

The Spin Cycle

Media's Political Spin Cycle

In an election year billions of dollars are raised by political campaigns and political action committees (PACs). Campaigns, PACs and Super PACs spend a lot of that money on political ads. For every dollar contributed to President Obama's 2008 presidential run his campaign spent nearly 60 cents on media. Super PACs spend an even greater percentage of the money they raise on TV ads. And with limits on corporate spending now eradicated by the Supreme Court's Citizens United decision, Super PACs are producing hundreds of ads designed to mislead American voters. Broadcasters put these ads on the air and the cash in their pockets. Instead of using that money for actual reporting on the candidates and the issues, broadcasters pinch pennies and favor cheap programming like celebrity gossip and junk news. The end result? Broadcasters record immense profits and unleash a torrent of misinformation that leaves voters in the dark.

Political advertising beats news coverage of elections anywhere from 6-to-1 to 17-to-1 (2004). Viewers saw 4 minutes and 24 seconds on political ads but only 1 minute and 43 seconds of actual election news coverage in an average 30 minute broadcast (2006).

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