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—JAMES CARVILLE

How

Political

Consultants

Are Reshaping

American Democracy

**NO PLACE FOR
AMATEURS**

DENNIS W. JOHNSON

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Are Reshaping American Democracy**

DENNIS W. JOHNSON

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To Linda, with love

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Preface

Several years ago, E. J. Dionne Jr., *Washington Post* syndicated political columnist, gave the commencement address at George Washington University's Graduate School of Political Management. After his speech, Dionne was presented with a gift from the student body, a T-shirt with the words "Graduate School of Political Management" on the front and "Because politics is not for amateurs" on the back. Dionne graciously accepted the gift, but then said that he hoped the T-shirt's slogan was mistaken. Dionne, author of the highly regarded book *Why Americans Hate Politics*, cautioned his audience: professionals have their place, but we should always have room for the amateur in American elections and politics.

Dionne was admonishing freshly credentialed graduates who had learned to design polls, conduct opposition research, make media buys, craft speeches, develop campaign messages, and apply the whole range of techniques and skills that are indispensable to modern professionalized campaigning. They were about to become part of a new generation of professionals trained to work in the increasingly sophisticated, albeit controversial, field of campaign management. Dionne's concerns are legitimate: increasingly elections in America are high-stakes, expensive contests that are controlled by professional political consultants; no one wants to see elections become mere spectator sports, with voters just sitting on the sidelines, content with participating only at the ballot box or, worse, not getting involved at all.

This book critically examines the role played by political consultants who apply their skills and technologies to elect their candidates and clients. It shows how campaign weaponry is used by professionals, and how consultants have become indispensable to modern campaigns. This book also looks at the changing role of the campaign volunteer and argues that there is much that the citizen-volunteer can do to reclaim a voice in the conduct of campaigns.

The business of political consulting has received its share of criticism in recent years. In many quarters, consultants are reviled as opportunistic spin

doctors and hired guns who say and do anything to get their clients elected to office. They are blamed for campaign commercials saturated with negative images and caustic accusations. Consultants are accused of debasing our democratic processes, cynically manipulating reality, and manufacturing images and issues. Even candidates, who clamor to hire the best consultants, often regard them as necessary evils who charge hefty fees, put unwanted words and slogans into their mouths, and treat them merely as products to be sold to a gullible public.

In today's complex, modern elections, rarely can a candidate compete, let alone win, without the help of professionals. However, with a professionally driven campaign there is a hefty price to pay, literally and figuratively. Professional campaigns have become increasingly expensive; consequently, many candidates devote most of their time to fund-raising rather than talking about issues or meeting with voters. Moreover, professionally driven campaigns change the tone and temperament of the contest. Many fear that the authentic voices of candidates are often lost or transformed beyond recognition, filtered and reconstructed through survey research and test-marketing, packaged for maximum persuasive impact. Especially in tight, competitive races, the gloves of campaign civility come off and attack ads hit the airwaves night after night, corroding the atmosphere of democratic choice.

With the increased role of the professional consultant, many amateur and volunteer campaign workers who once played an important role either have become disenchanting with modern politics or have been shunted aside, deemed unnecessary to winning campaigns. But there are also refreshing signs that campaign activists, community organizations, and concerned individuals are beginning to make a difference, thanks in large part to the Internet and politically oriented websites.

Have campaigns and elections become solely the domain of professional consultants? Can a candidate for high office be taken seriously and win without professional help? Have elections become so reliant on the sophisticated techniques of political marketing that candidates have lost their own voices? Are volunteers and amateur campaigners merely nuisances, irrelevant to the high-technology, media-driven modern election? Is there a resurgence of interest in politics at the grassroots level, thanks to the Internet? Throughout this book, I address these questions and offer my observations on the dynamics and tension of the modern professional campaign.

I have spent my professional life in both academic and campaign circles. Years ago, I gave up the security of a tenured university teaching position to

join the hurly-burly of a U.S. Senate race. I joined an ambitious political operative, James Carville, who was running his first major campaign, in 1982. For the next ten years, I worked on Capitol Hill and in elections, and spent six of those with my own firm, conducting candidate and opposition research for Democratic candidates at the statewide and federal level. The circle has been completed by my return to academic life to develop a graduate-level program that trains students for the profession of political management.

Many individuals assisted me in this project. Thanks to my academic and political consultant colleagues who read all or parts of this manuscript and gave valuable advice, especially David Anderson, John Anzalone, Christopher Arterton, Whit Ayres, Kirk Brown, Michael Cornfield, Tad Devine, David Farrell, Ron Faucheux, Peter Fenn, Ed Goeas, the late Bill Hamilton, Harrison Hickman, Roberto Izurieta, Jacqueline McLaughlin Linde, Jason Linde, Paul Maslin, Don Millar, Ralph Murphine, Joseph Napolitan, Phil Noble, Tom Ochs, Nicholas O'Shaughnessy, Rick Ridder, Mark Siegel, Brian Tringali, and Don Walter.

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My special gratitude goes to Amy Shipper, formerly the social science editor at Garland and associate editor at Routledge, not only for her enthusiasm for this project and her extraordinary editorial skills, but also for her friendship and support. Further, my warmest thank you goes to my current editor, Eric Nelson, and production editor, Krister Swartz.

Above all, I thank my dear wife, Linda, who sustained me throughout with her unflinching support and encouragement.

Dennis W. Johnson
Washington, D.C.

Introduction:

Canvassing the Political Landscape

The United States is the land of elections. We hold more elections, more frequently, than any other modern society.¹ Altogether there are approximately 513,200 popularly elected officials in the United States, and over a million elections are held in every four-year cycle.² The United States is also the land of political consultants. There are about seven thousand political consultants who play an increasingly important role in the conduct of national, state, and local elections.³ Professional consultants are found in virtually every campaign for president, senator, representative, big-city mayor, and governor, and in many state legislative and other elected offices. Altogether, about fifty thousand campaigns a year are managed or assisted by professional political consultants.

American elections come in many shapes and sizes, from headline-grabbing, billion-dollar presidential campaigns to low-profile local contests in which voters are often unaware of the contest until they see the candidates on the election-day ballot.

Campaigns can be placed into one of several categories, based on the size of the electorate, the relative importance of the office being pursued, and the degree of involvement of professional campaign consultants.

Statewide Elections This category includes races for U.S. senator, governor, attorney general, lieutenant governor, and other statewide-elected officials. These elections generally attract considerable attention and are usually expensive, competitive, and issue-oriented. This is particularly true in statewide contests in the mega-states of California, Texas, New York, and Florida, with their multiple media markets, complex and varied political cultures, and heavy reliance on television advertising. In statewide contests,

especially for the Senate or governorship, candidates rely heavily on the skills and services of professional consultants.

Presidential Primaries and General Elections While the presidency (along with the vice presidency) is our only national office, campaign strategies focus on key statewide contests. During the year or so before the primaries, presidential hopefuls seek out organizational help and early money. Then come the key early primaries, in which candidates rely on grassroots mobilization, telemarketing, and old-fashioned shoe leather to woo party loyalists. Later, during the general election, the mathematics of the electoral college require careful deployment of campaign resources. Campaign commercials and voter mobilization are concentrated on key media markets and states while giving national audiences glimpses of the campaign through televised debates. These campaigns are thoroughly professionalized, usually relying on the best campaign consultants in both parties.

Statewide Initiatives and Referenda During 1996 there were a record number of initiative and referendum contests held throughout the states. This form of direct democracy is big business and is becoming an increasingly lucrative market for political consultants. Some of the most expensive campaigns in the 1990s were ballot initiatives, several with budgets well exceeding \$20 million. Especially in the California market, some ballot initiatives surpass Senate and gubernatorial races in the amount of campaign funds spent. Big budgets attract media consultants, pollsters, general strategists, and a growing number of specialists in initiative and referendum campaigns.

Major Elections below the Statewide Level Elections in this category include mayoral races in large cities, congressional district races, and elections in major urban counties; serious candidates in most of these elections employ professional campaign consultants. Some of these elections involve far larger electorates and bigger campaign budgets than do statewide elections. For example, the mayoral election in New York City, with an electorate drawn from 7.3 million people and the most expensive media market in the country, easily surpasses most statewide elections in size and budget. However, most elections in this category are congressional contests in districts that are roughly equal in population—about 600,000 residents. Mayoral races and urban countywide races in this category are those in which the electorate is over 500,000 in population.

Medium-Sized Elections below the Statewide Level This category includes mayoral and city council elections in cities with a population of about 250,000, state legislative races, and other campaigns. These elections are being transformed most rapidly from amateur to professional. While many medium-sized elections still have low budgets and little media attention, others are becoming more competitive, more expensive, and based on professionally driven strategies.

Small Elections This category, with by far the largest number of elections, includes town campaigns, rural county campaigns, and races far down the ballot in big cities. Some of the techniques of professionalized campaigning might filter down, but consultants are not used. These races are too low-budget, the stakes are too small, and they are below the radar screen of consultants. These campaigns essentially count on name recognition and face-to-face meetings with voters, and have low-budget advertising through posters, yard signs, and last-minute advertisements in local newspapers.

Amateurs and Professionals

Throughout this book, I will refer to amateur and professional campaign workers. First, a few words about the difference between the two. Amateurs often have personal interests in the candidate, the office, and the issues. They might have worked for the candidate or party in the past, have a personal stake in the election, or are looking for employment if their candidate wins. They can usually be relied upon to help other candidates in upcoming elections, but are almost always limited to their city, county, or state. Amateur campaigners are often strongly motivated by issues of public policy and receive little or no compensation for their efforts. Election work is not their principal source of income nor is it their full-time profession.

Amateur status carries no normative baggage. An amateur campaign can be filled with dedicated, intelligent, hard-working volunteers who know the dynamics of state or local politics and who can develop an effective campaign message and implement a winning strategy. Many amateurs have a high degree of political sophistication and proven electoral skills.⁴ But amateur campaigns also can be understaffed, the organization unable to rely on volunteers and friends to perform all the campaign duties, unable to run an efficient, strategically smart race and simply out-gunned when facing an opponent's professionally driven campaign.

In contrast, professional political consultants have some level of detachment from the candidate and the campaign. The professionals might admire their candidates, agree on issues, and work very hard to help them win. But the professional is at least one or two emotional levels removed from the intensity and personal involvement found in most amateur campaigners. In many cases, consultants will personally disagree with the policies of the candidates or have less than the highest regard for them as individuals. Yet in the end those factors are secondary. The job of the professional consultant is to get the candidate elected to office; quite simply, that is what the professional is paid to do.

Many professional consulting firms juggle more than one campaign at a time. Some of the most successful pollsters, media firms, phone banks, and fund-raising firms may have ten to forty campaigns in progress throughout the country at various stages in the election cycle. Further, professional consultants are permanent fixtures on the election landscape. Candidates will come and go, but consultants will be there to guide them and their successors through the election process.

Many thousands of other political activists are involved in campaigns, year in, year out. They work for the national, state, and local political parties, labor unions, businesses and trade associations, and ideological and special-interest groups intimately involved in election activities. They are indeed political professionals, who are usually the unseen lubricant for a successful election: the get-out-the-vote specialists, the membership organizers, the petition signers, the fund-raisers, and volunteer coordinators. They are not the focus of this book, but their work is integral and will be discussed especially in relationship to party specialities such as opposition research, fund-raising, get-out-the-vote, and phone banks.

Modern campaigns, increasingly sophisticated and technologically complex, are being taken over by professional consultants, and because of that professionalization, there is little room for the amateur or volunteer campaign worker. Thanks in large measure to professional campaign strategies, citizens are increasingly disenchanted spectators in the blood sport of campaigning. There is a growing sense of apathy as citizens feel isolated from public life, uninterested in issues, and, therefore, reluctant to show up at the voting booth. This is a decidedly unhealthy picture for democratic choice and participation. While professionalization in modern campaigns is inevitable, there is much citizens can do to recover their place in elections and democratic choice.

1
PART

**PROFESSIONAL
CAMPAIGNING:
NEW
REALITIES,
NEW
CHALLENGES**

Celebrity Consultants and Professionally Driven Campaigns

I don't want to read about you in the press. I'm sick and tired of consultants getting famous at my expense. Any story that comes out during the campaign undermines my candidacy.

—Bill Clinton to his new 1996 reelection consultants
Dick Morris and Doug Schoen

Just days before the 1996 Democratic National Convention, a smiling, confident Bill Clinton was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine. Pasted on Clinton's right shoulder was a cut-out photo of political consultant Dick Morris, "the most influential private citizen in America," according to *Time*.¹ On the eve of Clinton's renomination, *Time* was sending its readers a backhanded pictorial message: here is the most powerful man in the world, who fought his way back from political oblivion, and perched on his shoulder is the reason why. Suddenly the once-secretive, behind-the-scenes consultant was a household name. In the early months of the reelection campaign, Morris worked hard at being the unseen political

mastermind and strategist. “Being a man of mystery helps me work better,” he confided to George Stephanopoulos.² While Bill Clinton’s 1992 consultants were talk-show regulars, wrote best-sellers, and traveled the big-dollars lecture circuit, Morris was the backroom schemer. Many media outlets had trouble even finding a file photo of the elusive Dick Morris, adding to the mystery and illusion of power.

Morris had been Clinton’s earliest political adviser back in Arkansas during the first run for governor. They had a rocky relationship over the years, but following the Republican takeover of Congress in November 1994, Bill Clinton began meeting secretly with Morris. Working out of the Jefferson Hotel in Washington, using the code name “Charlie,” Morris plotted the president’s comeback. He was the anonymous, behind-the-scenes consultant who would retool Clinton’s image, reposition his policies, and help revive his faltering presidency.

Throughout his career, Bill Clinton had a reputation for discarding political consultants. Those who helped him capture the White House in 1992—Mandy Grunwald, Stanley Greenberg, Paul Begala, and James Carville—were nowhere to be seen following the 1994 election upheaval. By the spring of 1995, Morris had assembled his own team, including veteran media consultants Bob Squier, Bill Knapp, and Hank Sheinkopf, and pollsters Mark Penn and Doug Schoen. They met regularly with several White House insiders to plan the remarkable political comeback of Bill Clinton.³

Morris’s anonymity was shattered when he was caught with his long-time prostitute companion by the supermarket tabloid the *Star*. The tabloid deliberately timed its bombshell story for maximum effect on the Democratic convention, with the scandal erupting on the day that Bill Clinton accepted his party’s renomination for the presidency. Morris and his wife immediately left the Chicago convention and the Clinton campaign, retreating to their Connecticut home, besieged by reporters and photographers. Morris, the political consultant turned nefarious celebrity, had become a late-night dirty joke, damaged goods, and certainly a political liability. There were rumors that he was sharing sensitive White House information with his prostitute girlfriend, and Morris shocked many by announcing that months earlier he had signed a secret book deal to write the inside story of Clinton’s reelection comeback. Morris now had plenty of free time to write his version of the 1996 campaign, work the talk-show circuit, join a twelve-step sex addiction program, retool his tarnished image, and pocket his \$2.5 million book advance. Though the Morris scandal scarcely damaged the Clinton cam-

paign, it ended up being everything President Clinton objected to: Dick Morris was getting famous—and rich—at his expense. For the moment, Morris joined a short list of celebrity political consultants who became as famous and often far more handsomely paid than their clients.

For years Americans had been unwittingly exposed to campaign posturing and manipulation engineered by political consultants. In the 1990s they grew curious about the manipulators. Suddenly, political consultants were hot properties. Movies, documentaries, and books gave us a glimpse of consultants at work. A film documentary, *The War Room*, made media stars of James Carville and George Stephanopoulos in Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign headquarters. Reporter Joe Klein's best-selling roman à clef, *Primary Colors*, detailed with unnerving accuracy the seamy side of the presidential quest by an ambitious young Southern governor and his avaricious campaign team. Later John Travolta starred as the silver-haired young presidential candidate in the inevitable movie version. *Vote for Me*, a PBS documentary, showed hard-charging New York media consultant Hank Sheinkopf patiently coaching his candidate, an Alabama Supreme Court judge, on the fine points of camera angles and voice projection. Another film documentary, *The Perfect Candidate*, chronicled the highly charged campaign of conservative lightning rod Oliver North and his consultant Mark Goodin as they battled and lost to the uninspiring, wooden Charles Robb in the 1994 Virginia Senate race.

In the movie *Wag the Dog*, the president's spin doctor (Robert De Niro) and a high-powered Hollywood myth-maker (Dustin Hoffman) conjure up a wartime incident in Albania to cover up the president's sexual indiscretions with a twelve-year-old girl.⁴ Michael J. Fox portrayed the energetic, earnest young White House aide, a George Stephanopoulos clone, in the film *An American President* (1995), and later reprised the role in a television series, *Spin City*, with Fox serving as an aide to an unprincipled, vacuous mayor of New York City.

The bookshelf was suddenly filling up with insider accounts by political consultants. Well-traveled, controversial Republican consultant Ed Rollins skewered many of his campaign rivals and former clients in a book entitled *Bare Knuckles and Back Rooms*. On the dust jacket was the middle-aged, balding Rollins, poised with his boxing gloves, ready to take on the rough and tumble of politics. Carville and his Republican-operative wife, Mary Matalin, teamed up on the lecture circuit, hawked credit cards and aspirin in television commercials, and wrote a best-selling memoir, *All's Fair: Love, War, and Running for President*.⁵

Carville, Stephanopoulos, and Paul Begala reappeared during the Lewinsky scandal and the impeachment hearings. Begala returned as the loyal defender inside the White House bunker, while Carville attacked special prosecutor Kenneth Starr on television talk shows and through an angry book, . . . *And the Horse He Rode in On: The People v. Kenneth Starr*.⁶ Stephanopoulos, meanwhile, singed by the president's betrayal, distanced himself from the White House and publicly criticized Clinton's behavior in his 1999 book, *All Too Human*.⁷ Morris, too, resurfaced on talk shows, wrote political columns, advised Clinton on how to deflect criticism during the Lewinsky scandal, and penned another book, immodestly titled *The New Prince: Machiavelli Updated for the Twenty-first Century*.⁸

Despite the notoriety and self-promotion of Morris, Carville, and others, the celebrity consultant is the exception, not the rule. Most political consultants toil in the background, content to ply their craft in anonymity. Even at the presidential campaign level, consultants generally labor in obscurity. Few Americans had ever heard of Don Sipple or Bill McInturff, consultants in Bob Dole's dysfunctional 1996 presidential race, or Bill Clinton's 1996 consultants Bill Knapp, Doug Schoen, and Marius Penczner. Very few have ever heard of George W. Bush's chief strategist Karl Rove, Al Gore's media consultant Carter Eskew, or John McCain's consultant Mike Murphy.

Political consultants, both controversial and anonymous, have become essential players in the increasingly technological, fast-paced, often brutal world of modern elections. Through it all, they have changed the face of modern American politics.

Political Consultants at Work

In earlier decades, campaigns were financed and run by local or state political parties. They were fueled by local party activists and volunteers, by family, friends, and close political supporters. By the early 1960s presidential campaigns and statewide campaigns for governor and senator began seeking out media and polling firms to help deliver their messages to voters. During the next two decades, there emerged both a new industry, political management, and a new professional, the campaign consultant. By the 1980s every serious presidential candidate, nearly every statewide candidate, and a large number of congressional candidates were using the services of professional political consultants.⁹

The 1990s witnessed yet another transformation. Candidates for office below the statewide level were beginning to seek the advice of professional political consultants. For many candidates, the dividing line was the \$50,000 campaign: those who could not raise that kind of money had to rely solely on volunteer services, and those above this threshold usually sought professional assistance.¹⁰ In some local political jurisdictions, record amounts of campaign funds were being raised to pay for campaign services, and races for medium-city mayor, county sheriff, or local judge took on the techniques and tactics once seen only in statewide, professionally managed contests. Professional consulting services, such as phone banks, telemarketing, and direct mail, were supplanting the efforts once provided by volunteers and party loyalists. This multibillion-dollar industry is now directed by professional consultants who make the key decisions, determine strategy, develop campaign communications, and carry out campaign tactics for their clients.

The influence of political consultants goes well beyond getting candidates elected to office. They play an increased role in ballot measures by helping clients determine ballot strategy, framing issues, and even providing the campaign foot soldiers who gather signatures for ballot petitions. Consultants use marketing and mobilization skills to orchestrate pressure on legislators. Political telemarketers link angered constituents directly with the telephones of members of Congress. Overnight, they can guarantee five thousand constituent telephone calls patched directly to a legislator's office. Political consultants are also finding lucrative markets internationally, serving presidential and other candidates throughout the world.

In the commercial world, a business that generates less than \$50 million is considered a small enterprise. By that measure, every political consulting firm, except for some of the vendors, is a small business. Most of the estimated three thousand firms that specialize in campaigns and elections have ten or fewer staffers and generate just several hundred thousand dollars in revenue annually. Only a few firms, such as media consultant Squier, Knapp, and Dunn, generate millions of dollars in revenue; most of this money, however, passes through the consultants' hands to pay television advertising costs.

Leading polling firms, such as the Tarrance Group or Public Opinion Strategies, may have forty to eighty employees; most are support staff working the telephones and part of the back office operations. Quite a few firms are cottage enterprises—one- or two-person boutiques, often in speciality markets such as event planning, opposition research, fund-raising, or media

buying. Many political consulting firms operate out of the basement of the principal's home with no more than telephone lines, computers, fax machines, and online access. For example, even after he became famous as Clinton's principal political adviser, James Carville and his assistants worked out of the "bat cave," a basement studio apartment on Capitol Hill that served as Carville's home and nerve center for his far-flung political operations.

Firms that rely solely on campaign cycles are exposed to the roller-coaster of cash flow: many lean months, with very little money coming in from clients, countered by a few fat months, when the bulk of the revenue pours in. In addition to the on-off flow of cash, the firms must deal with the logistical difficulties of juggling many candidates during the crucial last weeks of the campaign cycle and the enormous time pressures of a busy campaign season. Some consulting firms have around-the-clock operations during critical weeks of the campaign. These political emergency rooms are geared to handle any last-minute crisis. During long stretches when there are few campaign opportunities, professionals and support staff may have to be let go until the cycle picks up again.

One of the most difficult but necessary tasks is to even out the steep curves in the election cycle so that money and resources flow more regularly. Consultants have developed several strategies for this: convincing candidates to hire consultants earlier in the cycle, stretching out the amount of time they stay with campaigns, and seeking out off-year races, especially down the electoral ladder, such as mayoral races, general assembly, and other local contests, many of which in past years would not have sought professional assistance. Consultants are becoming more involved in the growing business of initiatives, referenda, and issues management. Many of these campaigns are tied to the same election cycle as candidate campaigns, but others are tied to local, state, or congressional issue cycles. Political consulting firms also pursue clients from the corporate and trade association world and international clients. By spreading out business, consulting firms are able to stay competitive, smooth out the peaks and valleys of the election cycle, and keep their heads above water.

In the 1980s firms began to shift away from heavy reliance on candidate campaigns. For example, the late Matt Reese, one of the founders of the political consulting business, who had worked for more than four hundred Democratic candidates, changed direction after the 1982 elections to concentrate on corporate and trade association clients. Republican consultant

Eddie Mahe shifted his business from 100 percent candidate-based in 1980 to about fifteen percent candidate-based in the early 1990s, picking up corporate and other clients. In the mid-1970s Wally Clinton's pioneering political telemarketing firm, the Clinton Group, gained 90 percent of its work from candidates, but has since moved away from reliance on candidates to issues and corporate work. Many successful consulting firms have followed this pattern and now have much of their business coming from noncandidate campaigns.¹¹

As corporations have discovered the value of grassroots lobbying and issues management, consultants who specialize in direct mail and political telemarketing have shifted focus to legislative and issues work. Corporate and trade association organizations took special notice of the successful political consultant–orchestrated grassroots campaign run against President Clinton's 1993–94 health care proposal. For political consultants, such work is often far more lucrative, more reliable, and less stress-inducing than working for candidates in competitive election cycles. Some of the most successful political consulting firms have less than half of their revenue coming from candidate campaigns.¹²

Winning Isn't Enough

Politics, like sports, is a zero-sum game: someone wins, someone loses. In business, success can be measured by increases in market share or profitability to shareholders, but in political consulting it's determined by winning or losing. However, winning is not enough. Perception and expectation play important roles as well. A consultant's reputation can be hurt when a client was expected to win by a wide margin but just barely manages a victory. Though consultants sometimes tout their winning streaks, when the streak is ten easy wins with little or no real competition, it loses its luster. The consulting firm that takes on the tough fight, steers the dark horse to victory, or puts up a much better fight than expected will build its reputation.

For the professional political consultant, losing is part of the game. Campaign consultants can be "hot" for two or three election cycles, then suffer crippling losses. Even the most successful consultants have suffered major defeats. James Carville, for example, began his late-blooming career with a series of bitter losses, then became famous within the small fraternity of political consultants by winning several key gubernatorial races. His reputation grew when he helped Harris Wofford overwhelm a seemingly invincible

Richard Thornburg in the Pennsylvania 1989 special election for U.S. Senate. Carville became a celebrity during the 1992 Clinton presidential campaign but then went on to lose a string of campaigns. Lately he has been concentrating on international clients throughout Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America.

