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## **GENERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN TV ADVERTISING SPENDING EXCEEDS \$50 MILLION IN FIRST TWO MONTHS OF CAMPAIGN**

**Candidates out-advertising their counterparts  
over comparable time period in 2004**

**McCain TV ads more negative than Obama**

**Not much has changed in advertising targets –  
Midwest battleground states still receiving huge numbers of ads**

MADISON, WI -- Over the comparable time period four years ago, Presidential candidates Barack Obama and John McCain are airing more TV advertisements in more media markets than their counterparts did during the 2004 election campaign. From the end of the primary season (June 3rd) through July 26th, the two presidential candidates have aired over 100,000 ads on broadcast television, while only 77,000 ads were aired during the same time period in 2004. The McCain campaign has spent just over \$21 million on television advertising since June 3rd, while Senator Obama has spent over \$27 million.

Interest groups have aired just over 4,000 ads, significantly fewer than at this point in 2004. In 2004, the two major parties had not aired any general election television advertising before July 26th, but this year just under \$4 million has already been spent on ads by the parties since June 3rd. Of course, the general election started much earlier in 2004 than it did in 2008, and there was significant advertising in 2004 starting in early March. Still, due to the competitive contest between Senators Obama and Clinton, there were also more primary ads in more states this year than there were in the last presidential election. McCain took some advantage of the prolonged Democratic primary, airing 5,374 ads and spending \$2.2 million prior to June 3rd. These ads were aired in Iowa, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia and are not included in the totals in this report.

As of July 26th, the Democratic National Committee had yet to air a single presidential election ad, while the Republican National Committee (RNC) has aired 6,005 ads, spending approximately \$3.6 million. Between June 3rd and July 26th, the Obama campaign out-advertised the McCain campaign by nearly 9,000 ads: 55,312 ads for Obama to Senator McCain's 46,563 ads. However, when the RNC ads are added to McCain's total, the margin drops to just 2,744 ads. Likewise, although Obama has spent \$6 million more than McCain on television advertising, including the spending by the RNC decreases the margin to roughly \$2.3 million. The messages for the McCain and RNC ads have been essentially the same, focusing on

issues of national security, energy policy, and the economy, with the combined Republican advertising consisting of roughly 45 percent negative ads.

“Obama’s fundraising totals allow his campaign to purchase more ads,” says Ken Goldstein, Director of the Wisconsin Advertising Project, “but, to this point, we have yet to see that advantage translate to a massive advantage in paid media.”

**Table 1: Advertising by Obama, McCain, and RNC**

	<i>Obama Spending</i>	<i>McCain Spending</i>	<i>RNC Spending</i>	<i>Ratio – Obama/McCain (w/o RNC ads)</i>	<i>Ratio – Obama/McCain (w/ RNC ads)</i>
Michigan	\$2,240,000	\$2,655,000	\$769,000	0.84	0.65
Ohio	\$2,486,000	\$2,568,000	\$904,000	0.97	0.72
Pennsylvania	\$3,937,000	\$4,602,000	\$1,524,000	0.86	0.64
Wisconsin	\$1,198,000	\$1,426,000	\$499,000	0.84	0.62
Other Battleground States	\$17,049,000	\$8,135,000	0	0.87	0.87

**CITE SOURCE OF DATA IN TABLE AS: TNS Media Intelligence/CMAG with analysis by the Wisconsin Advertising Project**

The McCain ad effort is more narrowly focused with intense attention being paid to four states -- Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. McCain is out-advertising the Democratic nominee in these four states where the RNC has also entered the fray. That said, in seven other battleground states where both campaigns are up (Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, New Mexico, Nevada, and West Virginia) the McCain campaign is also out-advertising the Obama campaign.

**Table 2: Presidential Advertising in States Where Both Campaigns are on the Air**

	<i>Obama Spending</i>	<i>Obama First General Election Airing</i>	<i>McCain Spending</i>	<i>McCain First General Election Airing</i>
Colorado	\$802,000	6/20/08	\$1,104,000	6/6/08
Iowa	\$700,000	7/8/08	\$946,000	6/4/08
Michigan	\$2,240,000	6/20/08	\$2,655,000	5/28/08
Minnesota	\$70,000	6/20/08	\$575,000	6/7/08
Missouri	\$1,246,000	6/20/08	\$1,600,000	6/6/08
North Dakota	\$157,000	6/20/08	\$71,000	6/8/08
New Hampshire	\$391,000	6/21/08	\$342,000	6/11/08
New Mexico	\$260,000	6/20/08	\$440,000	6/6/08
Nevada	\$633,000	6/20/08	\$1,134,000	6/7/08
Ohio	\$2,486,000	6/20/08	\$2,568,000	5/3/08
Pennsylvania	\$3,937,000	6/21/08	\$4,602,000	5/28/08
Virginia	\$2,660,000	6/20/08	\$1,509,000	7/8/08
West Virginia	\$166,000	6/20/08	\$414,000	5/3/08
Wisconsin	\$1,198,000	6/20/08	\$1,426,000	6/6/08

