for 6.5% of non-party television ads. They were followed Planned Parenthood (an pro-family planning political advocacy group) with, 5.3% of non-party spots airing after Super Tuesday.

The Issue Advertising Agenda

Tables 5: Ranking of Top Issues in Television Spots During Various Time Periods

Spots Aired Six of Last Eight Month Before Election March 8, 2000 – August 31, 2000		Spots Aired Last Two Months of Election Sept 1, 2000 -- November 7, 2000	
1 Healthcare	42%	1 Healthcare	32%
2 Environment	15%	2 Candidates (no single issue)	22%
3 Education	12%	3 Social Security	9.0%
4 Candidates (no single issue)	9.1%	4 Education	7.4%
5 Social Security	8.0%	5 Taxation	6.9%
6 Foreign Affairs/Defense	4.7%	6 Abortion	5.1%
7 Abortion	2.2%	7 Environment	4.3%
8 Taxation	1.4%	8 Gun Control	4.0%
9 Gun Control	0.7%	9 Foreign Affairs/Defense	0.2%

Healthcare

Healthcare was the number one topic for issue ads. It was the most common topic among unique issue ads for the whole election cycle accounting for 23% of all unique issue ads. It was the most common issue mentioned in television spots in the after Super Tuesday (March 8, 2000 though Election Day) accounting for over a third of all television issue ads aired during this period (35%). It was the most common issue mentioned between March and August (42%) and during the last two months of the campaign (September to November, 32%).

Broadcast Television Spots

Sponsors. The Democratic Party was the single biggest sponsor of televised health-care ads airing after Super Tuesday (29%).¹⁷ It was followed by Citizens for Better Medicare, with 26% of the spots; the Republican Party (18%); AFL-CIO (13%); Chamber of Commerce (5.9%); and the Alliance for Quality Nursing Home Care, an organization representing nursing home owners, (3.0%). When the major parties are excluded, business interests made up five of the top six sponsors of healthcare ads accounted for 37% of the televised healthcare issue ads in the last eight months of the election. Only one of top six non-party organizations airing healthcare issue ads represented labor interests.

Together the two major parties sponsored 47% of ads about healthcare in the eight months before the election. If we look at televised issue ad spots from the last two months of the campaign, the major parties made up an even larger percent, accounting for 52% of the televised healthcare issue ads.

¹⁷ Though the Democrats had the greatest number of healthcare ads aired between March 8 and Election Day they did not spend the most money. Citizens for Better Medicare ran the second largest number of ads but spent the most money suggesting that the ratings points for these ads may have been greater and therefore the CBM ads may have reached a greater audience.

Prescription Benefits for Medicare Patients: The single issue gaining the most attention in terms of number of ads aired after August was the inclusion of prescription drug benefits in Medicare, which accounted for about 56% of the healthcare ads that aired between March 8, 2000 and Election Day. Most of these ads about (68%) were sponsored by organizations that opposed including prescription benefits in Medicare (i.e., Republican Party, Citizens for Better Medicare, Chamber of Commerce). Two organizations ran spots in favor of government sponsored drug coverage for Medicare, the Democratic Party and the AFL-CIO. The other major issues covered by healthcare spots after Super Tuesday was The Patients Bill of Rights (most ads were run by the Democrats supporting the measure) and appeals to increase Medicare payments to hospitals (run mostly by hospital owners).

About two-thirds of the ads about prescription drug coverage airing after Super Tuesday opposed prescription drug coverage under Medicare. This may have tipped the Medicare discussion in favor of Bush.

Candidates

Broadcast Television Spots

The second most prominent topic for issue ads broadcast after Super Tuesday was candidate ads. These were ads that were about a candidate's election and either mentioned no issues or multiple issues. Ads with candidates as their only major issue accounted for 18% of the ads aired after Super Tuesday. They became more prominent at the election neared moving in rank from fourth (9.1% of spots) between March and August of 2000 to second (22% of spots) from September to Election Day. The major parties sponsored 84% of the ads that aired between March 8, 2000 and Election Day (Democrats 48%, Republicans 37%). Business Roundtable, an association of chief executive officers of 200 leading U.S. corporations that support a pro-business political agenda, followed with 5.6% of the spots. All of these spots made a case for or against a candidate.

