

OVERVIEW OF SEATTLE TIMES INITIATIVE FOR POLITICAL NEWSPAPER ADVERTISING

OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVE:

The Seattle Times Initiative for Political Newspaper Advertising is an effort to recapture a significant role for newspapers in political advertising. During political seasons, many millions of dollars are spent on political advertising, primarily in broadcast and direct mail. Those making political advertising buying decisions have not made newspapers a significant part of their media mix. The Seattle Times believes in-paper advertising IS an effective means for campaigns to deliver their messages to voters. The objective is to demonstrate that it is a worthwhile investment that CAN make a difference.

RATIONALE:

After a number of election cycles trying to convince candidates and consultants to give us a try in a meaningful way, we decided to take the initiative and demonstrate proof of concept for the effectiveness of a print newspaper campaign. The specific goal is to show that in races where reaching voters in King and Snohomish counties is needed, advertising with The Seattle Times will be as effective on a per voter cost as other media that campaigns currently use.

Specific benefits that an in-print newspaper political advertising investment provides include:

It is affordable and effective as 88% of Seattle Times readers are registered voters.

It can provide context that you can't get in a sound bite.

It provides more for voters – words that don't disappear, so people can evaluate them.

It reaches key segments of the electorate who are the swing votes in many races: 66% of voters who identify themselves as independent, 71% of voters who identify themselves as Democrat/leaning independent and 59% of voters who identify themselves as Republican/leaning independent.

Newspapers continue to play a vital role in providing news and information for citizens, and advertising revenue is an essential for our viability. This initiative seeks to tap into an important source of advertising revenue to help The Times continue to serve as a vital source of news and information in the Puget Sound region.

SPECIFICS:

In this unique demonstration, we identified two statewide campaigns to be involved in:

- Yes on Marriage Equality
- Rob McKenna for Governor

These campaigns were chosen in part because they are consistent with Seattle Times' editorial positions, as well as the fact that these two campaigns cover a range of political and social perspectives. Being **for** marriage equality and **for** McKenna for Governor provides some balance given the constituencies of these two statewide elections.

Advertising will run between now and Election Day 2012.

The approaches will be consistent with existing laws that treat political contributions to candidates and ballot measures differently:

Rob McKenna for Governor – Our involvement in this race will be via an **independent expenditure** in which The Seattle Times runs ads that have in no way been coordinated with the McKenna Campaign. As required by law, we will report such contributions to the Public Disclosure Commission. Independent expenditures are allowed under Washington State law and are not subject to limits on spending.

Yes on Marriage Equality – Our involvement in this ballot measure will be via an **in kind donation** of ad space to the Approve R 74, Washington United for Marriage campaign. Because political contributions for ballot measures are not subject to the same limits as exist for candidates running for offices, the most efficient means of integrating this campaign into our pilot program is via an in kind donation directed to Washington United for Marriage.

While these mechanisms differ somewhat, they both allow us to demonstrate the power of newspaper advertising for political campaigns.

This political advertising initiative was developed as a one-time approach for this election to demonstrate the effectiveness of political advertising in The Seattle Times. We will carefully evaluate election data, and use that data going forward to prove the concept and make the case to candidates and their consultants that The Times is an effective addition to their voter outreach.

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