**CITE SOURCE OF DATA IN TABLE AS: TNS Media Intelligence/CMAG with analysis by the Wisconsin Advertising Project**

Despite being out-advertised in nearly all states where both candidates are airing ads, Obama continues to advertise in states that have recently been unfavorable to Democratic presidential candidates. To date, Senator Obama is airing ads in 37 markets where McCain has not aired a single ad, while McCain is advertising in only two markets where Obama is not. Although Florida was the pivotal state in the 2000 presidential election, John McCain has not aired a single ad there since June 3rd. Senator Obama has aired over 7,000 ads in Florida since becoming the presumptive Democratic nominee and has spent more money in Florida than in any other state. Other states where only Obama’s paid advertising message is being heard are Alaska, Georgia, Indiana, Montana, and North Carolina. Neither Gore in 2000 nor Kerry in 2004 won any of these states. Alaska, Georgia, Indiana, North Dakota, and Montana are also states where Kerry did not advertise at all during 2004 election.

**Table 3: Advertising Spending in States with Only Obama Ads**

<i>State</i>	<i>Obama Spending</i>
FL	\$5,028,000
GA	\$1,824,000
NC	\$1,620,000
IN	\$1,268,000
MT	\$136,000
AK	\$88,000

**CITE SOURCE OF DATA IN TABLE AS: TNS Media Intelligence/CMAG with analysis by the Wisconsin Advertising Project**

Commenting on this fact, Professor Goldstein says, “It is certainly worth noting that Obama is up in these red states and has the airways all to himself. That said, we won’t really know if he’s expanding the playing field until September.” The Bush and Kerry campaigns were advertising in several states -- Louisiana, Arkansas, Virginia, and Arizona -- during July 2004 that ultimately did not receive any advertising during the final weeks of that campaign.” Furthermore, Goldstein notes, “Even with all the attention paid to expanding the playing field in 2008, like 2004, massive attention is still being paid to four key Midwest battlegrounds – Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.”

**Table 4: Total Campaign Advertising Spending by State**

<i>State</i>	<i>Total Spending</i>
PA	\$10,319,000
OH	\$6,399,000
MI	\$6,009,000
FL	\$5,028,000
VA	\$4,359,000
WI	\$3,244,000
MO	\$2,846,000
CO	\$1,914,000
GA	\$1,824,000
NV	\$1,767,000

IA	\$1,646,000
NC	\$1,620,000
IN	\$1,268,000
NM	\$799,000
NH	\$733,000
MN	\$647,000
WV	\$580,000
ND	\$228,000
MT	\$136,000
AK	\$88,000
TX	\$76,000

**CITE SOURCE OF DATA IN TABLE AS: TNS Media Intelligence/CMAG with analysis by the Wisconsin Advertising Project**

In general, the campaign advertising appears to be mostly about Obama and less about McCain. Over 90 percent of the ads aired by Obama are positive in nature and do not mention Senator McCain. In contrast, approximately a third of the McCain campaign's ads are negative, contrasting the two presidential candidates. None of the ads aired by the RNC are positive -- all compare the two candidates, referring to Obama negatively. "This campaign is about Barack Obama, not John McCain," explains Goldstein.

The Democratic nominee should be favored to win this year, with a strong advantage in party identification, a struggling economy, the war in Iraq, and an unpopular incumbent Republican president. In order to win, therefore, Senator Obama must clear a threshold of credibility with voters. According to Goldstein, "What the McCain campaign needs to do is convince the electorate that Barack Obama is not a credible commander-in-chief, and to do that they need to run negative ads. What Senator Obama's campaign and campaign advertising needs to do is persuade people that he is a credible president."

To date, Barack Obama has exhibited much greater overall message discipline in his campaign than John Kerry did in 2004. One of the biggest critiques of the way John Kerry ran his campaign was that he dealt with too many different issues in his television ads. Barack Obama, by contrast, is dealing with fewer issues in each ad, presenting a clearer, more consistent message to the voting public. In 2004, Kerry talked about 25 different issues between June 3rd and July 26th, while during a comparable period Obama has only mentioned 14 issues.

The study also found:

- To date, McCain has narrated 20 percent of the ads sponsored by his campaign, while Obama has narrated 51 percent of the ads sponsored by his campaign.
- In terms of issues, the two campaigns largely appear to be talking past each other. The top three issues that Senator Obama addressed in his television ads were jobs, welfare, and defense policy, respectively. Senator McCain talked about energy policy, national defense, and economic recession in his ads.

- Throughout the primaries Senator Obama labeled himself the candidate of change. Since winning the Democratic nomination, however, less than 1 percent of his ads mention the word change.
- Senator McCain used the word hope in over 34 percent of his ads, while Senator Obama has not used the word hope since June 3rd.
- Once the target of much criticism for not wearing an American flag pin on his lapel, Senator Barack Obama featured the flag in over 68 percent of his ads. The flag appeared in approximately 37 percent of Senator McCain’s television advertisements.
- In terms of total campaign advertising, the Philadelphia market has received the most campaign spots, followed by the Detroit and Cleveland markets.

