

Ad Spending in Federal and Gubernatorial Races in 2010 Eclipses \$1 Billion; \$250M in Last Two Weeks Alone

Spending by outside groups up to \$120 million since September 1

(MIDDLETOWN, CT --) As of October 20, spending on advertising in U.S. Senate, House and gubernatorial races has eclipsed \$1 billion, a historic figure by any measure. Almost \$620 million of that spending has been since September 1, and \$250 million was in the past two weeks alone. As a point of comparison, the Wesleyan Media Project estimated roughly \$220M was spent on advertising between January 1 and September 15. That means in the last two weeks alone, spending overtook the first nine and a half months of the year. Year-to-date spending is almost 50 percent greater in House races (from almost \$142M in 2008 to over \$210M today) and has almost doubled in Senate races compared to 2008 (from \$157.5M to \$314M).

“Almost any way you look at it, the advertising is up—and way up—this year,” said Travis Ridout, co-director of the Wesleyan Media Project and associate professor of political science at Washington State University. “That’s true for spending and the volume of ads, it is true for House and Senate races, and it is true whether one is looking at candidate or interest group spending,” he explained.

Table 1 shows spending in Senate races for the same September 1 to October 20 time period in both 2008 and 2010. The only category of ad spending that is down from 2008 is party spending, but if one takes into account coordinated expenditures with the campaigns, party spending is flat. In the two week period from October 7 to October 20, an estimated \$70 million was spent on ads in Senate races.

Table 1: Advertising in U.S. Senate Races, 9/1-10/20*

		Candidate	Party	Interest Group	Coordinated	Total
2008	Ads Aired	149,187	71,829	39,157	5,711	265,884
	Row %	56.11%	27.02%	14.73%	2.15%	
	Cost	\$51,241,220	\$30,334,940	\$16,455,413	\$1,887,608	\$99,919,181
2010	Ads Aired	228,281	33,797	51,119	23,320	336,517
	Row %	67.84%	10.04%	15.19%	6.93%	
	Cost	\$117,412,200	\$14,400,180	\$40,672,480	\$15,108,480	\$187,593,340
	% volume increase	53.02%	-52.95%	30.55%	308.33%	26.57%
	% cost increase	129.14%	-52.53%	147.17%	700.40%	87.75%

*All totals include Democrats, Republicans, and Third Party Candidates

CITE SOURCE OF DATA IN ALL TABLES AS:

Kantar Media/CMAG with analysis by the Wesleyan Media Project

Table 2 shows the same information for U.S. House races. Increases in spending and ad volumes are just as dramatic as in the Senate races, with total ad volume up 73 percent over 2008 and ad total ad spending up 79 percent. In the two-week period between October 7 and October 20, an estimated \$69 million was spent on advertising in U.S. House races.

Table 2: Advertising in U.S. House Races, 9/1-10/20*

		Candidate	Party	Interest Group	Coordinated	Total
2008	Ads Aired	162,429	36,056	16,750	5,037	220,272
	Row %	73.74%	16.37%	7.60%	2.29%	
	Cost	\$64,112,039	\$18,667,064	\$9,450,952	\$1,679,998	\$93,910,053
2010	Ads Aired	245,627	67,575	51,730	17,199	382,131
	Row %	64.28%	17.68%	13.54%	4.50%	
	Cost	\$102,062,090	\$25,791,610	\$33,841,540	\$6,273,280	\$167,968,520
	% volume increase	51.22%	87.42%	208.84%	241.45%	73.48%
	% cost increase	59.19%	38.17%	258.08%	273.41%	78.86%

*All totals include Democrats, Republicans, and Third Party Candidates

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“Interest group activity has especially increased in House races – by more than 200 percent when measured through airings and more than 250 percent when measured through spending. As a proportion of all activity, interest group ads account for almost double what they did in 2008,” said Michael Franz, co-director of the Project and associate professor of government at Bowdoin College. “On the Senate side, we’re seeing a smaller increase in airings (up 30 percent) and a sizeable increase in spending (up almost 150 percent) but as a proportion of all airings, interest groups account for roughly the same amount of the air war as they did last cycle.”

The nation’s most expensive Senate races are found in California, Illinois, Florida and Pennsylvania where more than \$15 million has been spent on advertising since September 1 (Table 3). In terms of the total volume of ads, however, Nevada, Wisconsin and Florida have the nation’s most intense U.S. Senate races. Democrats and Republicans are fairly well matched in terms of ad volume in many of the states, though the Republican has more than a 2 to 1 advantage in ad volume over the Democrat in both Missouri and Florida’s three-way Senate race. The table also includes the percentage of total airings that were sponsored by interest groups. In Missouri, Colorado, and Nevada, outside groups have aired about 30 percent of all pro-candidate ads. In California and Pennsylvania the number is past 20 percent.

Table 3: Most Expensive Senate Races, 9/1-10/20*

State	Cost	Pro-Dem	Pro-GOP	Total Spots	% Spots from IGs
CA	\$22,697,500	10257	8079	18336	21.8%
IL	\$17,541,460	8689	8884	17579	17.6%
FL	\$16,377,230	4886	10559	26025	10.2%
PA	\$15,335,670	8581	13673	22254	23.1%
CO	\$12,990,390	11068	12750	23841	31.5%
NV	\$11,994,530	15957	11972	27933	29.5%
CT	\$11,606,610	3246	5461	8786	3.5%
WI	\$10,776,430	11635	14901	26536	7.2%
MO	\$9,682,460	7493	17479	24972	31.4%
WA	\$9,477,490	10931	9845	20776	9.0%

*Amounts may include primary advertising.