There is not a great deal of stability for political consulting firms. The best are sometimes toppled by their own mistakes, by the tides of politics, or by the lackluster performances of their own clients. Consultants working for marginal candidates may not get paid on time, paid the full amount for services rendered, or paid at all. Some consultants simply lack the business skills or patience to keep their companies afloat. Busy firms have gone bankrupt and firms have folded because partners were impatient with internal business details. In the end, many political consultants are more adept at the game of politics than the business of consulting.¹³

It is relatively easy to break into the political consulting business, and in every campaign cycle scores of new firms are created. Following each election cycle, there is a substantial turnover at the national parties, and ambitious (and often soon-to-be-unemployed) campaign operatives join established consulting firms or decide to begin their own business in polling, research, fund-raising, and other special services. Often junior partners, chafing at their subordinate status in established consulting firms, set up their own operations. Since the 1980s, the increasing number of consulting firms has led to greater competition and, in many cases, a stagnation in prices charged for professional services.

Some of the best-known consulting firms have had acrimonious disputes among partners, with the firms splitting and dividing up their client base. Looking at Democratic polling firms alone, Washington-based political analyst Stuart Rothenberg observed that “change is so endemic . . . because most firms are merely collections of individuals who stay together for convenience. When disagreements about personality, money, or the direction of the firm crop up, there are few institutional loyalties to keep the firm together.”¹⁴

What Consultants Bring to Campaigns

Candidates, not consultants, win or lose elections. In 1996 voters chose Bill Clinton, not media consultant Bob Squier; they rejected Bob Dole, not pollster Bill McInturff. Candidates alone face the voters and ultimately bear the responsibility for the tone and expression of their campaign. Sometimes rep-

utations are diminished and images tarnished by the campaign itself. For example, George Bush will be remembered for permitting a down-and-dirty campaign that included the infamous “Revolving Door” and Willie Horton commercials in his 1988 presidential campaign. In that same year, Michael Dukakis will be remembered for his ride in a military vehicle, hunkered down in an oversized battle helmet, looking goofy. Alphonse D’Amato and Charles Schumer will be remembered for the abusive, in-your-face campaigns they waged in the 1998 New York Senate race.

While candidates are ultimately responsible for their campaigns, there is no way they can compete, let alone win, without professional help. Professional consultants bring direction and discipline to the campaign. Few enterprises are as unpredictable, vulnerable, and chaotic as a modern campaign. So much can go wrong: the candidate might go “off message,” in which case the campaign loses focus; internal party feuds might threaten the success of the entire campaign; fund-raising might fall short of expectations, choking the life out of the entire enterprise. All the while, the opponent’s campaign is raising more money, attacking with a sharp, clear message, redefining the race in its own terms, grabbing media attention, and efficiently mobilizing its resources. Campaign professionals are needed to bring order out of chaos, maintain message and strategy discipline, and keep the campaign focused.

The best consultants are able to define the race on their own terms—not the terms set by the opposition, the media, or outside third parties. In the end, the campaign boils down to letting voters know the answers to some very simple questions: who the candidate is, what the issues are, and why this race is important. Following are some examples of defining issues and messages.

From the 1996 Clinton-Gore reelection campaign:

Defining issue: Who is better prepared to lead this country into the next century?

Message: “Building a bridge to the twenty-first century.”

From the 1980 Reagan-Bush campaign:

Defining issue: The shortcomings of the Carter administration’s policies.

Message: “Are you better off today than you were four years ago?”

Republican consultant Lee Atwater was fond of saying that he knew that the message of his campaign was hitting home when he would go to a local

Kmart and ask shoppers what they thought of the contest, and they'd simply parrot the message he had developed.

Professionals also take campaign burdens off the candidate. Campaigns are exhausting, placing extraordinary physical and emotional demands upon the candidate. The campaign staff, and especially the campaign manager, absorb as much of the stress of the campaign as possible. A campaign manager may serve as official campaign optimist, psychologist, and hand-holder for the candidate or, often, the candidate's spouse. The manager will make the tough personnel and tactical choices when the campaign starts going bad, and be the unofficial heavy (or whipping boy) when needed.

Consultants, particularly those in niche or vendor industries, provide legal, tax, and accounting services for the increasingly complex financial disclosure reporting requirements. They provide expertise in buying television time and placing radio and television commercials. Consulting firms capture and analyze television commercials aired by opponents and other races, and offer both quantitative and qualitative analysis from survey research, focus-group, and dial-group findings. Increasingly campaigns depend on specialists who also can provide a technological edge. Consultants provide online retrieval systems and websites, computer-assisted telephone technology, voter and demographic databases, and geo-mapping and sophisticated targeting techniques so that a campaign can know, block by block and house by house, who is likely to vote and for whom they would cast a ballot. Strategists are able to use predictive technologies, traditional statistical techniques such as regression analysis, and new artificial intelligence technologies such as neural nets and genetic algorithms to target potential voters.¹⁵

Above all, consultants bring experience from other campaigns. Every campaign has its unique circumstances, events, and dynamics. But campaigns are also great recycling bins. When a consultant has worked for fifteen or twenty-five races, campaigns begin to fall into predictable patterns: messages and themes, issues, and tactics reappear, taking on slight variations—new twists to old challenges. Veteran consultants can save a candidate from making mistakes, spot opportunities quickly, and take advantage of changing circumstances. As veteran consultant Joseph R. Cerrell put it, tongue in cheek, we need consultants—“to have someone handy who has forgotten more about media, mail, fund-raising and strategy than most candidates will ever know.”¹⁶

Growing reliance on professional consultants is costly: the price of admission to elections has risen substantially. The campaign, for many candidates,

becomes a perverse full-time game of chasing dollars. Consultants have seen business grow because of the superheated fund-raising activities of the national Democratic and Republican parties, the explosion of soft money, and issues advocacy.

The best consultants aren't afraid of a fight. They know that in many cases an election can be won only if they drop the pretense of reasoned, civilized campaigning and take the gloves off. Campaigns engage in rough tactics because they work. Opposition researchers dig deep into personal lives, seeking out misdeeds and character flaws. Pollsters test-market negative material before focus and electronic dial meter groups. Then the media team cuts slash-and-burn thirty-second clips, using all the tricks of the trade: unflattering black-and-white photos of the opponent, ominous music and sound effects, and distorted features, salted with authentic-sounding textual material, often taken out of context. The direct mail pieces may get even uglier. The goal is to drive up the opponent's negatives, to paint the opponent in such unflattering ways that enough voters have only a negative view of that candidate.

Certainly not all campaigns use negative tactics. Candidates are often very reluctant to engage in mudslinging or demagoguery. Voters are turned off by negative campaigns and feel alienated from the democratic process. But campaign consultants see negative campaigning as a tool, not so much a question of political ethics or morality. If the only way to win is to go negative, then negative it is.

Professional consultants bring many weapons to a campaign. The campaign's theme and message are communicated through television and radio commercials, through direct mail pieces, and increasingly through campaign websites. Those communications are developed and honed through the use of sophisticated research analyses, especially survey research, focus groups, and dial meter sessions. Even more fundamental is the campaign's deadliest weapon, candidate and opposition research, the subject of chapter 4.

Running for Office: Not for the Faint of Heart

The modern campaign . . . is a high-tech, high-maintenance, high-anxiety, high-concept monstrosity where response time is instant. The candidate may have never held office. The manager is a professional political consultant who may be juggling three other races. The pollster samples public opinion every night for weeks. The press is frantically looking for dirt on the campaign and his or her every relative, dead or alive. The television budget may be larger than the gross national product of Niger. And if your ads don't slash and burn, you'll lose.

—former political consultant Ed Rollins

Anybody who says he enjoys campaigning is either a liar or a psychopath.

—Representative Barney Frank

Running for office is not for the faint of heart. Especially in high-octane, professionally driven contests, candidates must have stamina, determination, and thick skins. They must endure the cynicism and mistrust of voters; even worse,

candidates must endure their indifference and disinterest. Candidates expose themselves and their families to the prying eyes of professional researchers digging into every corner of their lives. They must brace themselves against the attacks from their opponents and from well-funded ad campaigns by unknown groups attacking them during the last days of the campaign. Rather than spending time meeting voters and talking about issues, candidates are forced to devote most of their time begging for campaign funds. Ed Rollins and Barney Frank are both right: campaigns can be monstrosities, and running for office is certainly no picnic.

The Sour Mood of the Public

Candidates have to face the harsh realities of public opinion: most voters today don't trust, admire, or respect politicians. Our confidence and trust in government and institutions have steadily deteriorated over the past thirty-five years; we are more suspicious of Washington and entrenched politicians, and public service has lost much of its distinctiveness and attraction. Several studies have tracked this erosion of public trust and confidence. One report, commissioned by the *Washington Post*, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard University¹ found that America had become a nation of "suspicious strangers" who have lost faith in the federal government and virtually every other national institution.² Furthermore, Americans had also lost faith in one another: only 35 percent of the public in 1995 said they could trust others, down from 54 percent in 1964 surveys, and citizens who distrusted others were suspicious of government and significantly less likely to vote in the last two national elections.³

There was an even steeper decline in confidence in the federal government: in 1964 about 76 percent of respondents said that government could be trusted "about always or most of the time" to do the right thing. Trust levels fell to 20 percent in the late 1970s, in large measure because of Watergate, economic dislocations, and the Iran hostage crisis. They rebounded to 40 percent in the 1980s, but then slowly eroded: in 1995 only 25 percent of respondents agreed that the federal government "about always or most of the time" did the right thing.⁴

Added to this sour mood is a growing dislocation between what people want from the government and what they're willing to pay for it. Robert J. Samuelson described the American mood as in an "almost permanent state of public grumpiness," based on inflated expectations of what the federal gov-

ernment can or should provide and the contradictory expectations that citizens should not be stuck with the bill to pay for such services.⁵

Many Americans, especially in the first half of the 1990s, harbored outright anger toward government, public leaders, and politics. *Anger* became the political watchword of the mid-1990s and had much to do with the Republican triumphs in the 1994 congressional elections.⁶ Many citizens, disturbed by what they saw as posturing, finger pointing, and unfulfilled promises of entrenched legislators, perceived Congress and especially the Democratic leadership as “public enemy.” Leaders from both parties worried about the absence of civility, the decline of intelligent dialogue, and the “rising decibels of hate in political discourse.”⁷ This pent-up citizen aggravation fed into the hands of conservatives, challengers, and antiestablishment candidates.⁸

By the late 1990s America’s collective mood seemed to have softened. With relative peace abroad and economic growth at home, Americans seemed somewhat more satisfied with the performance of government, elected officials, and the federal government. The *Washington Post* noted in early 1998 that “even those ‘angry white males’ of elections past seem less dyspeptic today than they were just a few years ago.”⁹

Where Are the Voters and Campaign Volunteers?

What could be an even greater problem for candidates is getting voters simply to pay attention. For many citizens, politics and public life have become wholly irrelevant to their lives. For them, politics is boring, politicians lie and cheat, and voting is a waste of time. These disenchanted nonvoters are the toughest challenge to candidates. Writing in 1992, political scientist Ruy Teixeira observed that the decline in voter turnout since 1960 had been “substantial and serious.”¹⁰ Since then, things have not improved. Despite legislation and court actions to simplify registration and ballot procedures, fewer people now take the time and effort to vote. Lukewarm citizens have many excuses not to participate—apathy and disinterest, irritation and disillusionment, lack of knowledge, and busy lives focused on more important personal and family matters.

For a short time, however, more citizens seemed to be interested in voting. The 1992 presidential election reversed a thirty-two-year trend of declining voter participation. It turned out to be an interesting election: President George Bush was in trouble, and Bill Clinton and Ross Perot made the race

engaging. But four years later, there was a palpable disinterest in the presidential contest between Bill Clinton and Bob Dole, perhaps because for many voters it was a foregone conclusion. Even the press was weary and bored. Television networks, sensing voter apathy, spent only half the time covering the 1996 election as they had on the 1992 election. Many voters were not paying attention. Incredibly, just before the vice-presidential debate between Al Gore and Jack Kemp, fully 40 percent of the American public did not know that Jack Kemp was Bob Dole's running mate. On election day, 11.6 million fewer citizens cast their ballots than in the 1992 presidential contest.¹¹ Voter disinterest was most evident in the youngest voters. Only 30 percent of Americans, eighteen to twenty-four years old, bothered to vote in the 1996 presidential elections. In the 1998 elections, just 36 percent of the eligible voters of any age cast their ballots, making it the lowest rate of voting since 1942.¹²

At one time, campaigns could rely on volunteers, election after election, to answer the telephone, lick stamps and mail envelopes, round up voters, and work the polling sites on election day. But now there is a dwindling number of people who devote their free time to helping candidates, especially at the statewide and congressional levels. Over a decade ago, veteran Republican strategist Stuart Spencer observed that the combination of money and television was leading to the disappearance of volunteers. "Because of the new technology, few campaigns are 'people campaigns' any more. You don't need a bunch of little old ladies stamping envelopes to send out a direct mail piece."¹³ Spencer's observation is even more relevant today. Fewer than 5 percent of American adults engage in any kind of political activity other than voting, and far fewer contribute money to political causes.¹⁴ Campaigns are fast becoming spectator sports, with fewer volunteers assisting in the campaigns.

Once in a while, there are exceptions. Several winning congressional campaigns relied on kitchen-table planning, hundreds of volunteers, and candidates willing to spend thousands of hours directly greeting voters, asking for their votes. For example, in 1994 Steven Stockman defeated veteran representative Jack Brooks of Texas, and Virgil Cooper defeated incumbent Mike Synar in the Democratic primary in Oklahoma. Both challengers were little known, had little or no professional consultant help, relied on a corps of volunteers, and wore through a lot of shoe leather in their drive to win over voters. In 1998 Tammy Baldwin likewise energized a corps of volunteers at the University of Wisconsin to help her win an open congressional seat from the Madison area.¹⁵

At the statewide level, another exception was the seemingly implausible challenge of college professor Paul Wellstone against incumbent senator Rudy Boschwitz of Minnesota in 1990. Outspent nearly five to one, Wellstone's campaign used its limited resources on clever professionally produced commercials that attracted considerable free media attention. But Wellstone also relied on an army of grassroots supporters from labor, feminist, and environmentalist causes for his upset victory over Boschwitz.¹⁶ Six years later, when Wellstone was up for reelection, his campaign was transformed: it became a professionally driven, six-million-dollar juggernaut, and Wellstone was able successfully to fend off Boschwitz in a rematch.¹⁷ Wellstone needed all the money, grassroots support, and help he could get, because the National Republican Senatorial Committee had targeted this 1996 race and had pumped \$1.5 million into negative advertising against him. Even more improbable was Jesse Ventura's successful bid to become governor of Minnesota in 1998. Starting with a shoestring budget and little visibility, this charismatic former professional wrestler and radio talk-show host was able to tap into voter disenchantment to humiliate his two mainstream rivals, Norman Coleman and Hubert H. Humphrey III. Barnstorming the state, using the Internet to energize volunteers, Ventura was able to bring back a grassroots enthusiasm that Minnesotans had not seen since the early Wellstone days.

Candidates affiliated with the religious right have often had the advantage of enthusiastic grassroots and volunteer support. A 1996 study by the Pew Research Center for the People and Press noted that religion was a "strong and growing force" in the way Americans think about politics, and its increased influence rivaled other dominant factors such as race, region, age, social class, and gender. The Pew study concluded that the conservatism of white evangelical Protestants was "clearly the most powerful religious force in politics today" and it was one that was effective at organizing and delivering at the grassroots level.¹⁸

In the early 1980s one of the strongest political vehicles for the religious right was the Moral Majority, led by Jerry Falwell. Since 1988 the far more successful organization has been the Christian Coalition. An offshoot of Pat Robertson's failed 1988 presidential campaign, headed by Ralph Reed until 1997, it claims 1.7 million members in seventeen hundred local chapters throughout all fifty states. At the height of its popularity the organization was expanding at the rate of a chapter a day. Reed once boasted that the Christian Coalition was for the Republican Party what labor unions once were for the

Democratic Party—an organized army of campaign volunteers.¹⁹ By the 2000 campaigns, however, the Christian Coalition had lost much of its effectiveness. Even larger than the Christian Coalition is James Dobson’s Focus on the Family, based in Colorado, claiming a mailing list of 3.5 million members who adhere to its culturally and religiously conservative principles. Its Washington-based political arm, the Family Research Council, is headed by Gary Bauer, who for a time was one of the many Republican aspirants for the 2000 presidential nomination.²⁰

Anti-Washington, Anti-Incumbent Mood

Years ago, Washington experience somehow became a liability rather than an essential prerequisite for the nation’s highest office. In their presidential campaigns, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton all boasted to voters that they were not a part of the “Washington mess.” Many Republicans turned to George W. Bush because of his Texas upbringing and experience, and Al Gore, trying to rekindle his faltering primary campaign, moved his headquarters out of Washington and back to his political home base in Tennessee. Just about every candidate running for a seat in Congress vows to bring a fresh, honest voice to Washington. They promise to bring Missouri (or Indiana, Texas, or New England) values to Washington, not Washington values to Missouri.

Senators and members of Congress also found themselves vulnerable to charges of “going Washington.” Many tried to inoculate themselves by downplaying their Washington experience. In the 1990s few incumbents created campaign commercials with their smiling faces framed by the U.S. Capitol, and their reelection literature did not brag about Washington connections and power. Once a proud feature on any incumbent’s campaign literature, the Capitol dome conveyed new meaning as a symbol of a corrupt, unresponsive big government, with its strings pulled by high-priced lobbyists.²¹

Incumbents quickly learned to dance to a new tune. Years before, many incumbents had shed their party label in reelection commercials and literature; during most of the 1990s they were shedding their incumbency as well. Washington insiders and power brokers transformed themselves into embattled champions of the folks back home, fighting against the federal government’s greed and hubris. Incumbents found a winning theme in railing against Washington. For example, Senator Bob Kerrey, veteran Democrat from Nebraska, stared directly into the camera in one of his 1994 reelection

commercials and declared, “The government is the most formidable enemy of all, sometimes.” Senator Dick Bryan, Democrat from Nevada, up for a second six-year term, declared in one of his commercials that he was “sick and tired of the mess in Washington and doing something about it.”²² But the “mess in Washington” was laid directly at the feet of Democrat incumbents, and Republicans in 1994 made sure that voters knew who was to blame. Anti-incumbent, for voters in 1994, meant anti-Democrat. No Republican member of the House or the Senate was defeated that year, while the Democrats lost their majority status in both chambers.

Challengers without fail contend that incumbents have lost touch with reality, have forgotten the people back home, or have let incumbency go to their heads. Jesse Ventura hit this sentiment right on the head. He wasn’t running against Washington, or against an incumbent governor, but against the lowest form of the species, the career politician. In a rap-style radio commercial for his gubernatorial campaign, Ventura’s back-up singers wailed: we don’t want “some suit who tows the party line,” and “we demand a leader with a spine.” Then Ventura growled, “I don’t play that game” and “I’m no career politician” as the back-up singers breathlessly chanted “Jesse, Jesse, Jesse.” Ventura defeated two well-established “suits,” thanks to the votes of many young, disaffected Minnesotans who, in record numbers, cast ballots for the first time.

This anti-Washington, anti-incumbent mood hurt some candidates and helped others. Challengers with anti-Washington themes encountered receptive audiences and found inspiration from successful insurgent campaigns. Incumbents redoubled efforts to gain enough campaign funds to insulate themselves from tough challengers, and thanked their lucky stars that Jesse Ventura-style candidates are true anomalies.

Political Party Transformation

State and local political parties in America were at the peak of their influence and structure during the latter part of the nineteenth century.²³ In the earlier decades of the twentieth century, political parties were the main agents for elections, providing the funds and all important workers; parties were also the training ground for candidates. Yet by the 1960s parties had lost much of their impact and were no longer the main focus of candidate elections.²⁴ Campaign finance reform, the proliferation of political action committees, the creation of the political consulting industry, and the rise of the candidate-

centered campaign all were important factors in the declining importance of political parties. Television, too, became a dominant force in elections. As veteran media consultant Robert Squier once noted, “Television is the political party of the future.”²⁵

Some predicted the demise of the political parties, while others saw the parties adapting to new roles.²⁶ In reality, political parties have not faded away, but they have indeed been transformed. Most important, the political parties have become money-gathering enterprises and financial conduits for campaigns. During the 1990s the national parties, corporations, labor unions, and wealthy individuals discovered the enormous funding potential of soft money—campaign funds that do not fall under the jurisdiction and control of federal election law. The Democratic and Republican national parties, in particular, have been able to generate millions of dollars of soft money and disperse it to state and local parties for many uses, all under the legal umbrella of “party building” purposes.

For decades now, the Republican Party has been able to tap a broader range of financial interests than has the Democratic Party. Republicans have aggressively sought funds from their natural allies—corporations, trade associations, and business-oriented political action committees. With equal determination, Republicans have sought out funds from individual donors and ideologically conservative interest groups. Until recently, they have been far more successful than Democrats in developing and cultivating a steady stream of donations.

For example, in three major off-year elections in 1997, the Republican Party far outspent the Democratic Party. While the national Democratic Party was saddled with a \$15 million debt left over from the 1996 presidential-year elections, the national Republican Party was able to pour leftover campaign funds into the 1997 Virginia and New Jersey gubernatorial races. In Virginia, the national Republican Party dumped over \$2 million into the campaign of James S. Gilmore III; by contrast, the Democratic Party gave only \$125,000 directly to its candidate, Donald S. Beyer Jr. In New Jersey, Republican governor Christine Todd Whitman benefited from a \$675,000 national Republican Party issue ad attacking the reputed tax-hiking and welfare-promoting policies of former New Jersey Democratic governors. In a special election in the thirteenth district of New York, the Republican National Committee strategically pumped \$791,000 into thirty-second advertising to attack the Democratic candidate. In this abbreviated special election, more money came from the national Republican Party than

was given by all contributors in an average full-length congressional race. In each election, national Democrats could not come close to matching those funds, and their candidates went down in defeat.²⁷

Political party money obviously helps win elections, but money alone won't win. That simple lesson was learned once again in 1998. Republicans that year announced they would raise some \$37 million in soft money for "Operation Breakout," targeting vulnerable Democrats and protecting Republicans in the congressional campaigns. Republicans spent nearly twice as much as Democrats, but Democrats expended their money more wisely.²⁸ While Republicans disbursed their money on expensive television campaigning on national issues, Democrats were able to concentrate funds on more candidate-specific issues and invest heavily in get-out-the-vote efforts.

Candidates still turn to the political parties for strategic advice, technical support, and even volunteers. But what candidates most actively seek from political parties are campaign contributions—party money to help support polling, telephone banks, computer equipment, television ads, direct mail, and the consultants who provide these services.

Communications Revolution

The profound changes in mass communications during the past two decades have greatly affected politics and campaigning.²⁹ Cable television has outpaced the three once-dominant networks, talk radio has become a dynamic outlet for angry voices, and new voices have transformed the media, bringing fundamental changes in traditional newscasting's sense of objectivity and fairness. News, once confined to short, predictable segments during the day and evening, now stretches forever, with twenty-four-hour news stations giving all the news, all the time. The once inviolable divide between news and entertainment has been torn away, and news, especially about politics and candidates, seems to be reported only if it is entertaining or provocative. Most disturbing, objectivity and verification of news have been supplanted by "buzz," the rumor mill that bounces with the speed of light from Internet sources, to tabloid newspapers, to late-night talk shows, to mainstream journalism.

Until the late 1970s the three major television networks dominated revenues and viewership. Thereafter, the networks lost much of their market share to cable television.³⁰ The average home in 1976 had seven television channels to choose from; by 1990 that number had risen to thirty-three

channels, thanks to the penetration of cable television. CNN now has a global viewership of 150 million households. Cable television has developed a small niche market for politics and public affairs. Some 16.7 million voting-age Americans watch C-SPAN, the cable industry's public affairs stations,³¹ which offer gavel-to-gavel coverage of the House of Representatives and the Senate, plus many other events related to politics, legislation, and governance. Cable access has given a voice to the politicians and causes, with shows devoted to politics on MSNBC, CNBC, and the conservative cable network America's Voice.

Talk radio also became an important agent for politics communications. After the Reagan administration rescinded the FCC fairness clause for radio broadcasts, talk radio shows mushroomed. In 1983 only 53 radio stations had news/talk formats; today, there are more than 1,000 such formats, with the total number of stations remaining relatively constant at 9,400 during this time. Talk radio has hit a popular chord and is especially effective with conservative audiences.