**Table 5: Top 20 Media Markets**

<b>Market</b>	<b>Airings</b>
Philadelphia	3,311
Detroit	2,870
Cleveland	2,724
Grand Rapids	2,617
Cincinnati	2,570
Harrisburg	2,519
La Crosse	2,410
Milwaukee	2,401
Las Vegas	2,390
Denver	2,351
Madison	2,336
Columbus, OH	2,329
Lansing	2,286
Pittsburgh	2,246
Green Bay	2,198
Albuquerque	2,196
Toledo	2,121
Youngstown	2,102
Reno	2,031
Wilkes Barre	2,011

**CITE SOURCE OF DATA IN TABLE AS: TNS Media Intelligence/CMAG with analysis by the Wisconsin Advertising Project**

Using data obtained from the TNS Media Intelligence Campaign Media Analysis Group (TNSMI/CMAG), the University of Wisconsin Advertising Project codes and analyzes nearly all of the political advertising that is aired in 2008 federal and gubernatorial races across the

country. The Ad Project, considered the single most important and credible source of information on campaign TV advertising, is funded in 2008 by a grant from the Joyce Foundation.

The Wisconsin Advertising Project codes political television advertising for sponsors, issues, tone, and numerous other characteristics – all in real time. While most of the attention will be focused on the presidential race in 2008, it also tracks candidate, party, and interest group advertisements in congressional, gubernatorial and other down ballot races nationwide, with a particular focus on the Midwest and the five states that comprise the Midwest Democracy Network (Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.) Findings will be released in a series of real time reports over the course of the campaign.

Ken Goldstein, professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the co-author of *Campaign Advertising in American Democracy* (Temple University Press), directs the Advertising Project. Goldstein has overall responsibility for the project and is available to work with media and policymakers during the entire course of the 2008 election year.

The Wisconsin Advertising Project coded virtually every significant political advertisement broadcast in the top 75 markets in 2000 and in the top 100 media markets from 2001 to 2004. In this process, using videos and storyboards of ads captured by TNSMI/CMAG, project staff first research the entity responsible for airing each separate political spot aired. In relation to campaign finance regulations as well as noting the names of sponsors, the project categorizes sponsors between those paid for by candidates, parties, hard money interest groups and soft money interest groups. Each spot is then further researched to attribute it to a specific candidate that the ad sponsors hope to elect. Once this is done, project staff codes the content of each ad, using a battery of questions. This extensive coding allows for the compilation of a massive database of the content of commercials that can be used in a variety of ways by scholars, the media and policymakers.

The University of Wisconsin Advertising Project is affiliated with the university's Political Science Department. This department is one of the nation's oldest and most respected programs. It is highly ranked in national surveys and its award-winning faculty is known for innovative research on the discipline's most current and important questions.

With a reputation for unbiased and non-partisan analysis, Goldstein is a favorite source for both politicians and the news media. He has appeared numerous times on *The NewsHour* with Jim Lehrer, *Nightline*, *ABC World News Tonight*, *NBC Nightly News*, *CBS Evening News*, *FOX News Channel*, *MSNBC*, *CNBC* and *CNN*, and is a frequent contributor on *National Public Radio*. He is also quoted extensively in the country's top newspapers, including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal*.

Based in Chicago, with assets of \$935 million, the Joyce Foundation funds groups working to strengthen public policies and improve the quality of life in the Great Lakes region. Its Money and Politics program supports efforts to promote a well-functioning representative democracy with open and accountable government, informed citizen participation, competition of ideas and candidates, fair and equal application of the laws, a high level of public trust and protection of

fundamental rights. Other funding areas are education, workforce development, environment, gun violence prevention and culture.

TNS Media Intelligence/CMAG is the leading provider of advertising tracking and analysis of political public affairs and issue-advocacy advertising. TNSMI/CMAG provides customized media analysis services to national trade associations, foundations, Fortune 100 companies, national media organizations, academia and hundreds of national, statewide and local political campaigns. Clients rely on TNSMI/CMAG's experienced political researchers to assemble the most reliable, comprehensive research and reporting. TNSMI/CMAG's customized reporting methods help its clients better manage their media strategy, media buys, public relations and communications efforts.

For more information on the report or the University of Wisconsin Advertising Project, please contact Aaron Keyak or Steve Rabinowitz at 202-265-3000 or [aaron@rabinowitz-dorf.com](mailto:aaron@rabinowitz-dorf.com) or go to <http://wiscadproject.wisc.edu>. To learn more about the book *Campaign Advertising in American Democracy*, go to [http://www.temple.edu/tempres/titles/1922\\_reg.html](http://www.temple.edu/tempres/titles/1922_reg.html).

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