



**For Immediate Release:**

## **Ad Spending Tops \$1 Billion, Yet Ad Volume is Down From the Last Midterm Election**

### **Over 600,000 Ads Sponsored by Groups; Almost 40 Percent Dark Money**

(MIDDLETOWN, CT) October 29, 2014 – Spending on television ads in federal and gubernatorial races in the 2013-14 election cycle has now topped \$1 billion, with an estimated \$1.19 billion spent from January 1, 2013 to October 23, 2014 (Table 1). That spending paid for over 2.2 million ad airings.

Including other races into the totals—other statewide offices, state representatives, ballot measures and local offices—raises airings to 2.96 million at an estimated cost of \$1.67 billion.

**Table 1: Ad Spending and Airings**

	<b>Est. Cost</b>	<b>Airings</b>
Governor	529.6 M	861,699
US House	234.5 M	481,307
US Senate	423 M	878,873
<b>Federal and Governor Total</b>	<b>1,187 M</b>	<b>2,221,879</b>
Ballot Measures	155.5 M	191,940
Mayor	76.1 M	83,367
Attorney General	56 M	88,916
State Senate	42.7 M	94,187
Lt. Governor	33.2 M	51,574
Comptroller	18.2 M	16,404
State Rep.	16.4 M	39,972
State Sup. Court	8.9 M	22,643
Other	83.6 M	158,488
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,675 M</b>	<b>2,969,370</b>

Figures are from January 1, 2013 to October 23, 2014. Numbers include broadcast television.  
 CITE SOURCE OF DATA AS: Kantar Media/CMAG with analysis by the Wesleyan Media Project.

The volume of advertising in House, Senate and gubernatorial races is down slightly from the previous midterm election cycle, when 2,433,017 ads aired (January 1, 2009 through Oct. 23, 2010) at a cost of \$1.189 billion.

Table 2 breaks down airings by party since September 1. In both races for the House and Senate, Democrats aired more ads overall this cycle. The Democratic advantage in Senate races is about 30,000 ads, while it is almost 55,000 ads in House races. Republicans hold an advantage of almost 28,000 ads in races for governor.

Compared to the last midterm election in 2010, the volume of advertising is down about 12 percent overall for the comparable time period (September 1 to October 23). Advertising in House races is down most significantly, 27 percent for Democratic ads and 37 percent for Republican spots. “The decline in House ads is consistent with the scope of the battleground this cycle,” said Michael Franz, co-director of the Wesleyan Media Project. “No one expects control of the House to be much in doubt. The clear struggle for control is in Senate races.” In Senate races, pro-Democratic ads are up over 37 percent compared to 2010. Republican Senate ads are down just slightly, by 7 percent.

**Table 2: Ad Totals by Race Type and Sponsorship (9/1-10/23)**

<b>2010 Midterms</b>						
Pro-Democratic Advertising						
	Cand.	Party	Coord.	Group	Total	
Governor	164,517	43,261	0	28,012	235,790	
US House	183,141	38,073	5,219	15,770	242,203	
US Senate	115,098	23,288	5,173	9,254	152,813	
Pro-Republican Advertising						
	Cand.	Party	Coord.	Group	Total	
Governor	202,567	25,881	1,205	34,191	263,844	
US House	90,905	41,621	12,784	44,997	190,307	
US Senate	123,526	15,680	19,198	46,222	204,626	
<b>2014 Midterms</b>						
Pro-Democratic Advertising						
	Cand.	Party	Coord.	Group	Total	% Change
Governor	118,702	41,563	0	45,570	205,835	-12.70%
US House	102,625	43,982	9,408	19,012	175,027	-27.74%
US Senate	116,700	40,574	7,602	44,848	209,724	37.24%
Pro-Republican Advertising						
	Cand.	Party	Coord.	Group	Total	% Change
Governor	141,867	54,170	704	36,920	233,661	-11.44%
US House	62,702	38,108	5,696	14,103	120,609	-36.62%
US Senate	90,352	18,667	13,039	68,005	190,063	-7.12%

Figures are from September 1, 2014, to October 23, 2014 and from September 1, 2010, to October 23, 2010. Numbers include broadcast television. CITE SOURCE OF DATA AS: Kantar Media/CMAG with analysis by the Wesleyan Media Project.

## North Carolina Senate Race Most Intense, Expensive

Table 3 shows the volume of advertising and estimated spending in the most competitive Senate races over the last two weeks. Topping the list is North Carolina, where television stations have aired over 20,000 ads during that time period. Ads supporting Democrat Kay Hagen outnumbered ads supporting Thom Tillis by about 4,000. Iowa had the second most intense Senate race in the past two weeks with over 17,000 ads aired. Ads favoring Republican Joni Ernst outnumbered ads favoring Democrat Bruce Braley by about 1,700.

Republicans continue to be helped by outside groups more than Democrats. In almost all races, a greater share of pro-Republican advertising than pro-Democratic advertising came from outside groups.

**Table 3: Ad Volume and Spending in Top Senate Races (Past Two Weeks)**

State	Total Ads	Pro-Dem Ads	Pro-GOP Ads	Dem % Group	GOP % Group	Pro-Dem \$s	Pro-GOP \$s
NC	20,389	12,178	8,211	30.2%	36.3%	7.4 M	6.3 M
IA	17,416	7,835	9,581	34.0%	51.2%	2.8 M	3.7 M
CO	12,211	6,390	5,821	25.9%	49.6%	4.6 M	4.4 M
GA	10,713	5,976	4,737	6.6%	47.8%	3.2 M	3.7 M
LA	10,354	5,976	4,378	7.6%	27.8%	2.3 M	2.4 M
KY	10,302	4,142	6,160	4.6%	26.4%	1.8 M	3.6 M
AR	8,767	4,336	4,431	18.2%	48.3%	1.9 M	2.2 M
KS*	8,184	3,981	4,203	57.7%	67.6%	1.8 M	2.8 M
AK	7,283	3,638	3,645	25.4%	37.1%	0.5 M	0.6 M
SD**	6,078	3,650	1,737	64.4%	19.0%	0.9 M	0.4 M
NH	5,251	2,665	2,586	23.3%	56.5%	2 M	2.2 M
VA	5,192	3,691	1,501	0.9%	0.0%	2.5 M	1.2 M
MI	4,190	3,503	687	11.2%	24.0%	2.4 M	0.6 M
OR	2,922	2,199	723	0.0%	0.0%	0.8 M	0.2 M
NM	2,886	2,042	844	0.0%	0.0%	0.6 M	0.2 M

Figures are from October 10-23, 2014. Numbers include broadcast television.