Conservative political talk radio has become the great feeding trough of citizens' anger, distrust, and ridicule. Howard Kurtz observed that talk shows have become a "powerful vehicle that trumpets the most extreme and polarizing views, that panders to sensationalism, that spreads innuendo and misinformation with stunning efficiency."³² Talk radio has also become a useful weapon for candidates, especially those with an outsider image or appeal. For example, two-time Republican presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan found talk radio to be a convenient rallying point for disgruntled voters in the New Hampshire primary in February 1996. He appeared on many local conservative talk radio shows, made his case to voters, answered calls from true believers, and urged his followers to show up on election day. For Buchanan, talk radio was an ideal election tool: the medium was "free," the audience was deeply sympathetic, and he could personally make his point directly to his listeners. He spoke, they listened and came out to vote. In the early and mid-1990s conservative talk radio hosts throughout the country claimed credit for energizing voters and helping to elect conservatives to federal and local office.

Cable television and talk radio have spawned new stars on the political horizon: Larry King, a long-time little-known radio disc jockey, became a fixture in national communications when Ross Perot announced his 1992 presidential ambitions on King's television show. King regularly hosts political personalities, show-business stars, and presidential hopefuls. Lobbing softball

questions to his guests, King has become a favorite with ambitious politicians seeking free media coverage. Rush Limbaugh, with an equally modest background, broke onto the national scene in 1988, and has been able to parlay bombast, humor, and bluff into a loyal following of some 20 million daily listeners, blasting away on radio and television at liberals (and especially Hillary Clinton), and calling for the impeachment of Bill Clinton long before the Lewinsky episode. Limbaugh's show is carried on more than 650 stations, and while his audience—97 percent white, 60 percent male and middle-aged—makes up only 10 percent of the population, it has the highest level of voter registration.³³

New York radio personality Don Imus, who has called Clinton a “redneck bozo” and a “lying weasel,” was named one of the twenty-five most influential Americans in 1996 by *Time* magazine, and has claimed that all he wants from guests on his radio show is to “goad them into saying something that ruins their life.” Clinton and other politicians nevertheless put up with Imus's abuses because his morning show is aired in ninety-five markets and is heard by approximately 10 million listeners throughout the nation.³⁴ As Bill Bradley candidly put it, “the number of people who come up to me in New Jersey and say ‘I heard you on Imus’ is 50 to 100 times the number who say, ‘I saw you on “Face the Nation.”’”³⁵

Political coverage has become democratized, it has brought in new viewpoints and perspectives, and in many cases resonates with shifting attitudes toward political legitimacy and authority, sexual mores, and lifestyles. The “suits” and talking heads of network television have been joined by voices with attitude.

News to a large extent has become trivialized, packaged as entertainment.³⁶ Politicians and candidates, vying for precious time on television, wanting to appear hip and reach new audiences, have become amateur entertainers. Long ago, Richard Nixon broke through barriers of popular entertainment, repeating the once funny tagline “Sock it to me!” on the comedy show *Laugh-In*. Bill Clinton in 1992 donned Blues Brothers-style shades and blew his saxophone on the *Arsenio Hall Show*, and later answered teen questions about his preference for boxers or briefs on MTV. Politicians become part of television's insatiable appetite for entertainment.³⁷ Members of Congress yuk it up on late-night television's *Politically Incorrect*. Hillary Clinton and Rudolph Giuliani and presidential hopefuls from Bob Dole to George W. Bush banter with Jay Leno and Dave Letterman. Patrick Buchanan has segued between political talk shows and self-deluding runs for

the presidency. Television is seductive: it feeds candidates' craving for self-promotion and ego gratification, and it reaches audiences that normally do not listen to politicians. In many ways, though, politics sometimes becomes just one more morsel of entertainment, one more channel to be surfed, just another episode on television.

Sometimes entertainers try their hand at politics, and politicians are drawn to entertainment. Ronald Reagan went from the movies and television to the governor's mansion and the White House. The late Sonny Bono, Ben Jones ("Cooter" in *The Dukes of Hazard*), Fred Grandy ("Gopher" in *The Love Boat*), and Fred Thompson, former Watergate lawyer-turned-actor, all headed to Congress. Senator Jesse Helms's career was launched through nightly commentary on his local television station, and Susan Molinari left the House of Representatives for a short-lived career in television. In every election cycle, local television anchors and weather reporters turn up as candidates; they are comfortable and familiar faces, seen every night on the local news. Sports heroes also parlay their fame into political careers. Heading to Congress were former baseball star Wilmer "Vinegar Bend" Mizell, football stars Jack Kemp, Steve Largent, and J. C. Watts, and basketball greats Bill Bradley and Tom McMillan. In 1998 baseball Hall-of-Famer Jim Bunning squared off against college basketball legend Scotty Baesler in the Kentucky Senate race. From the sport that combines cartoonlike characters of good and evil, fakery, and testosterone spectacle, came former pro wrestler (and action-movie bit player) Jesse Ventura.

Yet even with a twenty-four-hour blur of communications, it is sometimes next to impossible for a candidate to receive news coverage. Presidents, impeachment, and scandals will always have their day on television, but not so the candidate running for Congress, or even for governor. For many candidates, it is impossible to get any free media—even ten seconds in a news clip on local television. For example, during the 1998 California primary, local news coverage of the gubernatorial primary was almost invisible: less than one-third of one percent of local television time was devoted to covering the governor's race, and when television stations did air stories, they fell back on the easiest of reporting, telling viewers who was ahead, who had momentum, and who looked hot, rather than covering substantive issues. Political news is barely covered on local television, because in the minds of news editors (confirmed by viewer survey results), audiences are bored by campaigns and discussions of public policy. In order to get their message across to voters, candidates have to resort to the increasingly expensive forms of paid media,

especially television and radio commercials and direct mail, but are also turning to the Internet as a way to communicate with voters.

The New Media

Thanks to the Internet, even marginal candidates have an inexpensive, efficient way of communicating with voters. Candidate websites and other forms of online communications may prove to be the most important, transforming factors in politics and campaigning. Candidates and campaigns have rapidly adapted to online communication. In 1994 hardly any campaigns had websites, but by 1998 nearly 70 percent of all federal, state, and local campaigns had websites.³⁸ Campaign websites were particularly attractive in these early years because Web users were better educated, more likely to vote, and more interested in politics than the average adult. One 1996 online survey found that 90 percent of Web users were registered to vote and that 63 percent had participated in their most recent local, state, or national election. Both figures were much higher than the U.S. general population, in which slightly over 60 percent of the adult population were registered to vote and approximately 42 percent had voted in the 1994 elections. By 1998, with Internet usage becoming more commonplace, the audience profile began to look more like the average voter.³⁹

Public interest groups, ideological organizations, the White House, individual senators and members of Congress, and political parties have developed online sites. So, too, have broadcast television networks, CNN, MS-NBC, C-SPAN, national news magazines, and newspapers. As political websites grew in number, two master websites were established in 1998 that kept track of politics online. Many of the most innovative and informative politics-based websites were linked to Web White and Blue, a master site sponsored by the Markle Foundation and Harvard University that permitted voters to have easy access to more than twelve hundred candidate, party, and interest group sites in 1998. Likewise, George Washington University's website Election Connection provided links to all major party federal candidates in 1998. Appendix A lists many of the best Internet sites found through Web White and Blue, Election Connection, and other locations.

During the 1998 election season, some 11 million Americans logged on to the Internet for election news. Fully 50 percent visited national news organization websites, another 29 percent turned to local news websites, while about 17 percent turned to candidate or campaign websites.⁴⁰ While websites

proliferate and the use of online services becomes standard fare in campaigns, political scientists Michael Cornfield and Christopher Arterton point out that we are still in the “prehistoric era” of Internet politics.⁴¹

The Internet provides rich new means of communication. For seventy dollars, anyone can register an Internet address, create a website, and become a player in the swirl of politics and issues. With a small investment, individuals can create electronic platforms that scream out issues or poke fun at candidates; they can create their own media watchdog service or become a clearinghouse for political gossip and rumor. Interactive sites let citizens sign electronic petitions and voice their views on issues. Public interest groups have found the Internet an exceptionally useful way of explaining policy issues, listing the key votes of candidates, and giving voters information on ballot issues and how to register and where to vote.

As communication tools, the best websites have become one more arrow in a campaign’s quiver. Websites are used to communicate with voters, round up volunteers, announce events, target selected audiences, raise funds, and, increasingly, attack opponents. Campaign websites have enormous potential, with enthusiasts predicting that campaign online communication will soon make the difference in many campaigns. Wade Randlett of the Technology Network, an industry-backed advocacy organization, predicted that the websites could swing the votes of 7 percent of the 50 million Americans using the Internet in the 2000 campaigns. However, professional consultants, particularly those in media, direct mail, and telemarketing, are more skeptical. Pollster Mark Mellman summed up the observation of many consultants: “The truth is, as a tool of political communication, the Internet today is of marginal value, but increasing value.”⁴²

Campaign websites certainly are not the primary communication tool for campaigns, but they can be something of an equalizer for underfunded campaigns. Candidates may have little or no money to buy television or radio ads, or may find direct mail prohibitively expensive, but for a small investment their campaigns can create effective no-frills websites that communicate to all who want to click on.

Rapid-Fire Communications

Candidates now have to be prepared for “real-time” campaigning, the rapid-fire communications of charges and countercharges leveled between candi-

dates. This has been one of the most significant changes in campaign communications. In earlier years, an attack might have simply gone unanswered, or weeks would go by before a response. That has changed. Today in presidential and in many gubernatorial and senatorial races, response is nearly instantaneous, even anticipated in advance.

A pioneer in rapid-response techniques was Democratic media consultant Frank Greer. Working for Douglas Wilder against Republican Marshall Coleman for the 1989 Virginia governor's race, Greer prepared generic response ads in advance of an actual attack by the Coleman campaign. Film was shot and voice-overs, music, and graphics were prepared in advance. Only last-minute details of the charge and the response were needed to fill in the blanks. A Coleman attack ad would appear on television at 9:00 P.M.; Wilder media consultants, thanks to their advanced preparation, had their counterattack ads ready for airing the next morning.

Since then, response time has gotten even shorter. One episode during the 1996 Dole-Clinton presidential campaign illustrates the capabilities of real-time response.⁴³ Senator Dole's economic plan, calling for a 15 percent across-the-board tax cut, was to be announced on Monday morning, August 5. This was to be the policy centerpiece of the Dole campaign. In order to dominate early television and print coverage, the Dole plan was leaked to selected newspapers the night before. Meanwhile, the Clinton campaign obtained early editions of the Monday-morning newspapers published late Sunday night. By midmorning on Monday, the Clinton campaign had faxed to reporters the script of a television ad prepared by its media consultant Squier, Knapp, Ochs attacking Dole's "last-minute scheme that would balloon the deficit." The ad showed a black-and-white picture of a haggard Bob Dole, with a quote from that Sunday's *New York Times* pasted over it, calling the tax-cut plan "a desperate move." The Clinton ad was rushed to television networks Monday evening for their news shows. And when reporters arrived at Dole campaign headquarters to be briefed on the economic plan, they were met by a Clinton campaign intern who handed them a seven-page rebuttal to the still-unreleased Dole document.

The battle for public attention heated up on Monday, first on Republican-dominated talk radio shows and then on television. Jack Kemp (just days before being selected as Dole's running mate), as well as Steve Forbes and several senators, were recruited to praise the Dole plan. The White House then countered with Labor Secretary Robert Reich and George Stephanopoulos,

who between them conducted twenty satellite interviews with local television anchors.

This fast reaction time by the Democrats and the counterpunch by Republicans illustrates rapid-response, real-time capabilities of modern campaigns. The effective rapid-response campaign has done the research in advance, anticipated media and opponent questions and prepared responses, and prepared radio and television spots to fight back and counter charges.

Rapid-response commercials were dubbed “crash ads” or “crash spots” during the 2000 campaign. Thanks to new digital cameras, the George W. Bush campaign was able to tape (or digitize) their candidate at 11:30 on a Tuesday morning in New Hampshire, cut the footage down to thirty seconds, e-mail the proposed script and a Quick-Time video by computer to the Texas campaign headquarters for approval, and meet the Manchester, New Hampshire, television station’s 3:00 P.M. deadline for the next day’s commercials. In predigital days, the campaign would have needed a cameraman and a sound man, the editing would have taken far longer, and video tapes would have to be sent to the television station by overnight courier.⁴⁴

Campaigns that cannot keep up are campaigns that will not win. In today’s communications war, there is no time to rest. All-news radio, expanded television news, and Internet services now extend political coverage to any time, day and night. An attack made against a candidate at noon might rebound through many news outlet sources and be rebutted, counter-charged, and rebutted again before the 11:00 P.M. evening news. Campaigns can become electronic shouting matches. If lucky, a candidate will receive fifteen seconds on the evening news to counter a charge, sometimes even less. Campaign communications has to be able to turn on a dime, the candidate has to bombard listeners with clever phrases and quick rejoinders in ten-second sound bites, and hope that voters are paying attention. Lost in this bumper-car game of real-time rapid response are thoughtful, articulate responses with substance and depth.

Outside Voices

Candidates have to contend with more than their opponents; now they have to worry about third parties, sometimes known and other times not known, that are trying to influence the outcome of the election. Some of the most important sources of outside influence have been the state or national parties,

which offer funds, organizational support, and party advertising. But in recent years, other voices have been added to campaigns. Outside organizations interject their own campaign messages, using independent expenditures and issues advocacy advertising as their vehicles. Because of these outside interests, local congressional contests have become nationalized as battlegrounds between national pro-choice and anti-abortion organizations, term limit advocates, and labor or pro-business forces. These outside groups, and others, bombard the airwaves with television commercials trying to persuade voters. As Paul Taylor writes, candidates “now share the election megaphone with a cacophony of other voices.”⁴⁵

Federal election law allows individuals or organizations to spend unlimited amounts of money to oppose or support a candidate in federal elections through independent expenditures, provided the money is spent without the knowledge of or coordination with the campaign that will be benefiting from it, and the expenditure must be reported to the Federal Election Commission.

Recently, money has come from a wide variety of ideological political action organizations, corporations, and individuals. The League of Conservation Voters has targeted the “dirty dozen,” its list of the members of Congress with the worst environmental voting records. In 1996 seven of the “dirty dozen” were defeated. Taking a cue from environmental advocates, Handgun Control selected twelve members of Congress, dubbed them the “dangerous dozen,” and spent \$220,000 on advertising to defeat them. The same year, the National Rifle Association poured \$4.5 million, including \$1.5 million in independent expenditures, into races to support pro-gun or to defeat anti-gun advocates.

There was a flurry of outside money and campaigning in the 1996 and 1998 congressional elections, particularly supporting issue advocacy advertising. Issue advocacy is the hot new weapon in campaigns, though it is reminiscent of the old days before campaign finance reform, reporting requirements, and funds limits. Issue ads are funded by soft money—that is, money outside the jurisdiction of federal election law. There are no limits on the amounts of money raised, and none of the funds need to be reported to the Federal Election Commission. Moreover, an organization can come up with an innocuous-sounding name that hides its true aims and supporters. As long as the advertisements do not specifically call for the defeat or election of a candidate, they are considered issue advocacy.

Chasing Campaign Dollars

Especially in its early stages, the modern campaign is mostly about raising money. In presidential campaigns, this is called the “invisible primary,” the year or so before the Iowa caucus and New Hampshire primary when candidates are busily raising money, flying from one part of the country to another for fund-raising events, and using direct mail and telephone solicitation to gain campaign dollars.⁴⁶

Candidates for statewide office especially rely on early money and early political support. Early contributors vote with dollars, indicating how political insiders see the election shaping. The media pays attention, writing stories about the fund-raising abilities of candidates, proclaiming front-runners and also-rans depending on how well they are raising campaign dollars.

The cost of campaigns has risen steadily during the 1990s. From 1990 through 1996, there were fifteen Senate races that cost more than \$10 million each; the \$1 million House campaign, once highly unusual, became more commonplace. The elections of 1996 were by far the most expensive in American history, totaling about \$2.2 billion for the presidency and Congress,⁴⁷ but were soon eclipsed by the 2000 campaigns, with early estimates of 3 billion being spent. Some local legislative races that once cost \$35,000 now cost eight to ten times as much. The pressure on candidates and campaigns to raise money is relentless and often crowds out other important campaign activities. During the final weeks of the campaign, while candidates should be delivering speeches and attending rallies, they may find themselves attending private fund-raisers, trying to eke out another \$150,000 to pay for the last week of television commercials.

Campaign dollars and professionalized campaigns go hand in hand. When news accounts report that a campaign has \$2 million in the bank, this tells only a fraction of the story. The \$2 million war chest means that the campaign can afford the services of pollsters, media consultants, opposition researchers, direct mail, and professional fund-raisers, and can blanket the television market with hundreds of commercials.

Stepping into the Mudfield

Individuals seeking elective office frequently have to pay a high personal price. Campaigning is not a sport for the timid, nor for those whose egos bruise easily. More attention is paid to the personal lives of candidates than

ever before; campaigns probe deep into public and private records of opponents, searching for misdeeds, financial irregularities—any ammunition to use against the candidate.

Negative campaigning has increased sharply over the past two decades and has become a key ingredient in many campaign arsenals.⁴⁸ Hard-hitting, factual information is legitimate and helps to inform the public. In this sense, “negative” campaigning is an important and often potent weapon. The public can benefit from robust debate on policy positions and information about candidate voting records and an incumbent who hasn’t been doing the job (or a challenger who isn’t up to the job).⁴⁹ The real concern is the ugly nature of some campaign attacks. Too often, campaigns get vicious, even when the facts are correct. Charges are blown out of proportion, taken out of context, and become irrelevant to the campaign. Sometimes, the charges are beyond the political statute of limitations—they drag up ancient information that clearly doesn’t matter or is so personal that it should be out of bounds.

There are several long-lasting consequences of this vicious streak in campaigns: good potential candidates are driven away, voters become disgusted with campaigns and candidates, the business of political consulting is given a black eye, and elections and democratic choice are denigrated in the process. Much of the raw ammunition for vicious campaigning is provided by professional researchers who comb through personal records and electronic databases, and campaign media consultants are more than willing to use that data.

Candidates for public office, whether they are challengers or veteran incumbents, face many tough obstacles. Given the uncertainty, the loss of privacy, and the enormous physical and emotional drain on candidates, who would want to run for public office? Even more important, how many good, honorable people are dissuaded from running because it just isn’t worth it?

CASE STUDY:

**Challenging an Incumbent U.S. Senator:
The Realities of a Tough, Hard-Fought,
Professional Campaign**

Competitive U.S. Senate races provide good examples of the use of modern campaign techniques and the role played by political consultants. While Senate campaigns vary widely,¹ there are many common features. This is a hypothetical campaign; Barbara Allyn and Senator Robert Porter are fictitious but they represent a composite of candidates in several recent Senate campaign cycles. Many of the details and circumstances surrounding this race are left purposely vague. We do not know, for example, what state this race is in, what political parties Allyn or Porter belong to, who the president is, or what election cycle we are in. What we do know is that this is a well-executed campaign with sufficient time and resources to employ the most sophisticated techniques and talent available.²

Our focus is on Barbara Allyn, who is challenging one-term senator Robert Porter. Allyn has been minority leader in the state General Assembly for six

years and is a tested, attractive force in the party. She may face early rivals; still, she is considered to have the best chance of capturing her party's nomination.

The Context of the Campaign

Every campaign starts with a list of “givens,” realities that face both candidates, and “all strategy, tactics, message resources, and decisions must originate from this foundation.”³ Some of these givens, however, present more of a challenge than others. Following are several key elements facing Allyn and her campaign.

Off-Year Election There is no presidential or gubernatorial election held during this election cycle; the Senate contest is the biggest race in the state. Thus no other major race will dominate the news and set the agenda, it should be easier to purchase advertising time during the last crucial weeks of the campaign, and, finally, statewide funding sources will not be siphoned off to the gubernatorial and presidential contests.

An Expensive State to Run in The most effective way to reach voters in this state is through television advertising. The state has six media markets, two of which are relatively expensive. One of those costly media markets serves three states; consequently, many of the television advertisements aired during the last weeks of the campaign will be wasted on viewers who cannot vote in the state. During the last two competitive statewide contests, the gubernatorial election two years ago and the other Senate seat four years ago, each of the major candidates spent between \$4 and \$6 million, with the greatest amount of money spent on television advertisements.

Challenger Facing an Incumbent Members of Congress running for reelection historically have a much better chance of winning than do Senators.⁴ One study of Senate elections concluded that the main reason many Senate incumbents are defeated is that they attract strong challengers able to spend large amounts on their campaigns.⁵ Allyn is an attractive, strong candidate, and she will have a sizeable campaign war chest. But money alone won't buy elections. There are plenty of examples of well-financed Senate challengers who have come up short. Michael Huffington outspent incumbent Dianne Feinstein by two to one in the 1994 California Senate race; Oliver North

spent nearly four times as much as incumbent Charles S. Robb in the 1994 Virginia Senate race; and Mark Warner spent twice as much as incumbent John Warner in the 1996 Virginia Senate race. All three well-funded challengers were defeated. The Allyn campaign is not worried about raising sufficient funds; rather, it is worried about how skillfully Porter will be able to use his power of incumbency to influence this race.

Statewide Electorate Is Very Competitive The state has been a fairly even political battleground: Democratic and Republican parties are relatively equally matched. Bill Clinton won the state twice, but so did Ronald Reagan. There are currently a Democratic governor and two Republican senators. Neither side should expect an electoral advantage or disadvantage in this race.

Female Office Seeker Only once before, twenty years ago, has a woman been elected to a major office in this state, and never to the Senate. The “year of the woman” that seemed to carry so much appeal in 1992 is now ancient political history and has little resonance in this year’s state politics. Polling will later tell Allyn’s campaign that she receives no advantage from female voters and a slight disadvantage among male voters.

Defending an Unpopular President Allyn might possibly be dragged down by the president, who is of her own party, never carried the state, and suffers from continued low popularity. She will have to distance herself from him and ultimately make painful political choices when inevitably asked to defend her president’s record on a variety of issues.

The Challenger

Barbara Allyn is quick-witted and personable; people like her; she appears trustworthy and looks good on television. Representative Allyn is an attractive candidate: she is married to a successful executive, and they have two telegenic grade-school children; at forty-three, she is a refreshing contrast to the incumbent, who is twenty-five years her senior.

Allyn is a veteran campaigner, having run for office four times already; she is tireless, willing to put up with the numbingly long days and nights on the road, and she does not panic or fluster easily. She can absorb criticism with the best of public officeholders; she is an excellent speaker, very knowledgeable

about state issues and policies; she should be a formidable television debater; and as minority leader in the state General Assembly, she has ready access to political support and funds.

Even though she has run for office four times previously, Allyn is still relatively unknown to the state's voters. Her previous elections were all in a district with a total population of 65,000 in a state of 8 million. Her political base is located away from urban population centers. She is well known to the capitol crowd and party insiders, but registers only 10 percent name recognition from the general population. Until now, Allyn has never assiduously courted the free media. While everyone knows her in the General Assembly, hardly anyone at the local shopping center would recognize her.

The Incumbent

Allyn's opponent has used the advantages of incumbency very effectively. Senator Porter, who won his seat five years ago by only 3 percent, has since used his incumbency to strengthen his hold on the office. While fairly bland and colorless, his name recognition is 55 percent, thanks to an aggressive use of free media, especially for two high-profile events: he enjoyed almost six weeks of widespread media exposure as he fought for flood relief benefits for the western half of the state, and he appeared on the *Oprah Winfrey* show with a ten-year-old girl, a constituent, who badly needed hospital care but had been stymied by federal regulations. Senator Porter's legislative record is considered mediocre at best, but people like him, and his approval rating has topped 60 percent.

Further, Porter has systematically courted reelection campaign funds. He has been especially effective in raising political action committee money, and after five years in office has been able to wipe his original campaign debt clean and now has over \$3 million in the bank. Another sobering thought for Barbara Allyn: the interest accruing every month in the Senator's campaign account is more than she has ever had to raise in any of her previous campaigns. Senator Porter has already begun assembling his reelection campaign team—veteran, top-notch political consultants and a seasoned network of local party workers who helped during his first campaign.

The one immutable factor is time: election day will come soon enough, as what has to be done in the meantime is formidable. Every campaign goes through several phases, from the quiet early moments when the decision to run is made, through the relentless months of fund-raising, to the intense,

noisy, and public days at the end of the election. This is what the Allyn campaign faces.

Phase One: The Decision to Run

Beginning eighteen months before election day, several key aspects of the campaign are set in motion.

Establishing Support and Getting Advice from the Core Group This phase involves serious discussion with family, close political allies, and a few influential political insiders and financial supporters. While her decision to run is not firmly set, anyone who is plugged into state politics knows that Allyn is seriously thinking about it. The rumors fly among the politically well connected within days of the first discussions; indeed, rumors have been circulating for months. “Who will take on Porter?” is a favorite topic in the corridors of the General Assembly and in the watering holes of lobbyists and journalists.

