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Annenberg Public Policy Center Tracks over \$509 Million in Reported Expenditures on Issue Advocacy

Almost \$248 million was spent on TV ads in the top 75 media markets after Super Tuesday, \$85 million addressed health care issues.

Over a half a billion dollars was allocated to issue advocacy advertising in the 1999-2000 cycle according to analysis by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania. The total, based on reports in the media, the organizations themselves and/or tracking from the Campaign Media Analysis Group (CMAG), surpasses the totals for the 1996 and the 1998 cycles. The research was funded by The Carnegie Corporation of New York.

In addition, for the first time, Annenberg researchers were able to track television spending in the top 75 media markets in the country after Super Tuesday. Using CMAG data, Annenberg researchers found that almost \$248 million was spent on television issue ads in the top 75 media markets during the period of March 8 – November 7, 2000. The political parties accounted for almost two-thirds of the spending on TV spots after Super Tuesday and almost all of the ads they aired specifically mention a candidate and include some form of attack. In the last two months of the campaign, almost all (94%) of the TV issue ads airing in the top 75 media markets made the case for or against a candidate.

“This research raises some important questions: Why are television viewers inundated with issue ads as election day approaches, if by law these ads are not supposed to advocate the election or defeat of political candidates?” said Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center and Dean of the Annenberg School for Communication.

Examination of television issue ad spending after Super Tuesday (from March 8 – November 7, 2000) found (**all bullets refer to television spending during this period, not overall spending**):

- The two parties and one other group – Citizens for Better Medicare – accounted for almost three out of every four dollars spent on TV ads after Super Tuesday.
- \$85 million of the television spending was around the issue of healthcare.
- Over \$156 million was spent by the political parties on television advertising after Super Tuesday (including RNC, DNC, the party Senate and House Committees and the state political parties).
- Citizens for Better Medicare was the interest group with the greatest television spending, purchasing \$25.4 million worth of ads after Super Tuesday. The AFL-CIO was next, spending \$9.5 million.

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- The two major parties, Citizens for Better Medicare, the AFL-CIO, Planned Parenthood, the Chamber of Commerce, the Business Roundtable, the League of Conservation Voters, Americans for Job Security, Emily's List, and the Coalition to Protect America's Healthcare accounted for 90% of the spending on television issue ads in the top 75 media markets after Super Tuesday. Sixty five other groups accounted for only 10% of the spending.
- Viewers in Detroit and Kansas City saw the most television issue ads, while Detroit and Philadelphia had the most spending on issue ads.
- TV viewers in Detroit, Kansas City, Seattle, Louisville, Lexington and St. Louis saw over 10,000 issue ads during the final eight months of the campaign.
- TV viewers in Birmingham, Phoenix, Oklahoma City, San Antonio, Baltimore, Greensboro and Wichita each saw fewer than 500 ads in the final eight months of the campaign.

“Issue ads have become a dominant advertising force during political campaigns. And while we estimate half a billion was spent on broadcast issue advocacy in the 2000 cycle, that number probably underestimates the total being spent.” added Jamieson. “Stations charge more to air issue ads as election day approaches, groups run radio and print ads targeting voters, and phone-calling has become a new arena for issue advocacy.”

About the TV Data

The data used by the Annenberg researchers to examine television spending after Super Tuesday include information about issue advertising (around federal issues and House, Senate, and Presidential races) running in the top 75 media markets on network television and national cable. The data do not include local cable advertising. In addition, the spending estimates used by CMAG do not take into account the fact that most stations increase their advertising rates as election day approaches (see complete report for explanation of the data set).

About the Overall Expenditure Data

The data used by the Annenberg researchers to determine reported expenditures includes an organization's total reported budget for issue advocacy during the cycle or expenditures for a series of ads or just one flight of ads or organization self-reports. In fact, it probably underestimates expenditures, since in some cases, organizations were unwilling to reveal how much they were spending and the numbers contained in the analysis only include expenditures for those ads researchers could tie to spending reports. For some organizations that sponsored issue ads researchers could locate no reports for ad expenditures (see complete report for an explanation of the data set).

The Annenberg Public Policy Center tracked issue advertising from over 100 groups. The full report and complete descriptions of the groups and their activities can be found at www.appcpenn.org/issueads.

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The Annenberg Public Policy Center was established by publisher and philanthropist Walter Annenberg in 1994 to create a community of scholars within the University of Pennsylvania that would examine the role of communications in public policy issues at the local, state and federal levels. The Center has four ongoing research foci: Information and Society; Media and the Developing Mind; Media and the Dialogue of Democracy; Health Communications. The Annenberg Public Policy Center supports research and sponsors lectures and conferences in these areas.