\*Numbers for independent candidate, Greg Orman, are reported in the Democratic columns. \*\*South Dakota independent Larry Pressler aired 656 ads at an estimated cost of \$158K.

CITE SOURCE OF DATA AS: Kantar Media/CMAG with analysis by the Wesleyan Media Project.

The most expensive race so far in the 2013-14 election cycle was in North Carolina, where an estimated \$62 million has been spent on advertising. This is followed by Georgia, Colorado, Kentucky and Michigan. Although the bulk of the spending is for general election races, some of the ad spending in each of these states was used for primary contests.

**Table 4: Most Expensive Senate Races This Cycle**

State	Est. Cost	Airings
NC	62.4 M	96,169
GA	43 M	61,405
CO	37.8 M	55,710
KY	33.6 M	76,420
MI	32.6 M	50,801
IA	29.4 M	82,528
LA	27.9 M	66,698
AR	27.1 M	57,797
VA	13.2 M	19,616
MA	11.2 M	12,357
NH	11 M	16,335
MN	9.3 M	18,672
KS	9.2 M	23,069
MS	8.5 M	24,246
IL	7.8 M	4,540

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Figures are from January 1, 2013, to October 23, 2014.  
 Numbers include broadcast television.  
 CITE SOURCE OF DATA AS: Kantar Media/CMAG  
 with analysis by the Wesleyan Media Project.

Table 5 shows the most intense House races over the past two weeks. Georgia-12 tops the list, with the most ads aired, and is followed by Florida-02, Arizona-02, California-07 and WV-03.

**Table 5: Ad Volume and Spending in Top House Races (Past Two Weeks)**

<b>District</b>	<b>Total Ads</b>	<b>Pro-Dem Ads</b>	<b>Pro-GOP Ads</b>	<b>Dem % Group</b>	<b>GOP % Group</b>	<b>Pro-Dem \$s</b>	<b>Pro-GOP \$s</b>
GA-12	7,322	4,515	2,807	16.5%	31.7%	1.5 M	1 M
FL-02	7,320	4,122	3,198	5.5%	20.0%	0.9 M	1 M
AZ-02	5,281	2,471	2,810	12.5%	38.6%	0.8 M	1.5 M
CA-07	4,288	2,189	2,099	23.7%	39.8%	1.6 M	1.7 M
WV-03	3,829	2,005	1,824	19.4%	0.0%	0.5 M	0.4 M
AZ-01	3,815	2,337	1,478	45.4%	50.3%	2.6 M	2 M
IA-03	3,668	2,329	1,339	23.6%	9.0%	0.8 M	0.5 M
IL-12	3,512	2,283	1,229	12.0%	0.0%	1.1 M	0.7 M
MN-08	3,489	2,264	1,225	5.5%	19.7%	1.1 M	0.9 M
CA-52	3,318	1,830	1,488	40.7%	38.1%	1.5 M	1.3 M

Figures are from October 10-23, 2014. Numbers include broadcast television.

CITE SOURCE OF DATA AS: Kantar Media/CMAG with analysis by the Wesleyan Media Project.

Table 6 reports the same information for gubernatorial races. There was a striking imbalance in the volume of Republican and Democratic advertising in a few states. Pro-Republican advertising was much more common in Florida and Texas than was pro-Democratic advertising, while in New York, pro-Democratic ads outnumbered pro-Republican ads by an 18 to 1 margin.

**Table 6: Ad Volume and Spending in Top Gubernatorial Races (Past Two Weeks)**

<b>State</b>	<b>Total Ads</b>	<b>Pro-Dem Ads</b>	<b>Pro-GOP Ads</b>	<b>Dem % Group</b>	<b>GOP % Group</b>	<b>Pro-Dem \$s</b>	<b>Pro-GOP \$s</b>
FL	26,679	9,200	17,479	10.3%	0.4%	6.4 M	10.2 M
TX	15,000	4,393	10,607	0.0%	0.0%	2.5 M	5.6 M
WI	13,261	7,769	5,492	39.3%	29.9%	2.7 M	2.5 M
IL	11,495	5,619	5,876	0.0%	0.0%	6 M	6 M
MI	11,005	5,100	5,905	59.4%	26.2%	2.7 M	4.3 M
GA	6,711	4,123	2,582	0.0%	38.3%	2.3 M	1.7 M
NY	6,705	6,351	354	0.0%	100%	4.3 M	0.2 M
KS	6,313	3,223	3,090	43.9%	56.1%	1.5 M	1.2 M
ID	4,667	2,625	2,042	0.0%	14.9%	0.4 M	0.4 M
PA	4,583	2,285	2,298	0.0%	1.5%	2.2 M	1.7 M
ME	4,530	2,510	1,801	40.7%	38.7%	0.8 M	0.5 M
CO	4,070	2,928	1,142	56.2%	49.9%	2.1 M	0.7 M
MA	3,484	1,671	1,604	54.4%	42.1%	2.3 M	2 M
AZ	3,349	1,157	2,192	35.8%	44.6%	1 M	1.6 M
CT	3,250	1,287	1,963	45.9%	43.9%	1.5 M	2.6 M

Figures are from October 10-23, 2014. Numbers include broadcast television.

CITE SOURCE OF DATA AS: Kantar Media/CMAG with analysis by the Wesleyan Media Project.

Table 7 shows the most expensive gubernatorial races this cycle. Florida heads the list, with an estimated \$77 million spent to air over 137,000 ads. Florida is followed by Illinois, Pennsylvania, Texas and Michigan.