Unique Ads

Candidates were about equally prominent among the unique issue ads where it also ranked second. Twenty percent of ads fell into this category. The major parties were the prime backer of these ads, sponsoring 71% of them (Republicans 38%, Democrats 35%). The Republican Leadership Council, an organization that supports fiscally conservative and socially inclusive Republicans, followed next. All of these ads made cases for or against candidates.

Education

Broadcast Television Ads

Education was the third most often cited subject of ads broadcast after Super Tuesday. It accounted for 8.8% of the ads aired in that period. Education dropped in prominence from a ranking of third for spots aired between March and August (12%) to fourth among ads aired after August (7.4%). Again the two major parties were the major sponsors of these ads. Together they sponsored 91% of these ads (53% Republicans, 38% Democrats). These ads focused on smaller class sizes, education standards, student loans, and tax credits but always in the context of advocating for or against a candidate. It is interesting to note that the Republicans ran more issue spots than the Democrats did on this traditional Democratic issue in the eight months before the election. Emily's List, an organization dedicated to helping Democratic women who support abortion rights get into office, was the sponsor with the next greatest number of spots aired (1.6%). Their advertisement promoted House candidate Debbie Stabenow's record on education.

Unique Ads

Education accounted for 7.3% of all unique issue ads making it fourth most common issue among the unique ads. More than half (59%) of these ads were sponsored by the major parties (Democrats 38%, Republicans 21%). The American Federation of Teachers, a teacher's labor union, sponsored the next most unique ads (23%). Their ads focused on a variety of current education issues such as learning standards, school violence, and class size.

Social Security

Broadcast Television Ads

Social Security was fourth on the list of top issues aired in the eight months before the election (8.7%). It moved up in importance as the election approached moving from fifth (8.0% of the spots) between March and August to third (9.0% of spots) for September through November. The parties sponsored all of the spots that aired after Super Tuesday. Republicans aired 75% and Democrats 25% of the social security ads. These ads tended to push the major parties' competing plans to reform the social security system usually in the context of making a case for or against specific candidates.

Unique Ads

In terms of unique ads, Social Security played a much smaller role, dropping out of the list of top five issues. It accounted for just 3.3% of unique issue ads and ranked ninth. Eighty-two percent of these unique ads were sponsored by the major parties (Republicans 50%, Democrats 32%). The Committee for Good Common Sense, a pro-Libertarian group made up of people who would benefit from the privatization of Social Security, was next for sponsorship of unique issue ads (5.3%).

Environment

Broadcast Television Ads

When accounting for air data after Super Tuesday, the environment accounted for 7.7% of the issues giving it a ranking of fifth. The issue dropped in importance as the election approached. It was ranked second of the issues from March 8, 2000 through August 31, 2000 (15% of spots), but it was ranked seventh in the last two months of the election accounting for just 4.3% of the spots.

The Democratic Party was the major sponsor of these ads (48%). They were followed by the League of Conservation Voters (a pro-conservation advocacy and education group) 20%, Republicans 16%, and the Sierra Club (a pro-environment advocacy group) 8.8%, and Americans for Job Security (a pro-business lobbying group) 2.2%. The Democratic Party, Sierra Club, and the League of Conservation Voters ads tended to oppose candidates they said would allow pollution and threaten a safe and environment. The Republican Party ad defended Presidential Candidate George Bush's record on keeping the environment clean and charged that Al Gore had a bad record on preventing pollution. The American's for Job Security ads tended to oppose the removal of the damn on the Snake River.

Unique Ads

The environment played a larger role among unique ads making it the third most common topic. The environment appeared in 11% of the distinct issue ads. Most of these (57%) were part of an ad campaign run by the Sierra Club. The Sierra Club ad campaign highlighted pollution problems across the nation. The second largest sponsor was the League of Conservation Voters, which backed 8.5% of these ads. Its campaign also focused on various problems associated with pollution.

Taxation

Broadcast Television Ads

Taxation was the sixth most often cited subject in final eight months -- accounting for 5.1% of spots. It moved up in importance as the election approached; it ranked eighth among issues from March to August accounting for just 1.4% of the television spots, but it ranked 5th among the spots from after August (6.9%).

