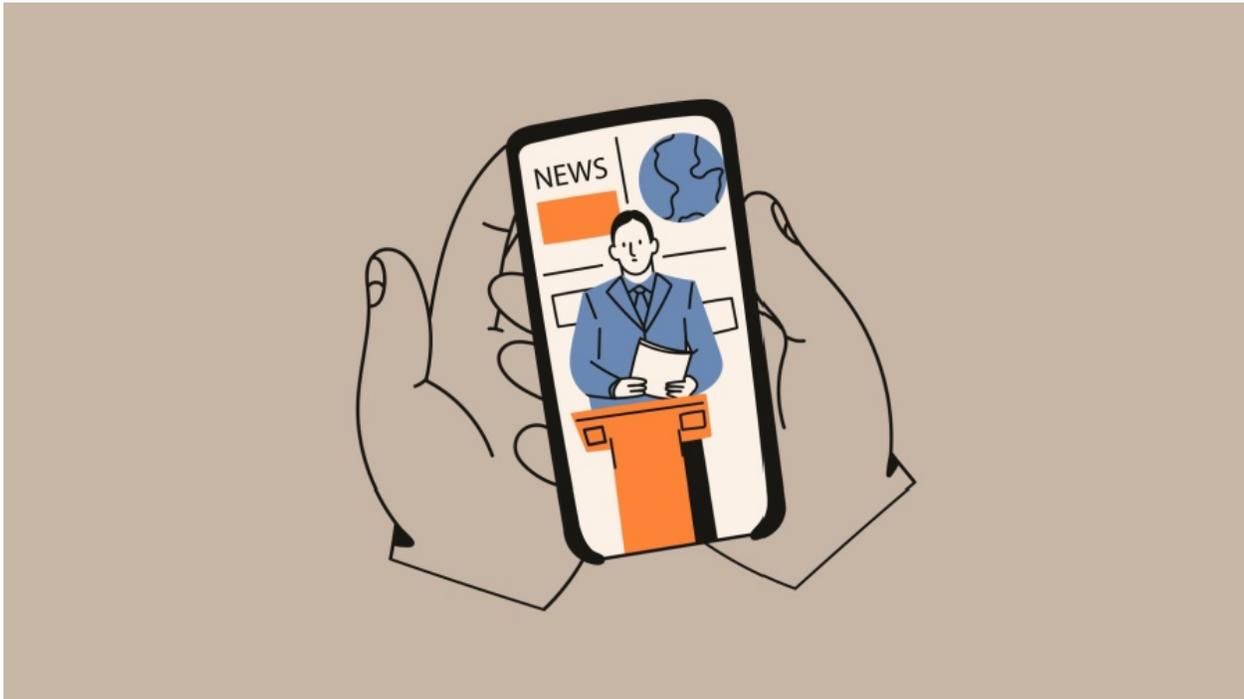


Political Advertising in 2024: The New Playbook Essentials

By Randi Langford
September 18, 2024

Originally published by ANA at: <https://www.ana.net/miccontent/show/id/ii-2024-09-political-advertising>



As the 2024 election cycle revs up, the stakes for political campaigns at every level are higher than ever. From local races to the presidential election, the ability to run effective and efficient advertising campaigns will be crucial in swaying undecided voters and securing victories. With political ad spending expected to reach record highs — some estimates suggest it could [surpass \\$12 billion](#) — candidates and their teams must be more strategic than ever in how they allocate their media budgets.

The landscape of TV advertising has evolved in several notable ways since the 2020 presidential cycle, driven by changes in consumer viewing habits and advances in data applications. As we move deeper into 2024, traditional strategies must be adapted to meet the demands of a fragmented media environment and the new voter reality. Here are three considerations that need to be a part of the political TV advertising playbook this year.

Streaming Extensions Are Essential

The days when a campaign could rely solely on linear TV buys to reach its full roster of desired voters are gone. In 2024, a comprehensive advertising strategy must include streaming extensions to ensure that all voter segments are reached effectively.

For political campaigns, linear TV (and especially cable) remains the most powerful tool for reaching key segments of voters, particularly older individuals who still favor traditional viewing methods. However, without extending ad buys to streaming platforms, campaigns risk missing a significant portion of the electorate. Streaming services offer the ability to reach cord-stackers, cord-cutters, and cord-nevers, delivering ads directly to voters on the platforms where they spend a growing portion of their time.

Independent Voter Viewing Habits Must Guide Media Buys

As the political landscape has become increasingly polarized, the importance of targeting independent voters with TV buys cannot be overstated. In many key races, these voters will be the ones who ultimately decide the outcome. This reality necessitates a shift in focus away from traditional partisan strongholds — and toward more nuanced, influential placements on regional news networks and sports channels.

Regional cable news networks are uniquely positioned to influence independent voters. Unlike local broadcast news programs, which often cater to broader and less politically engaged audiences, regional cable networks attract viewers who are highly likely to participate in the electoral process.

In addition to news, sports programming on regional channels offers another valuable avenue for reaching independent voters. Sports audiences represent a cross-section of the electorate that may not be reached through other means. By strategically placing ads on these channels, campaigns can connect with independent voters in a setting where they are most engaged and receptive.

Campaigns Must Leverage Data to Minimize Waste

In an era of tight budgets and fierce competition, political campaigns cannot afford to waste resources on ineffective or poorly targeted advertising. Every dollar spent must contribute to reaching the voters who matter most. This is where data-driven advertising becomes essential. With the advent of advanced analytics and the wealth of data available from set-top boxes, campaigns now have the tools to target their TV ads with unprecedented precision.

Set-top box data provides a treasure trove of information about viewing habits, allowing campaigns to identify the channels and programs that their target voters are watching. This level of granularity enables campaigns to tailor their ad placements to reach specific demographics, geographies, and even individual households.

For example, a campaign can use data to identify swing districts where voter turnout is expected to be high and allocate their TV budget accordingly. This approach ensures that ads are seen by voters who are most likely to be influenced and, ultimately, to vote.

As the 2024 election cycle heats up, political campaigns face the daunting task of navigating a complex media landscape while maximizing the impact of their advertising budgets. The key to success lies in embracing strategies that reflect the realities of today's viewing habits and voter behavior. By extending their reach to streaming platforms, focusing on independent voters through regional networks, and leveraging data to minimize waste, campaigns can ensure that their TV ads make a meaningful difference.

The views and opinions expressed are solely those of the contributor and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the ANA or imply endorsement from the ANA.

Randi Langford

Randi Langford is VP of political, programming, and local sales at [New York Interconnect](#).