Gathering Political and Financial Support Barbara Allyn and her close associates are seeking insider political and financial support. This is the crucial “elite” campaign—to determine who among the state’s money givers and political influentials are willing to assist. An exploratory committee is established, Friends of Barbara Allyn, seeking early sponsorship. The committee establishes a website. While purchasing the domain name, www.friendsoffbarbara.com, the committee also purchases three other sites, including www.allynforsenate.com.

In Phase One, fund-raising is the crucial activity, and much of it must be handled by the candidate herself. Some early backers are eager to contribute—that’s the easy part; but then comes the much harder sell, to potential contributors who are sitting on the fence, waiting to see which way the political winds will blow, not ready to commit themselves and their money too soon. At this stage of fund-raising and gathering support, Allyn must be involved in one-to-one conversations. Her finance chairman is a lawyer-lobbyist with extensive contacts in politics and fund-raising. He has laid the groundwork for her fund-raising calls, has put together the extensive lists of prospectives, and has introduced Allyn to financial backers at dinners, quiet meetings, and over the telephone. Well connected and experienced as a fund-raiser, he is still considered an amateur, just as nearly all the supporters and volunteers for Allyn’s early campaign have been.

Signing Up Key Political Consultants This is also the time when Allyn chooses her general campaign consultant and polling and media specialists. Allyn has worked with both Washington- and state capitol-based consultants before: a Washington-based polling firm, a state-based phone bank service, a regionally based media consultant, and a state-based fund-raiser have been used in recent years by her party's House caucus. She has used two of the consultants for her own reelection campaigns, and they have a track record with the state party as well.

It is important to have a solid political consulting team signed up early; this is part of the insider game of the election. With a general consultant, pollster, and media consultant on board, she now looks like a serious candidate. Political action committees, the national party, and the media are quickly concluding that this campaign is indeed going places.

Phase One is the longest part of the campaign, and it requires considerable one-on-one persuasion and planning. The campaign headquarters is the Allyn's basement home office, which is equipped with a couple of telephone lines, a fax machine, and two borrowed computers.

Several others have been mentioned as potential challengers, including the former lieutenant governor, a wealthy businessman with no political experience, and a colleague in the General Assembly. Two of them have already formed exploration committees, and the third, the wealthy businessman, has already talked with several media consultants. Above all, Allyn wants to avoid a primary fight. She is convinced she would prevail, but the primary would drain resources away from her main objective, a clear shot at the incumbent. Much of her effort in this phase is to convince political insiders and funding sources of her viability. Scaring off potential rivals from her own party is part of that strategy.

The most important news coming out of this phase of the campaign is the newspaper and television stories indicating how much in campaign funds potential candidates have managed to raise. These stories come out just days after the Federal Election Commission quarterly financial reporting deadlines. There is a big push to deposit as many dollars and to hold off on as much spending as possible, so that the FEC report can show a healthy amount of cash on hand. Allyn is increasingly seen as a serious candidate because of her fund-raising abilities. The early money, the "smart money," is coming her way.

The other important news, unmentioned in the media, is the private, insider speculation that Barbara Allyn has all but locked up the most impor-

tant party supporters, has signed up twenty of the party's most influential money people, and has endorsement commitments from a majority of the party's county and city chairs. This is reinforced by the news that the governor's senior political aide is working behind the scenes for Allyn. This sends a strong, clear message to the political leaders throughout the state to get behind the Allyn campaign.

The public and private assessments of Barbara Allyn are so strong that the other potential challengers are backing away and probably will not press for a primary fight. One of the biggest battles, thus, has already been won: Barbara Allyn has used her organizational skill, friends, and political muscle to fend off potential rivals for the party's nomination.

Phase Two: Preannouncement

Ten months before election day, this is one of the busiest and most crucial stages in the campaign. On the recommendation of the general consultant, a campaign manager has been chosen. Toward the end of this phase, the press secretary will be chosen and a skeletal staff assembled, many of whom are volunteers. Now with a paid staff of three (campaign manager, press secretary, and fund-raising assistant) and six to eight volunteers and part-timers, the campaign has moved out of the basement office to a vacant storefront in a strip mall: low-rent, rather shabby facilities, but serviceable nonetheless.

More Fund-Raising The most important campaign activity in Phase Two is raising funds. Nearly all of the Allyn's time is spent trying to raise money—through small events and, especially, through individual telephone calls to potential donors. This is a difficult, time-consuming, but absolutely essential task that can only be accomplished by the candidate. Day after day, Allyn tackles the list of potential contributors, all of whom have to be contacted personally, with a campaign worker nagging her to make the calls. This is tough, humiliating work; in many cases, she has to nearly beg for funds and support.

The task of raising money becomes much more difficult when the candidate is a long shot or is running against an incumbent. If money cannot be raised, there is no chance the campaign will succeed against Porter. Barbara Allyn knows that the fund-raising task is formidable: her finance team has set a very high goal of raising \$1.5 million by announcement day, only five months away. To reach that goal, nearly \$75,000 has to be raised each week. By contrast, Allyn's first race for the General Assembly eight years ago cost a total of \$32,000.

The task becomes even more difficult because Senator Porter has been raising money for at least three and a half years and thus far has salted away over \$3 million. Very few political action committees are willing to hedge their bets and give Allyn campaign funds, since they have supported Senator Porter in the past and the senator's campaign will aggressively court them again.

Undaunted, the Allyn's finance committee puts together its fund-raising goals and strategy. The overall budget will be \$6.5 million, an ambitious figure but certainly not unprecedented in this state. The campaign probably cannot match the funds that Senator Porter will gather, but the general consultant is convinced that Allyn can run a competitive race even while spending \$1.5 or \$2 million less than Porter. However, there is a further complication: many of the individual, reliable campaign contributors are close to being tapped out. They were hit very hard just eighteen months ago in the very expensive governor's race and the presidential election. Allyn couldn't start fund-raising while the governor's race was going on; consequently, she is off to a slow start.

Twenty-five percent of the contributions will have to come from political action committees, another 60 percent from individual donors, and Allyn is counting on the state and national parties to help with the remaining 15 percent. Allyn has only about \$25,000 left from her last race for the General Assembly. She can't directly use that money for this election but, following the advice of several party leaders, she has used that money to buy computers, fax machines, and other equipment, which she will then "lend" to her Senate campaign.

Barbara Allyn has a special reserve, but no one is comfortable talking about it. She could spend nearly \$1 million of her own family money, although this would be an enormous burden on her family's financial well-being and could possibly place strains on her marriage. Her campaign team is also banking on several key organizations and labor unions to mount and sponsor independent ads against Senator Porter. No one talks openly about these, but behind the scenes several possibilities are being considered.

Researching the Record During this period, the professionals have begun to do their work. The research consultant is one of the first professionals hired, on the recommendation of the media and polling advisers. The researcher has worked for approximately a dozen strong Senate challengers in the past three election cycles and has a quick understanding of the job ahead—researching the public records of both Allyn and Senator Porter. The researcher will com-

pile a coherent, strategically defined record on Allyn's career: her state legislative career and her work in the previous governor's Task Force on Education Reform; her financial disclosure statements, tax records, and other financial matters; her husband's corporate and wide-ranging business dealings; potential problems with the family; and myriad other issues. At the same time, research has been started on Senator Porter's record. This is a fairly daunting task, because in addition to his five years as senator, he has also served eight years as a congressman and four years as lieutenant governor. The research consultant charges \$3,000 per month to do a complete search of both candidates, and will continue throughout the remainder of the campaign.

Focus-Group Research The polling firm will conduct preliminary focus-group research to determine the general mood of the electorate and its knowledge of Barbara Allyn. The basic focus-group script is written, relying heavily on the campaign research already completed. The campaign will conduct at least two focus groups in the four largest media markets. The participants, eight to twelve individuals in each focus group, were carefully chosen to represent the undecided but persuadable voters who will ultimately determine the outcome of this race. There is an extraordinary amount of anticipation in the campaign about the focus groups: the candidate, and many on the campaign staff, want to attend the focus groups. This is the first statewide test of Allyn's strengths and weaknesses. Being as diplomatic as possible, the pollster convinces the candidate that she should not be present, and that only the media consultant, general consultant, campaign manager, and the research consultant should observe the focus-group proceedings.

All eight focus-group sessions are completed in a two-week time period at a cost of \$32,000; the polling firm prepares the narrative analysis, and the findings are given to the campaign. The focus-group research conclusions are generally optimistic but also indicate an uphill struggle. Hardly any participants could identify Barbara Allyn, but when they were read a description of her and saw several video news clippings they were enthusiastic; they were more positive when she was identified with certain salient issues: tax cuts, getting tough on crime, and education reform.

Benchmark Survey Using information gathered from candidate and opposition research and findings from the focus-group analysis, the polling firm prepares its questions and strategy for the benchmark poll. The results of this lengthy first survey tell the campaign that most voters in the state are fairly

content with their lives and feel that the direction the country is taking is more positive than two years ago. While this is good news in a general sense, these findings trouble Allyn's pollster, as good news tends to favor the incumbent, not the challenger. More troubling are the poll data showing that Senator Porter, while his support is soft, has 55 to 60 percent name recognition and a 60 percent approval rating. Allyn has a long way to go: her name recognition still hovers around 20 percent, but her negative ratings are less than 10 percent and her positive approval rating is above 40 percent; the rest of the voters simply don't know enough about her. This statewide survey, using a sample size of 1,730, cost the campaign \$16,000.

Candidate research, focus groups, and polling information form the blueprint for launching the campaign. This information is used alongside updated analysis of state voting patterns, demographic trends, and other tools to target where the probable voters are and how they can be persuaded to vote. All this information and the realities of the campaign context form the building blocks of this campaign. It's now up to Allyn's senior strategists and consultants to develop the message, strategy, and tactics for the unfolding campaign.⁶

Phase Three: Announcement Day

Two weeks before announcement day, Barbara Allyn resigns her position as minority leader to devote herself to campaigning full-time. She could have kept drawing a state salary throughout the campaign, but had declared very publicly several months ago that she considered it unethical for her to receive a taxpayer salary while running for a different office.

By announcement day, eight months before election day, several things are already in place. The campaign staff is geared up, particularly the campaign press office; the press packets and information on the campaign are prepared. The skeletal campaign staff of three months ago has now swollen to ten or fifteen campaign workers, a volunteer coordinator, and a network of twenty-five to thirty volunteers. A professional speechwriter has been hired to craft the stump speech—the basic message that will be given throughout the campaign—and the media consultants have put together a ten-minute videotaped candidate biography.

The announcement day is planned with close to military precision. Campaign staff form an advance team and will be in place at each of the stops on announcement day. The announcement day stops are planned for each of

the principal media markets, with press packets tailored for each market. The overarching goal on announcement day is to have the candidate appear on all television stations, every radio outlet, and every newspaper. Every news outlet has received either the radio cassette or the video biographical information, plus a press kit. Barbara Allyn will be interviewed live on morning news shows in the two largest media markets and, if time permits, in the other markets as well. The campaign's official website, two months in preparation, is now ready for unveiling during the announcement. The old Friends of Barbara Allyn website will stay in use and will link to the new official site.

Announcement day is an exercise in planning and coordination: endorsements are gathered and key groups are assembled at the televised events. Announcement sites are selected to provide maximum television interest; every site and all the staging—including the list of invited guests—are carefully chosen and vetted with local political allies. The strategy is to use children at every event to emphasize the recently developed campaign theme: protecting our kids' future. Campaign expenses are beginning to mount: staff salaries and office expenditures are running at \$45,000 per month. Announcement day expenses alone, the most being for the rented helicopter that shuttles Allyn to the different media markets, will cost another \$60,000.

Phase Four: Shoring up Political Support

One of the critical activities in this phase, seven months before the election, is to secure the candidate's base of support. If the base is not secure, the election is surely lost. At this stage, every group of supporters wants to meet with Allyn; no one wants to be excluded. This becomes a scheduling headache of the first order. The candidate must maximize her time, meeting with the right people at the right times, and must avoid wasting time and resources. Allyn, in her earlier enthusiasm, had wanted to declare publicly that she would visit every county and every city in her sweep across the state. Cooler heads prevailed; she will visit only those places and groups that will yield maximum political potential. Like the media plan, her schedule must have direction, strategy, and rationale.

As in every other phase, fund-raising overshadows everything else. Allyn is raising far more than ever before in her career, but it isn't enough. A fund-raising consultant is brought in to help put together events targeted at individual donors of \$1,000 and at political action committees. It is painfully clear that the usual reliable sources of funds will not be enough, that the

campaign will have to go beyond the state to look for funds. During this phase, twenty-seven fund-raisers have been planned in-state, and others are planned in New York City, Los Angeles, Miami Beach, and Washington. Allyn, of course, will have to attend every one, taking precious time away from home state campaigning. These fund-raisers are time-consuming but necessary facts of life for the Allyn campaign, and the money anticipated from local events will hardly close the fund-raising gap.

The campaign has also been tapping the state party's list of supporters. Still, this will not be enough, so the campaign has hired a direct mail fund-raising firm to assist in broadening the fund-raising base. Using lists from the national party, several nonprofit organizations, and others, the campaign has added a whole new layer of direct mail possibilities. Direct mail solicitation is very expensive, a \$220,000 up-front proposition, and much of the early money spent on direct mail will not yield cash resources until later in the campaign. Money has never come into an Allyn campaign as fast or as much as in this race thus far, but the task of raising funds is daunting, and expenses are rapidly eating away at campaign contributions.

The campaign website, www.allynforsenate.com, encourages supporters to contribute, and gives a secure link so they can deposit funds into the campaign. So far, however, only about \$11,500 has trickled into the campaign from electronic solicitation.

Phase Five: Long Summer

The summer season, with six months before the election, has been a discouraging one for the Allyn campaign. Fund-raising has slowed and there has been hardly any media attention given to the race. Even worse, there seems to be little interest among the public. Allyn attends rallies, barbecues, Memorial Day and Fourth of July parades, and other events throughout the summer, but she gets the nagging sense that few people really care about the election, and is getting frustrated that all her efforts are for naught. Though a savvy and experienced campaigner, Allyn has never been involved in a statewide race before, and never in one that has lasted as long as this.

A late May poll in the state's largest newspaper contains some worrisome numbers: Allyn's name recognition inched up, but only to 28 percent. Her own pollster reassures her that voters simply haven't focused their attention on this race and will not do so until after Labor Day. Privately, the consultants are quite concerned: they have seen this pattern too many times before—a

candidate who, despite pouring her heart and soul (and millions of dollars), into the campaign, doesn't seem to connect with the voters. The consultants and the campaign press secretary begin mapping out a free media drive for the rest of the campaign. The goal is to get Barbara Allyn on as many morning, noon, and evening newscasts as possible, to use every opportunity to be on friendly talk radio programs, and to use every photo opportunity possible to boost her name recognition and positive numbers. In July, Allyn's campaign gets an unanticipated, though minor, free media boost: her campaign website is chosen as one of the ten best political sites in a university study.

Commercials The campaign learns from inside sources in one of the television network affiliates that the Porter campaign plans a major media buy during the third week of June. The timing is somewhat unorthodox: this is very early in the campaign, and voters are not at all focused on the race. Allyn's consultants speculate that Porter's own polling numbers show his support to be growing soft, and his campaign wants to air some positive biographical spots to bolster his standing. Or perhaps Porter wants to flex his campaign muscle and tempt Allyn to run costly television advertising to counter his. The Allyn campaign holds firm and doesn't run television spots, but the Allyn pollster does a quick survey of six hundred registered voters. The Porter television ads, which aired throughout the state, cost an estimated \$420,000. The Allyn poll results show, however, that there was only a slight positive bump for Porter in name recognition and approval.

The Allyn media team has prepared six separate commercials of its own, including a three-minute soft biographical commercial introducing Allyn to state voters. All six commercials were test-marketed by four separate focus groups, who measured, ranked, and criticized the efforts. Allyn's biographical commercial had a heavy emphasis on her family's roots in the state, her values, and her role as a modern mother concerned about her kids and community. Allyn reminded her media consultant of Senator Patty Murray's 1992 "mom in tennis shoes" image; it worked for Murray, it might work here. Allyn very much wanted to keep her children out of the glare of publicity, and especially out of television commercials, but her media consultant persuaded her to show her children in the television ads because the children had the highest positive rating of all visual images shown to the focus groups. In response to the focus groups' comments, Allyn changed her hairstyle, stopped wearing three of her favorite dresses, stopped using the words *progressive* and *Democrat*, and sharpened her critical comments against her opponent.

Because of the focus-group reactions, five of the six commercials were reworked and were readied for the next phase of the campaign. On a gamble, the media consultant and pollster convinced Allyn to add more humor, self-deprecation, and an “I’m not from Washington” punch to her commercials. Knowing that they’ll probably never outspend Porter, the Allyn campaign needs catchy ads that will generate large amounts of free publicity. They plan to do some irreverent ads like the ones former college professor Paul Wellstone aired in 1990 and unknown state senator Russell Feingold aired in 1992 to beat their well-known and well-funded rivals.⁷

The focus groups also were shown the Porter commercial; it brought only lukewarm response, much as the consultants had guessed. Porter had spent over \$400,000 and gotten very little in return.

Telephoning for Dollars The campaign absolutely must raise more money so that the television media blitz can be launched in early September. Despite personal appeals from Allyn, the scores of fund-raisers she has attended, and the seven very expensive direct mail appeals for funds, the campaign must reach out to other voters and hit those who have already contributed funds. The campaign brings in a telemarketing firm that specializes in political fund-raising. Thirty thousand telephone calls will be made during the final weeks of August and early September to solicit campaign funds. The direct mail appeal was marginally successful; the telemarketing, though more expensive, should yield a better return of contributors.

Phase Six: Ten Weeks Out

Television and Radio Advertisements The Allyn campaign has held off until ten weeks before election day to begin its paid media. This will be the most expensive portion of the campaign, with nearly \$2 million devoted to television and radio advertising during these last ten weeks. Weeks ago, the media consultant’s senior ad buyer reserved time on television and radio outlets in the six media markets. Network television shows will get the bulk of the advertising dollars, followed by a few selected cable shows, then radio. The strategy is to advertise on television shows that especially appeal to women (*Rosie O’Donnell* and *Oprah*, the top afternoon choices), general audiences in the morning (*Today Show*, *CBS Morning News*, *Good Morning America*, and *Fox Morning News*), the local noontime news, and popular

nighttime network broadcasts (*Frasier* reruns, *ER*, and several others). This is a high-cost strategy, especially for the popular network television shows, which charge very high prices for both local and national advertising. The radio budget is devoted to “drive time,” the important morning and late-afternoon shows that attract large commuter audiences. The media buyer tries to get her on drive-time shows with a general audience but also specifically targets African-American stations.

The media buyer is having difficulty getting the choicest advertising spots—a sure sign that Porter and others have gotten there first and are planning an even greater airwave assault. On the advice of the media consultant, a specialty firm is hired to monitor the opposition’s ads during this crucial time of the campaign.

Issues Advocacy Attack Six weeks before the election, the local television stations in all six media markets are saturated with thirty-second television ads highly critical of Allyn. Barbara Allyn is seen in a very unflattering black-and-white photo spliced into a montage of toxic waste spills, sick children, and poisoned wildfowl. Rapidly scrolling across the screen are twelve environmental votes in the General Assembly that Allyn had missed during her six years of service. In bold red letters beside each vote is the word “ABSENT,” pulsating on the screen. In a voice-over dripping in sarcasm, the narrator snaps, “She says she loves kids and trees . . . but when it came time to stand up and vote, where was she? . . . Barbara Allyn—all talk, no action. Barbara Allyn—if she can’t show up for work, does she deserve a promotion? (Paid for by the Committee to Protect Our Kids’ Future, J. Otis Burkewood, treasurer.)

This ad is mean-spirited, unfair, and underhanded. It is also perfectly legal. Allyn is one of eight Senate and thirty-two congressional candidates being attacked by the so-called Committee to Protect Our Kids’ Future. This is the opening shot of what will be an \$18 million dollar media buy orchestrated to hit throughout the week. The Committee to Protect Our Kids’ Future is funded mostly by a consortium of the fifteen largest waste disposal companies in the country. The Porter campaign publicly disavows any prior knowledge of the ads, and at a news conference Senator Porter decries outsiders trying to influence the campaign. The issue advocacy ads continue for the next two weeks.

At the same time, a mysterious new website appears: www.therealbarbaraallyn.com. The home page, with boldface type, “The Real Barbara

Allyn,” features a cartoon caricature of Allyn looking like a frazzled, loud-mouthed screamer. The five pages of the website show Allyn making blatantly false and outrageous statements: “Make me your Senator or I’ll scratch your beady little eyes out.” “Porter is an idiot and anyone who votes for him is an idiot; come to think of it, my husband is an idiot.” “Liberal? You want liberal? Hell, you ain’t seen nothin’ yet, baby. Send me up to Washington, and I’ll beat the crap outta those stuffed shirts.” Click on each of the statements, and out comes the audio of a screaming Barbara Allyn. This mysterious website notes that it was produced by “a bunch of regular voters who are fed up with the Barbara Allyn of this world.” No other identification is given. A check of the domain registration proves elusive—this rogue website was registered under a fictitious name and a phony telephone number. The site gathers considerable media attention during its first few days; after three weeks it disappears as mysteriously as it emerged.

The Opposition Porter’s first ads were run in June and were soft biographical pieces. Since then, no ads have run—until now. Starting in early September and continuing through the third week of October, Porter saturates the major television stations with wicked combinations of negative-positive ads. The biting thirty-second ads attack Allyn’s record, then rattle off Porter’s accomplishments. The commercials are deftly done: there are no direct attacks on Allyn’s character, nothing to offend women voters. Porter is taking the offensive, and the ads are carefully timed and spaced apart to have the maximum impact. The ads are hitting hard and directly at three weaknesses that Allyn’s own consultants had spotted long ago: Allyn’s voting absences during her General Assembly days, her refusal to support the death penalty, and an episode six years ago in the General Assembly in which four legislators were forced to resign because of bribery charges (Allyn was not involved, but was now being accused of not doing enough to punish the legislators involved). Porter’s pollsters are reading the same numbers and focus group impressions as Allyn’s pollsters, and coming up with the same vulnerabilities.

The Allyn senior strategists try hard to avoid playing defensive advertising. Porter has set the pace and has delivered the first blows. The Allyn media consultant decides to scrap three of the commercials already made and shoot new ads to counter the most damaging charges made by Porter. The new commercials are quickly produced from old video footage—the commercials

are not tested through focus groups, as political instinct and creativity take over and the media team quickly puts the counterattack ads on the air. During the first two weeks following the Porter attack ads, the Allyn campaign's media plans are caught off stride. However, by the first of October, the Allyn media is back on its basic message.

Candidate Debates Barbara Allyn is good on her feet; she wants to debate Porter throughout the state. The Porter campaign wants no debates at all, or as few as possible seen by as small an audience as possible: Why give Allyn free television exposure? Porter is wooden, phlegmatic, and not good with the give-and-take of the debate format. With the state League of Women Voters as the intermediary, the two campaigns decide, after much maneuvering, to have one debate, broadcast statewide on a Friday night and rebroadcast on public television the next Sunday afternoon. Porter has won the tactical battle: few people will watch on a Friday evening (scheduled opposite an important football game of the state's flagship university), and fewer still will watch public television on Sunday. Besides, the public television viewers are already solidly in Allyn's camp. As long as Porter makes no egregious errors, there will be no damage to his campaign, and really no advantage to Allyn's. Both candidates are well prepared (Allyn's campaign even hires a debate coach), there are no "silver bullets," no knockout punches thrown. Both campaigns have party officials, other elected leaders, and consultants ready at the end of the debate to tout to the press the overwhelming victory of their side. The evening television news programs devote twenty seconds to the entire debate, with Allyn and Porter getting in the predicted sound bites and the television reporters uniformly intoning that "Allyn and Porter go head to head in their one and only debate." Later tracking polls show that the debates had negligible impact on voters.

Phase Seven: The Final Push and Election Day

Two weeks before the election, this is the period of highest intensity and anxiety in the campaign. Every media outlet is hit each day through orchestrated last-minute paid television and radio spots and through as many free media sources as possible. Allyn will be going around the state nonstop, to rallies, media events, and other campaign stops.

Get-out-the-Vote Drive Soft money comes to the rescue. Over a million dollars in labor and some corporate contributions have poured into the state party to operate telephone banks and help in the get-out-the-vote drive. These funds technically don't go to Allyn's Senate campaign (although there's little else of importance going on election-wise in the state this year) and thus are not hard money. The soft money funds go to the state's coordinated campaign activities. The national party is also supporting a get-out-the-vote drive, thanks to a last-minute injection of soft money funds. The same telemarketing firm that has been soliciting for fund-raising is doing the get-out-the-vote telephone calls. About 200,000 calls have been made by the firm, which is supplemented by party loyalists making last-minute phone calls and volunteering to man the polls and drive targeted voters to the polls if necessary. This good news is muted by the almost certain knowledge that funds are pouring into the Porter campaign from outside sources at an even faster rate.

