



For Immediate Release:

Presidential Ad Volumes Less than Half of 2012; Clinton Maintains Huge Advantage Over Trump

Trump Campaign Running Positive Ads; Dems Hold Ad Advantage in Many Senate Races

(MIDDLETOWN, CT) **October 18, 2016** – Advertising in the presidential race is considerably less intense than it was four years ago, with 117,000 presidential ads airing between September 16 and October 13. That compares to 256,000 ads during that same time period in 2012.

“People in the battleground states are getting a bit of break this year,” said Erika Franklin Fowler, co-director of the Wesleyan Media Project. “In the past month, ad levels have been less than half what they were four years ago. Certainly, this has a lot to do with Trump running an unconventional campaign, but even pro-Clinton ads are only half the number of pro-Obama ads four years ago.”

Indeed, the Clinton campaign has aired 62,000 ads in the past month, compared to 124,000 aired by the Obama campaign during the same time period in 2012 (Table 1). Neither the Democratic or Republican party has aired a single ad in the presidential race in the past month.

In spite of the lower ad volumes overall, pro-Clinton ads outnumber pro-Trump ads by more than three to one, 89,000 to 28,000.

Table 1: Volume of Presidential Ads in 2016 v. 2012 (Since September 16)

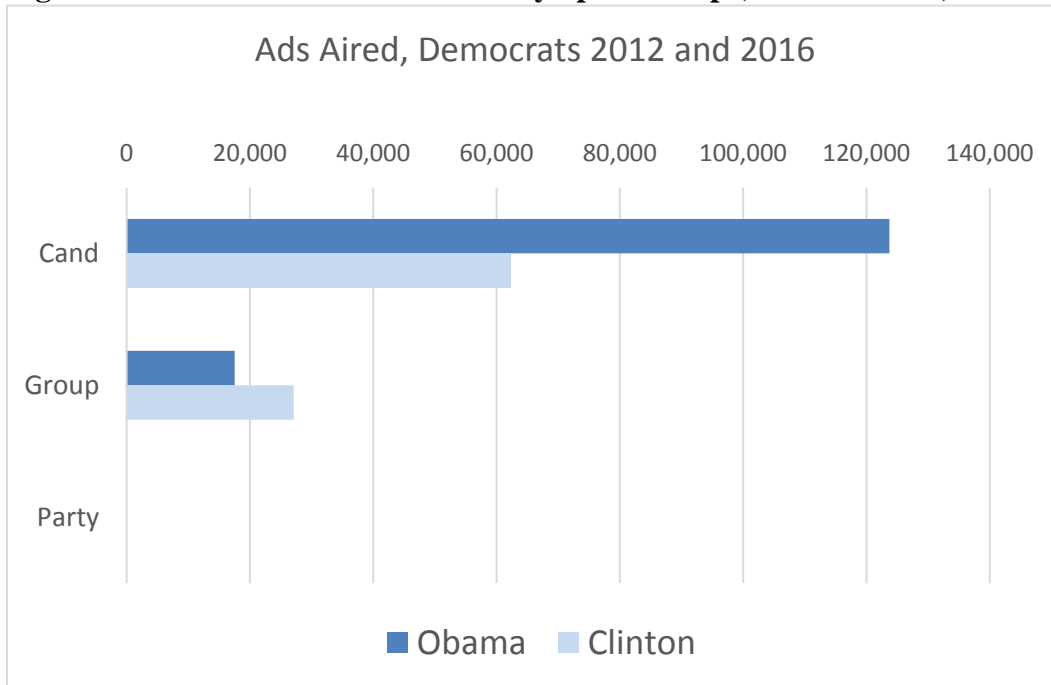
Count	2012		2016	
	Pro-Obama	Pro-Romney	Pro-Clinton	Pro-Trump
Candidate	123,714	50,413	62,351	15,440
Group	17,545	52,644	27,106	12,188
Party	1	11,709	0	0
TOTAL	141,260	114,766	89,457	27,628

Figures are from September 16, 2016 to October 13, 2016. Numbers include broadcast television, national network and national cable.

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

Figure 1 visualizes the breakdowns for Democratic advertising in the presidential race between 2012 and 2016. Although there has been more group activity in 2016 than in 2012 (mostly by Priorities USA Action), candidate advertising is down by half.

Figure 1: Volume of Democratic Ads by Sponsorship (2012 and 2016)



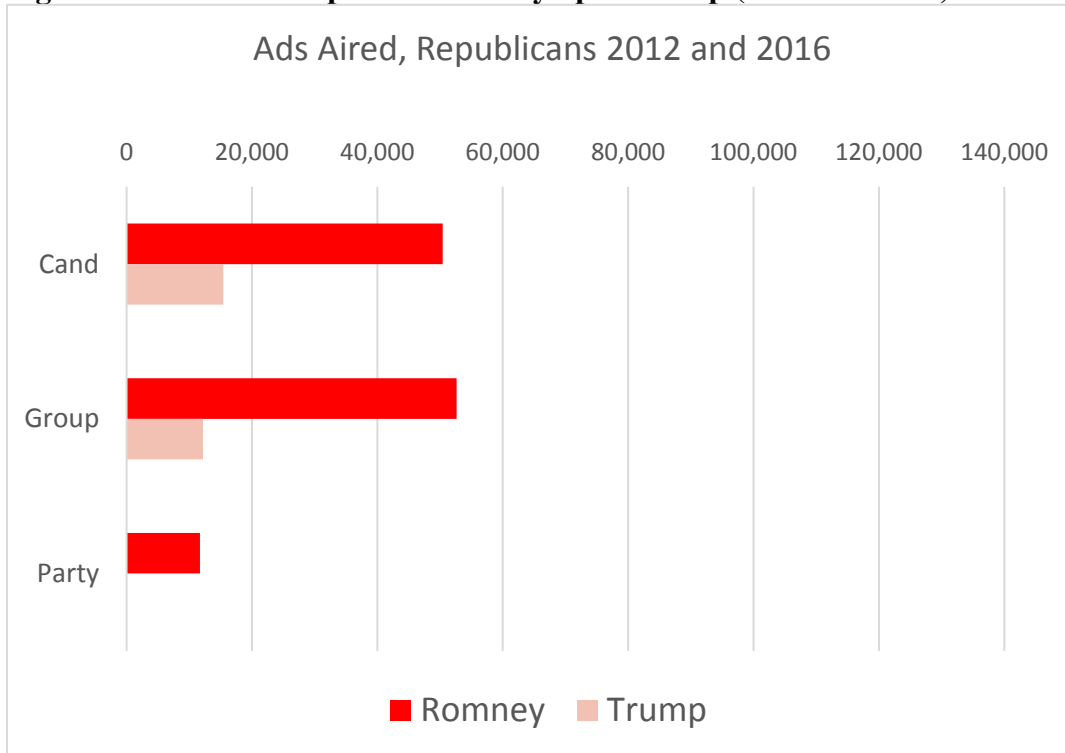
Figures are from September 16 to October 13 for each cycle.