**Table 7: Most Expensive Gubernatorial Races This Cycle**

<b>State</b>	<b>Est. Cost</b>	<b>Airings</b>
FL	77.7 M	137,221
IL	68.1 M	62,431
PA	53.7 M	64,079
TX	32.8 M	57,183
MI	27.8 M	45,586
VA	26.9 M	60,802
NJ	23.5 M	11,782
NY	22.9 M	34,778
MD	21.5 M	21,099
WI	17.2 M	49,025
AZ	16.6 M	23,075
GA	15.8 M	23,491
CT	15.2 M	14,548
MA	13 M	10,827
KS	9.7 M	25,444

Figures are from January 1, 2013, to October 23, 2014.

Numbers include broadcast television.

CITE SOURCE OF DATA AS: Kantar Media/CMAG with analysis by the Wesleyan Media Project.

## Denver, Little Rock Most Inundated by Ads

Table 8 reports the volume and estimated cost of advertising that has aired in the top media markets this election cycle (inclusive of all political ads). In Denver, over 78,000 ads have aired at an estimated cost of \$77 million. Little Rock, Arkansas, has seen over 50,000 ads this cycle, as has Tampa, Florida.

**Table 8: Top Media Markets by Ad Volume (All Races)**

Market	Airings	Est. Cost
Denver, CO	78,386	77.6 M
Little Rock, AR	51,758	25.4 M
Tampa-St. Pete, FL	50,826	34.7 M
New York, NY	47,357	113.9 M
Grand Rapids, MI	44,874	18.1 M
Phoenix, AZ	43,123	40 M
Colorado Springs, CO	41,105	11.3 M
Des Moines, IA	40,892	16.2 M
Cedar Rapids, IA	40,338	10.4 M
Washington, DC	40,091	68.1 M
Anchorage, AK	39,481	8.6 M
Boston, MA	37,271	46.6 M
Philadelphia, PA	36,342	57.1 M
Detroit, MI	35,966	44.5 M
Ft. Smith-Fayetteville, AR	35,606	13.2 M

Figures are from January 1, 2013, to October 23, 2014. Numbers include broadcast television.  
CITE SOURCE OF DATA AS: Kantar Media/CMAG with analysis by the Wesleyan Media Project.

## Just 26 Percent of Senate Ads Positive

Table 9 reports the percentage of ads classified as positive, negative and contrast (mentioning both a preferred candidate and an opponent) in the 2010, 2012 and 2014 election cycles for the September 1-October 23 period. Just 26 percent of ads aired since September 1 in Senate races were positive, with another 52 percent being purely negative. House and gubernatorial races were comparatively more positive during that same time period. Thirty-one percent of ads aired in House races were positive, and 35 percent of ads aired in gubernatorial races were positive.

“Since 2000, the percentage of negativity has been rising in each election cycle, but it seems we may have finally reached a plateau,” said Erika Franklin Fowler, co-director of the Wesleyan Media Project. “Negativity this cycle has been comparable to past levels. Gubernatorial ads are more negative this year than they have been previously, but House ads are less negative. Senate ads are slightly more negative than 2010 but less negative than 2012. Any way you count them, however, attack ads continue to dominate the airwaves.”



**Table 9: Tone of Advertising over Time by Race Type (9/1-10/23)**

		<b>Negative</b>	<b>Contrast</b>	<b>Positive</b>
2010	Governor	43.3%	20.3%	36.5%
	US House	56.5%	21.7%	21.8%
	US Senate	50.9%	18.8%	30.4%
2012	Governor	41.4%	19.1%	39.5%
	US House	51.3%	22.5%	26.2%
	US Senate	55.1%	20.0%	24.9%
2014	Governor	45.7%	19.5%	34.9%
	US House	46.6%	22.3%	31.2%
	US Senate	51.5%	22.4%	26.1%

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Figures are from September 1 through October 23 in each year. Totals in 2014 are based on ongoing Wesleyan Media Project coding, and 2010 and 2012 totals are from prior Wesleyan Media Project coding of Kantar Media/CMAG ad airings.

The Wesleyan Media Project is launching a new initiative and new web presence today – AttackAds.org – aimed at educating voters about attack ads and dark money thanks to funding from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. To read more about the launch, click here [Cross link to blog post].

Table 10 breaks down ad tone in 2014 by party, race and sponsorship. Parties have been the most negative, followed by groups. Republican-leaning groups, although still engaging in considerable negativity, have been more positive than Democratic-leaning groups.

“Groups, especially groups that favor Republicans, are trying something new this year, which is actually running some positive ads,” said Travis Ridout, co-director of the Wesleyan Media Project. “In recent election cycles, group-sponsored advertising has been almost universally negative.”

Some party differences also emerge from Table 10. In Senate races, Democrats have aired a greater percentage of negative ads (57 to 47 percent), while Republicans have focused more on airing contrast ads (27 percent to Democrats' 17 percent). In the House, however, pro-Democratic and pro-Republican advertising has been equally negative at around 46 percent.

**Table 10: Tone of Advertising by Sponsorship and Favored Party (9/1-10/23)**

		Pro-Democrat			Pro-Republican		
		Negative	Contrast	Positive	Negative	Contrast	Positive
<b>House</b>	Candidate	19.4%	33.9%	46.7%	23.9%	24.5%	51.6%
	Coord.	48.6%	44.7%	6.8%	26.7%	23.5%	49.8%
	Group	85.3%	6.6%	8.1%	69.9%	9.7%	20.5%
	Party	91.9%	4.8%	3.3%	79.3%	14.2%	6.5%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>46.3%</b>	<b>24.2%</b>	<b>29.5%</b>	<b>46.9%</b>	<b>19.5%</b>	<b>33.6%</b>
<b>Senate</b>	Candidate	32.8%	25.1%	42.1%	26.0%	35.8%	38.2%
	Coord.	24.1%	59.6%	16.3%	8.7%	68.4%	22.9%
	Group	90.1%	2.5%	7.5%	70.2%	14.0%	15.8%
	Party	98.4%	1.6%	0.0%	91.9%	8.1%	0.0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>57.4%</b>	<b>17.0%</b>	<b>25.6%</b>	<b>47.1%</b>	<b>27.5%</b>	<b>25.4%</b>

Figures are from September 1- October 23, 2014. Numbers include broadcast television.  
 CITE SOURCE OF DATA AS: Kantar Media/CMAG with analysis by the Wesleyan Media Project.