Tracking Polls The final two weeks of tracking poll results are coming in and are analyzed daily at the early-morning conference call between the pollster, campaign manager, and media consultant. The tracking results indicate that Allyn is closing to within four percentage points of Senator Porter statewide, with significant gains in two of the strongest media markets. Porter's media barrage is not having the negative impact the Allyn campaign had feared, and the Allyn message seems to be catching hold. Voters are now more focused on this race and they like what they see in Barbara Allyn.

Last-Minute Personal Funds This is an excruciating time for Allyn personally. She has made the decision to put up \$500,000 of family money for the final media buys. The campaign has fallen short of its fund-raising goals and has run out of money for the final days. The television stations insist on up-front payments. If Allyn wins, there is a very strong chance that she can recoup the loan made to her campaign. If she loses, it will be very hard for her to gather enough funds from outside sources to repay her loan. She makes the gutsy move to put up her own money.

Last-Minute Media Barrage During this last phase, enough air time has been reserved for the final push of Allyn commercials. The ads are all positive, encouraging citizens to vote for Allyn; they are the most creative, catchiest spots in the Allyn campaign. The trouble, however, is that the Porter cam-

paign has put out another barrage of ads that slam Allyn while praising Porter. Allyn will spend approximately \$750,000 on last-minute air time; the Allyn campaign estimates that Porter will spend at least \$250,000 more than that.

Push-Polling Attack The Allyn campaign learns over the last weekend before election day that the someone, presumably with the Porter campaign, is making thousands of telephone calls to probable voters under the guise of conducting a poll. Unknown to Allyn but known to the Porter campaign, a major telemarketing firm has been hired, paid for by an independent expenditure organization, Committee for American Family Values, which is composed primarily of major corporate interests. This is a classic push-poll operation: under the guise of a legitimate poll, the telemarketing firm hired by the Committee for American Family Values asks potential voters pointed and misleading questions about Allyn. Two examples: “Barbara Allyn missed more committee votes than practically any legislator; doesn’t that make you wonder about how hard she’ll work for us?” “Would you still vote for Allyn if you knew that she consistently voted to increase your taxes?”

Anti-Abortion Attack Allyn is also attacked during the last Sunday before the election by an orchestrated effort in fundamentalist and other right-wing churches: with messages from the pulpit and with leaflets on cars parked in church parking lots, churchgoers are urged not to vote for her. Allyn’s campaign anticipated this, as it had happened in several statewide races before. Allyn forces have done their work to get thousands of African-American voters to the polls, through the same vehicles, and also through a network of powerful African-American preachers and their churches, congregations, and radio listeners. She has counted on organized labor to assist her, but her state has a very weak labor movement, and her campaign doesn’t expect much assistance from this usually reliable but rather weak ally. National labor support has supplied a good deal of soft money, but local labor is unwilling and frankly unable to supply the manpower for canvassing and get-out-the-vote assistance.

Coming Up Short

On election day, exit polls conducted by the wire services and early Internet reporting confirm what had been disturbing the campaign manager’s sleep

for weeks: not enough money, not enough clout at the end, clobbered by the resources of the incumbent and his supporters. Allyn loses to Senator Porter by 2.3 percentage points. Later FEC figures would show that Porter spent over \$7.2 million, with an extraordinary push at the end of the campaign. Allyn's campaign spent just \$5.3 million and is now about \$200,000 in debt, not counting the personal loan of \$500,000. As much as that half-million-dollar debt hurts, what pains Allyn more is the gnawing question of whether spending another half-million of her own funds at the end would have closed that gap and helped achieved victory. A series of debt-retirement fund-raisers are planned for late November and early December to try to capture some of the \$200,000 that Allyn owes to campaign creditors.

The campaign headquarters closes three weeks after the defeat; none of the staff remaining during those three weeks is paid—all cash had been spent to pay for pressing campaign items. Allyn has a poignant telephone conference call with her lead consultants: they commiserate, share a laugh about Porter's stuffiness, and talk around but never really get to the heart of why they lost. Allyn has planned a fund-raiser for early December to recoup some of the campaign debt. She is also thinking of the governor's office, which will be vacant in two years. Right now, she won't even discuss this with her husband, but she knows she has a good chance to grab the nomination.

By early December, the campaign manager has lined up a Senate race in Kentucky; the pollster and media adviser are in Aruba for the presidential contest and the warm weather. Senator Porter's reelection committee is planning the next year's fund-raising events, with the goal of having \$2 million cash on hand by the end of the first year of his new Senate term.

Lessons in the Aftermath

Money, Above All Allyn was outspent by Senator Porter with \$5.3 million to his \$7.2 million. Her campaign consultants knew it would be difficult to outspend an aggressive incumbent, but they felt that \$6 million would be sufficient to run a respectable race. Allyn ran a far more efficient race: she spent less on direct mail expenditures and far less on campaign overhead than Porter. Allyn had a greater percentage of her funds devoted directly to campaigning, and each vote cost \$1.70 less than the votes gathered by Porter. But efficiency counts for little: Allyn was outspent, her opponent poured on a last-minute barrage of television commercials and an effective get-out-the-vote drive, and she lost in a relatively close race.

BREAKDOWN OF EXPENSES AND VOTE EFFICIENCY

	<i>Rep. Allyn</i>	<i>Sen. Porter</i>
Total amount spent on campaign	\$5,299,000	\$7,202,948
Overhead	\$900,830	\$1,414,242
Fund-raising	\$1,006,810	\$1,310,050
Spent directly on persuading voters	\$3,102,490	\$4,023,000
Votes received	926,398	970,747
Total dollars spent/vote	\$ 5.72	\$ 7.42

Not counted in these totals are the approximately \$2.2 million spent by third parties, with almost all of those funds unrecorded by the Federal Election Commission.

Challengers Face an Extraordinary Uphill Battle While Senate challengers have a much better record of defeating an incumbent Senator than House challengers have, it still is an uphill fight. Porter was relying on his name recognition, his assiduous use of the free media, and his campaign's long-range organizational and fund-raising efforts. Porter was also banking on the general mood of the state's voters: times were relatively good, the economy was in good shape, there was no compelling reason to kick the incumbent out of office. Despite all the commercials, direct mail appeals, telephone calls, and local news coverage, most voters barely paid attention to the race. Turnout was extremely light, despite herculean efforts by both sides to get people out to vote. Many voters were unfocused, unsure of Allyn, and in the end content to reelect a relatively safe, nonthreatening incumbent.

While Barbara Allyn used some of the best consulting talent in her party, her opponent was able to match her in talent. In many ways, this contest featured the best strategic and creative minds in both parties going up against each other in a tough, aggressive race. Allyn's communications were sharp, clever, and memorable, but Porter's were equally up to the task. Porter had the advantage of more funds to spend on commercials, plus the help of an advertising blitz from an outside issues advocacy group.

2
PART

**WEAPONS
OF
MODERN
CAMPAIGNING**

Political Research: Digging Up the Dirt

There's not a garbage pail I won't get in, not an angle I won't aim a hidden camera. . . . I take cases from Republicans, Democrats, conservatives, liberals. It's all information.

—Larry Preston Williams, private detective

Larry Preston Williams is unusual in a couple of respects: he candidly admits that he seeks out dirt on political candidates and that he will work for anyone. Most professional researchers work in the shadows, preferring the anonymity of probing sensitive online databases, masking the true intent of their activities, and hiding their employment through subcontractor arrangements with law firms or political parties. Many professional researchers reject the unsavory practice of “dumpster diving”—ferreting through garbage cans behind campaign headquarters or candidates’ homes—and some refuse to go after ex-spouses or divorce records or to seek out illegally obtained (but relatively easy to find) medical or financial records. Most researchers will work for one party only, unlike Williams, who sends every statewide candidate in Louisiana an

offer to dig up evidence of white lies and other indiscretions of potential opponents.

Despite its sometimes nefarious reputation, political research is essential to any successful campaign. It comes in two related forms: candidate (or incumbent) research and opposition research. Candidate research is both an offensive and defensive weapon: it builds the case that the incumbent has established a solid record of achievement, it spots weaknesses in the incumbent's record, and it devises strategies to protect that record. Opposition research attacks; it seeks out and exploits the weaknesses of the opponent.

At its best, political research gives shape and focus to complex events, sharpens the distinctions between candidates, builds the case for one candidate with solid evidence, and helps in developing critical but fair conclusions. At its worst, political research crosses the line of decency and fairness, is used ruthlessly for character assassination, and becomes the indispensable weapon in "gotcha" campaigning.

Political research is critical to modern campaigning: with the close scrutiny paid to campaigns by the press and the increased emphasis on negative campaigning, the need for rapid response to opponent charges requires that details of the record be researched in advance, though this is aided considerably by the instant accessibility of public records through the Internet and online sources. Above all, political research is vital because it works; no serious campaign can do without it. During the height of the 1988 presidential campaign, chief Republican strategist Lee Atwater remarked that "the only group I was very interested in having report to me directly was opposition research."¹

At its most sophisticated, political research is a campaign specialty dominated by professionals, working either for their political parties or as private consultants, who are adept at ferreting out information and using it to maximum political advantage. In recent years professional campaign researchers have been joined by people like Larry Preston Williams—private investigators, former police officers, ex-CIA and FBI agents who have honed their skills in the rough-and-tumble worlds of corporate espionage, national security, and criminal investigations.²

The Nature of Political Research

Political research, especially candidate and opposition research, bears little resemblance to academic social science research. The latter follows well-understood norms and disciplines. In academic research, great care is taken

in developing research questions, proposing suitable explanations, defining concepts, and testing hypotheses.³ Data are chosen and used with caution; verification often depends on rigorous quantitative analysis using well-developed statistical and other instruments; findings are usually couched in circumscribed language; definitions and words are chosen with precision. Academic research is usually presented as tentative, part of a much larger universe of knowledge yet to be discovered; the work of other researchers is acknowledged and given due recognition.

These are not the norms and standards of political research. James Carville, a brilliant student of applied political strategy, had little patience with social science research, and his attitudes typified those of many of his colleagues. He understood its importance in survey research and focus-group analysis, but otherwise had little appreciation for the disciplines and processes of social science research. When I was first introduced to Carville and was being considered for a position as research director for a Senate campaign, he brushed me off: "I don't need any goddamned professor on this campaign. Trouble is, they can't get off the can and make a decision. To them, everything is gray; I want black and white. I want to nail our opponent, I want to rip his head off. I want answers, and I want them now."⁴

Campaign research is unequivocally applied research. The goal is to build the best possible case for a candidate or, if it is opposition research, to find the most damaging information to be used against an opponent. There is no time or place for hypothesis testing or theory building. Tangential research and information gathered after the election is over are of no value.

There is a premium on accuracy of data and information. Political researchers are extraordinarily careful to get the facts correct: the right vote on an amendment, the exact quote from a newspaper article, or the precise amount of money reported on a financial disclosure statement. Inaccurate information can quickly taint an entire research operation. When the opposition campaign or the press discovers errors of fact, the entire research operation can be swiftly rendered useless. Critics often charge that a campaign's facts are wrong; usually, however, the facts are not wrong. Often the real problem is not in the accuracy of the research but in its interpretation and questionable use in the campaign. Political research doesn't seek to weigh sides and present a balance; it seeks to build a case, and in doing so often pushes well beyond the norms of objectivity.

In one of the nastiest campaigns of the 1998 Senate elections, incumbent Alphonse D'Amato battled challenger Charles Schumer for the Senate seat in

New York. Nothing was very subtle in this race, and both sides leveled scathing charges at each other. In one tough television commercial, D'Amato's campaign accused Schumer of being soft on crime, child pornographers, and gun-related crimes:

Voice-over: The facts about Chuck Schumer's record on crime are very clear. Chuck Schumer voted to allow violent criminals to leave jail before serving their full sentences. He voted against mandatory sentences for criminals who use guns. And in the Assembly, Chuck Schumer even voted against tougher penalties for child pornographers. The facts don't lie. Chuck Schumer is a New York City liberal. Chuck Schumer. Wrong on crime. Wrong for us.⁵

D'Amato's attack ad was a slash-and-burn distortion of Schumer's record, based on isolated votes, dipping back at least eighteen years to a vote when Schumer was in the New York Assembly, building a weak though superficially damaging case. Schumer soundly defeated D'Amato, despite the knock-down, drag-out ad campaign on both sides.

In another hotly contested race, incumbent senator Barbara Boxer, Democrat from California, portrayed her opponent Matt Fong, the mild-mannered state treasurer, as a dupe of the gun lobby:

Voice-over: This is a Saturday night special. It's the favorite gun of street criminals. This is an assault weapon. It's the favorite weapon of drug dealers. This is Matt Fong. He's the gun lobby's favorite candidate for the Senate because he's against new bans on Saturday night specials and assault weapons. And this is Senator Barbara Boxer. She's pushing for tough bans on Saturday night specials and assault weapons. That's why she's the favorite Senate candidate of California's police. Barbara Boxer. The right direction for California.⁶

As the above illustrations suggest, in political research, information is often highly selective, the rules of causation and correlation are thrown out the window, and conclusions are presented in the starkest of terms. The research conclusions become all the more damaging in the hands of the media consultant, who mixes in even more hyperbole through distorted images, imaginative music and sound effects, and voice-overs laced with sarcasm.

Candidate or Incumbent Research

Analysis of the campaign's own candidate is the most important research of all. It is tempting to concentrate only on the opponent, leaving candidate research as an afterthought. But the campaign that neglects its own candidate runs the great risk of not being able to defend against an attack and of not taking full advantage of the candidate's record of legislative and constituency achievements.

When the candidate is an incumbent officeholder, there is usually a built-in advantage for conducting research. U.S. senators or members of Congress are permitted by House and Senate ethics rules to use their own staffs to conduct research on their own records. Compiling such research is supposed to be done only for official, noncampaign purposes, such as the preparation of reports and newsletters. But throughout Capitol Hill it is widely acknowledged that congressional staffers, whose salaries are paid by taxpayers, are also conducting vital, but not necessarily lawful, campaign research. Congressional and Senate offices can be assisted by the resources of other legislative services, such as the Senate Computer Center or the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress, which compile and produce extremely helpful information on the legislators' achievements and voting records. The staffs for governors, big-city mayors, and, to some degree, state legislators have similar built-in advantages of access to public information and professional staff support.

However, incumbents are turning more to professionals to conduct their candidate research. Three reasons stand out. First, as the glare of public disclosure increases, incumbents do not want to be accused of using staffers to conduct campaign research while on the taxpayers' payroll.⁷ Having a professional consultant on the campaign payroll demonstrates that the campaign, not the taxpayers, is paying for candidate research. Second, staffers cannot objectively assess the successes and failures of their boss's record; in doing so, they are being asked to judge their own work. A professional researcher can coldly and objectively assess the performance of the incumbent—and, by extension, the staff. The third reason is more subtle but just as important: legislative staffers think primarily in terms of process and issues, not politics. What may look so very crucial in the hot-house of the legislative arena, in a committee markup or in an amendment, may have absolutely no bearing in the campaign battle. Seasoned professional researchers bring experience from

many campaigns; they instinctively sense what research is politically salient and what parts of a candidate's career are simply irrelevant to the campaign fight ahead.

At the heart of the entire reelection campaign is the central question: Why should the incumbent be returned to office?⁸ Incumbent research must provide answers to some very simple but extraordinarily important questions: What did the incumbent promise to do, and were those promises kept? Does the incumbent work hard? How has the incumbent helped people like me and others in our state? All in all, why does this politician deserve to go back to Washington?

The incumbent is highly vulnerable because everything in the public record is fair game for analysis, criticism, and distortion. For the challenger, conducting opposition research is easier: find the three or four critical weaknesses, test them in focus groups and through polling, and then bear down on them throughout the campaign.

The incumbent needs to be on the firmest ground when saying to voters, "When I ran for office five years ago, I promised to do four things when I got to Washington. And thanks to your help, we've won each of those fights." Promises come in a variety of forms: candidates may promise always to come back home on the weekends, never miss a vote, be honest, or make sure the state gets a larger share of federal funds. Many times, the promises made during the hectic days of running for office do not materialize. When that realization sets in, the campaign must be prepared to defend a vulnerable record.

In 1986 North Dakota senator Kent Conrad promised voters that if the federal budget deficit were not reduced by 80 percent during his first term in office, he would not seek reelection in 1992. The budget deficit did not go down, and, true to his word, Conrad announced that he would not run again.⁹ As circumstances had it, Conrad's senior Senate colleague Quentin Burdick died five months later, leaving a vacancy. Conrad did not run for his old seat, but ran for and won the vacant Burdick seat. Conrad had the courage to keep his word, and the North Dakota voters had the unforeseen chance to reaffirm their faith in Conrad as their senator.

During the 1988 presidential campaign, Michael Dukakis was attacked for not upholding promises he made as governor of Massachusetts in this Bush television ad:

Voice-over: Michael Dukakis promised not to raise taxes. But as governor, he imposed the largest tax increase in Massachusetts history.

He promised jobs, but since 1984 Massachusetts lost ninety-thousand blue-collar jobs. He promised less spending, but spent at a greater rate per capita than any other governor in America. And now he wants to do for America what he's done for Massachusetts. America can't afford that risk.¹⁰

The best-known and most damaging unkept campaign promise cost George Bush dearly. When he proclaimed, "Read my lips, no new taxes" at the 1988 Republican National Convention, Bush received extraordinary media coverage and accolades from the party faithful. This pledge was central to the Bush 1988 campaign message, but he was left with the daunting task of living up to it during his presidency. When he broke the pledge in 1990, voters remembered and were unforgiving in 1992.¹¹

Promises made and kept are more than a mere catalogue of accomplishments. They reflect on character and leadership, and when promises are highly visible and not kept, as in the Bush case, they can become politically fatal.¹² Every incumbent running for reelection must know what has been promised and have credible explanations for the promises not kept.

A campaign must also have a clear understanding of the incumbent's accomplishments from many angles. The research reports listing those accomplishments must be arranged in a variety of formats: (a) by key constituency groups, such as suburbanites, women, the elderly, and veterans; (b) by year in office, to ward off charges that the incumbent hasn't really done anything except during election year; (c) by media market, city, and county; (d) by issues and subject areas; and (e) by the names of individuals who were assisted. The accomplishments may be categorized as legislation introduced (or blocked), grants and financial assistance secured, important votes cast, favorable ratings to be used on interest group scorecards, supporting or standing up to the administration, and so on. For the campaign and professional research team, it is time to take credit and translate accomplishments into easily understood and politically compelling themes.

A thorough accomplishments file would have ready answers to hundreds of campaign-relevant questions. The range of questions can be bewildering, but the research must be done and answers readily accessible:

- What are the ten most important things you have accomplished each year in office?
- How much money have you turned back to the Treasury from your official office account?

- How many times have you visited each of the state's counties and cities, and what federal grants have you been able to obtain for them?
- How much money will it cost taxpayers to fund all the projects that you have voted for?
- Why did you vote against increasing the minimum wage but at the same time vote for a pay raise for members of Congress? Why aren't you willing to return your pay increase to the Treasury?
- How many women and minorities do you have in your Washington and district staffs; what is their pay and rank in comparison to white males?
- Why did you receive only a 55 percent approval rating on the League of Conservation Voters' most recent environmental scorecard?
- In what specific ways have you stood up to (or supported) the president's agenda?

The most effective accomplishments are those issues that connect with people's concerns and their lives.¹³ When portrayed as personal vignettes they can become very compelling:

- Senator A forced the EPA to close eight toxic waste dumps; now our communities are healthier and our children are much safer.
- Twelve hundred new jobs have come to our community thanks to Senator A's tough action in Washington.

Connecting with voters is the paramount task of the campaign. When a senator spends weeks in negotiation over a complicated GATT trade agreement, those efforts begin to connect only when voters understand that the senator is fighting for jobs and good wages. Taking a stand against a technical amendment on a budget rescission makes sense only when voters understand that their children's generation will be better off because of this action. If voters cannot understand the relationship to their lives and communities, any legislative or policy accomplishment, no matter how important, will be ineffective.

For each accomplishment, the research team often prepares two sets of documents: the first, and most important, is written in clear, simple prose, and is available for reprinting at rallies, in persuasion literature, press releases, on the campaign website, and in other campaign advertising. The second set, kept by the campaign and available to the press when necessary, is the fully

documented version, giving complete citation to amendments introduced, federal officials called, dollars awarded for a local project, newspaper clippings, and video files. The second version is crucial because of increased scrutiny of a candidate's record by the media and the opposition campaign. The documented second set is not required by law or regulation, it's just smart campaign practices to have it available.

Candidate research must prepare for the inevitable challenge from the opposition. The themes are predictable, as general lines of attack appear in campaign after campaign, and they concern ageless values—the incumbent has lost touch with the people back home, doesn't work hard, doesn't stand on principle and changes his mind to please different people, has used the office for personal gain, will say just about anything to get reelected, and, as the sum of all these charges, the incumbent doesn't deserve to be reelected. The thoroughly prepared candidate research team has to anticipate these charges, prepare rebuttals, check the opponent's record to see if a similar charge can be leveled directly back at the opponent, and take steps to inoculate the campaign against the charge.

Many voters have little interest in politics and only a marginal understanding of policy and legislative issues, and barely know anything about the candidates beyond their names. Television, their primary source of news, generally ignores campaigns or covers them only superficially. Under these conditions, campaign advertising takes center stage, given a relatively free hand in defining the race and the opponent, and often it turns nasty and venal.

The 1998 race for governor in Georgia is an example. Nearly \$30 million was spent in this knock-down, drag-out fight. Some of the roughest television ads came from the campaign of Guy Millner, a multimillionaire businessman in his third unsuccessful bid for public office. Millner's ads blasted away at rival Roy Barnes, using opposition research to attack Barnes's character:

Voice-over: Take a look at Roy Barnes's character. Barnes overcharged customers twenty-five thousand dollars in sales taxes, and then failed to pay nine thousand dollars in taxes he owed the state. Barnes was caught destroying courtroom evidence in a trial, and started a fist-fight with an assistant attorney general. And Barnes filed a false affidavit in court that helped set a convicted murderer free. Not paying taxes, destroying evidence, filing false affidavits. If character is the question, Roy Barnes isn't the answer.¹⁴

When people change their minds, it's often a sign of intellectual growth and maturity. But not in politics. When candidates change sides, their opponents quickly see a sign of political weakness or, worse, crass opportunism. For example, Georgia governor Zell Miller, for sixteen years the lieutenant governor and several more years a state legislator, was tagged with the deadly sobriquet "Zigzag Zell" because of the variety of views he had held on several subjects over his long career. Promising Senate candidate Ed Zschau lost to incumbent Senator Alan Cranston in 1986 in part because of devastating attack ads mocking Zschau's "flip-flopping" on issues when he served in Congress. To protect against such attacks, candidate research must know every time there has been a change in policy or voting record, and have a clear explanation of why changes were made.

The reputations of officeholders can be quickly tarnished and careers dented by questionable personal financial gain. Every candidate for federal and most state offices must file detailed financial records. In some campaigns, the candidates voluntarily release their income tax returns. Beyond tax returns and financial disclosure statements, there are many public record databases containing critical financial information on taxes paid, tax liens, bankruptcy proceedings, probate settlements, company and stockholder information, and more. Individual contributors and political action committees who financially support the candidate are required to report their gifts to the FEC or file appropriate financial disclosure forms with their state board of elections. Tough questions can come from research into financial records:

- How much money did the candidate give to charity last year?
- Why did the candidate, when sitting on the board of directors of Local Industries, vote to give the chairman a million-dollar bonus, while the company laid off five hundred workers in our state?
- Why did thirty-nine of the incumbent's checks bounce at the House of Representatives "bank"?

The research team needs to know every aspect of the candidate's financial filings and what might cause embarrassment or inflict political damage. The campaign research team must be able to rebut every possible charge of financial impropriety.

Voters have to show up for work, and so should legislators. When a candidate abuses this basic job performance requirement, the results can be particularly damaging. Research on an incumbent's attendance usually focuses on roll

call and committee votes. These votes substitute for the symbolically larger issue of showing up for work. For example, in a 1998 Washington state congressional race, eventual winner Brian Baird's campaign created a special website, www.missedvotes.com, which listed, by category, the four hundred votes missed by his opponent, state legislator Don Benton. The website had a smiling, cartoon figure of Benton skipping out the Senate door while colleagues watch in dismay, saying, "I don't miss any of the important votes." The website asked, "If most employees skipped work one-fifth of the time, never showing up for work on Monday, would they expect to keep their job? But that's just what Don Benton did last year . . . and now he's asking you for a promotion!"

Another version of the inevitable attack commercial looks like this one in the 1986 Louisiana Senate race, when incumbent senator Henson Moore went after his challenger, Representative John Breaux:

Voice-over: The number one thousand eighty-three. Know what it stands for?