Numbers include broadcast television, national network and national cable.

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

Figure 2 makes the same comparisons for Republicans. Candidate and group-sponsored ads are down dramatically from 2012, and party activity has dropped to 0.

Figure 2: Volume of Republican Ads by Sponsorship (2012 and 2016)



Figures are from September 16 to October 13 for each cycle.

Numbers include broadcast television, national network and national cable.

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

Table 2 shows the top group advertisers in the presidential campaign over the past month. Topping the list is Priorities USA Action, a super PAC supporting Hillary Clinton. The group has aired over 21,000 ads at an estimated cost of \$20 million since September 16. The NRA Institute for Legislative Action, which has aired ads supporting Trump, is second on the list, with over 5,000 ads. The pro-Clinton NextGen California Action Committee has aired almost 3,900 ads, while the pro-Trump Rebuilding America Now PAC has aired some 2,600 ads.

Table 2: Top Group Advertisers in the Presidential Campaign

Sponsor	Party	Ads	Est. Cost (in Ms)
Priorities USA Action	Democrat	21,398	20.0
NRA Institute for Legislative Action	Republican	5,115	4.7
NextGen California Action Committee	Democrat	3,870	5.0
Rebuilding America Now PAC	Republican	2,660	2.1
Reform America Fund	Republican	2,051	1.4
45committee	Republican	2,022	2.1
SEIU Cope	Democrat	590	0.9
El Super PAC Voto Latino	Democrat	578	0.9
Latino Victory Fund	Democrat	340	0.2
Leading Illinois For Tomorrow	Democrat	294	1.1
AARP	Other	236	0.4
Right to Life of Michigan	Republican	106	0.3
NRA Political Victory Fund	Republican	104	0.1

Figures are from September 16, 2016 to October 13, 2016. Numbers include broadcast television, national network and national cable.

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

Air War in Last Month More Positive than Last Four Presidential Cycles

The 2016 campaign has been an ugly one, but political advertising since September 16 has actually been more positive than advertising during the same time period over the last four presidential campaigns (Table 3 and Figure 3). The percentage of ads that are positive—that is, focus solely on the favored candidate—is 27 percent, which is up from a mere 6 percent for this same period in 2012. Still, 61 percent of ads have been purely negative, focused on the opponent, and 12 percent have been contrast ads, those that mention both a favored candidate and the opponent.

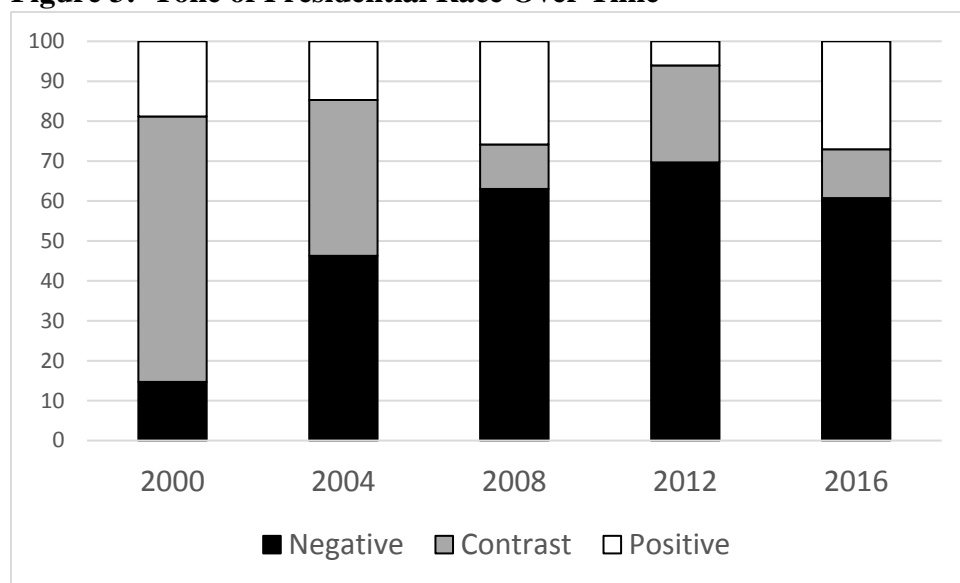
Table 3: Tone of Presidential Race over Time

Year	Negative	Contrast	Positive
2000	14.7	66.49	18.81
2004	46.28	39.03	14.69
2008	63.02	11.14	25.84
2012	69.68	24.28	6.04
2016	60.75	12.2	27.05

Figures are from September 16 to October 13 for each cycle. Numbers include broadcast television, national network and national cable.

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

Figure 3: Tone of Presidential Race Over Time



Figures are from September 16 to October 13 for each cycle.

Numbers include broadcast television, national network and national cable.

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The tone of advertising, however, does vary depending on its sponsorship. Group-sponsored ads tend to be more negative in tone than candidate-sponsored ads, as Table 4 and Figure 4 show. For instance, while 98 percent of ads sponsored by groups promoting Clinton have been purely negative, 52 percent of the ads sponsored by the Clinton campaign have been negative. The groups sponsoring pro-Trump have been over half negative (56 percent), but they also have engaged in considerable contrast advertising (35 percent). Perhaps surprisingly, given the rhetoric on the campaign trail, over half of the ads sponsored by the Trump campaign over the past month have been positive ads aimed at promoting Trump (51 percent).

“You wouldn’t know it by his behavior on the campaign trail, but Trump’s advertising campaign has been more positive than negative this past month,” said Travis Ridout, co-director of the Wesleyan Media Project. “Perhaps the difference in tone is a strategic move. His caustic style on the stump is well known; the positive ads might be more memorable as a result.”