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Table 4 shows the nation's most expensive U.S. House races. They are found in Michigan's 7th district (held by Democrat Mark Schauer), Nevada's 3rd district (held by Democrat Dina Titus) and Virginia's fifth district (held by Democrat Tom Perriello). All three representatives are serving their first terms in office. In MI-7, outside groups have sponsored nearly 31 percent of the 11,000 ads since September 1. In four other races in Table 4, outside groups have sponsored more than 1 in every 5 ads.

Table 4: Most Expensive House Races, 9/1-10/20*

State	District	Cost	Pro-Dem	Pro-GOP	Total Spots	% Spots from IGs
MI	7	\$4,385,250	6290	4656	10946	30.9%
NV	3	\$4,013,830	3174	2637	5811	23.3%
VA	5	\$3,528,340	5322	4924	10246	16.5%
AZ	5	\$3,505,180	2860	2042	4902	21.5%
SC	5	\$3,429,970	3743	4569	8312	23.5%
MD	1	\$3,306,460	4361	2044	6405	11.5%
FL	22	\$3,195,640	2467	2246	4713	3.7%
MN	6	\$2,927,660	1955	2094	4049	0%
OH	16	\$2,626,560	2550	1946	4496	25.9%
IN	2	\$2,543,090	2898	2994	5892	16.8%

*Amounts may include primary advertising.

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Table 5 displays the most expensive gubernatorial races. California continues to outpace all others weighing in at nearly \$60M since September 1. The three-way Florida contest follows with nearly \$36M. Texas clocks in at almost \$25M, with New York, Massachusetts, Ohio,

Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Maryland all at eight figures. Notably, in the Wisconsin race, interest groups have sponsored over 43 percent of the 27,000 airings, which accounts for a larger share of the advertising than either individual candidate.

Table 5: Most Expensive Gubernatorial Races, 9/1-10/20*

State	Cost	Pro-Dem	Pro-GOP	Total Spots	% Spots from IGs
CA	\$58,382,540	33248	45600	78848	2.6%
FL	\$35,986,250	24615	43440	68055	0.5%
TX	\$24,650,270	15142	15016	30158	6.5%
NY	\$12,736,170	19090	2494	21584	0%
MA	\$12,661,550	3494	5112	8606	30.4%
OH	\$12,463,720	16257	13173	29430	19.8%
WI	\$11,252,760	11688	15614	27302	43.2%
PA	\$11,217,690	5541	9948	15489	1.3%
MD	\$11,122,780	4897	4159	9056	34.0%
IL	\$9,538,200	5757	5336	11093	3.9%
GA	\$9,261,880	12963	8753	21716	18.5%

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Table 6 shows the top independent groups that are spending on political advertising in support of or opposition to a candidate. Republican-leaning groups dominate the top of the list, which is headed by the Republican Governor’s Association. This group is followed closely by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which has spent an estimated \$15.7 million since September 1 in support of Republican candidates and an estimated \$1.2 million in support of Democratic candidates. All told, outside groups have spent \$120 million on advertising for candidates since September 1. The majority of that money (\$85 million) has benefited Republicans.

“Particularly noteworthy is the fact that 6 out of the top 10 interest group spenders are non-profit groups that do not have to disclose their donors, and were we to exclude the Republican Governor’s Association, it would be 7 of the top 10 as number 11 is Americans for Job Security,” said Erika Franklin Fowler, co-director of the Project and assistant professor of government at Wesleyan University. “That is nearly \$40M dollars of advertising activity in top races for which the public will be unable to track the source.”

Table 6: Top Ten Interest Group Spenders, 9/1-10/20

Group*	Group Type	Party Lean	Spots	Cost	Party Lean
Republican Governor's Association	527	Republican	26874	\$19,230,960	Republican
US Chamber of Commerce	501(c)(6)	Republican**	16255	\$15,773,980	Republican
Crossroads Grassroots Policy Strategies	501(c)(4)	Republican	9702	\$8,945,810	Republican
American Crossroads	Independent Expenditure Committee	Republican	11077	\$7,964,770	Republican
American Action Network	501(c)(4)	Republican	6538	\$6,110,760	Republican
60 Plus Association	501(c)(4)	Republican	5486	\$4,151,050	Republican
American Future Fund	501(c)(4)	Republican	6773	\$3,763,910	Republican
SEIU	501(c)(5)	Democrat	3789	\$3,582,430	Democrat
Citizens for Strength and Security	527	Democrat	2355	\$3,418,970	Democrat
Bay State Future	527	Democrat	1556	\$2,787,140	Democrat

* Groups often have more than one classification through which they conduct their political or election-related activities. The entry in this table reflects our best guess as to what organizational form funded the ads. The group type assignment may not be completely accurate because the ad disclaimers do not signify the tax entity through which the parent organization funded the ad buy.

** The Chamber of Commerce also spent an estimated \$1.2 million in support of Democratic candidates not included in this figure.

***For a table of the Top 30 Spenders, see: <http://election-ad.research.wesleyan.edu/press-releases/> (look for the link to download the zipped XML file).

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“By all accounts advertising in 2010 is one for the history books,” concluded Fowler.

The Wesleyan Media Project provides real-time tracking and analysis of all political television advertising in real-time. 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.

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The Wesleyan Media Project’s website can be found here:

<http://election-ad.research.wesleyan.edu/>

For more information contact:

David Pesci at 860-685-5612 or dpesci at wesleyan.edu

Erika Franklin Fowler at 860-685-3407 or efowler at wesleyan.edu

Michael M. Franz at 207-798-4318 or mfranz at bowdoin.edu, or

Travis N. Ridout at 509-335-2264 or tnrident at wsu.edu

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