[Various men and women are asked, but make wild guesses.]

Voice-over: One thousand eighty-three is the number of votes Congressman John Breaux missed in Congress. One thousand eighty-three times he didn't show up for work.

Man in hard hat: Whew, wish I had a job like that.¹⁵

Members of Congress running for governor or senator are especially vulnerable to the problem of missing votes. They often have to miss scores of votes in Washington while back home campaigning for higher office; and opponents are eager to tell voters every time a vote is missed.

Missed votes become even worse when linked with perceived personal financial gain, such as collecting an honoraria fee¹⁶ or attending a political fund-raiser. Senators Walter (Dee) Huddleston of Kentucky and Lowell Weicker of Connecticut suffered the wrath of voters for doing just that: missing an inordinate number of roll call or committee votes because they were at private events accepting campaign funds or honoraria fees. More important, the campaigns were not able to respond quickly and decisively when attacked. Whenever a legislator misses votes, campaign research has to know which were missed and the political fallout involved in missing them, and be able to explain why the candidate was absent.

Officeholders could be vulnerable because of their abuses of taxpayer trust: for example, spending too much money on franked mail, having office

staff who are also on the campaign payroll, unwarranted trips by office staffers, lobbyist-sponsored trips for the legislator and spouse, even listing the wrong kinds of magazine subscriptions on an official office account.¹⁷ All of this information is in the public record and much of it can be obtained through electronic databases. The candidate research team must know all facets of the use of the candidate's office and be able to build the case against any charges of misuse of taxpayer funds or voter trust.

Senators and members of Congress cast between three hundred and five hundred roll call votes each year, and these votes are prime evidence of a legislator's policy preferences and ideology. But not all votes are of equal importance. Most votes simply don't matter in a reelection campaign: they are either too technical, tedious, or politically irrelevant. Only when votes mean something to voters back home do they become politically salient. Of the two thousand roll call votes a senator has amassed over a six-year term, perhaps two hundred to three hundred are truly relevant to the campaign. Further, the politically savvy legislator will have the good sense to know what constituents will tolerate or demand, and will vote accordingly.

But there will always be votes that the legislator will cast with trepidation, knowing that at election time they will have to be defended:

- Votes that have strong ideological or political repercussions (parental notification of a minor's abortion, waiting period for handgun purchase, gay rights issues);
- Votes that are of special interest to powerful organizations or constituencies (environmental votes, social security cost-of-living adjustments, Medicare and other "seniors" votes, family and medical leave);
- Votes that touch on the legislator's perceived personal gain (votes on pay raises); or
- A vote for or against the impeachment of Bill Clinton.

On these tough votes, legislators rely more on their instincts, on cues they might receive from party leaders, and from the tug of constituent groups than on the advice of consultants. Political consultants generally come in after the fact: the votes have been cast, and now the consultants have to help the candidate explain them or ride out the storm during the campaign.

What often matters more than individual roll call votes are the themes that developed from a set of votes. Voting themes, however, can work both for and against an incumbent:

- **Accomplishment:** Every time special interests have tried to strip away funding for children's health care, Congressman A has voted to prevent them.
- **Attack:** When you add up every spending bill Congressman A has voted for these last four years, it turns out he's one of the biggest spenders in Washington.
- **Accomplishment:** When you add up his votes on tough tax-and-spend issues, you can see why the Defenders of Free Enterprise Committee gave Congressman A its perfect one hundred approval award.
- **Attack:** Congressman A just blows with the wind when it comes to tax cuts. He voted to cut excise taxes twice last year, then this year voted to increase excise taxes. He said he'd never vote to raise taxes. Why's he lying to us?

Opposition Research

Campaign research usually gets its unsavory reputation because of the tactics and mind-set of opposition research. Incumbents and challengers alike will use it as an offensive weapon, but it seems particularly useful for challengers and candidates in tight races. Veteran Republican consultant Terry Cooper stated that opposition research is an increasingly important tool in the campaign of a challenger or lesser-known candidate running for an open seat. Such research is valuable because of voter inertia—the “tendency of the vast majority of the electorate to re-elect the incumbent or vote for the better-known candidate unless someone gives them a good reason to do otherwise.”¹⁸

A candidate often has to face intense scrutiny of his public and, increasingly, personal life. Candidates with past public experience, such as a member of the city council or of the state general assembly, should expect that their entire public career will be thoroughly analyzed, and the candidate will be held accountable even for things that were beyond his or her immediate control. For example, an eight-year incumbent of a medium-sized city council might have to explain his consistent pattern of not showing up for subcommittee meetings, but also for the failure of the city to stop the increase of crime or to put its fiscal house in order.

Candidates with no public record are by no means immune from scrutiny. A successful businesswoman turned candidate might have to explain why her

children go to an expensive private school, why her company was cited for environmental violations, or, as a member of the board of directors of another company, why she voted to punish union activists.

One of the worst things candidates can do is lie or exaggerate about their careers and achievements. More than one candidate for office has lost an election solely on the basis of disclosures of inflated resumes, a padded Vietnam War record, or a university degree that was never earned. Lies or exaggerations go to the heart of character and integrity, and nothing will doom a candidate quicker than being caught lying about personal matters. Opposition research often begins with an thorough examination of the opponent's campaign literature and resume.

At what point in a candidate's career does political research begin? A first-term U.S. Senator might conclude, with certain logic, that research on his career would begin with the day he became senator or certainly no earlier than the Senate campaign. But an exhaustive and complete research record would also cover the six years the senator served in the House of Representatives, his four years as lieutenant governor, and the four years he served as district attorney. Opposition researchers might even be interested in the senator's military service record or college days.

The lesson from the 1992 presidential campaign should be clear: despite a lengthy record as governor of Arkansas, the Bush opposition researchers were far more interested in Clinton's draft records and his months spent in England when he was a young graduate student. During the 1988 presidential campaign, Republican researchers combed through twenty-five years of Boston newspaper clippings to find ammunition against Michael Dukakis, going back to 1949 Brookline city council minutes, where they found a letter sent by Dukakis and several college classmates protesting against U.S. future involvement in Korea.¹⁹

Candidates have to worry about skeletons in their closets. Baby boomer candidates have to figure out how to respond to charges of using marijuana and other drugs, or explain why they did not serve in Vietnam. Thanks to the Clinton sex scandals, marital infidelity is now the skeleton lurking in many candidates' closets. Former vice president Dan Quayle stated that adultery will be "the question" for any candidate in the 2000 presidential contest, and declared that he could "pass" that test. Lamar Alexander, Steve Forbes, and George W. Bush have all issued statements proclaiming their faithfulness. In Utah, the attorney general sent affidavits to each of the senators and House members requesting that they voluntarily sign an oath proclaiming their

marital fidelity. All five legislators refused to sign, but then publicly declared that they have been faithful in their marriages.²⁰ Some interest groups demand that candidates sign a pledge that they will not raise taxes, or support term limits, or that they believe in the right to carry guns. The Reverend Lou Sheldon, head of the Traditional Values Coalition, stated that he personally planned to ask all Republican 2000 presidential candidates if they have committed adultery. Opposition researchers, never shy when looking into personal indiscretions, will shed any qualms they might have in searching personal family history and divorce records if marital infidelity becomes fair game in campaigns. They might not be as blatant as pornography publisher Larry Flynt, who offered million-dollar bounties to help “out” marital hypocrites during the Clinton impeachment proceedings, but the temptation will be to leave no stone unturned in their efforts.

The Technology of Research

Few aspects of campaigns and elections have changed as profoundly as the technology of research. Just a decade ago, research was confined almost exclusively to paper and microfiche records—old newspaper clippings, voting records, FEC reports, state and federal financial reporting forms, and a wide variety of public documents. Much of the research work ended up in index cards and three-ring binders, cross-referenced and color-coded.

Many of these basic sources continue to be extremely valuable. Even in the sophisticated days of online resources and the Internet, I found myself in rural Alabama on a steamy August afternoon looking through handwritten records at a county courthouse for a candidate running for Congress. Another client, running for governor in another state, asked me to dig up a potentially embarrassing comment he had made about John F. Kennedy to a small-town newspaper reporter thirty-five years earlier. Many such records, especially pre-computer age files, never make it onto Lexis-Nexis or other comprehensive online services, and must still be searched by hand.

The information revolution came first through computerized voting and issues database files. Online services came next, with *The Hotline* as one of the first, a service that political junkies in particular could not resist. *Hotline* material is generated daily, summarizing news accounts about politics from some two hundred fifty news sources. The explosion of Internet services, particularly websites, has revolutionized political research. Websites that collect the massive amount of public record information are now at researchers’ fingertips.

For primary research materials—the backbone of solid political research—online services are becoming indispensable. Foremost are online resources, from commercial newspaper and document sources like Lexis-Nexis, to more specialized information in *Congressional Quarterly's Washington Alert* and *LegiSlate*, to online services of federal and state governments, such as the Federal Election Commission records, Securities and Exchange Commission reports, and the wealth of demographic information available through U.S. Census reports. There is also an extraordinary and increasing range of materials online from commercial sources available to political researchers. Diligent and inventive searches through Web browsers will turn up many data service companies that provide public record information. Commercial online services provide companies with background checks of potential employees; much of the same information is valuable to political researchers.²¹ Candidates for office should now expect that online public record sources will be routinely checked to learn about their business interests, tax records, possible civil and criminal lawsuits, felony and misdemeanor criminal filings, driving records, property records, money owed, probate settlements, and bankruptcy proceedings.

Credit bureau information is particularly tantalizing to a political researcher. The Fair Credit Report Act does not permit the merely curious to search the extensive credit files found in the major credit card bureaus, such as TRW, CBI/Equifax, and Trans Union. There must be a legitimate business relationship: an auto dealer, for example, checking on the creditworthiness of a potential buyer. But because there is so much detailed financial information available, campaigns are sometimes tempted to ask a friendly business to make the credit check and hand the material over to the campaign. This is both illegal and risky: a credit check leaves footprints, because the name of the business will be reported when a credit check is requested.²²

Information gleaned from the public record may yield embarrassing items, particularly for candidates whose public posturing is contrasted with private action:

- A wealthy businessman who is running as the defender of the “little guy” but has a long record of suing his own employees for the most petty of reasons;
- A member of Congress who portrays herself as being tough on drugs but has a string of citations for driving while under the influence of alcohol; or

- A candidate who rails against excessive taxes but fails to pay back real estate taxes on vacation property.

Researchers (and the general public, for that matter) have to be careful in choosing Internet sites. The Internet is a wide-open communications tool, and the rules of journalistic fair play and ethics no longer apply. Parody and rogue sites mushroom during campaigns—they look like campaign sites, and their Internet names are close to sounding legitimate, but in fact they are set up by individuals and groups that either want to profit from the campaign or want to make fun of it. Website speculators grabbed the names of possible 2000 presidential candidates; by early 1999, there were at least thirty-seven fake George W. Bush websites, twenty Al Gore fake sites, and another twenty addresses using variations of Steve Forbes's name.²³ Some websites, with the Drudge Report leading the way, have no qualms about posting rumor and speculation, information that legitimate news organizations would never print without substantiation and verification. Mainstream newspapers, such as the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, and *Wall Street Journal*, maintain reputations for fair and accurate reporting; so, too, do their websites. The great majority of political websites are accurate and reliable. But the bewildering array of websites ranges from those that are highly reliable, nonpartisan, and scrupulously fair in their reporting, to those that are highly partisan or filled with inaccurate information, character assassination, and rumor-mongering. Many websites perform valuable civic service, while others practice guerilla warfare.

There is also an increased awareness of the need to maintain video archives. Traditionally, the printed word was the authoritative source for political research. Now the powerful image on television is even more important. Campaigns find indispensable their records of audio and video tapes of nightly news programs, public events, campaign commercials, and campaign events, all categorized by key words, dates, events, and issues.

Technology has increased the pace of campaigns and the need for reliable, complete research that is available instantaneously. In earlier decades campaigns had the luxury of waiting a week or several days to rebut charges made by an opponent. Today there is no time for a leisurely response. The communications technology of cellular telephones and cellular fax machines, satellite feeds, video conferencing, online databases, e-mail, and websites requires that campaigns be able to respond almost immediately when challenged.

Rapid response comes at a high price, however. Research must be completed, packaged, and available for use very early in the election cycle.

Sophisticated campaigns recognize this and often make candidate and opposition research one of the first commitments of the campaign.

Using Political Research

The best-prepared research team should have every conceivable aspect of its candidate's public and private careers known, analyzed, and explained. The research team should know its opponent's record—both strengths and weaknesses—better than would the opponent. It should be able immediately to refute and punch holes in the arguments made at the opponent's news conferences. The research should be deadly accurate, thoroughly checked, never questioned. The research should also be imaginative, creating potent campaign attack themes from disparate bits of information.

Thousands of hours can be spent on candidate and opposition research in any major campaign. A campaign might have three to five full-time researchers plus a professional research consulting firm, all of whom are combing through the records of the incumbent and challengers. While vast amounts may be collected and analyzed, probably 95 percent of all research material is never used. The agonizing problem for the research staff, however, is not knowing which 5 percent will be crucial to the campaign.

Candidate and opposition research becomes valuable at several stages throughout the campaign. First, campaign research gives the campaign a basic framework of the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate and the opponents. Research can point the candidate to actions that need to be taken: issue areas that have to be addressed or concrete action that needs to be taken, such as offering a high-visibility amendment.

Next, research findings are used in the preparation of focus-group scripts and survey questions. Research might show that an opponent has taken positions on eight or ten issues that differ from those of the incumbent, or that an incumbent has a potentially damaging, checkered personal life. These findings may then be tested in focus groups and later in polls to determine their saliency with voters.

Research findings are important for message development. By pinpointing achievements of an incumbent or by highlighting the weaknesses and omissions of the opponent, researchers can help the campaign team develop powerful campaign themes and messages.

Research is also helpful in the preparation of direct mail and PAC literature, checking sources, developing themes, and providing relevant quota-

tions, newspaper headlines, votes, and other sources to give the literature further weight and credibility.

Research is key for the fact-checking of media advertising. To have the utmost in credibility, a campaign advertisement—especially an attack ad—must be grounded solidly in fact. Especially since 1988, news sources have started doing independent investigation of the claims made in television and radio advertising. To increase credibility and visibility, campaigns often preview commercials with journalists. Part of the preview might be a ten- to twenty-page analysis of every single aspect of the advertisement. For example, an attack on a legislator's voting record on a certain issue will include the actual votes, the bills, the newspaper clippings on the stories, and the probable impact on the voters of the state.

Another important use of research, especially later in the campaign, is in debate preparation. Here issues and analysis are boiled down to their essence. The research team will have prepared the debate fact book containing the anticipated twenty or thirty most difficult questions, the best responses (in fifteen-, thirty-, and sixty-second sound bite answers), the probable attack lines and positions of the opponent, and the records of the candidate and opponent.

Finally, research is vital in the day-to-day charge and countercharge of the campaign. As the rapid-response scenario indicates, an attack must be countered within a matter of hours or minutes, arguments and facts assembled and ready to do battle at a moment's notice.

The Limits and Boundaries of Research

Bare-knuckle, nasty research flourishes at nearly every level of professionally run campaigns. Private investigator Michael Hershman has seen it all: "I've had plenty of people say to me, 'Hey, I want as much dirt as you can get. Is the guy cheating on his wife? Is he doing drugs? Does he gamble? Does he like little boys?' The whole gamut. They want a no-holds-barred investigation."²⁴ Hershman won't go down this road, but others will.

Why would professional researchers and campaign consultants descend into the gutter of personal vilification? Professional campaign strategists are highly pragmatic: if a tactic works, use it; if it is ineffective, scrap it. Negative campaign research will continue as a weapon of choice simply because it works. Yet there are limits: it cannot reach out further than the public will tolerate or believe. Unfortunately the cynical and suspecting

public will tolerate just about anything. Many in the public presume that all politicians are crooks and all politicians lie, and many more have no interest in politics or are woefully unfamiliar with basic issues. This leaves campaigns with a clean canvas on which to paint their own picture and their own version of reality. Campaigns and candidates desperate to win are willing to push tolerance and credibility to their limits. Research now probes further into personal and private relationships, delving into areas once considered off limits.

Throughout American history, presidential campaigns have been full of mudslinging and personal invective.²⁵ Character attacks were particularly vicious in the days before television. Opponents tried to smear Thomas Jefferson, accusing him of being a deist and of having a sexual liaison with his slave Sally Hemmings; Lincoln was portrayed as an illiterate backwoods baboon; Grover Cleveland was criticized for having an illegitimate child; Theodore Roosevelt was accused of being a drug addict; and Warren G. Harding was chastised for fathering an illegitimate child and having a mistress in the White House.

The new medium of television initially may actually have forced campaigns to clean up their acts. Television came into the American home in the early 1950s, but it did not intrude.²⁶ It came in gently, and it fostered a sense of middle-class normalcy and wholesomeness. The rough edges of society were not exposed, television comics practiced self-censorship, and in sit-coms Dad worked, Mom took care of the kids, and they slept in separate beds. Today's presidential sex jokes by Jay Leno, David Letterman, and their raunchier counterparts would have been unheard of in the 1950s; so too would the latter-day flame-throwing television campaign commercials bent on personally destroying their candidates' opponents.

Presidential elections in the 1950s through the mid-1960s generally were relatively free of personal or character-related attacks.²⁷ There were whispers of Kennedy's womanizing and rumblings about Johnson's wheeler-dealer financial dealings, but few blatant personal attacks on the candidates. However, Watergate, the Vietnam War, and Chappaquidick changed everything.²⁸ The public lost confidence in Washington and its elected leaders, the press became much more vigilant, suspicious, and aggressive, and campaigns started taking off the gloves. Political research provided the ammunition.

In the 1976 election, the Ford campaign hired a freelance researcher to check into allegations of extramarital affairs by Jimmy Carter.²⁹ Revelations of Gary Hart's long-suspected extramarital dalliances broke through to the public in 1984—through Hart's own doing as well as through the reporting

of the *Miami Herald*. The pointed and inflammatory political ads that shocked many voters in the 1988 presidential campaign had their roots in earlier senatorial, gubernatorial, and congressional races in the 1980s, in which sharp-elbowed research and media campaigns had stretched the tolerance level of voters.

During the 1980s and early 1990s the Republican Party developed superior campaign research capabilities. Hungry for victory and goaded on by their second-party status, Republican leaders raised and invested enormous sums of money in all facets of party development. Especially over the last twenty years, Republicans have devoted more money, talent, and resources to candidate and opposition research than have Democrats, who have been playing a difficult game of catch-up.

In 1988, the Republican opposition research team, with over a hundred staffers and volunteers, worked around the clock in three shifts with a budget of \$1.2 million to examine the life and career of Michael Dukakis.³⁰ Republicans mounted an even more sophisticated \$6 million opposition research effort in 1992 against Bill Clinton.³¹ As the *Newsweek* election reporting team observed, Lee Atwater, during his brief leadership of the Republican National Committee, built the RNC headquarters into a “state-of-the-art [opposition research] war machine.”³² The RNC opposition research’s data storage and retrieval technology “was perhaps the flashiest in American politics.”³³ The object of the research was much less Bill Clinton, governor of Arkansas, than Bill Clinton, flawed public servant. The Republican research team went directly for Clinton’s alleged extramarital affairs and his draft record.

At the same time, the Clinton campaign paid private investigator Jack Palladino more than \$100,000 in 1992 to probe into allegations and rumors of Clinton’s womanizing. Some two dozen women were targets of Palladino’s damage-control inquiries.³⁴

The Republican opposition research efforts in 1992 demonstrate both the possibilities and limitations of political research. The Bush-Quayle research team dispatched operatives to Little Rock, where it collected thirty file drawers of state papers, bought microfilms of the Little Rock and Pine Bluff newspapers for the past twenty years, and subscribed to every daily and weekly newspaper. Friendly academics obtained hundreds of hours of Clinton from C-SPAN on the pretext that they needed the videotapes for scholarly research.³⁵

However, the extensive probing into Clinton’s personal life and character had only limited value to the Bush-Quayle campaign. First, if Bill Clinton

was vulnerable, so was George Bush. The Bush-Quayle opposition research team had amassed large files on Clinton's "waffles, straddles, ducks, dodges and fibs." Usually very damaging to a candidate, such information became a potent weapon in the research arsenal. But Clinton gained immunity from charges of waffling or, in the argot of researchers, "flip-flopping": if voters remembered anything at all about George Bush, it was his "read my lips" pronouncement and his subsequent reneging. "Clinton is a pathological liar," a Bush-Quayle staffer said. "Unfortunately, George Bush is the only politician in America who can immunize him against that tag."³⁶

Second, voters simply didn't believe that the worst charges could be true. Both Bush and Clinton campaigns believed that one of the most damaging indictments against Clinton was a successful lawsuit charging that the state of Arkansas was criminally negligent in treating poor and abused children under its care. Years had elapsed before Governor Clinton did anything to clean up this problem, and it would have been easy to charge him with inept leadership. But when this issue was tested before focus groups, participants essentially dismissed the charge "as a fairy tale; it sounded too horrible to be true."³⁷

Finally, voters weren't particularly interested in Clinton's character flaws. The Bush campaign was desperate to find a silver bullet—that explosive charge that would turn the campaign around in the last weeks. It finally turned to Charles Black, the "last bare-knuckle brawler" left in the Bush campaign, to run his own off-the-record opposition research. "We're gonna strip the bark off the bastard," Black had been telling colleagues for months.³⁸ The silver bullet was going to be Clinton's draft status, his trip to Moscow as a student, and the two antiwar rallies he helped organize during his university days in England. Eventually Gary Maloney, a protégé of Lee Atwater who was studying for his doctorate at Oxford, was called in to produce photographs of the rallies and hopefully discover the mother lode: a bearded, scruffy Clinton at a rally with Vietcong flags flying.³⁹ Nothing came of this venture, but it demonstrated how desperate the Bush campaign team had become to find anything to tarnish Clinton.⁴⁰

The personal problems of Bill Clinton, his antiwar record, his days at Oxford, his years as governor of Arkansas—none of this seemed to matter. The critical issue in 1992 was not "trust" or "character"; voters had moved on to "change" as the key issue.⁴¹ No amount of damaging information about Clinton's character or personal failures dug up by the Republican opposition research team was going to matter.

Once in office and faced with mounting investigations from Whitewater to Paula Jones, President Clinton's lawyers in 1994 hired Terry Lenzner and his company, Investigative Group International, to dig up information on Paula Jones's sexual history, to trace the financial records of the anti-Clinton network that surrounded millionaire publisher Richard Mellon Scaife, and to build public record dossiers on "likely courtroom opponents"—which reporter David Samuels surmised would be independent counsel Kenneth Starr. Samuels characterized Lenzner as "a front-line soldier in a new kind of war, in which embarrassing information about political and legal opponents is provided for use as ammunition in today's partisan culture of scandal." Former White House consultant Dick Morris went further, calling Lenzner the head of the "White House secret police."⁴² The campaign tactic of aggressively digging into candidates personal lives carried over into the presidency: enemies of the president or, in the words of Hillary Clinton, a "vast right-wing conspiracy" digging into personal lives, countered by a White House bent on digging up information on its enemies in return.

In 1996 the Dole campaign was experiencing a familiar sinking feeling: no matter what character faults Bill Clinton possessed, people really didn't care. There was plenty of character-related ammunition amassed during four years of the Clinton White House, but focus groups and polling results gave a different message: Clinton wasn't doing a half-bad job, and character doesn't really matter. By 1996 Americans had lowered their expectations for presidential behavior and accomplishments.⁴³

Clinton pollster Mark Penn's research had led to a similar conclusion. On the matter of personal character and integrity, Bob Dole easily beat Bill Clinton. As long as Clinton wrapped himself in the public values that people believed in, "voters would forgive or forget about his personal life." Mark Penn's aphorism—that "public values trump private character"⁴⁴—served Clinton well, not only in 1996, but during the long, sordid scandal that culminated in an impeachment trial. In the bizarre circumstance of an impeached president delivering his State of the Union address in early 1999, Americans strongly disapproved of Clinton's personal behavior but gave him high marks for his articulation of values and programs they held dear.

Research conducted in the heat of a campaign often brushes up against ethical boundaries and the tolerance of the voting public.

Guilt by Political Association Guilt by association has been a well-worn theme in campaign research for decades. For example, for many years

Republican Jesse Helms and Democrat Edward Kennedy were seen as the Senate's ideological polestars, and political researchers would match up their Senate candidate or opponent to see how closely they aligned with either Helms or Kennedy. It might be very damaging to be seen as Jesse Helms's closest voting friend or a liberal in the pocket of Ted Kennedy.

