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**New Annenberg Research Tracks over \$105 Million in Inside-the-Beltway  
Print and TV Issue Ads During the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress**

**The Side With Greater Spending Was More Likely To Prevail**

(Washington, DC) Over \$105 million was spent on broadcast and print legislative issue advocacy inside the beltway from 2001- 2002, most of it with greater ad buying for one side of an issue than another, according to a new report released today by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania.

The report, *Legislative Issue Advertising in the 107th Congress*, found that of the 12 straightforward legislative issues examined, all but two had greater spending on the prevailing side. For example,

- Eighty-nine percent of spending went to oppose stiffer regulations on air emissions and they were not imposed.
- Ninety-six percent of spending went to promote a nuclear waste dump in Nevada and legislation passed.
- Eighty-five percent of spending went to oppose laws that would have prevented drug companies from extending patents and no legislation was passed.

The report identified over 670 different organizations and coalitions that sponsored over 5,000 print and television ads from 2001 - 2002. Airtime for television legislative advertising in the Washington area in 2001 and 2002 cost over \$41 million and was sponsored by 70 different organizations while spending for over 5,000 print ads purchased by over 600 organizations totaled about \$64 million.

“The imbalance in spending on legislative issue advocacy raises such questions as is the public interest well served when the message of one side is shouted and the other side whispered,” said Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center. “Just as we have recently had a public policy debate about money in the campaign process, our society has to decide how we want to handle money in the legislative process.”

The top issues covered in the ads were energy/environment, health care, economy and business, and telecommunications. These four broad issues accounted for three out of every five dollars (61%) spent on inside-the-beltway legislative issue advertising (See Table 1 for a breakdown of spending by issue.).

Despite the large number of organizations and coalitions sponsoring issue ads, a few big spenders accounted for most of the dollars spent, with over half of all money coming from the 20 largest spenders. Spending on television advertising was even more concentrated with the top 10 spenders accounting for 77% of the spending (See Table 2 for a list of the top spenders.). In addition, among organizations that spent over \$1 million on issue advocacy, business interests outspent other interests. About 72% of these organizations that ran ads (18 of 25) represented business interests.

“Businesses can buy disproportionately large amounts of advertising, and this may skew political speech and therefore public policy,” said Erika Falk, author of the report and Research Director at the Annenberg Public Policy Center. “The imbalance in legislative issue advertising targeting those who live and work in Washington means that policymakers may be repeatedly exposed to uncorrected and one-sided claims, said Falk.”

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## Key Findings:

### Energy/Environment

Energy/Environment accounted for the most spending with approximately \$15.4 million spent to advertise issues related to a National Energy Policy. Roughly 94% (about \$14.5 million) was spent by energy/business interests, with “non-business” interests spending the remaining 6%.

### Healthcare

Three subtopics accounted for 77% of the \$20 million worth of health care advertising. They were: prescription drug benefits (42% or \$8.4 million), increased federal funding for hospitals and other providers (19% or \$3.8 million), and expanded coverage for the uninsured (17% or 3.4 million). In addition, of the close to \$20 million spent on health care advertising, industry groups (such as pharmaceutical manufacturers, insurance companies, and business associations) spent the most, over \$7 million. They were followed by health care providers, such as hospitals, nursing homes, and doctors (\$4.7 million). Consumer groups, such as the AARP (formerly American Association Retired Persons) came third, with about \$3 million in spending.

### Broadband Deregulation

Overall, there was about \$9.5 million worth of advertising around the issue of broadband deregulation with spending roughly equal on both sides of the issue. About \$4.9 million went to ads that opposed the various bills and regulations that would release the telecom companies from broadband sharing requirements. About \$4.6 million was spent in support of such bills (e.g., Tauzin-Dingell).

The report also found that some organizations obscure the nature of their sponsorship by using pseudonyms that are vague or potentially misleading. Among the organizations that sponsored ads during the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Annenberg researchers noted the following:

- **Americans for Balanced Energy Choices:** A coalition of mining companies, coal transporters, and electricity producers, primarily funded by the coal industry.
- **Black Alliance for Educational Options:** A pro-voucher advocacy group that accepts funding from a number of largely white, conservative foundations.
- **Citizens for Better Medicare:** A group created by the pharmaceutical industry that was formed to block the Clinton Administration's proposals for a drug benefit for seniors.
- **Coalition for Affordable and Reliable Energy:** An organization dedicated to promoting the use of coal.
- **Coalition to Protect America's Health Care:** A coalition of hospital owners and operators that advocates for increasing federal funding to hospitals.

### Methodology

Annenberg researchers examined ads that ran in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area and had as their subject issues before the president, Congress, a regulatory agency, or were a matter of public policy debate. To be included, ads had to run in 2001 or 2002 in the *Washington Times*, *Washington Post*, *The Hill*, *Congress Daily AM*, or *Roll Call*. Also included were broadcast ads that ran on local DC stations and ads that ran nationally on the networks or cable.

The full report and methodology can be found on [www.appcpenn.org/issueads](http://www.appcpenn.org/issueads). The study and the website were funded by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

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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 Annenberg Public Policy Center supports research and sponsors lectures and conferences.*

## Legislative Issue Advertising in the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress

Table 1: Top 10 Television and Print Issues in D.C. Legislative Issue Ad  
2001 and 2002 (In Millions of Dollars)

Top Print and Television Issues	Estimated Total Spending	Percent of Total Spending
1. Environment/Energy	20.82	19.7
2. Health Care	19.61	18.5
3. Economy/Business	12.16	11.5
4. Telecommunications/Internet	11.84	11.2
5. Education	7.48	7.1
6. Government Spending	7.34	6.9
7. Foreign Affairs/Defense	7.05	6.7
8. Abortion/Family Planning	6.05	5.7
9. Trade	3.04	2.9
10. Social Security	1.53	1.4

Table 2: Organizations Spending More than Two Million Dollars on D.C.  
(Television and Print) Legislative Issue Ads in 2001 and 2002 (In Millions of Dollars)

Organization	Estimated Total Spending	Percent of Total Spending
Americans for Balanced Energy Choices	8.32	7.9
National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League	5.56	5.3
Voices for Choices	4.34	4.1
Black Alliance for Educational Options	4.33	4.1
AARP (formerly American Association of Retired Persons)	4.14	3.9
Freddie Mac	3.29	3.1
Connect USA	2.78	2.6
Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA)	2.75	2.6
Covering the Uninsured	2.73	2.6
Better World Campaign	2.16	2.0
Lockheed Martin	2.02	1.9