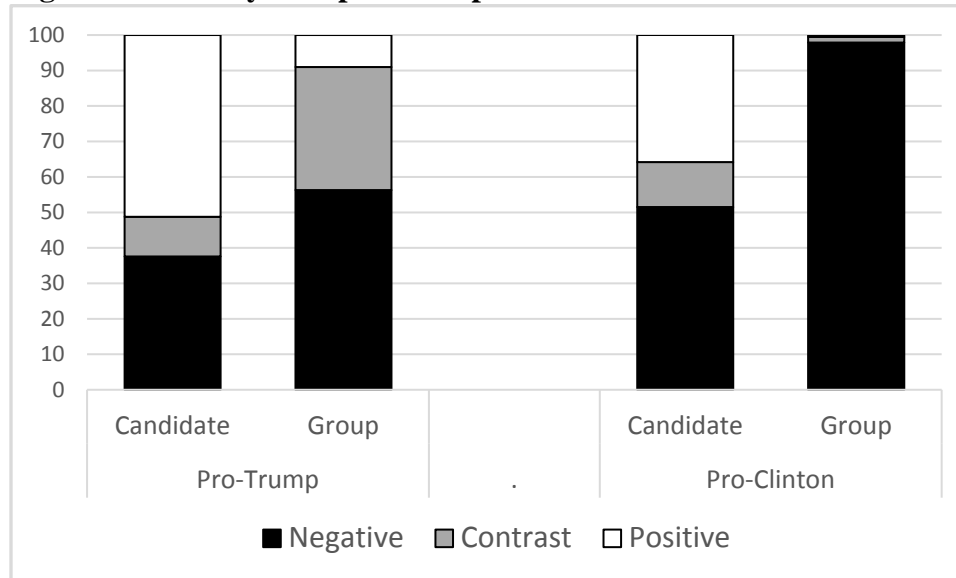
Table 4: Tone by Ad Sponsorship

		Negative	Contrast	Positive
Pro-Trump	Candidate	37.58	11.2	51.22
	Group	56.31	34.65	9.04
Pro-Clinton	Candidate	51.5	12.67	35.84
	Group	97.87	1.58	0.55

Figures are from September 16, 2016 to October 13, 2016. Numbers include broadcast television, national network and national cable.

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

Figure 4: Tone by Ad Sponsorship



Figures are from September 16, 2016 to October 13, 2016.

Numbers include broadcast television, national network and national cable.

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A more in-depth look at the candidates' advertising reveals that their attacks often use the opposing candidates' words against them. For instance, 86 percent of Clinton-sponsored pure attack ads (27,308 total airings) include clips of Trump's voice, and 98 percent of Trump-sponsored pure attack ads (5,663 total airings) include Clinton's voice. Moreover, Pro-Clinton ads are focusing on personal characteristics over policy: 87 percent of pro-Clinton attack ads focus on Trump's personal characteristics. Pro-Trump attacks ads are more likely to focus on both personal characteristics and policy (42 percent) with a third (33 percent) focusing solely on personal characteristics of Clinton. When Trump goes positive, however, the discussion often turns to policy: 75 percent of pro-Trump promotional ads focus on policy as opposed to personal characteristics.

Florida Still at Center of Presidential Advertising Storm

Florida continues to be at the center of the presidential advertising world, with Orlando and Tampa seeing more ads than any other media market in the country over the past month (Table 5). In both markets, pro-Clinton ads have dominated, comprising 84 and 77 percent of total ads respectively. Media markets in Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Ohio round out the top 10. Clinton holds an ad advantage in all of the top 20 media markets. Notably, the Clinton campaign has aired 4,504 ads on national cable over the last month as well, compared to just 608 aired by the Trump campaign.

Table 5: Top Media Markets in Presidential Race

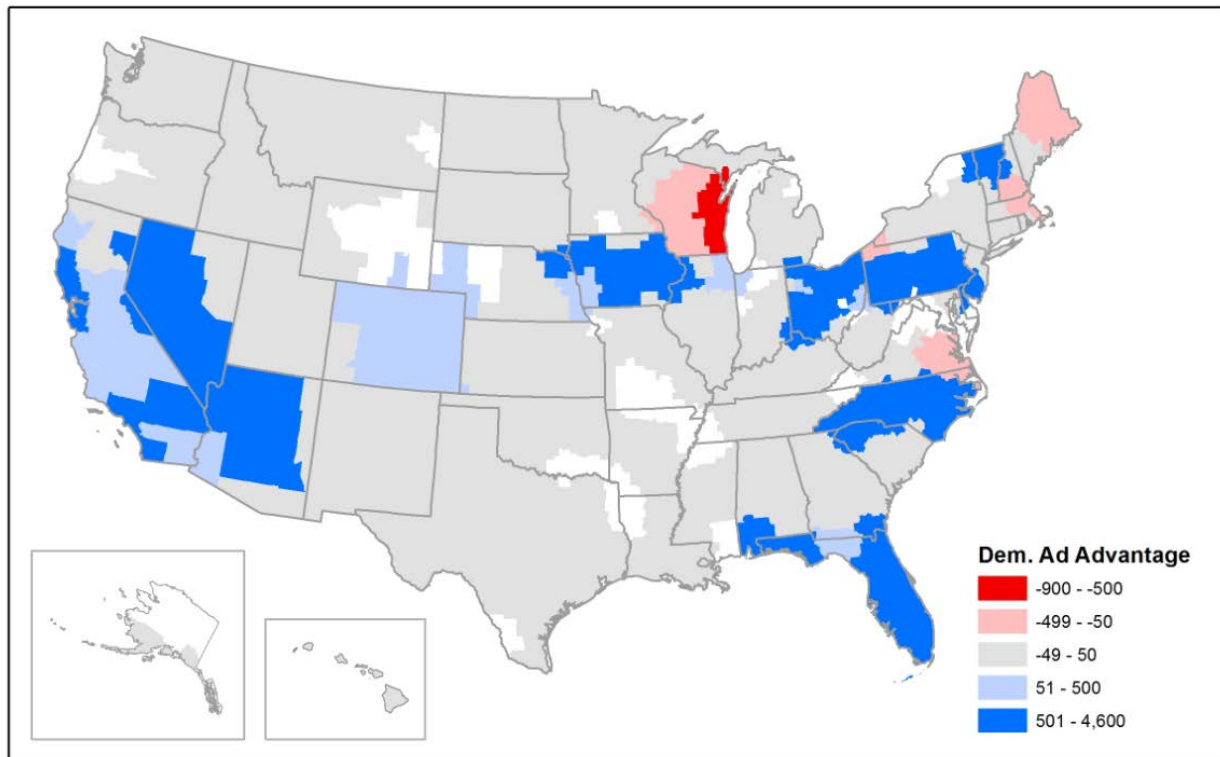
Media Market	Dem Ads	Rep Ads	Total Ads	Total Cost (in Ms)	% Dem Ads
Orlando	5,655	1,039	6,694	8.3	84%
Tampa	4,570	1,340	5,910	5.9	77%
Las Vegas	4,597	923	5,520	4.1	83%
National Cable	4,504	608	5,112	10.9	88%
Charlotte	3,557	1,171	4,728	3.9	75%
Greensboro	3,160	1,053	4,213	1.5	75%
Philadelphia	3,429	561	3,990	4.2	86%
West Palm Beach	3,157	805	3,962	2.4	80%
Cincinnati	2,549	1,212	3,761	1.8	68%
Reno	2,811	897	3,708	1.8	76%
Pittsburgh	2,548	1,017	3,565	3.2	71%
Cleveland	2,683	679	3,362	3.1	80%
Raleigh	2,762	510	3,272	2.2	84%
Columbus, OH	2,323	833	3,156	2.2	74%
Jacksonville	2,109	935	3,044	1.1	69%
Miami	1,864	1,132	2,996	3.5	62%
Harrisburg	1,965	936	2,901	1.5	68%
Ft. Myers	2,053	743	2,796	1.0	73%
Wilkes Barre	1,925	733	2,658	1.1	72%
Dayton	2,131	362	2,493	1.2	85%
Des Moines	2,180	309	2,489	1.3	88%