During the 1994 congressional elections, an often-repeated tactic was to portray Democratic legislators as being hand-in-glove with the then unpopular and damaged President Clinton. *Congressional Quarterly's* "Roll Call" series conveniently lists votes that have presidential support; and it is just one step further for a campaign to charge that a freshman Democratic congressman voted 95 percent of the time with President Clinton, and is "just in Washington to do liberal Bill Clinton's bidding." Many Republican challengers wrapped the unwelcome mantle of Bill Clinton over their Democratic opponents. Vulnerable Democrats tried as hard as they could to distance themselves from the president, but many were caught in the political undertow.

The guilt-by-association tactic can play in any direction. In the 1996 presidential campaign, it was difficult at times to determine whether Jack Kemp or Newt Gingrich was Bob Dole's running mate. Democrats were delighted any time they could link the highly unpopular Gingrich with the Dole-Kemp presidential campaign, and Republican incumbents and challengers were tagged with the label "Gingrich clones."

But there's an even darker side. The most egregious example of guilt by association in the recent years didn't involve a comparison between a candidate and Gingrich or Ted Kennedy, but between a candidate and a murderer. The 1993 horrific kidnaping and murder of twelve-year-old Polly Klaas, who was abducted from her bedroom during a slumber party, was injected into a California congressional election, and challenger Walter Capps was the target. Capps, a former religion professor at the University of California, was attacked in television ads because of his opposition to the death penalty. One commercial charged: "When the murderer of Polly Klaas got the death penalty he deserved, two people were disappointed . . . Richard Allen Davis, the murderer. And Walter Capps." The advertisement continued: Capps "would rather see Richard Allen Davis spend twenty years in jail watching cable TV than get the punishment he deserves." The media team that created this ad, Sandler and Innocenzi, and the candidate, incumbent representative Andrea Seastrand, deserved direct blame for what was dubbed the "Willie Horton of 1996."⁴⁵ Capps survived this onslaught and was elected to Congress.

Half-Truths and Innuendo Much political advertising is built on solid research but unsupportable conclusions. This is the world of half-truths and innuendo. In one striking example, Jim Courter, running for governor of New Jersey in 1989, was attacked in campaign advertising by his opponent James Florio, whose ads charged that Courter had illegally stored a hazardous environmental substance in his backyard. “Imagine,” began the ad, “it’s almost unbelievable—a candidate for governor with toxic waste barrels on his own property.” The television ad, produced by Squier/Eskew Communications, failed to mention that the hazardous substance was actually several barrels of home heating oil stored on land owned by Courter and his brother.⁴⁶ In a state sensitive to environmental degradation, this half-truth was all the more devastating.

Presidential candidate Michael Dukakis was accused in 1988 of doing nothing when he was governor to clean up the pollution of Boston harbor. The Bush campaign hammered him for his failures but nowhere mentioned that clean-up of the harbor was primarily a federal, not state, responsibility.

The campaign of Marshall Coleman, Republican candidate for governor of Virginia, attacked Lieutenant Governor Douglas Wilder in an emotionally charged commercial that showed a young woman weeping in the shadows as an announcer intoned that Wilder sought legislation to allow defense lawyers to question underage rape victims. In the tiniest of type, the ad admits that the legislation was introduced seventeen years earlier by Wilder in the Virginia Senate and was defeated.⁴⁷

Both the Dole and Clinton campaigns engaged in half-truths. In one Dole commercial, Clinton states: “I will not raise taxes on the middle class.” Then the narrator takes over: “But he gave the middle class the largest tax increase in history. Higher taxes on your salary. Gasoline. Social Security. Clinton even tried higher taxes on heating your home. Two hundred fifty-five proposed tax and fee increases in all. . . . Sorry, Mr. Clinton. Actions do speak louder than words.” As media critic Howard Kurtz pointed out, the bulk of the 255 proposed tax and fee hikes were levies on industries and individuals for services they use, such as dredging permits, haddock fees, and grazing fees. The ad also failed to mention that Clinton’s income tax increase targeted the wealthiest one percent of taxpayers, and the Social Security tax hit the most affluent thirteen percent.⁴⁸

How Personal? Floyd Brown’s aggressive research tactics during the 1992 presidential campaign illustrate the seamy side of opposition research. Brown

was involved in the creation of the Willie Horton commercials in 1988; in 1992, he headed the Presidential Victory Committee, an independent group that backed George Bush. A *CBS News* report in July 1992, filed by reporter Eric Engberg, charged that Floyd Brown aggressively tried to substantiate a story that a woman named Susan Coleman had an affair fifteen years earlier with her then law professor, Bill Clinton, and had committed suicide when the romance ended. The CBS report stated that the Coleman family maintained there was no truth to the story and that reporters who had investigated it found that an anonymous and false letter was sent to news organizations. Despite all this, Brown hired private detectives to try to substantiate the story and hounded the Coleman family with unwanted telephone calls and visits. The sister of the suicide victim said on the CBS interview: “To think that they have a right to just foster this type of grief on a family and then dredge up something like this. . . .” CBS correspondent Engberg said on the air: “When we confronted Floyd Brown he asserted a special right to track down sleaze and use it to blackmail candidates.”⁴⁹

Brown clearly and flagrantly crossed the ethical line of valid, fair, and public research. President Bush had earlier insisted that Brown not air a television ad that raised questions about Clinton’s character and invited viewers to call an 800 number to listen to alleged conversations between Clinton and Gennifer Flowers, a woman who claimed to have had an affair with Clinton. The Bush-Quayle campaign eventually filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission against Floyd Brown after President Bush read a transcript of the CBS interview. Press secretary Marlin Fitzwater said in announcing the complaint filed with the FEC, “as the president has said, Floyd Brown’s activities are despicable and have no place in the American political system.”⁵⁰ The late-filed complaint, of course, did nothing to change the tone of the presidential debate, but did give the Bush campaign momentary cover. Floyd Brown, unbowed, became chairman of Citizens United, a conservative organization that claims 150,000 members, he has his own talk show in Seattle, and he appears frequently on television as a political commentator.

What’s Fair? What will the public tolerate when it comes to opposition research, attack ads, and “gotcha” politics? Voters have been exposed to raw, visceral attack commercials based on campaign research. Sometimes the ads work, many times they fail. Voters are not fools and understand when campaign commercials have crossed the line of fairness. One recent study of Virginia citizens concluded that voters are “savvy enough to make assess-

ments about the fairness” of campaign charges and “will punish” candidates whom they consider to be most unfair.⁵¹ Researchers from the Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership at the University of Virginia found that the voters surveyed considered “fair” charges that criticize opponents for talking one way and voting another, or for the opponent’s voting record or business practices, or for taking money from special interests. The voters surveyed felt that charges were “unfair” when they deal with past extramarital affairs, past personal troubles with drugs or alcohol, the personal lives of the opponent’s party leaders, or the behavior of family members.⁵²

Drawing the Line

In the heat of the battle, campaigns are tempted to use whatever damaging material might be available to them. But certain lines should be drawn, for both practical and ethical reasons.

On a purely practical point, no research should be conducted on an opponent that can come back to embarrass the other campaign. Hiring a detective agency to dig up dirt on a candidate’s high school or college years, badgering friends and neighbors of the candidate for titillating information, publicizing a campaign hotline that asks people to spread gossip and innuendo—these are examples that shed far worse light on the opposition than on the candidate being investigated. Apart from their ethical shortcomings, such actions announce to the world that a campaign is willing to look under any rock against its opponent.

A campaign should not give to the press or some other third party material that it is not willing to defend and make public itself. If a campaign has damaging evidence against an opponent, and is convinced that this material is relevant to the character or actions of that opponent and that the public should know about it, then the campaign has the obligation to make that information known itself, not use a third party as a cover.

As an ethical matter, evidence against an opponent should be relevant to the office, particularly if it borders on questions of character and personal life.⁵³ Perhaps more as a tactical point than an ethical one, the Clinton-Gore reelection campaign charged Senator Bob Dole with having an extramarital affair some thirty years ago. To the credit of the *Washington Post*, which had confirmed Dole’s extramarital relations, it did not make those details front-page news. The executive editor of the *Post*, Leonard Downie Jr., explained the newspaper’s decision: “After completion of our reporting and extensive

discussion with senior editors and reporters, I decided that this information we had about this personal relationship 28 years ago was not relevant to Robert J. Dole's current candidacy for president and did not meet our standards for the publication of information about the private lives of public officials."⁵⁴

Along with determining whether an issue is relevant, campaign research should recognize and respect a statute of limitations on both personal and political conduct. Unless the actions that took place fifteen or thirty years ago were outrageous and beyond societal norms, they should be considered a closed book. Looking for a bearded picture of student Bill Clinton holding a Vietcong flag or wishing to make a trip to the Soviet Union should be out of bounds. Not only is it not relevant to the questions of character and qualification for the presidency, but from a political and tactical point of view probably has little significance.

In addition, carefully assembled facts should not lead to widely distorted conclusions. While campaigning often looks like a shouting match or a mud-throwing contest, research needs to be reined in, and conclusions should not be drawn that cannot be supported by factual evidence. This does not mean that political researchers have to adapt the norms and disciplines of social science research, but that they must draw the line. When the evidence does not support bald conclusions, the research specialist must make that point emphatically. If the point is not made by the researcher when turning over the materials, it is almost guaranteed to be distorted even further once it is in the hands of the media advertising specialists.

Finally, and most important, innocent third parties should not be harmed. When candidates thrust themselves into the political arena, they know that their lives and careers will be put under the microscope. However, the privacy and reputations of innocent spouses, ex-spouses, children, colleagues, and associates should be spared from the bruises and spotlight of harsh campaign attack ads.

It is no wonder that many decent and honorable civic-minded individuals refuse to run for elective office. They know that the moment their names surface as possible candidates, the opposition party, a potential primary opponent, or even a freelance investigator will be digging through public records, compiling information on business and personal matters, and searching vast electronic databases. In the sometimes brutal world of modern professional campaigning, this is the inevitable price that candidates must pay.

Testing Public Opinion

*Politics without polling has become as unthinkable
as aviation without radar.*

—Daniel S. Greenberg, editor of *Science and Government Report*

*Pollsters have overused “focus groups,” in which civilians are carefully,
demographically selected and wantonly encouraged to whine.*

—Joe Klein, *Newsweek* reporter and author of *Primary Colors*

Pete Dawkins had everything going for him: good looks, charm, a telegenic family, and a storybook resume—Heisman trophy winner, All-American football player at West Point, Rhodes Scholar, one of the youngest generals in the army, and successful Wall Street financier. In the 1988 New Jersey Senate election, he challenged one-term incumbent Frank Lautenberg. The national Republican Party had committed money and energy to target the New Jersey Senate seat for victory. But Dawkins had one glaring vulnerability: he was perceived as an opportunistic newcomer. He had moved to New Jersey just before

announcing his candidacy and he had been mentioned as a possible candidate for elective office in about nine other states in the few years since he had retired from the military. The Dawkins strategy was to take on this issue from the start. In his announcement speech, Dawkins, surrounded by his family, talked about his dreams and hopes for America and, with a smile and confident look, he stated: “I moved around a lot. I lived in a lot of places. But I have to tell you that throughout all those years, in all those places, I never found a single place that had as good people or as much promise as I found right here in our Garden State.”

The Lautenberg campaign had a videotape of the announcement speech and the more times media consultant Carter Eskew rewound the tape, the more he was convinced something was there. Pollster Paul Maslin and general consultant James Carville agreed. New Jersey voters are a tough, cynical lot. Focus groups throughout the two New Jersey major media markets (New York and Philadelphia) were shown the clip from the Dawkins announcement speech. Paul Maslin, who conducted the focus-group sessions, then asked the lunch-bucket Democrats and Reagan supporters for their reactions to the Dawkins announcement tape: “He’s a phony,” “He’s got some nerve talking about New Jersey,” “Beautiful Garden State—hell, I’d get out of here if I had the chance!”¹ Citizens from New Jersey, who had spent their lives coping with pollution, mind-boggling traffic congestion, heavy tax burdens, a rising crime rate, grinding local corruption, and an ingrained inferiority complex, weren’t buying Pete Dawkins and his treachery homage to their native soil.

From the focus-group research² developed one of the most controversial and inventive campaign ads of the 1988 season. The barrage of campaign ads didn’t start until Labor Day weekend, mostly because of the enormous expense of buying ads in the largest (New York) and fourth largest (Philadelphia) television markets in the country. Carter Eskew’s first ad for the Lautenberg campaign was a direct attack on the credibility and motives of Dawkins. With a still frame of Dawkins smiling in the background, a voice-over asked, “Why did Pete Dawkins move to New Jersey last year? Because he likes us so much?” Then twenty-one seconds of Pete Dawkins, smile on his face, uttering the words from his announcement speech: “I moved around a lot. I lived in a lot of places. But I have to tell you that throughout all those years, in all those places, I never found a single place that had as good people or as much promise as I found right here in our Garden State.” The screen went totally black for two seconds, then the voice-over intoned scornfully: “Come on, Pete, be real.”

This totally unorthodox first ad never mentioned Senator Frank Lautenberg and gave his opponent thirty seconds of free air time. But it devastatingly drove home the point: Dawkins came across as an opportunist and a phony. The rest of the campaign featured nasty attack ad countering even nastier attack ad. Only in the last week, with Dawkins out of funds, was the Lautenberg campaign able to field its effective positive accomplishment ads. Republican George Bush and Democrat Frank Lautenberg both won handily in New Jersey. On election day, fewer than half of the eligible New Jersey voters participated, a turnout that political scientist Clifford Zukin blamed on a “very serious dysfunctional cynicism about politics.”³

Professionally run campaign focus groups were just coming of age in the late 1980s, and the Lautenberg campaign took advantage of the small group analysis to its their opponent’s credibility and motivations. The New Jersey voters gave the campaign strategists the ammunition needed to launch their controversial ad campaign.

Polling and Campaigns

In the private business sector, public opinion research is a multibillion-dollar enterprise, where increasingly sophisticated techniques determine what the public thinks, wants, fears, and desires. Businesses use survey research, focus groups, and other forms of qualitative and quantitative analysis to determine customer satisfaction and product acceptability. Consumer testing tells us what colors and shapes are most appealing, what slogan has the greatest believability, and which beer “tastes great” and is “less filling.” Survey research will tell a company to use the word *kids* in its ads instead of *children*, because *kids* is a warmer, friendlier word. Dial meter research tells us that one candidate for a local television anchor position has more credibility and warmth than another, which TV soap opera cast member should be killed off, and how movies should end so as to attract the biggest audiences.

Many of the same opinion research techniques are used in campaigning, policy formation, and governing. Tracking polls told the Clinton White House that Attorney General Janet Reno would be a credible voice after the Branch Davidian disaster in 1993 and later told Clinton policy makers that most Americans would support bombing Iraq.⁴ The Clinton White House has made focus-group and public opinion testing a major factor in every public pronouncement and decision. Clinton “polls as often as he breathes,” observed Dick Morris.⁵ Every State of the Union speech, every presidential

address, and every major campaign announcement is pretested, topics are emphasized or disregarded, words and phrases are used or avoided, depending upon what the public wants to hear. Polls and focus groups concluded that Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky was a private matter; when it was finally time to address the nation, six times in a four-minute speech, Bill Clinton uttered the resonating word *private*. Undoubtedly, polls and focus groups told the White House that the public did not want the president to talk about the Lewinsky affair during his 1999 State of the Union speech. While Republicans stewed, Clinton, in his natural element, never mentioned Monica and spoke at length about just what was on peoples' minds. In poll after poll, a significant majority of citizens said that the president addressed the important concerns of the nation in his speech. Indeed he did, thanks to the White House's exacting attention to what the public wanted to hear.

More than ever before, public opinion testing is key to nearly every facet of campaigning and officeholding. In an era when many voters say that politicians are out of touch with the American people, candidates and officeholders increasingly rely on the weathervane of public opinion to point to the mood of the public, adjust to its nuances, and use the public as a sounding board for campaign and policy themes. Veteran Democratic pollster William R. Hamilton describes polling as the "central nervous system" of modern political campaigns.⁶

In earlier years of professional consulting, the campaign manager or general consultant would bring in a pollster and the media consultant, with each working more or less separately on his or her own specialties. But in the past fifteen years, survey research has moved to center stage, and the pollster, media consultant, and campaign manager now form the strategic core of the campaign.

Private campaign survey research varies widely, depending upon the competitiveness of the race, the funds available, whether or not there is a primary opponent, the size of the electorate, the demography of the voting population, and the overall dynamics of the campaign. In addition to private polling, which is usually paid for directly by the campaign or the political party, there may be other polls conducted throughout the campaign, including those conducted by the news media and universities. Presidential campaigns take polling to a whole new order of magnitude, both in the private polls conducted by the campaigns and in the enormous variety of independent trend polls, debate reaction surveys, tracking polls, and, ultimately, exit polls.

A well-financed statewide campaign would conduct its own private public opinion studies at various stages of the campaign. Some of these might include:

- *Focus-group analysis.* These studies are conducted in each of the state's major media markets perhaps twelve to fourteen months before the election. Assuming that the state has three major media markets, there will be four or five focus-group sessions for each market. Each focus-group will have eight to twelve participants. Focus-group analysis together with candidate and opposition research provides basic information used in creating the benchmark survey.
- *Benchmark survey.* This first poll taken by the campaign gives a detailed analysis of the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and dangers of the campaign ahead. The benchmark survey might be taken ten to twelve months before the election, with five hundred to twelve hundred voters participating.
- *Focus-group analysis after the benchmark.* Small group analysis, with eight to twelve participants in several focus groups, explores in greater depth the responses given in the benchmark survey.
- *Trend surveys.* Taken perhaps four or five months after the benchmark poll, when there has been movement or change in the campaign, such as commercials run by the opponent, trend surveys have roughly the same size of sample, five hundred to twelve hundred voters, but there are fewer questions asked than in a benchmark poll.
- *Dial meter analysis.* Used to test-market candidate (and hypothetical opponent) commercials before they are aired; thirty to forty participants might be involved in each dial meter session.
- *Tracking polls.* In the last few weeks of the campaign, tracking polls are taken to determine late trends and movements of public preference. A rolling average of four hundred voters is used, with a hundred added each night and a hundred dropped from previous nights.

Some multimillion-dollar campaigns, such as a growing number of Senate and gubernatorial contests, use all of these research sources. Other campaigns, such as a typical congressional contest with a half-million-dollar budget, might be lucky to have a benchmark poll, one trend survey, and perhaps limited tracking polls.

The benchmark or baseline poll is the first survey taken by a candidate for office, and serves as the basic tool for campaign planning and strategy. Democratic pollster Mark Mellman and his colleagues note that polling “is at its best when it is testing the relative merit of competing ideas, hypotheses, and theories.”⁷ The key feature is that the benchmark is a projective exercise: it introduces both positive and negative information about the candidate. The benchmark poll gives information on the candidate’s name recognition, electoral strength, and voter evaluation.⁸ The survey results are used to decide whether a candidate should run or to test the vulnerability of an incumbent or the strength of other candidates. Benchmark polls help determine whether the campaign should target a different set of voters, adjust the basic campaign message, develop different press events, or adjust its spending of resources.⁹ Benchmark surveys are often preceded by a series of focus-group interviews to help determine the questions that go into the benchmark or baseline survey.¹⁰ Candidate and opposition research also yield critical information for survey questions. Nearly all benchmark polls are conducted by telephone and with a fairly large sample (five hundred to twelve hundred for a statewide race, four hundred to five hundred for congressional districts) asking ninety to one hundred questions.¹¹ A typical benchmark poll lasts fifteen to eighteen minutes, with some running twenty-two to twenty-four minutes. With longer benchmark surveys, pollsters run the risk of losing respondents, who might be tempted to hang up before the questions are completed. For smaller races, a benchmark poll of twelve minutes and correspondingly fewer questions might be what a client can afford.¹²

Timing of the benchmark poll is an important judgment call. If it is conducted too soon, the public may not have any interest in the campaign and have very low recognition level of the candidates. If held too late, candidates may miss important public trends, use faulty assumptions to begin their campaigns, and start out on the wrong foot without benefit of solid survey research information.

The end product of the survey is the analysis, together with the raw data in cross-tabulation tables. Here the pollster explains the candidate’s strengths and weaknesses, how he or she compares with the opposition, and what is on the minds of voters. The best of benchmark poll analysis requires perception and insight so that the data come alive. The benchmark analysis must accurately reflect the data, but above all, the data, and thus the survey analysis, are valid only when exacting social science survey research methodology is carefully employed.

During the middle of the campaign, the pollster will use trend surveys, shortened versions of the benchmark poll, to evaluate the twists and turns of a campaign; to see if the candidate or the opponent's message is getting through; to determine what has changed since the benchmark survey; to test new issues; and, generally, whenever there has been a change in the dynamics of the race. A trend survey usually has the same sample size as a benchmark poll, but the number of questions asked is fewer, in the twenty-five to thirty-five range.¹³

Tracking polls were devised in the early 1970s to determine voter trends and preferences in the last crucial weeks of the primary or general election. During those weeks, campaigns kick into high gear. Voters are bombarded with campaign advertising, nightly television news features clips of candidates as they go from event to event, and voters start paying some attention to the elections. Through tracking polls, a campaign can determine if its advertising is working or if the opponents' ads are having any impact. By the late 1970s a new technique, rolling averages, was introduced separately by V. Lance Tarrance and William Hamilton. During four consecutive evenings, one hundred voters are interviewed. The four hundred total responses are then analyzed. On the fifth night, another one hundred voters are interviewed and the first night's one hundred responses are replaced. Then on the sixth night, another one hundred voters are interviewed, and the second day's responses are dropped. In this way, a reliable sample of four hundred persons would yield results that could be tracked from day to day.¹⁴

With sophisticated telephone and survey technology, polling data collected at 10:00 P.M. one night can be analyzed and delivered to the campaign the next morning. With overnight information, a campaign can make quick decisions on advertising and on where to spend precious last-minute dollars and in which markets, and can determine which ads, especially negative ads, are working. Tracking is so important to the Tarrance Group's work that this Republican polling firm stays open twenty-four hours a day for the last six weeks of the campaign cycle. It may be conducting tracking polls for up to one hundred clients. Tracking ends at 11:00 P.M. and written reports are available to clients the next day at 7:00 A.M.¹⁵

A variant of the tracking poll, but not involving continuous polling, is the "brushfire" poll. Republican pollster Gary Ferguson described the survey, used principally in congressional or other nonstatewide races: three hundred interviews over two nights, then seven to ten days later another survey, then a week later, another three hundred interviews.¹⁶

In a typical statewide race, and certainly in presidential races, news organizations and national polling firms also conduct surveys. News organizations conduct trial heat surveys that typically ask: “If the election were held today, who would you vote for?” Pollsters conduct cross-sectional surveys in which a sample of adults (or likely voters) is asked about the candidates or issues; another poll is taken some time later, asking another sample, of equal size, the same questions. Cross-sectional surveys have the advantage of telling what overall changes have occurred in preference, but do not explain what internal changes may have occurred from one survey to another.¹⁷ Panel surveys, which feature interviews of the same individuals are also used by news organizations and national polling firms to determine how the dynamics of the election have impacted voter attitudes. Tracking polls have become especially prominent in presidential contests. While tracking polls have been used in earlier presidential races, the Democratic polling firm Lake Research and the Republican firm the Tarrance Group have been instrumental in developing nationwide tracking polls through their “Battleground” series, conducting nightly tracking of public opinion from September 1 through November 1. Finally, election-day exit polls are conducted at carefully selected voting precincts to determine how voters actually voted, what influenced them, and other election-day issues that the media wish to explore.¹⁸

Polling technology has advanced dramatically in the last two decades. At one time polls were conducted with pencils and paper, with interviewers filling in answer grids and later punch cards; detailed reports were written and the results given back to the client several weeks after the survey. It was also standard practice to administer polls in the field through personal interviews. Nearly all interviews are now conducted by telephone, taking advantage of the enormous changes in telecommunications and computer technology—low-cost long-distance charges, speed dialing, random digit dialing, and computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). With a CATI system, interviewers sit before a video terminal and feed answers into the computer as the respondent is giving them. In the earlier days of CATI and before the revolution in personal computers, expensive mainframe computers were required to handle the number crunching. Today, however, personal computers easily do the job; CATI systems are more sophisticated, better able to handle large quantities of data, and cost far less to operate.¹⁹

Several of the major polling firms do not conduct their own interviewing but leave it to professional phone bank firms. The subcontracting to phone

bank firms is done primarily as a cost factor: a sophisticated phone operation may mean a capital investment easily over a million dollars and a considerable personnel overhead in trained interviewers. By using an outside phone bank, noted Democratic pollster Kirk Brown, his firm can conduct surveys for clients at the right time, not having to schedule surveys around the times available for an in-house operation.²⁰ An outside phone bank company is useful because it puts a further screen between the candidate and those being surveyed, providing another filter against survey bias.²¹ It is not unusual for telephones to ring in homes in Colorado, the respondents answering questions read to them by interviewers in Kentucky who are working from scripts prepared by a polling firm based in Washington.