Two organizations sponsored almost all of the ads mentioning taxes. The Republicans sponsored 58% of the ads and American's for Job Security sponsored 26% of the ads. The Democrats backed 11% of these ads. Most of the Republican ads supported candidates they said would reduce taxes and opposed candidates they said would increase taxes. Americans for Job Security ads opposed candidates they said would raise taxes.

Unique Ads

Taxation was sixth among issues mentioned in the unique issue ads. These ads accounted for just 5.4% of the distinct advertisements. Republicans sponsored 59% of these ads, Democrats 9.8%, and Americans for Job Security 6.6%. These ads mainly made cases for or against candidates based on their taxation policies or histories.

Abortion

Broadcast Television Ads

Abortion ranked seventh among the issues ads broadcast after Supper Tuesday. It also ranked seventh among topics in ads broadcast from March through August (2.2% of ads) and moved up slightly in the last two months of the campaign to a ranking of sixth, accounting for 5.1% of ads.

The largest sponsor of ads about abortion was the Planned Parenthood Action Fund (46%), a pro-family planning political advocacy group, followed by the Democratic Party (15%), Pro-Choice Decision, an organization that advocates for abortion rights (14%), and the National Abortion Rights Action League (10%), another organization that advocates for abortion rights. The top six sponsors of ads about abortion advocated for abortion rights and comprised over 90% of the spots aired about abortion. Most of these ads promoted candidates who supported abortion rights and opposed those who did not. We were not able to find funding or air information for most of the Right to Life ads and as such they are not fully represented in the air data.

Unique Ads

Abortion ranked seventh among unique issue comprising 4.6% of the ads. The National Abortion Rights Action League sponsored the most unique ads (52%) followed the Right to Life Organization, an advocacy group that opposes abortion rights, (17%). The Democratic Party was third with 15%. In general NARAL and the Democratic Party ads advocated for candidates who support abortion rights and against those who did not. In general, the Right to Life ads argued that abortion rights should be abandoned.

Gun Control

Broadcast Television Spots

Gun control played a small role in the last eight month of the campaign, ranking eighth and accounting for just 2.9% of the spots. It was similarly rare between March and August (ranking 9th with less than 1% of spots) and September through November (eighth with 4% of the ads). It was however, among the top five for unique ads (6.1%).

Handgun Control, an advocacy group supporting legislation to promote gun safety, was the single leading sponsor, backing 29% of the ads that aired after March 7. Their ads tended to highlight accidents by children with guns and advocated closing loopholes in existing gun laws. It was followed by the Democratic Party (18%) which ads tended to support candidates in favor of gun control. The Hunting and Shooting Sports Heritage Fund, an advocacy organization backed by a firearms trade association, was next with 17.5% of the gun ads after Super Tuesday. Their ads tended to support an unrestricted right to guns and oppose restrictions on the free purchase of guns. Campaign for a Progressive Future, an organization that advocates for gun control, was forth with 16% of the ads. Their ads focused on candidates who opposed gun control.

Unique Ads

Gun control played a greater role among unique ads (ranking sixth), accounting for 6.1% of these. Almost half (46%) of these ads were part of a National Rifle Association (a lobbying organization for gun owners and the gun industry) campaign against gun control. The second largest sponsor was Handgun Control (23%). Their ads supported gun control candidates and highlighted the dangers of guns to children.

Methodology

How We Track Issue Ads & Spending

Issue ads were defined as ads sponsored by someone other than the candidate that did not use any of the words designated by the Supreme Court to constitute express advocacy (reject Smith, Smith for congress, cast your ballot for Smith, Support Smith, vote for Smith, elect Smith, vote against Smith, defeat Smith). We analyzed only ads about issues pending before Congress or about Presidential, House and Senate Candidates. No ads about ballot issues, state or local offices, or state or local legislation were included. Public service announcements, aired at no cost to the sponsor, were also excluded. This study looked only at radio and television broadcast advertisements.

Data for coding were collected from seven sources: a) National Journal Ad Spotlight web site was (1/1/99 – 11/7/00) for issue ads and spending figures; b) National Journal Hotline tapes (6/16/99 – 11/7/00); c) Campaign Media Analysis Group (provided issue ads and spending estimates related to the issue ads in the presidential campaign in the top 75 media markets (1/1/99 – 8/31/00)); d) Campaign Media Analysis Group (provided issue ads and spending estimates for all issue ads in the 75 media markets (3/8/00 – 11/7/00)); e) Lexis-Nexis news articles (searched biweekly for stories about issue advertisements and spending). When stories were found the organizations were contacted to gather the ads (1/1/99 – 11/7/00), f) When no other sources could be found, known sponsors of ads were contacted to provide ads and to ask for spending estimates; and g) Web sites known to display ads were visited to gather ads (1/1/99 – 11/7/00).