Figures are from September 16, 2016 to October 13, 2016. Numbers include broadcast television, national network and national cable.

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

Clinton’s ad advantage does not exist in all media markets, however. Figure 5 displays Clinton’s ad advantage in each media market, with darker blue indicating those markets in which her advantage is highest and dark red markets indicating markets in which Trump has the largest ad advantage. While Clinton has an advantage in almost all of the pure battleground states, pro-Trump ads outnumber pro-Clinton ads in Wisconsin, Maine, parts of New Hampshire, parts of Virginia and in Erie, Pennsylvania.

Figure 5: Democratic Ad Advantage in Presidential Race



Figures are from September 16, 2016 to October 13, 2016. Numbers include broadcast television. Map does not depict large Clinton advantage in National Cable. CITE SOURCE OF DATAAS: Kantar Media/CMAG with analysis by the Wesleyan Media Project.

Dems Air More Ads in Tightest Senate Races; Ohio and Florida Exceptions

Table 6 shows the volume and cost of advertising in U.S. Senate races. Pennsylvania’s Senate race, between incumbent Pat Toomey and challenger Katie McGinty, has seen the most advertising since September 16 with over 26,000 airings at an estimated cost of \$21.6 million. Indiana’s Senate race is close behind, seeing almost 24,000 ads (\$11.3 million). Races in Missouri, Nevada and North Carolina round out the top 5, and in all five the Democratic candidate leads in terms of the volume of advertising. Among the top 10 Senate races, the Republican candidate leads only in Florida and Ohio, two states in which the GOP candidate holds an edge in the polls as well.

Table 6: Ad Volume and Spending in Top US Senate Races (Since September 16)

State	Airings	Est. Cost (in Ms)	Dem Adv.	Pro-Dem			Pro-Rep		
				Cand	Party/ Coord	Grp	Cand	Party/ Coord	Grp
PA	26,358	21.6	2,752	5,208	2,936	6,411	3,217	1,858	6,728
IN	23,756	11.3	5,890	7,024	4,644	3,155	3,075	1,232	4,626
MO	21,695	13.7	5	2,709	3,946	4,195	5,613	1,253	3,979
NV	20,882	13.6	2,678	3,846	2,901	5,033	1,845	2,091	5,166
NC	20,412	10.0	5,364	5,330	4,959	2,599	1,153	2,902	3,469
FL	18,135	15.3	-5,419	3,509	208	2,641	5,399	1,394	4,984
NH	14,458	27.7	2,136	1,470	3,549	3,278	2,228	425	3,508
WI	10,726	4.2	1,566	6,006	0	140	2,102	1,401	1,077
OH	9,784	5.2	-7,452	1,166	0	0	5,281	542	2,795
IL	7,215	6.3	925	4,070	0	0	1,889	222	1,034
LA	6,928	3.4	-5,266	831	0	0	5,471	0	626
AZ	6,318	3.6	-662	2,828	0	0	1,623	1,428	439
GA	4,926	2.2	-1,222	1,852	0	0	3,074	0	0
KY	4,069	1.3	1,165	2,507	0	110	447	678	327
AR	2,943	1.0	-143	1,400	0	0	1,543	0	0
IA	2,054	0.8	-2,054	0	0	0	2,054	0	0
ID	1,893	0.3	-1,881	6	0	0	1,887	0	0
OR	1,866	0.9	1,866	1,866	0	0	0	0	0
NY	1,645	0.6	1,625	1,635	0	0	0	0	10
CO	1,582	0.9	1,442	1,512	0	0	70	0	0
WA	1,391	1.0	1,391	1,391	0	0	0	0	0
KS	1,003	0.4	-1,003	0	0	0	1,003	0	0
ND	959	0.2	-959	0	0	0	9,59	0	0
CT	952	0.6	952	952	0	0	0	0	0
AK	608	0.1	-608	0	0	0	608	0	0
VT	379	0.1	379	379	0	0	0	0	0
HI	208	0.06	208	208	0	0	0	0	0
CA*	126	0.2	126	126	0	0	0	0	0
MD	116	0.08	116	116	0	0	0	0	0

