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Joyce Foundation Board Approves Grant to Fund University of Wisconsin Advertising Project in 2008

Ad project has a proven track record of working with the media to shine light on what remains the most expensive and high profile aspect of modern political campaigns

Chicago/Madison, WI – All evidence points to the fact that 2008 will again be a record year for political ad spending. With competitive primary contests in both parties, no incumbent running, the likelihood that major party nominees will eschew federal funds and spending limits for the general election as well as a Supreme Court decision (Wisconsin Right to Life v FEC) that opens the door to more interest group advertising on television, even more advertising from even more sources is likely to flood the nation, as a whole, and the Midwest, in particular.

Using data obtained from the TNS Media Intelligence Campaign Media Analysis Group (TNSMI/CMAG), the Wisconsin Advertising Project will again code and analyze all of the political advertising that is aired in 2008 federal and gubernatorial races across the country's top 100 media markets. The Ad Project is considered the single most important and credible source of information on campaign advertising and will be funded in 2008 by a \$298,945 grant from the Joyce Foundation.

In 2008, the University of Wisconsin Advertising Project will again code for sponsors, issues, tone, and numerous other characteristics – all in real time. While most of the attention will be focused on the presidential race in 2008, it will also track candidate, party and interest group advertisements in congressional, gubernatorial and other down ballot races all over the country with a particular focus on the Midwest and the five states that comprise the Midwest Democracy Network (Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.) Findings will be released in series of real time reports over the course of the campaign.

Since 2000, the Wisconsin Advertising Project has gathered, processed, coded, and made available to the scholarly community tracking data originally collected by TNSMI/CMAG. This commercial firm specializes in providing detailed, real-time tracking information to corporate and political clients. These tracking data represent the most comprehensive and systematic collection on the content *and* targeting of political advertisements.

The data include two types of information. First, frequency information tells when and where ads aired. It contains precise and detailed information on the date, time, market, station and television show of each airing, allowing, also, for very accurate estimation of its cost and value at the market level. Second, the data provide information about each ad's content, including text and images, in the form of a "storyboard" created by TNSMI/CMAG for each unique creative or individual ad.

During the 2000, 2002 and 2004 campaigns, the Wisconsin Advertising Project's real time release of advertising data became the primary means by which journalists and other political observers tracked candidates' strategic campaign decisions about message and geographic targeting. It was also the dominant method the media employed to track money flows and the activities of a variety of outside political groups. The data have also been made available for scholarly use. Researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and around the country have made extensive use of the advertising data in a variety of studies that look at the use and impact of political commercials and their impact on campaign finance.

Larry Hansen, Director of the Joyce Foundation's Money and Politics Program noted in announcing the grant, "One of the goals of the program is to strengthen honesty, transparency, and fairness in our political system. Following the money spent on television advertising in 2008 will enhance transparency, enabling voters to see who is spending money to influence election outcomes and what they are saying. It should shed light on the enforcement and impact of current campaign finance laws, and help policymakers decide on future legislative and regulatory measures."

Ken Goldstein, professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison will again direct the Advertising Project. Goldstein will have overall responsibility for the project and will be available to work with media and policy makers during the entire course of the 2008 election year.

Goldstein said, "We are grateful for the support from the Joyce Foundation and are excited to again be able to work with TNSMI/CMAG to provide compelling information on the sponsors, content, and targeting of televised political advertising. If you care about money and politics and how citizens receive political information, there is no more important way to follow the money and understand the nature of political speech in modern politics than to look at who is saying what how many times on television where."

The Wisconsin Advertising Project has coded virtually every significant political advertisement broadcast in the top 75 markets in 2000 and in the top 100 media markets from 2001 to 2004. In this process, using videos and storyboards of ads captured by TNSMI/CMAG, project staff first research the entity responsible for airing each separate political spot aired. In relation to campaign finance regulations as well as noting the names of sponsors, the project categorizes sponsors between those paid for by candidates, parties, hard money interest groups and soft money interest groups. Each spot is then further researched to attribute it to a specific candidate that the ad sponsors hope to elect. Once this is done, our staff codes the content of each ad, using a battery of questions.

This extensive coding allows for the compilation of a massive database of the content of commercials that can be used in a variety of ways by scholars, the media and policymakers.

The University of Wisconsin Advertising Project is affiliated with the university's Political Science Department. This department is one of the nation's oldest and most respected programs. It is highly ranked in national surveys and our award-winning

faculty are known for innovative research on the discipline's most current and important questions.

Based in Chicago with assets of \$935 million, the Joyce Foundation funds groups working to strengthen public policies and improve the quality of life in the Great Lakes region. Its Money and Politics program supports efforts to promote a well-functioning representative democracy with open and accountable government, informed citizen participation, competition of ideas and candidates, fair and equal application of the laws, a high level of public trust and protection of fundamental rights. Other funding areas are education, workforce development, environment, gun violence prevention, and culture.

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