Table 11 ranks the Senate races by their share of pure positive ads since September 1, starting with the least positive race. Louisiana takes top honors, followed by North Carolina, Kansas, Georgia and Kentucky. But the Senate race with the greatest share of pure negative ads was North Carolina's contest, followed by Arkansas and Michigan.

**Table 11: Least Positive U.S. Senate Races**

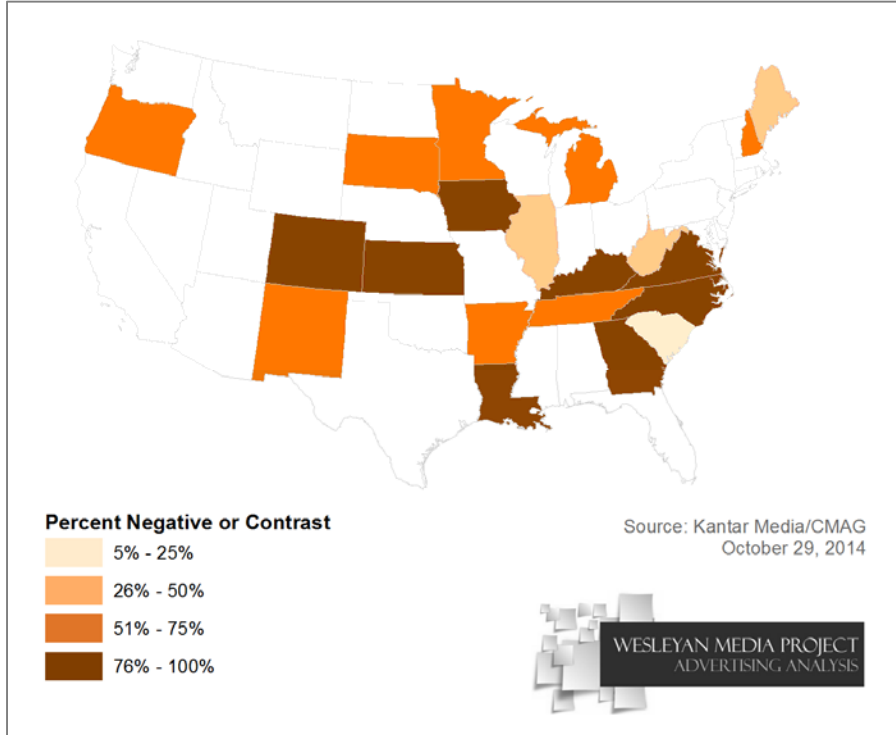
State	Positive	Contrast	Negative
LA	14.3%	47.9%	37.8%
NC	15.3%	18.9%	65.8%
KS	15.7%	28.0%	56.3%
GA	17.0%	39.5%	43.5%
KY	17.2%	26.0%	56.9%
VA	18.2%	46.4%	35.4%
CO	20.5%	20.0%	59.5%
IA	21.2%	16.9%	61.9%
AK	23.5%	21.5%	55.0%
MI	25.1%	9.9%	64.9%
NH	26.0%	20.5%	53.5%
AR	27.0%	7.6%	65.5%

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Figures are from September 1, 2014, to October 23, 2014. Numbers include broadcast television. Hawaii, where all advertising was contrast spots, is not shown in the table because only 56 ads were aired.

CITE SOURCE OF DATA AS: Kantar Media/CMAG with analysis by the Wesleyan Media Project.

**Figure 1: Percent of Ads that are Negative or Contrast in U.S. Senate Races (9/1-10/23/14)**



Numbers are based on ongoing Wesleyan Media Project coding of Kantar Media/CMAG video of ads in House and Senate races.

Connecticut's gubernatorial race takes the crown for least positive race for governor (Table 12). Just 15 percent of ads aired in that race since September 1 were positive. Second on the list is Illinois, followed by New Mexico, Florida and Pennsylvania. Connecticut's race also has the greatest share of pure negative ads, at 69.6 percent.

**Table 12: Least Positive Gubernatorial Races**

State	Positive	Contrast	Negative
CT	15.0%	15.5%	69.6%
IL	17.8%	20.4%	61.8%
NM	20.2%	24.0%	55.8%
FL	21.3%	15.8%	62.8%
PA	21.8%	20.1%	58.1%
MI	22.0%	26.9%	51.0%
WI	23.1%	13.7%	63.3%
AZ	23.7%	26.2%	50.1%
NH	25.3%	44.8%	29.9%
MD	25.7%	17.8%	56.5%
MN	31.5%	35.3%	33.2%
NY	31.9%	23.1%	45.0%
SC	34.9%	33.2%	31.9%
AR	36.9%	28.6%	34.5%
GA	37.3%	32.4%	30.3%
ME	37.5%	51.9%	10.5%
KS	39.9%	13.6%	46.5%
CO	40.8%	0.3%	58.9%
OK	41.5%	55.7%	2.8%
IA	43.3%	11.2%	45.5%

Figures are from September 1, 2014, to October 23, 2014. Numbers include broadcast television. In North Carolina, all ads aired were negative and in California, all ads aired were contrast, but given that fewer than 1000 gubernatorial ads aired in each state, they were excluded from the table.

CITE SOURCE OF DATA AS: Kantar Media/CMAG with analysis by the Wesleyan Media Project.

## House Majority PAC Becomes Top Group Spender

House Majority PAC aired the most ads—and was also the biggest interest group spender—over the October 10-23 period, airing almost 7,000 ads at an estimated cost of \$8.7 million (Table 13). The group was active in over 20 different House races. The Republican Governors Association aired 5,500 ads in races in 8 states, while Crossroads GPS and its cousin American Crossroads, each aired about 5,000 ads, mostly in Senate races.