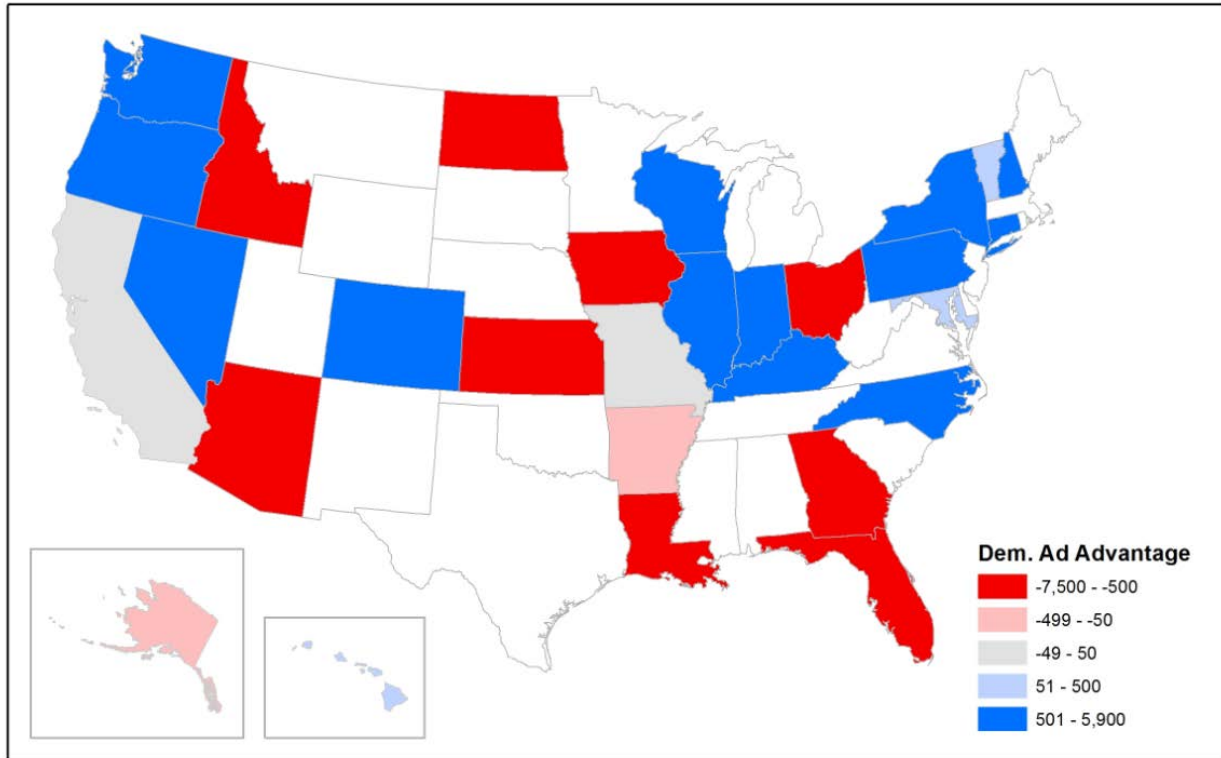
Figures are from September 16, 2016 to October 13, 2016. Numbers include broadcast television, national network and national cable.

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

*Two Democrats are competing against each other in California's Senate general election.

Figure 6 displays which party held an advantage in terms of the number of ads aired over the past month, with blue denoting those states with a Democratic lead and red denoting those states with a Republican lead.

Figure 6: Democratic Ad Advantage in U.S. Senate Races



Figures are from September 16, 2016 to October 13, 2016. Numbers include broadcast television.
CITE SOURCE OF DATA AS: Kantar Media/CMAG with analysis by the Wesleyan Media Project.
*California: 126 ads aired during this period in the Dem vs. Dem Senate race.

Majority of Senate Ads Negative

The majority of ads aired in U.S. Senate races over the past month have been negative, as Table 7 and Figure 7 show. Almost 53 percent of ads have been purely negative—focused solely on the opponent—while another 22 percent have been contrast—mentioning both the favored candidate and the opponent. These percentages are similar to what has been seen over the same time period in the last three election cycles.

Table 7: Tone of Senate Races over Time

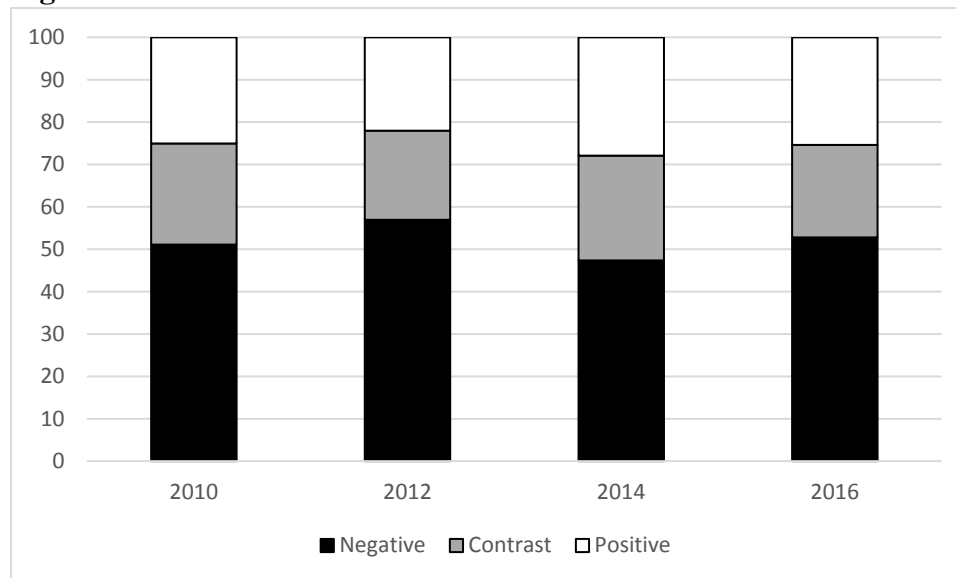
Year	Negative	Contrast	Positive
2010	51.08	23.87	25.05
2012	56.93	21.06	22.01
2014	47.35	24.73	27.92
2016	52.78	21.82	25.4

Figures are from September 16, 2016 to October 13, 2016.

Numbers include broadcast television, national network and national cable.

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Figure 7: Tone of Senate Races over Time



Figures are from September 16, 2016 to October 13, 2016.

Numbers include broadcast television, national network and national cable.