Data were coded by two of the authors. All reported variables were reliable at a Krippendorff's Alpha of .70 or better.

Appendix 1

Groups Running Issue Ads

The Annenberg Public Policy Center tracked issue advertising from over 100 groups. Complete descriptions of the groups and their activities can be found at www.appcpenn.org/issueads. The following groups sponsored issue advocacy advertising during the 1999-2000 cycle:

AARP	Democratic Party
AFL-CIO	Education Reform Alliance
Alabama Hospital Association	Emily's List
Alliance for Florida Economy	Federation for American Immigration Reform
Alliance for Quality Nursing Home Care	Federation of American Health Systems
American Association of Health Plans	First American Education Project
American Cancer Society	Friends of the Earth
American Civil Liberties Union	Handgun Control, Inc.
American Conservative Union	Hands Across New Jersey
American Family Voices	Hands off the Internet
American Federation of Teachers	Health Benefits Coalition
American Immigration Control Foundation	Health Insurance Association of America
American Medical Association	Healthcare Reform Project
American Seniors Inc.	Healthtrack.org
American Society of Anesthesiologists	Heritage Forests Campaign
Americans for Balanced Energy Choices	Human Rights Campaign
Americans for Economic Growth	Judicial Watch Org.
Americans for Hope, Growth & Opportunity	League of Conservation Voters
Americans for Job Security	League of Women Voters
Americans for Responsible Medicare Spending	Log Cabin Republicans
Americans for Tax Reform	Montanans for Common Sense Mining Laws
Antitrust Coalition for Consumer Choice in Health Care	Motorola/ Business Coalition for China Trade
Aretino Industries	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
Association of Builders & Contractors	NASA Langley Community Support Team
Better World Campaign	National Abortion Rights Action League
Black America's Political Action Committee	National Association of Realtors
Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities	National Center for Policy Analysis
Business Roundtable	National Cttee. to Preserve Social Security & Medicare
Campaign for a Progressive Future	National Environmental Trust
Campaign for America's Children/Coalition for Better Education	National Pro Life Alliance
Catholic Health Association	National Rifle Association
Center for Reclaiming America	National Right to Life
Center for Reproductive Law & Policy	National Right to Work Committee
Christian Action Network	National Shooting Sports Federation
Citizens for a Better America	National Smokers Alliance
Citizens for Better Medicare	Natural Resources Defense Council
Citizens for Life	Negative Population Growth
Clean Air Trust/Clean Air Project	New York Conservative Party
Club for Growth	North Carolina Voters Education Fund
Coalition for Affordable Quality Health Care	Nuclear Energy Institute
Coalition for Asbestos Resolution	PARCA
Coalition for the Future American Worker/ Americans for Better Immigration	Peace Action Committee/ Peace Voter Fund
Coalition to Protect Americans Now	People for the American Way
Coalition to Protect America's Health Care	People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
Committee for Good Common Sense	Pharmaceutical Research & Manufacturers of America
Competitive Broadband Coalition	Planned Parenthood Action Fund
Conservative Leadership PAC	Priests for Life
Council for a Livable World	Pro Choice Decision
Cuban American National Foundation	Project Abolition
	Republican Ideas Political Committee
	Republican Jewish Coalition
	Republican Leadership Coalition

Republican Leadership Council
Republican Party
Republicans for Choice
Republicans for Clean Air
RuffPAC
Shape the Debate
Sierra Club
Solutions for a New Century
South Carolina Heritage Coalition
Susan B. Anthony List
Taxpayers for Common Sense
Traditional Values Coalition

U.S. Term Limits/ Americans for Limited Terms
Union of Concerned Scientists
United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania
United Steelworkers of America
US Action
US Chamber of Commerce
Voters for Campaign Truth
Voters for Choice
Washington Conservation Voters
West Virginia Rivers Coalition
World Campaign Organization
Youth Christian League