**Table 13: Top Group Sponsors over Past Two Weeks**

<b>Sponsor</b>	<b>Type/ Disclose?</b>	<b># Ads</b>	<b>Est. \$\$</b>	<b>Races</b>
House Majority PAC	Super PAC/yes	6,907	8.8 M	House: AZ01, AZ02, AZ09, CA07, CA36, CA52, CO06, CT05, FL18, FL26, GA12, IA03, IL12, MA06 ME02, MN07, MN08, NE02, NH02 NJ01, NY24, TX23, VA10, WV03
Republican Governors Association	527/yes	5,533	2.8 M	Gov: AR, AZ, CO, GA, ID, KS, ME, MI
Crossroads Grassroots Policy Strategies	501c4/no	5,072	5.5 M	Sen: AR, CO, KY, LA, NC House: NJ03, NV04
American Crossroads	Super PAC/yes	4,928	3.1 M	Sen: AK, AR, IA, NH House: AR02
Freedom Partners Action Fund	Super PAC/partial	3,964	2.9 M	Senate: AR, CO, IA, KS, NC House: FL02
AFSCME People	527/yes	3,771	2.9 M	Sen: CO, IA, MI, NC House: CA52
Mayday PAC	Super PAC/yes	3,651	1.5 M	Sen: KS, SD House: IA03, MI06
Democratic Governors Association	527/yes	3,107	1.5 M	Gov: MD, MI
U.S. Chamber of Commerce	501c6/no	3,037	1.9 M	Sen: AK, CO, IA, KS, NC House: AZ02, CA21, MA06
NEA Advocacy Fund	Super PAC/yes	2,755	1.8 M	Sen: AR, CO, NC House: FL02, ME02 Gov: HI, KS
Ending Spending Action Fund	Super PAC/yes	2,549	2.6 M	Sen: CO, GA, KS, MI, NH
Congressional Leadership Fund	Super PAC/partial	2,303	4.5 M	House: AZ02, CA07, CA52, FL02, IL10, NH01, TX23, VA10
American Action Network	501c4/no	2,211	3.2 M	House: AZ01, AZ02, CA07, FL26, MN08, TX23
NRA Political Victory Fund	PAC/yes	1,953	1.5 M	Sen: AR, CO, GA, IA, KS, LA, NC Gov: CO, GA, KS
Making Colorado Great	527/yes	1,645	1.5 M	Gov: CO
Greater Wisconsin Committee	501c4/no	1,493	0.8 M	Gov: WI
Committee to Elect An Independent Senate	Super PAC/yes	1,396	0.8 M	Sen: KS

**Table 13 (cont.)**

<b>Sponsor</b>	<b>Type/ Disclose?</b>	<b># Ads</b>	<b>Est. \$s</b>	<b>Races</b>
Senate Majority PAC	Super PAC/yes	1,376	0.8 M	Sen: AR, CO, IA, NC, NH
NextGen Climate Action Committee	Super PAC/yes	1,151	1.7 M	Sen: CO Gov: FL
Kentuckians for Strong Leadership	Super PAC/yes	1,117	0.9 M	Sen: KY

Figures are from October 10-23, 2014. Numbers include broadcast television.

CITE SOURCE OF DATA AS: Kantar Media/CMAG with analysis by the Wesleyan Media Project. Disclosure information from the Center for Responsive Politics.

The biggest group spenders this election cycle are shown in Table 14. Since January 1, 2013, the Republican Governors Association has spent almost \$23.3 million to air almost 45,000 ads. They are followed closely by Senate Majority PAC, Crossroads Grassroots Policy Strategies and Americans for Prosperity.

**Table 14: Large Group Spenders This Election Cycle (All Airings)**

<b>Sponsor</b>	<b>Party Lean</b>	<b>Est. spending</b>	<b>Number of Airings</b>
Republican Governors Association	GOP	22.3 M	44,880
Senate Majority PAC	Dem	22.1 M	42,476
Crossroads Grassroots Policy Strategies	GOP	20.9 M	30,623
Americans for Prosperity	GOP	17.1 M	34,140
House Majority PAC	Dem	14.9 M	19,037
U.S. Chamber of Commerce	GOP	14.5 M	25,165
Let's Get To Work	GOP	13.2 M	26,723
NextGen Climate Action Committee	Dem	11.6 M	21,787
Democratic Governors Association	Dem	10.3 M	18,264
Ending Spending Action Fund	GOP	9.5 M	11,080
American Crossroads	GOP	9.1 M	17,839
Illinois Freedom PAC	Dem	8.8 M	6,182
Freedom Partners Action Fund	GOP	6.9 M	11,054
Patriot Majority USA	Dem	6.3 M	14,638
NRA Political Victory Fund	GOP	6 M	7,675
Kentucky Opportunity Coalition	GOP	5.8 M	12,116
Independence USA PAC	Dem	5.4 M	3,150
Commonwealth Future Independent Expenditure PAC	GOP	5.2 M	3,639
NEA Advocacy Fund	Dem	5.1 M	8,274
AFSCME People	Dem	5 M	6,749

Figures are from January 1, 2013-October 23, 2014. Numbers include broadcast television.

CITE SOURCE OF DATA AS: Kantar Media/CMAG with analysis by the Wesleyan Media Project.

## 38 Percent of Group-Sponsored Ads Paid for with Dark Money

A Wesleyan Media Project analysis, in partnership with the Center for Responsive Politics, shows that over 600,000 group-sponsored ads have aired in House, Senate and gubernatorial races since the beginning of the 2013-14 election cycle (Table 15). Thus, groups have sponsored 27.2 percent of ads aired this election cycle in federal and gubernatorial races.

Among those 600,000-plus ads, 37.8 percent were paid for with “dark money,” groups whose donors are not being disclosed. Another 3.6 percent of group-sponsored ad airings this cycle were sponsored by groups that only partially disclose their donors.

"These opaque groups are spending more money than ever and making up a larger portion of election spending," said Sheila Krumholz, executive director of the Center for Responsive Politics, a Wesleyan Media Project partner. "As a result, voters lack information they need to understand which individuals or organizations are trying to influence their vote."

Much of the dark money advertising has appeared in congressional races. In the Senate, 48.6 percent of group airings were backed by dark money, and these groups additionally sponsored 43.8 percent of group airings in the House. In races for governor, however, only 16.3 percent of group-sponsored ads were backed by dark money.

There were also party differences in the use of dark money. Forty-eight percent of the airings from Republican-leaning groups were from groups that do not disclose their donors. Among, Democratic-leaning groups, 23 percent of ads were paid for with dark money.

