

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Michael Rozansky | mrozansky@asc.upenn.edu | 215.746.0202

Political attack ads and Lincoln's 1864 campaign

On the 150th anniversary of Lincoln's reelection, the campaign is reconceived in videos

PHILADELPHIA – (October 30, 2014) – What would the 1864 presidential campaign have looked like if Abe Lincoln and Gen. George B. McClellan had used today's deceptive campaign techniques and video attack ads?

Lincoln was reelected 150 years ago on Nov. 8. His bruising campaign against McClellan, conducted in the midst of the Civil War, has been reimagined by the political literacy website FlackCheck.org through a [video timeline](#). The ads employ humor, parody, and an array of contemporary deceptive approaches to show what the campaign might have looked like if the candidates of 1864 – and a motley assortment of imaginary third-party super PACs – had created attack ads.

The candidates come under fire for the same kinds of issues that resonate in America today:

- **Immigration:** By signing the Act to Encourage Immigration, an ad from a pro-McClellan super PAC claims, "Lincoln guaranteed that the paupers would continue to pour in... Secure our borders. Safeguard our nation. Save our heritage."
- **Terrorism:** Following a Confederate attack on St. Albans, Vt., other attacks from the South are displayed to the ominous sound of a ticking time bomb. "Abraham Lincoln," the ad says: "Soft on Terror."
- **Leadership:** A pro-Lincoln ad attacks McClellan, the newly nominated Democratic candidate, as short, vain and cowardly. "George 'Little Mac' McClellan. Unfit to Command an Army. Unfit to Lead a Nation."

The campaign-ad timeline features fictional campaign attacks generated by real events. Launched in November 2013 for the 150th anniversary of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, the timeline comprises a dozen ads, including several produced by the renowned political consultants Bob Shrum and Mark McKinnon. Shrum worked with Democratic presidential candidates Al Gore and John Kerry; McKinnon worked with Republicans George W. Bush and John McCain.

In addition to the dozen ads on the timeline, FlackCheck.org has produced nearly 30 other ads employing deception, distraction, attacks on character, and out-of-context words that touch on the issues of the campaign. In one, the pro-Lincoln Super PAC "Steam Boat Veterans for Truth" goes after McClellan's military record. In another, Mary Todd Lincoln's penchant for holding séances in the White House comes under attack.

The video ads, designed for lovers of history, politics and advertising, are accompanied by a lesson plan for teachers. The ads are designed to make mid-19^h century American history and politics more accessible and educate students about how language and facts can be manipulated.

[FlackCheck.org](http://www.flackcheck.org) is a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center's [Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics](http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/leonore-annenberg-institute-for-civics) and a political-literacy companion to the policy center's [FactCheck.org](http://www.factcheck.org), which serves as a “consumer advocate” for voters by monitoring political ads and claims and reducing the level of deception in American politics. The policy center also was one of 26 organizations that formed an alliance in September as the [Civics Renewal Network](http://www.civicsrenewalnetwork.org), which is dedicated to elevating the profile of civics and civic education by making high-quality, no-cost, nonpartisan resources available on its website.

“Lincoln 1864: A Campaign Chronology” can be found at <http://www.flackcheck.org/lincoln-1864/>. The entire set of FlackCheck.org Lincoln videos is at <http://www.flackcheck.org/lincoln-vs-mcclellan/>.

FlackCheck.org (<http://www.flackcheck.org/>), a political literacy companion site to the award-winning FactCheck.org, is dedicated to exposing and educating citizens, especially students, about patterns of deception and other flaws in advertising and political discourse. Both FactCheck.org and FlackCheck.org are projects of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania.

The **Annenberg Public Policy Center** (<http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org>) was established in 1994 to educate the public and policy makers about the media's role in advancing public understanding of political and health issues at the local, state and federal levels.

Follow FlackCheck.org on Twitter: [@FlackCheck](https://twitter.com/FlackCheck).

Follow APPC on Twitter: [@APPCPenn](https://twitter.com/APPCPenn).

Like APPC on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/appc>