

“The 30-Second Candidate”

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Print Political Campaign Advertising

Fact: Newspaper campaign ads nationwide accounted for about 1.7 percent of total advertising expenditures in 2001, according to the Center for Public Policy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Try this!

Choose a political candidate and create a direct mail piece supporting her/his television campaign advertising. Direct mail includes flyers and brochures that campaign volunteers stick on your car’s windshield, stick in your front door, or mail to your house.

Design a yard sign for a political candidate. What’s the important information you need to include? How can you grab attention?

How much?

Pick a recent issue of a local newspaper and compare the amount of space devoted to campaign advertising with the space devoted to automobile advertising. What percentage of the newspaper is used for campaign advertising? How many candidates have more than one ad running in the same issue? How much is too much? Why?

Who pays?

In addition to a political candidate and his/her campaign team, who else buys campaign advertising? Check out the “Paid for by...” information included in several print campaign newspaper ads, brochures, bumper stickers, and yard signs.

Find one print piece that states it is “not authorized and paid for by” a candidate’s campaign. Who paid for this particular print piece? Contact that person or organization and ask why they are supporting this particular candidate. Go one more step and ask what other candidates this person or organization supports.

Truth Check

Pick a print campaign ad for any candidate, from any party. Now do a truth check:

- ✓ Who paid for this ad?
- ✓ What is this ad communicating? What is its message?
- ✓ How is the message being communicated?
- ✓ What is the purpose of this ad?
- ✓ How does this ad affect its viewers? How does it affect you?

The 30-Second Candidate is a project of Wisconsin Public Television and the Educational Communications Board.