**Table 15: Disclosure Status of Outside Group Advertising in Federal and Gubernatorial Races**

	<b>Volume Cycle to Date</b>	<b>% of Airings</b>	<b>Dem Airings</b>	<b>GOP Airings</b>
Dark Money	228,489	37.8%	22.9%	48.2%
Partial Disclosure	22,215	3.6%	2.5%	4.5%
Full Disclosure	354,213	58.6%	74.6%	47.3%
Total Group-sponsored ads	604,917			

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Figures are from January 1, 2013 – October 23, 2014. Numbers include broadcast television.  
CITE SOURCE OF DATA AS: Kantar Media/CMAG with analysis by the Wesleyan Media Project. Disclosure information from the Center for Responsive Politics.



Figure 2 reveals the volume of advertising by sponsorship (candidate, party, fully-disclosing group, partially-disclosing group or non-disclosing group) and by party for five top Senate races. Bars above the line indicate Republican advertising, while bars below the line indicate Democratic advertising. The figure shows, first, how the volume of advertising has picked up heading toward Election Day. In addition, the figure shows considerably greater volumes of group advertising on the Republican side. Finally, the figure shows that a greater proportion of Republican group-sponsored advertising comes from non-disclosing and partially-disclosing groups compared to Democratic group-sponsored advertising. Figures showing the same data for Senate races in Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa and North Carolina are also available [LINK].

**Figure2**

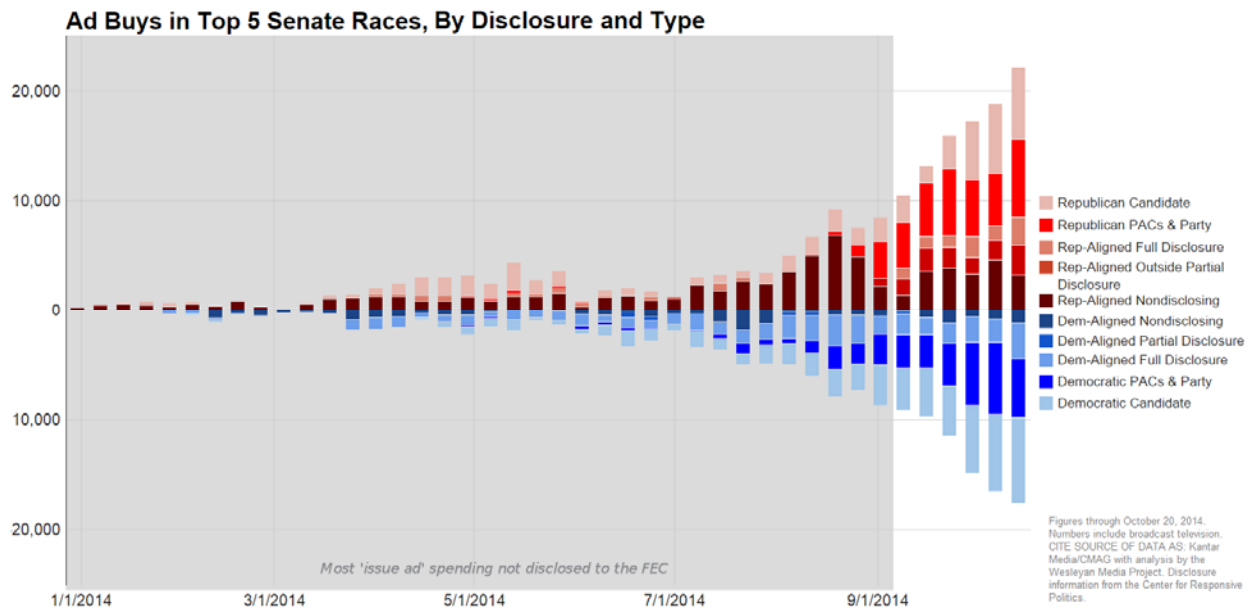
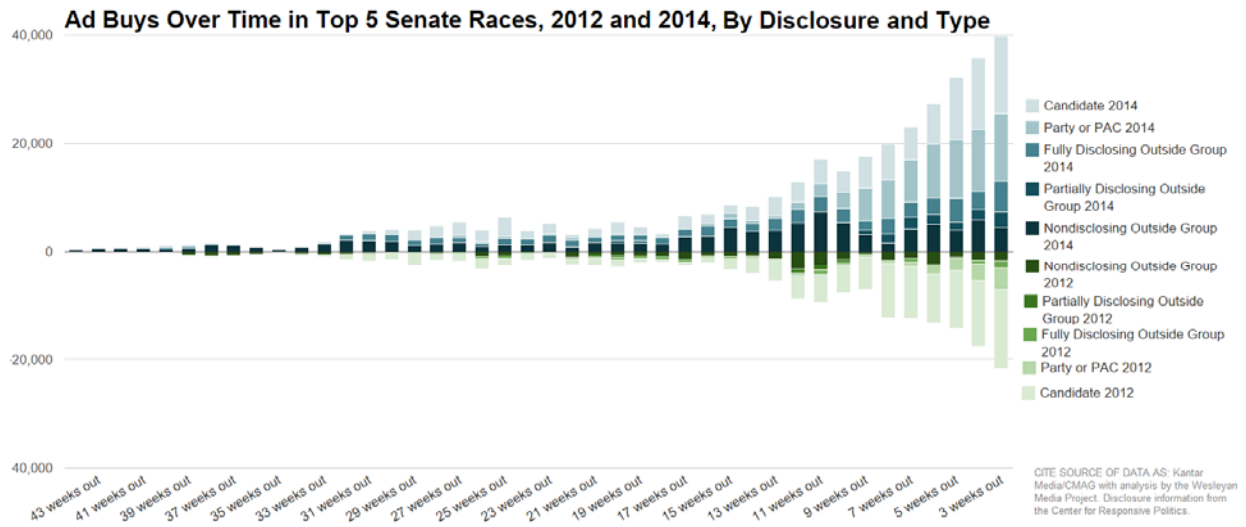


Figure 3 shows how the extent of disclosure compares to 2012 in the 5 top Senate races in each year. Bars above the 0 point indicate the volume of advertising in 2014 by source (candidate, party, fully disclosing group, partially disclosing group or non-disclosing group). Bars below the 0 point indicate the same information for 2012. Not only has the overall volume of advertising in the top Senate races increased over 2012, but the volume of dark money has as well.

