

This year political ads will swallow up more airtime than campaign coverage on local television newscasts. The Supreme Court's Citizens United decision, which lifted restrictions on corporate political spending, unleashed countless millions of dollars for campaign ads.

But broadcasters aren't using this newfound revenue to beef up news operations and ensure in-depth coverage of candidates and their issues. Instead, they're just padding their bottom lines — while leaving the public in the dark about who really sponsors these ads, what interests they represent and whether the content of the attacks is true.

In an election year, it's critical that the public have access to information about who's trying to influence our decisions. Broadcasters must tell the public who is funding attack ads, and they must put this information online.

The public needs to know who is spending money to influence U.S. voters in 2012.

I want information about how much money political campaigns spend on advertising at my local stations. I want to know who is paying for these ads. And I want broadcasters to make this information available online where it can be easily accessed.

Broadcasters enjoy free access to our airwaves; in exchange, they're supposed to serve the interests of the communities in which they broadcast. They can start by putting their political files online, and by fully disclosing the names of both the front groups that place political ads and the financial interests that bankroll these commercials.