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The most negative Senate race over the past month has been in Nevada, where 76 percent of ads have been purely negative (Table 8). The Senate races in Florida and Indiana have been similarly negative, with 3 in 4 ads being purely negative.

Table 8: Negativity in Senate Races

State	Airings	Negative %	Contrast %	Positive %
NV	20,882	76%	15%	10%
FL	18,135	75%	21%	4%
IN	23,756	74%	11%	16%
NH	14,458	69%	14%	16%
NC	20,412	63%	31%	6%
MO	21,695	61%	21%	18%
PA	26,358	60%	23%	18%
OH	9,784	45%	12%	43%
WI	10,726	34%	28%	38%
IL	7,215	33%	55%	11%
AZ	6,318	30%	50%	20%
KY	4,069	20%	3%	78%
LA	6,928	8%	31%	62%
NY	1,645	1%	0%	99%
GA	4,926	0%	52%	48%
AR	2,943	0%	48%	52%
IA	2,054	0%	37%	63%
CO	1,582	0%	4%	96%
ID	1,893	0%	0%	100%
AK	608	0%	0%	100%
CA	126	0%	0%	100%
CT	952	0%	0%	100%
HI	208	0%	0%	100%
KS	1,003	0%	0%	100%
MD	116	0%	0%	100%

Figures are from September 16, 2016 to October 13, 2016.

Numbers include broadcast television, national network and national cable.

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Table 9 shows that among negative ads, those attacking Democratic Senate candidates (pro-Republican ads) have been more focused on their personal characteristics than those negative ads attacking Republicans (Pro-Democratic ads). Fifty nine percent of pro-Democratic ads have attacked on policy compared to 44 percent of pro-Republican ads.

Table 9: Focus on Personal Characteristics v. Policy by Party in Senate Ads

Party	Personal	Policy	Both
Pro-Rep % (attacking Dems)	30.1	44.4	24.4
Pro-Dem % (attacking GOP)	16.7	59.1	21.8

Figures are from September 16, 2016 to October 13, 2016.

Numbers include broadcast television, national network and national cable.

Based on Wesleyan Media Project coding of Kantar Media/CMAG data (excluding Spanish-language advertising).

Clinton Frequently Mentioned in GOP Ads; Trump Largely Ignored by Dems

Table 10 reveals that anti-Clinton references appear in more than one of every 10 pro-Republican Senate ads (14 percent), which is more common than disapproving mentions of Obama (which occur in 9.5 percent). Anti-Trump references occur in only 2 percent of pro-Democratic ads.

“Democrats have been very cautious in their attempts to link Trump with Republican Senate candidates,” said Michael Franz, co-director of the Wesleyan Media Project. “The expectation was that Democrats would pin Trump to down ballot candidates. They have not, and it’s very surprising.”

Democratic ads are about twice as likely as Republican ads to convey anti-Congress or anti-Washington sentiments.

Table 10: Disapproving References by Party in Senate Ads

Mention	Overall	Pro-Dem	Pro-Rep
Obama	4.7%	0.1%	9.5%
Clinton	7.0%	0.0%	14.2%
Trump	1.0%	1.9%	0.0%
Congress	5.1%	6.7%	3.5%
Washington	17.2%	24.5%	9.7%

Figures are from September 16, 2016 to October 13, 2016. Numbers include broadcast television, national network and national cable.

Based on Wesleyan Media Project coding of Kantar Media/CMAG data (excluding Spanish-language advertising).

Democrats Speak of Wall Street; Republicans Attack Obamacare

The Wesleyan Media Project also coded for specific words that appeared in Senate advertising. Wall Street is mentioned in 11 percent of all pro-Democratic Senate ads but in only 3.8 percent of Republican ads (Table 11). Obamacare is mentioned in over 12 percent of all pro-Republican Senate ads but in only 1.3 percent of Democratic ads. The ideological label, liberal, is also commonly used in Republican advertising, appearing in nearly 12 percent of Republican ads. Not a single Democratic ad mentions the word, however.

Table 11: Word Mentions by Party in Senate Ads

Words	Democrats	Republicans
Change	1.7%	0.0%
Liberal	0.0%	11.5%
Conservative	1.0%	4.6%
Special Interests	8.2%	4.0%
Working Class	1.9%	1.7%
Middle Class	3.4%	2.9%
Wall Street	11.6%	3.8%
Big Government	0.0%	1.3%
Obamacare	1.3%	12.3%
Planned Parenthood	6.4%	0.0%
Out-of-State Money	0.0%	1.4%
Rigged	1.3%	0.5%

Figures are from September 16, 2016 to October 13, 2016.

Numbers include broadcast television, national network and national cable.

Based on Wesleyan Media Project coding of Kantar Media/CMAG data (excluding Spanish-language advertising).

Maine House Race Sees Most Advertising

Table 12 focuses on the volume and cost of advertising in top U.S. House races since September 16. Maine's second congressional district leads the pack. Over 9000 ads have aired in that race over the past month. Montana's at-large congressional district, New York-22, Minnesota-08 and Florida-18 round out the top five House races in terms of ad volumes. In general, Democratic candidates have benefitted from more advertising than their Republican opponents. Democrats held an ad advantage in 8 of the top 10 races and in 16 of the top 20 races over the past month.

Table 12: Ad Volume and Spending in Top US House Races (Since September 16)