**Figure 3**



## GOP House Candidates Talk Obamacare, Taxes, Jobs; Dems Talk Taxes, Social Welfare Issues

Table 16 shows the top issues mentioned in House advertising since September 1, broken down by party. The issue featured most often in ads favoring Democrats is taxation, a mention of which appears in 29 percent of ads. Taxation is followed by Medicare, Social Security and education as most-mentioned issues in pro-Democratic advertising. On the Republican side, Obamacare is the most frequently mentioned issue, appearing in 26 percent of ads. Discussion of taxation, jobs and budgets/deficits follow.

**Table 16: Top Issues in U.S. House Advertising**

	<b>Pro-Dem</b>		<b>Pro-GOP</b>
Taxes	28.8%	Obamacare	25.9%
Medicare	19.4%	Taxes	24.2%
Social Security	17.2%	Employment/Jobs	21.9%
Education/Schools	14.4%	Deficit/Budget/Debt	15.6%
Employment/Jobs	14.1%	Gov't spending	13.7%
Deficit/Budget/Debt	11.4%	Medicare	13.0%
Government shutdown	11.1%	Government Ethics/Scandal	10.3%
Veterans	11.0%	Energy Policy	7.9%
Government Ethics/Scandal	10.3%	Business	7.4%
Health Care	8.1%	Veterans	7.4%
Gov't spending	7.0%	Health Care	6.5%
Women's Health	6.6%	Economy	5.3%
Abortion	6.4%	Immigration	5.2%
Local Issues	5.8%	Moral/Family/Religious Values	4.8%

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Figures are from September 1 to October 23, 2014 and are based on ongoing Wesleyan Media Project coding of Kantar Media/CMAG video.

Table 17 lists the top issue mentions in sixteen Senate races, by party. In only three states (Georgia, Kentucky, and Minnesota) are the top issue mentions the same in Democratic and Republican advertising. Obamacare is the top issues mentioned in ads favoring Republicans in five of the sixteen states, while budget and deficits get top billing in four states. Immigration features highly in pro-Republican advertising in Louisiana, appearing in almost two out of three ads. The top issue mentioned in pro-Democratic Senate advertising varies considerably across states. Women’s health, for instance, is mentioned in almost half of ads favoring the Democrat in Colorado.

**Table 17: Top Senate Issues by State**

<b>State</b>	<b>Pro-Dem Top Issue</b>	<b>Pro-GOP Top Issue</b>
Alaska	Local issues (27.5%)	Deficit/Budget (32.5%)
Arkansas	Taxes (33.5%)	Obamacare (42.9%)
Colorado	Women’s health (48.8%)	Energy policy (30.8%)
Georgia	Jobs/employment (30.9%)	Jobs/employment (51.3%)
Iowa	Social security (38.3%)	Veterans (28.0%)
Kansas*	Business (26.2%)	Obamacare (46.9%)
Kentucky	Jobs/employment (48.4%)	Jobs/employment (26.4%)
Louisiana	Medicare (44.1%)	Immigration (65.3%)
Michigan	Environment (35.9%)	Jobs/employment (44.0%)
Minnesota	Taxes (31.8%)	Taxes (60.2%)
North Carolina	Education (41.3%)	Deficit/Budget (22.7%)
New Hampshire	Jobs/employment (42.4%)	Obamacare (47.2%)
New Mexico	Veterans (27.5%)	Deficit/Budget (71.6%)
Oregon	Taxes (61.2%)	Deficit/Budget (32.6%)
South Dakota	Social security (41.1%)	Obamacare (55.5%)
Virginia	Jobs/employment (47.0%)	Obamacare (67.7%)

Figures are from September 1 to October 23, 2014 and are based on ongoing Wesleyan Media Project coding of Kantar Media/CMAG video.

\*Numbers for independent candidate, Greg Orman, are reported in the Democratic column.

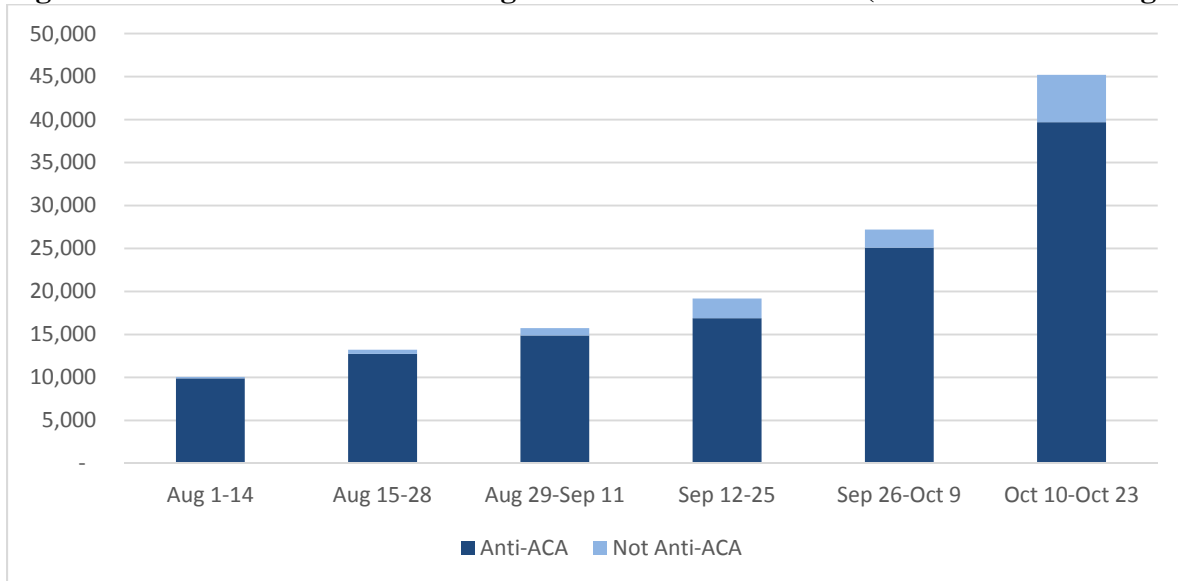
\*\*The top issue for South Dakota independent Larry Pressler was Deficit/Budget (66.1%).

