

“The 30-Second Candidate”

wisconsin**vote**.org

Television Political Campaign Advertising

Fact: In the 2004 Presidential Election, candidates spent \$333.4 million in a six-month period on television ads, according to the Campaign Media Analysis Group (CMAG).

Fact: According to CMAG, the total amount spent on TV ads by all candidates and issue-advocacy groups during the 2004 election was \$1.7 billion. That number is expected to reach \$3 billion for the 2008 election cycle.

Fact: From March 2004 to August 2004, for just the presidential general election, there were over 500,000 television ads nationwide.

How much is too much?

Pick a 3-hour block of network, primetime television to watch (7:00pm-10:00pm on a weeknight). Before watching, make a chart to track the number of minutes devoted to political campaign advertising, fast food ads, or to promote a new movie or TV show. Add the total time during the 3-hour block that was allotted to each type of advertising. How do these totals compare? What do these totals tell you? How much is too much?

Who pays?

Check out the “Paid for by...” information at the end of a television campaign ad. How can you find out how much this ad might cost? Will a local television station provide you with that information? Who pays for television campaign ads? Where does this money come from?

Truth Check

Pick a television 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 intended audience for this ad, based on the message and presentation?**
- ✓ **How does this ad affect viewers? How does it affect you?**

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