Race	Airings	Est. Cost (in Ms)	Dem Adv.	Pro-Dem			Pro-Rep		
				Cand	Party/ Coord	Grp	Cand	Party/ Coord	Grp
ME02	9,327	2.8	2,515	3,697	749	1,475	1,463	1,943	0
MT01	7,683	0.8	-669	3,507	0	0	4,176	0	0
NY22	6,100	1.3	5,834	2,736	0	3,231	133	0	0
MN08	5,438	4.4	1,150	691	1,402	1,201	659	1,196	289
FL18	4,950	2.3	-118	2,416	0	0	9	1,805	720
CA24	4,913	0.8	249	1,235	0	1,346	1,312	1,020	0
TX23	4,803	3.2	1,093	682	2,266	0	793	973	89
NY24	4,479	0.9	617	545	2,003	0	919	832	180
NY19	4,390	1.5	264	1,084	593	650	31	1,446	586
NE02	4,221	1.6	313	1,022	710	535	238	1,716	0
CO06	3,946	3.1	-46	354	1,207	389	619	1,377	0
NV03	3,859	2.6	461	440	1,468	252	297	1,101	301
IA01	3,787	1.2	367	815	769	493	836	874	0
NV04	3,760	2.3	178	0	1,969	0	0	1,791	0
IA03	3,742	1.2	512	931	1,196	0	918	697	0
AZ02	3,716	1.1	-1,162	1,277	0	0	2,439	0	0
CA49	3,517	1.4	1,117	0	2,317	0	1,200	0	0
PA08	3,370	3.2	1,424	222	2,175	0	284	689	0
MI07	3,213	1.1	429	1,821	0	0	1,130	262	0
NY21	3,141	0.6	685	1,913	0	0	1,228	0	0
UT04	3,140	1.4	384	1,762	0	0	1,378	0	0
MN03	3,037	2.4	991	776	1,238	0	1,016	7	0
FL26	2,846	2.7	184	49	1,306	160	456	852	23
MN02	2,740	2.5	1,564	979	698	475	119	469	0
CA07	2,716	1.4	356	898	638	0	382	485	313
AZ01	2,711	1.3	1,425	741	1,327	0	492	151	0
CA21	2,681	0.7	-869	0	0	906	1,775	0	0
WI08	2,492	0.8	-424	943	91	0	627	831	0
CO03	2,482	1.0	384	729	0	704	475	574	0

Figures are from September 16, 2016 to October 13, 2016. Numbers include broadcast television, national network and national cable.

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

Montana Race for Governor Garners Most Ads

Table 13 shows advertising levels in gubernatorial races, with Montana's race between incumbent Democrat Steve Bullock and Republican challenger Greg Gianforte topping the list. Pro-Gianforte ads have outnumbered pro-Bullock ads by nearly 8,000 over the last month. North Carolina's gubernatorial race between incumbent Republican Pat McCrory and Democratic challenger Roy Cooper ranks number two in volume of airings (though it is highest in cost), with pro-Cooper ads dominating. Missouri's open race between Democrat Chris Koster and Republican Eric Greitens ranks third overall in volume, with Koster-sponsored ads slightly edging out Greitens-sponsored ones by just over 700 airings.

Table 13: Ad Volume and Spending in Top Gubernatorial Races (Since September 16)

Gov Race	Airings	Est Cost (in Ms)	Dem Ad Adv	Pro-Dem			Pro-Rep		
				Cand	Party/Coord	Group	Cand	Party/Coord	Group
MT	20,056	2.4	-7,924	2,898	0	3,168	12,940	1,050	0
NC	16,493	7.7	5,537	8,544	0	2,471	3,920	1,558	0
MO	15,825	5.5	724	8,274	0	0	7,550	0	0
IN	9,647	3.4	21	4,759	0	75	4,813	0	0
OR	3,459	1.1	2,009	2,734	0	0	725	0	0
VT	2,937	1.2	87	622	0	890	287	0	1,138
WV	2,868	0.6	104	1,484	0	2	780	602	0
NH	1,471	2.3	965	102	635	481	0	0	253
WA	1,277	1.3	919	1,098	0	0	179	0	0
UT	266	0.2	266	266	0	0	0	0	0
ND	166	0.04	-166	0	0	0	166	0	0

Figures are from September 16, 2016 to October 13, 2016.

Numbers include broadcast television, national network and national cable.

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

In terms of tone, the race for governor in West Virginia is the most negative by far, with 99.7 percent of ad airings in the past month classified as purely negative. At the other extremely, all airings in the North Dakota race for governor have been positive, though there have been only 166 airings in the past month.

Table 14: Most Negative Gubernatorial Races

State	Airings	Negative %	Contrast %	Positive %
WV	2,868	99.7%	0.0%	0.3%
NC	16,493	75.2%	15.8%	8.9%
MT	20,056	64.4%	6.3%	29.3%
MO	15,825	56.0%	17.6%	26.3%
NH	1,471	49.9%	5.2%	44.9%
VT	2,937	47.8%	7.8%	44.4%
IN	9,647	40.1%	19.7%	40.3%
OR	3,459	21.0%	0.0%	79.0%
WA	1,277	14.0%	0.0%	86.0%
UT	266	10.2%	0.0%	89.8%
ND	166	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

Figures are from September 16, 2016 to October 13, 2016.

Numbers include broadcast television, national network and national cable.

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

Most Active Groups Are Super PACs

An analysis of group activity this election cycle, done in conjunction with the Center for Responsive Politics, reveals that the majority of the most active groups are those that do disclose their donors (Table 15). Airing the most ads in the presidential race is Priorities USA Action, a pro-Clinton super PAC. Most active in Senate races has been Senate Majority PAC, a super PAC working to elect Democrats to the Senate. Right to Rise, Jeb Bush’s super PAC, even though they have not aired any ads for months, is still the third most active group in this election cycle. All three are super PACs and thus must disclose their donors.

However, two of the ten most active groups this cycle, One Nation and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, are “dark money” groups that do not disclose who their donors are.

Table 15: Top Group Advertisers in 2015-16 Election Cycle

Group	Ads	Pres Ads	Sen Ads	House Ads	Disclose ?	Org. Type
Priorities USA Action	66,278	66,278	0	0	Y	super PAC
Senate Majority PAC	38,189	0	38,189	0	Y	super PAC
Right To Rise USA	35,558	35,558	0	0	Y	super PAC
Conservative Solutions PAC	30,169	30,169	0	0	Y	super PAC
Freedom Partners Action Fund	25,126	0	25,126	0	Y	super PAC
Senate Leadership Fund	22,606	0	22,606	0	Y	super PAC
One Nation	20,216	0	20,216	0	N	c4
U.S. Chamber of Commerce	17,266	0	15,073	2193	N	c6
House Majority PAC	16,075	0	0	16,075	Y	super PAC
Fighting For Ohio Fund	12,846	0	12,846	0	Y	super PAC
Club For Growth Action	12,612	6548	991	5073	Y	super PAC
Women Vote	11,082	1305	9477	300	P	super PAC
Rebuilding America Now PAC	10,498	10,498	0	0	Y	super PAC
Stand For Truth, Inc	10,330	10,330	0	0	Y	super PAC
American Future Fund	8,380	5291	3089	0	N	c4
NRA Inst. for Legislative Action	7,948	5119	2829	0	N	c4
AFSCME People	7,417	0	7417	0	Y	PAC
End Citizens United	7,085	0	5623	1462	Y	PAC
Our Principles PAC	7,000	7000	0	0	Y	super PAC
NextGen California Action Cmte	6,911	6911	0	0	Y	super PAC
NRA Political Victory Fund	6,313	4618	1695	0	Y	PAC
Americans For Prosperity	5,427	0	5427	0	N	c4
New Day For America	5,394	5394	0	0	Y	super PAC
America Leads	5,377	5377	0	0	Y	super PAC
Granite State Solutions	5,039	0	5039	0	Y	super PAC
Keep The Promise I	4,957	4957	0	0	Y	super PAC
Conservative Solutions Project	4,882	4882	0	0	N	c4
Independence USA Pac	4,787	0	4392	395	Y	super PAC

Group classification by the Center for Responsive Politics.