## Negative Mentions of Affordable Care Act Continue to Rise

The number of ads mentioning the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) continues to rise as Election Day approaches (Figure 4). About 45,000 ads in the past two weeks mentioned the ACA, the vast majority of which (almost 40,000) mentioned the ACA in a negative fashion. The few ads that are not-anti ACA can at best be characterized as obliquely discussing the law using references to a candidate “standing up to insurance companies,” etc.

“Campaign ads attacking the Affordable Care Act continue to rise in number as we head into the upcoming enrollment period,” said Erika Franklin Fowler, co-director of the Wesleyan Media Project. “How the negative political messaging interacts with insurance advertising may be important in understanding citizen attitudes, information and behavior.”

**Figure 4: Volume of Ads Referencing the Affordable Care Act (House/Senate Airings Only)**

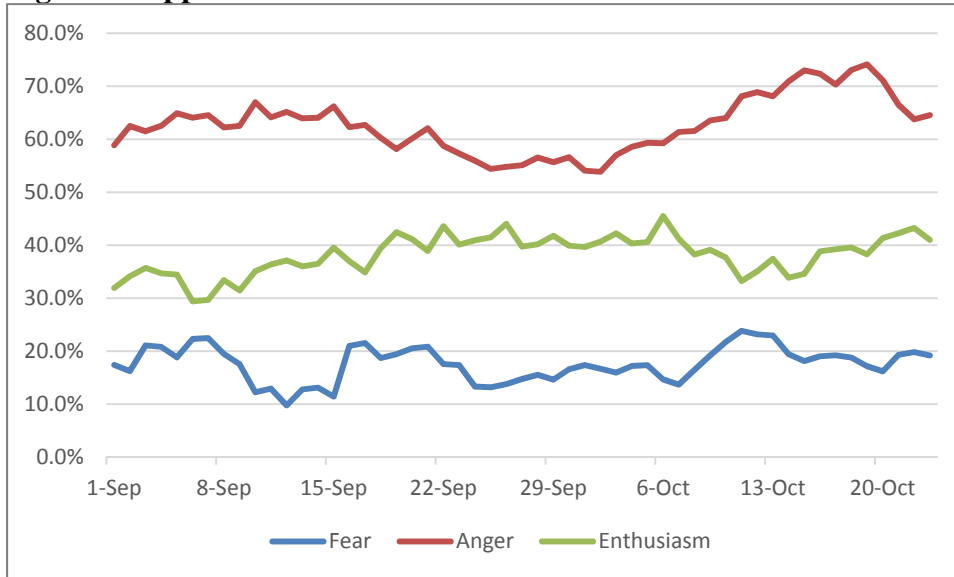


Numbers are based on ongoing Wesleyan Media Project coding of Kantar Media/CMAG video of ads in House and Senate races.

## Anger Outpaces Fear and Enthusiasm in Senate Races

Figure 5 shows the percentage of ads over time in Senate races making appeals to anger, enthusiasm and fear. There was a small uptick in the use of fear appeals earlier this month, but anger remains the dominant emotional appeal in Senate advertising—and anger’s use has been growing since the end of September. On October 19, for instance, just under 75 percent of ads aired in Senate races made an appeal to anger.

**Figure 5: Appeals in U.S. Senate Races**



Figures are from September 1 to October 23, 2014 of and are based on ongoing Wesleyan Media Project coding of Kantar Media/CMAG video.

## About This Report

Data reported here do not cover local cable buys, only broadcast television and national cable buys. All cost estimates are precisely that: estimates. Content information is based on ongoing Wesleyan Media Project coding and analysis of Kantar Media/CMAG video, which is 93% complete for the time period discussed (99% complete for U.S. Senate races and 86% complete for U.S. House races). Intercoder reliability is high for measures of tone (94% agreement and a Kappa score of 0.91). Disclosure categorization information on interest groups comes from the Center for Responsive Politics.

The Wesleyan Media Project provides real-time tracking and analysis of all political television advertising in an effort to increase transparency in elections. Housed in Wesleyan's Quantitative Analysis Center – part of the Allbritton Center for the Study of Public Life – the Wesleyan Media Project is the successor to the Wisconsin Advertising Project, which disbanded in 2009. It is directed by Erika Franklin Fowler, assistant professor of government at Wesleyan University, Michael M. Franz, associate professor of government at Bowdoin College and Travis N. Ridout, associate professor of political science at Washington State University. Laura Baum is the Project Manager.

The Wesleyan Media Project is supported by grants from The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation and Wesleyan University. Data provided by Kantar Media/CMAG with analysis by the Wesleyan Media Project using Academicclip, a web-based coding tool. The Wesleyan Media Project is partnering in 2014 with both the Center for Responsive Politics, to provide added information on interest group disclosure, and Ace Metrix, to assess ad effectiveness.

**The Center for Responsive Politics** is the nation's premier research group tracking money in U.S. politics and its effect on elections and public policy. Nonpartisan, independent and nonprofit, the organization aims to create a more educated voter, an involved citizenry and a more transparent and responsive government. CRP's award-winning website, OpenSecrets.org, is the most comprehensive resource available anywhere for federal campaign contribution and lobbying data and analysis.

Periodic releases of data will be posted on the project's website and dispersed via Twitter @wesmediaproject. To be added to our email update list, [click here](#).

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**About Wesleyan University**

Wesleyan University, in Middletown, Conn., is known for the excellence of its academic and co-curricular programs. With more than 2,900 undergraduates and 200 graduate students, Wesleyan is dedicated to providing a liberal arts education characterized by boldness, rigor and practical idealism. For more, visit [www.wesleyan.edu](http://www.wesleyan.edu).

**About the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**

Knight Foundation supports transformational ideas that promote quality journalism, advance media innovation, engage communities and foster the arts. We believe that democracy thrives when people and communities are informed and engaged. For more, visit [www.knightfoundation.org](http://www.knightfoundation.org).

**About the MacArthur Foundation**

The MacArthur Foundation supports creative people and effective institutions committed to building a more just, verdant, and peaceful world. In addition to selecting the MacArthur Fellows, the Foundation works to defend human rights, advance global conservation and security, make cities better places, and understand how technology is affecting children and society. More information is at [www.macfound.org](http://www.macfound.org).