Figures are from January 1, 2015 to October 13, 2016.

Numbers include broadcast television, national network and national cable.

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

In the Disclosure column, a Y indicates the group full discloses its donors, a P indicates partial disclosure, while N indicates no disclosure of donors.

Dark Money Declines in Senate Races as Election Day Approaches

Groups have been sponsoring a large number of the ads airing in the most competitive Senate races, but the extent of their involvement has varied across the course of the campaign. In the past month, the average competitive Senate race has seen about 35 percent of its ads sponsored by groups, but prior to September 16, the average race saw about 44 percent of its ads sponsored by groups. As Election Day approaches and candidate-sponsored advertising ramps up, the involvement of groups as a percentage of total ads declines. See Table 16.

The other important change is that, as we approach Election Day, the percentage of ads sponsored by “dark money” groups—those that do not disclose their donors—has declined. On average, it was 42.5 percent of group ads prior to September 16, but since the FEC’s 60-day reporting window has kicked in, dark money groups have sponsored, on average, only about 11 percent of group-sponsored ads in the most competitive Senate races.

“We’re seeing dark money groups that have spent millions of dollars in Senate races fade away, rather than report their spending to the FEC” as they’re required to do beginning two months before the election, said Sheila Krumholz, the executive director of the Center for Responsive Politics. “It’s a way to get around telling the IRS next year that a great deal of their activity was political, which isn’t supposed to be the case with 501(c) groups.”

Table 16: Group Involvement in Competitive Senate Races over Time

Between 9/16 and 10/13				
State	Est. Cost (in Ms)	Ads	% Group	% of grp that is dark money
PA	21.6	26,358	49.8%	8.8%
IN	11.3	23,756	32.8%	12.2%
MO	13.7	21,695	37.7%	29.4%
NV	13.6	20,882	48.8%	17.1%
NC	10.0	20,412	29.7%	9.0%
FL	15.3	18,135	42.0%	21.6%
NH	27.7	14,458	46.9%	1.8%
WI	4.2	10,726	11.3%	11.5%
OH	5.2	9,784	28.6%	0.0%
IL	6.3	7,215	14.3%	0.0%
		mean	34.2%	11.1%
		total	37.4%	13.4%
From 1/1/2015 to 9/15/16				
PA	64.4	63,971	61.4%	33.1%
OH	48.9	63,489	78.6%	28.1%
WI	21.1	35,992	35.8%	53.8%
NV	22.3	34,320	55.8%	32.3%
IN	15.7	32,348	21.0%	36.7%
FL	22.1	25,736	29.0%	58.5%
NH	45.6	22,435	62.9%	39.0%
CO	9.9	14,743	22.8%	56.9%
MO	8.6	14,220	32.1%	51.4%
IL	13.1	12,271	38.5%	35.7%
		mean	43.8%	42.5%
		total	50.8%	36.0%

Numbers include broadcast television, national network and national cable.
 CITE SOURCE OF DATA AS: Kantar Media/CMAG with analysis by the Wesleyan Media Project.

Clinton Emphasizes Jobs, Trump Emphasizes Taxes

Table 17 lists the top issues mentioned by the Trump and Clinton campaigns—and the number of times each issue was mentioned in their advertising. The Clinton campaign has been focused foremost on jobs and unemployment during the past four weeks, though veterans’ issues, the economy and education are also in their top five. The Trump campaign, by contrast, has focused on the issue of taxes, with terrorism, women’s rights and jobs receiving many mentions as well.

Table 17: Top Issues in Presidential Race by Sponsor

Clinton	Pro-Clinton Groups	Trump	Pro-Trump Groups
Jobs	Immigration	Taxes	Gun Control
Unemployment	Terrorism	Terrorism	Supreme Court
Vets	Faith	Women’s Rights	Public Safety
Economy	Civil Rights	Jobs	Jobs
Education	Green Energy	Unemployment	Unemployment

Figures are from September 16, 2016 to October 13, 2016.

Numbers include broadcast television, national network and national cable.

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

The issues mentioned by the groups supporting the candidates are quite different. Groups supporting Clinton discussed immigration, first and foremost, followed by terrorism, faith, civil rights and green energy. Groups supporting Trump most frequently mentioned gun control, followed by the Supreme Court, public safety, jobs and unemployment.

Appendix

[Download Table A: US Senate Advertising by Race and Sponsor \(since September 16\)](#)

[Download Table B: US House Advertising by Race and Sponsor \(since September 16\)](#)

[Download Table C: Gubernatorial Advertising by Race and Sponsor \(since September 16\)](#)

*CMAG classifies both RGA and RGA Right Direction PAC as parties, as both explicitly mention RGA (“Republican Governors Assn.”).

About This Report

Data reported here do not cover local cable buys, only broadcast television, national network and national cable buys. All cost estimates are precisely that: estimates. Disclosure categorization information on outside 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, associate professor of government at Wesleyan University, Michael M. Franz, associate professor of government at Bowdoin College and Travis N. Ridout, professor of political science at Washington State University. WMP staff include Laura Baum (Project Manager), Dolly Haddad (Project Coordinator) and Matthew Motta (Research Associate).

The Wesleyan Media Project is supported by grants from The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and Wesleyan University. Data are provided by Kantar Media/CMAG with analysis by the Wesleyan Media Project using Academiclip, a web-based coding tool. The Wesleyan Media Project is partnering this year with both the Center for Responsive Politics, to provide added information on outside 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.

About the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

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