Bill Hamilton has noted several related trends in polling. First is the adaptation of a technique used in market research of testing television spots by having one hundred or so people watch a rerun program on an independent station, with the campaign commercial and other commercials inserted in the program. The ads are viewed in a natural setting, at home, the way voters see ads, woven into commercial breaks. A second trend is the testing of radio spots or audio tracks from television commercials during a telephone interview. Another trend is the use of a new kind of sampling, before moving into the tracking phase, that asks a very small number of questions to a very large population. This has the advantage of quickly determining the reactions from a much broader number of participants and participant subgroups, so that media messages can be targeted with nearly pinpoint accuracy.²²

A variation of this technique is marketed as a “bullet” poll. These polls are generated solely by computer, and will have a sound similar to automated voice mail systems. The person answering the telephone is given a short recorded message (“In the election for governor next month, there are two candidates, William Smith, the Republican, and Alice Jones, the Democrat”). Then, the person answering the telephone is asked to choose (“Press 1 if you are for William Smith; press 2 if you are for Alice Jones”). This kind of poll is truly bulletlike in its speed: answers can be tabulated and reported within hours. Further, bullet polls are relatively cheap: automation replaces humans sitting at terminals asking questions. The major problem with bullet polls, however, is the inability to control who answers the telephone when it rings. Bullet polls may ask if a person is registered to vote, or if a person is of voting age. But, without human judgment in the screening process, there is no way of telling if children are screened out, if too many women or too few elderly people answer the telephone, or other problems.

The Problem with Numbers

Polling is seductive. Any poll will generate answers. Those answers can always be turned into numbers and look very scientific. Add a decimal point, and it looks like real, hard science.

Mark Mellman and colleagues²³

Of all the skills in the field of political consulting, survey research stands nearly alone in demanding adherence to well-developed social science methodology. Errors can arise in three major areas of public opinion surveys: in sampling error, when the sample selected is not representative of a relevant population; in measurement error, when questions are poorly designed or badly arranged; and in specification error, when a theory is inappropriate for the opinion that the poll is trying to measure.²⁴ Social scientists Henry A. Brady and Gary R. Orren see the latter two, measurement and specification errors, as the most serious and fundamental problems. If errors do occur in these areas, the validity of the entire poll can be affected.²⁵

Is public opinion being sampled? Social scientist Russell Neuman observes that mass public opinion is stratified along a sophisticated continuum.²⁶ On most issues, the great majority of citizens are uninformed and inattentive. He sees three separate publics. First, the bottom stratum, roughly 20 percent, which does not monitor politics and is unlikely to be mobilized to political action, even to vote. Second is the attentive and active 5 percent, who for political matters may be only a fraction of one percent of the entire population. Most people fall into the third stratum, the half-attentive vast middle. Their responses represent “quasi-attitudes”—somewhere between an attitude and a nonattitude. Neuman sees citizen responses as a “mixture of carefully thought out, stable opinions, half-hearted opinions, misunderstandings, and purely random responses.”²⁷

When a busy parent, trying to finish the dinner dishes before tucking in the children, picks up the telephone, the last thing on her mind might be whether NAFTA is good for the country or whether the administration’s policy on Bosnia is working. Daniel Greenberg observes that what pollsters are collecting under such circumstances are “intellectually undigested responses to issues of the moment, which is quite different from deliberately arrived at opinion.”²⁸

At one time, it was almost a unique experience to be asked for an opinion by a stranger over the telephone. Now it is just one more annoyance in the frazzled lives of busy people who are pestered by annoying cold calls from

solicitors for credit cards, vacation homes, and long-distance telephone service plans. Just as junk mail floods peoples' mailboxes, junk phone calls pester people during the evening. This presents the pollster with two fundamental problems: individuals will refuse to participate in a poll or, more frustrating, will become impatient and hang up before the interview is complete.

Republican pollster Ed Goeas has noted that the refusal rate closely parallels how people feel about government. When citizens are fairly content with government, the refusal rate goes down; when irritated and exasperated, the refusal rate goes up.²⁹ Kirk Brown sees refusals and terminations as a "tremendous problem," particularly in urban areas of California, New York, and New Jersey.³⁰ Given the surly mood of many citizens, it becomes very difficult to complete a twenty-minute telephone poll. This puts pressure on the pollster to devise poll questions that are neither too long nor too complicated, that are interesting and sound unbiased while still fitting the requirements of a legitimate survey, and to find a representative sample willing to respond. Answering machines add another layer of disconnectedness between the surveyor and the respondent.

Even slight nuances in the way questions are posed can lead to major changes in the public's response. Questions must be clear, with no overlapping alternatives and no false premises; they cannot pose two or more questions in one; and questions cannot be emotionally charged, embarrassing, overly technical, or leading to a particular answer.³¹ Further, questions must permit alternative answers, such as "don't know," or "stay the same." Pollster Albert Cantril argues that well-conducted interviews have a "pace and rhythm; they possess a beginning, middle, and end; they evolve as a rapport is established between respondent and interviewer." In this context, question order can be an important consideration, and questions may have to be rotated to remove the impact of one question upon a succeeding one.

Do individuals lie to pollsters? Sometimes they do, and pollsters try to make adjustments by modifying the question order and using variations of the same question to screen out inconsistencies or false statements. Sometimes these adjustments simply do not work, especially when sensitive or controversial subjects are considered. For example, a poll taken just days before the 1990 Louisiana Senate primary showed that 22 to 28 percent of the voters preferred white-supremacist David Duke; he ended up with 44 percent of the vote.³² Assuming that the poll was an accurate reflection of the Louisiana voting population, many individuals were either not telling the truth to the interviewers or had an unusual last-minute change of mind.

Sampling errors cannot account for some of the discrepancies found, particularly in elections in which race could be an issue. In 1989 three African Americans were elected to prominent positions—David Dinkins, mayor of New York City, Norman B. Rice, mayor of Seattle, and Douglas Wilder, governor of Virginia. In each election, the three winners barely won, but the late tracking polls and exit polls showed them with substantial leads of at least ten percentage points. There is considerable evidence that whites who state they are undecided in a black-white election end up voting overwhelmingly for the white candidate.³³ In New York and Virginia, a major black candidate would draw in a new set of voters, many of whom haven't been previously identified. In exit polls, Wilder and Dinkins voters were more enthusiastic than their rivals, turning out earlier in the day to vote, which led to early numbers showing both candidates comfortably ahead.

Polling is an inexact science, and results can vary widely. For example, on the eve of the 1992 presidential election, national polls were showing quite different results. Two weeks before the election, a *Wall Street Journal*–ABC poll reported a 19-percentage-point Clinton lead, while other surveys were showing Clinton leads of about half that size. One week before the election, the Gallup poll conducted for CNN and *USA Today* had a Clinton lead of just 2 points, while at least four national polls had Clinton leads of between 7 and 11 points. George Bush, who earlier urged voters to ignore those “nutty” polls, pointed to the convenient Gallup Poll as evidence that Clinton's lead was collapsing.³⁴ The uncertainty and volatility of the 1992 race led pundits to call it a “pollercoaster.” At the same time, the Tarrance Group and Lake Research were claiming unparalleled accuracy with their Battleground '92 nationwide tracking polls.³⁵

One of the biggest problems, wrote Richard Morin, was trying to determine who really would vote: some people don't tell the truth about their voting intentions and young people typically do not vote. Pollsters use questions to screen out the probable nonvoter, but this is far more of an art than a science. MTV and the “Rock the Vote” campaign targeted young people, urging them to vote. Pollsters could only guess what the impact of these efforts would be on young voters, who were more attracted to Clinton and Perot than to Bush. The baby boom generation also has a relatively poor voting record, but with double boomers in Clinton and Gore, it was also a guess to determine what their voting turnout might be. Turnout is even more difficult to predict in midterm elections and primaries, when it is historically lower.

Another difficulty was the steady but persistent buildup for Ross Perot and

the erosion of support for both Clinton and Bush. In the Battleground '92 tracking survey, Perot started with just 3 percent favoring him in the first week of the tracking (September 6). Over the next seven weeks, Perot gained steadily, ending with 19 percent of the vote.³⁶ The popularity of Ross Perot represents an anomaly in American politics. Political scientist Raymond Wolfinger noted that Perot represented neither the model of a standard-bearer of a sectarian party nor a major political figure who had been disappointed by his party.³⁷

Veteran political observer Charles Cook notes the wide discrepancies in polls during the late summer and early fall of the 1996 presidential campaign. He writes that private polls conducted on behalf of candidates and parties are “by definition, biased and unreliable” in the view of many observers; polls taken by newspapers or university-sponsored polls should be more impartial and reliable, but “some of the shoddiest, most superficial polls” are often commissioned by local news organizations who pay a fraction of the going cost for such a poll, often conducted by “fly-by-night” firms.³⁸ Cook observes that university-based surveys sometimes suffer because of the lack of adequate supervision over student-run polls. What troubles Cook most are the erratic numbers released by reputable firms. Polls can come from anywhere, and during the election season they are far more numerous than at any other time. Attentive voters must be their own best editors, exercising a healthy skepticism about polling results and taking the findings with a grain of salt.

Pseudo-Polls The term *pseudo-polls* refers to the growing phenomenon of public opinion surveys that are devoid of methodological safeguards.³⁹ Newspaper columnists, talk-show hosts, television shows, and a growing number of candidates are asking readers or viewers to mail in a sample ballot, call an 800 or 900 number, or post answers on an Internet site to express their viewpoints. The results are sometimes enthusiastically announced as public opinion, but in no way do such “polls” accurately measure the public at large.

Increasingly 800 and 900 numbers are used by the media to get a sense of the pulse of the American people. But 800 and 900 number polls are wholly unrepresentative; they are nothing more than the comments of people who care enough to respond. Unless this fact is explained deliberately and often, viewers or readers develop the false sense that the results actually reflect reality. The media do a fairly poor job of reporting legitimate, scientific polls,⁴⁰

and there is little to suggest that they will vigilantly point out the unreliability of pseudo-polls.

One example of press vigilance and good reporting clearly reveals how pseudo-polling, left unchecked, can distort reality. *USA Today* asked its readers in June 1990 if Donald Trump symbolized what was right or wrong with the United States. Eighty-one percent of the 6,406 people who called an 800 number said that Trump was great and 19 percent said he was bad for the country. But there was an organized effort to fix the numbers: it turned out that 72 percent of the telephone calls came from two phone numbers.⁴¹ Had this fact not been reported, readers would never have known that these results were cooked.

Online Polling It was inevitable that the Internet and online polling would come to political campaigns. One of the first was conducted in early 1996 in the 26th congressional district of New York; online viewers were able to examine the issue positions of Representative Maurice Hinchey and his two challengers and then cast their preferences online. By the end of the 1996 cycle, online polling had become commonplace, much of it done by news organizations and some by political campaigns. One study found fifty-seven political website polls operating that year, many of them simply “horse race” polls and some oriented toward policy issues; most, however, were nothing more than junk polls, permitting people to cast preferences more than once and lacking any safeguards for random sampling.⁴²

Online polling can be particularly attractive to both campaigns and news organizations for two reasons. First, while the start-up costs of website design and development may be greater, in the end it is far cheaper to run polls through a website than through the traditional telephone banks. The other attraction is the greater speed with which a poll can be completed, analyzed, and returned to a client.

Smaller campaigns, those with budgets of less than \$50,000, would find online polling to be a seductive feature, and larger campaigns might be tempted to do far more polling and far more testing of messages, themes, and commercials using online technology. However, the online poll results may be nothing more than fool’s gold. What may look like an economical alternative to expensive traditional telephone surveys may be fatally flawed because of the inherent problems of sampling techniques over the Internet. The increase in speed of polling analysis would mean nothing if what is being analyzed is flawed in the first place. Campaigns, especially, depend on accu-

rate and scientifically sound survey research information. Flawed data and the resulting flawed analysis are worthless to campaigns and even detrimental when campaigns rely on this imperfect information to determine strategy and message.

One of the biggest concerns is with random sampling. If all citizens were wired, the problems of sampling would be mitigated; but all citizens are not, and in all probability many may never have access to the Internet. For some time to come, there will be 30 to 40 percent of the U.S. population who do not have online access or capabilities, especially the elderly, poor, and those with modest levels of formal education. Resolving the issues of online sampling presents some of the most important obstacles to using the Web for serious political survey research. Political scientist Alan J. Rosenblatt argues persuasively that sampling online is faced with many problems unique to the Internet and that such sampling can be a “nightmare filled with ghosts and avatars.”⁴³ Among the problems is the seemingly simple collection of e-mail addresses: e-mail lists are proprietary information, some available to the public and others not; there is a multiplicity of e-mail addresses, with no standard format; and there is no central directory of such addresses.

Some polling firms are undeterred by the obstacle of online demographics. Gordon Black, chairman and CEO of Harris Black International, intends his firm, which has 5.4 million addresses in its online system, to demonstrate the viability of the Internet as an effective public opinion measuring device during the 2000 elections. Every Harris poll is now carried on the Internet, and HBI compares data from Internet usage and more traditional telephone surveys.⁴⁴ Harris Black International collects e-mail addresses from volunteers at various websites and later contacts them to participate in online polls. The results are statistically adjusted to compensate for demographic differences between Internet users and the U.S. population at large.

Internet polls that do not have built-in safeguards can easily fall prey to the problems found in pseudo-polls. They can easily be manipulated, since there is no way to check the results and the wording can be misleading; it is easy to stuff the online ballot box; and only those who are interested in the topic will vote. One simple example of ballot stuffing occurred in July 1999, when baseball fans were encouraged to use the Internet to vote for their favorite All-Star players. One Red Sox enthusiast programmed his computer to cast ballots nonstop, and after two days, he had “voted” forty-thousand times for his hero, Nomar Garciaparra. Though perhaps not with the same enthusiasm as All-Star voting, TIME.com conducted a straw poll allowing

anyone, not just registered voters, to cast their ballot choice for president. Orrin Hatch, who was barely visible in most traditional polls in late 1999, garnered 60 percent of the votes on the TIME.com survey. Hatch had hyperlinked the TIME.com poll to his own campaign website, and his supporters enthusiastically clicked away.⁴⁵

Growing Use of Focus Groups

For decades, focus-group research has been used in the commercial marketplace, testing and measuring consumer preferences for services and products.⁴⁶ Inevitably, campaigns caught on, and by the mid-1980s focus-group research became commonplace in major campaigns.⁴⁷ Focus groups are now standard research tools in nearly every statewide race and were used heavily in recent presidential campaigns. Focus groups, and their electronic cousins, dial meter groups, have become the hot, even faddish, new tool in the pollster's arsenal. Under the name of qualitative research, these tools reveal much about attitudes, fears, and preferences, but very little about public opinion at large. They are tempting substitutes for the real thing—scientifically based survey research.

The focus group is a structured conversation. Eight to twelve individuals, carefully chosen to fit a targeted demographic or political cluster, are asked both general and specific questions by a moderator adept at bringing out participants' responses through open-ended questions and associational techniques. Under ideal circumstances, focus groups are held in each of the competitive media markets in a statewide race, with four or five different sessions per market. Focus-group sessions are held in special market research rooms, commonly found on the upper floors of shopping malls, that have one-way mirrors and audio and videotape capabilities. Often focus groups are segregated by gender or by race; typically a woman will moderate an all-female group or an African American will moderate an all-black group. Pollster Stanley Greenberg observed that the key to an effective focus group is homogeneity of the participants: "The more homogeneity, the more revealing" the answers.⁴⁸ Homogeneity appears to allow for a freer conversation, without the added constraints of race, sex, party preference, or class that might come with a more diverse group.

Small-group participation and dynamics are important features of focus groups. But no matter how carefully the participants are chosen, inevitably some individuals will present problems. Social scientist Richard Krueger

identified several: the self-appointed expert, the know-it-all who thinks he knows everything about politics; the dominant talker, who cannot keep quiet; the shy participant, who has nothing to contribute; and the rambler, who cannot get to the point and drifts off on irrelevant tangents.⁴⁹ Veteran Republican focus-group moderator Brian Tringali found another problem type, the Oprah Winfrey participant, who deviates from the conversation to bring in personal problems, wanting to share them with the group.⁵⁰

Potential problems are generally spotted in the reception room before participants assemble in the focus-group session. For example, participants who are C-SPAN junkies may be screened out, because they probably fit into the self-appointed expert category. Also screened out are strong partisans or, especially late in a campaign, individuals who have definitely made up their minds. Once inside, the moderator must be able to control the flow of conversation, quieting those who tend to dominate and opening up those who say little. Pollster Kirk Brown sees the know-it-all as the biggest problem. While this individual is often clearly wrong about a set of facts, other focus-group members have a strong tendency to believe him or her rather than the moderator, particularly when the moderator tries to correct factually wrong information. The moderator, Brown observed, has a difficult, if not impossible, task of changing a clearly factually wrong view.⁵¹

The focus-group moderator works from a carefully prepared script, drawing out responses from participants in a variety of ways. Brian Tringali follows a general format when probing responses from focus-group participants: First, ground rules are established. At the outset, participants are told what is expected of them, that everyone's views are important, that the session is confidential, and that it is being video- and audiotaped. Next, the environment is established: participants introduce themselves and tell a little about their families and where they work. Questions then move on to more contextual concerns: In their everyday lives, what are they worried about, what are their big concerns in life? The third stage tests levels of political and issue awareness. Open-ended questions are asked about politics and public issues, probing levels of general knowledge about officeholders and issues. The fourth stage tests image information. Participants might be shown a campaign advertisement or a news clip of some relevant event and asked to discuss it. The fifth stage probes the participants' appraisal of the job performance of the incumbent or challenger.

The sixth stage seeks more specific and directed information. For example, the moderator might hold up a newspaper article or comment on something in the news, then get the participants to fill in the details and get reactions.

Finally, there is a set of what-if scenarios, presenting participants with a variety of hypotheticals that fit into the overall message and campaign strategies of the candidates. Throughout the focus-group sessions, which generally last up to two hours, the moderator must remember that the goal is not to educate the focus-group participants but to discover their opinions, attitudes, biases, and viewpoints.⁵²

Focus-group research can be highly useful to a campaign, especially as a means of unearthing new information. When a policy or campaign issue first appears or emerges in a different context, it is often tested in a focus group before being addressed in a benchmark poll. For example, when national health care and NAFTA became important issues in the mid-1990s, pollsters needed first to determine what voters knew and understood, and what language should be used later in the survey research questions. Focus-group research helps determine what citizens know, what they comprehend, and the language that will fit their understanding. Focus-group research is also very useful when analyzing attitudes in states or regions that have high growth rates, such as Florida, where many new voters have arrived since the last election cycle and where there is no reliable current history on voter demographics and preferences.⁵³

Focus-group research adds a human dimension that cannot be matched by traditional survey research methods. Participants are recorded and their reactions are carefully observed and measured. Their answers to open-ended questions can give campaign researchers valuable information; participants are free to express themselves, to complain, and to vent their anger. The moderator can also guide participants through several sets of facts, situations, or scenarios to understand how opinion is molded and changed.

One well-known example of this was the focus-group research conducted in Paramus, New Jersey, during the early stages of the 1988 presidential campaign. The Bush campaign's decision to go on the offensive with a blistering attack against Michael Dukakis came over Memorial Day weekend, when the results of several focus groups were analyzed and the videotapes shown to George Bush. There was urgency in the Bush camp: a just-published Gallup poll showed that Michael Dukakis was 16 points ahead.⁵⁴ The Bush campaign conducted focus groups around the country in areas considered to be hotly contested; one such area was northern New Jersey. In Paramus, two sessions were held with conservative Democrats who had supported Reagan in 1984, but were leaning toward Dukakis in 1988. The moderator asked ques-

tions about Dukakis: What do you think of Dukakis if he opposed capital punishment? If he vetoed legislation as governor that would allow teachers to lead schoolchildren in the pledge of allegiance? If he permitted murderers to have weekend passes from prison?

The reactions were strong and fierce. According to Bush campaign pollster Fred Steeper, “majorities favoring [Dukakis] became majorities opposing him, he was fingered as a liberal.” When approached one at a time, each of the negatives about Dukakis could be rationalized away by the focus group participants, but the cumulative effect was devastating. “It took all four or five [issues],” said Steeper, “you could literally see the tearing, the ripping going on.”⁵⁵ Whatever positive attributes people had identified in Dukakis soon turned to anger and resentment.⁵⁶ “I realized right there that we had the wherewithal to win . . . and that the sky was the limit on Dukakis’ negatives,” campaign manager Lee Atwater concluded.⁵⁷

Bush was shown the videotapes of the Paramus focus groups and given a choice by Atwater: attack Dukakis now or attack him later. Bush chose now, and one of the ugliest presidential media campaigns was soon under way. Such dirty work, however, is usually left to surrogates, not presidential candidates. “We knew that if we left [the attack against Dukakis] to surrogates, it wouldn’t have the impact,” Atwater said. “Plus, Bush didn’t have an image of personal meanness, so we knew he would be credible.”⁵⁸

Focus-group participants are often asked to comment on certain words or phrases in candidate speeches and potential wording of referendum ballots, and as a pretest for policy statements. In preparing for the fall congressional 1994 elections, Representative Newt Gingrich and House Republican leaders launched their ten-point “Contract with America” with an announcement on the Capitol steps and a nationwide advertisement in *TV Guide*. The carefully prepared and worded contract was to set the agenda for the new session of Congress, and became even more important when the Republicans captured the House of Representatives. House Minority Whip Newt Gingrich, representatives Dick Armey of Texas, Bill Paxon of New York, Robert Walker of Pennsylvania, Tom Delay of Texas, and other Republicans had earlier in 1994 come up with the idea of a ten-point legislative agenda that an overwhelming majority of Republican incumbents and challengers would sign onto and that could be brought to the House floor within one hundred days.

In order to craft the succinct Republican message and legislative agenda, Representative Delay consulted with more than a hundred business groups

concerned with regulatory relief. In addition, all House Republican incumbents and challengers were given an eight-page questionnaire with sixty-seven specific items to be tested.⁵⁹

Republican pollster Ed Goetas conducted three focus groups, showing participants eight television ads that had been prepared. “The one thing that jumped out was that voters were looking for a mechanism to hold elected officials more accountable,” Goetas said. “The most important thing about the contract is the accountability of signing a pledge.”⁶⁰ Words and phrases were tested in the focus groups conducted by Goetas and later by pollster Frank Luntz. In fact, the *contract* in “Contract with America” came from observations of focus-group participants. The term *empowerment* was scrapped because participants did not understand it, replaced with the phrase *individual choice*. The term *citizen legislator* was used to explain the concept of term limits, and even the word *Republican* was avoided because of negative reaction from focus-group participants.⁶¹

Increasingly focus groups serve as prescreeners for campaign commercials. Before a multimillion-dollar television buy, a campaign may want to test the reaction of focus-group viewers. Polling pioneer George Gallup first used the instant-reaction meter technique in the 1940s to learn what an audience felt while watching motion pictures, and later Gallup used a device called the Hopkins Televote machine to monitor public response to the 1960 Kennedy-Nixon presidential debates.⁶² Campaigns now pretest commercials using electronic and standard focus-groups techniques. Those commercials receiving a favorable reaction from the participants will have a better chance of being aired; those that receive merely a lukewarm reception may not see the light of day. Participants become critics: they don’t like the brown jacket the candidate is wearing, they don’t want the candidate to say bad things about the opponent, and they really like the punch line at the end.

Pretesting inevitably leads to friction between media consultants who use their skill and artistry to create the commercials, and pollsters armed with focus-group research results. The media consultants think they have a creative, hard-hitting ad; the focus groups criticize the harsh tone of the commercials. When thirty-second spots are previewed before focus groups, particularly dial groups, and reactions are minutely observed, the creativity of the media team is immediately scrutinized. Left to the preferences of focus-group participants, campaign commercials would be far more bland and would lose their critical and creative edge. Republican pollster Mike Murphy argues that focus groups “reflect a make-believe world of politics where you

never say anything bad about your opponent.”⁶³ Media consultants sometimes view this screening procedure as nothing more than ill-informed second-guessing, making television critics out of focus-group participants and diluting their craft.

Focus-group analysis can provide a campaign with information that was overlooked or misread by the campaign team. For example, in a Senate race several cycles ago, the consultants for the Democratic incumbent thought they had a winning issue. The Republican challenger opposed a hike in the minimum wage. In this heavily industrial, unionized state, reasoned the consultants, Democrats will go crazy when they hear this. Yet the consultants were cautious enough to pretest the minimum wage issue with the focus group. The participants, blue-collar Democrats, were told that the Republican candidate did not support a hike in the federal minimum wage. There was no outcry, really no visible reaction—certainly not the visceral and heated response the consultants were expecting. In focus group after focus group, the reaction was the same: Who cares? So what? The reaction was best summed up by two focus-group participants: “Look, everybody in my family and my friends are all working, and have got decent jobs.” Another: “My neighbor’s kid works down at McDonald’s, and they’re paying two bucks an hour more than minimum. Who cares?” Minimum wage, typically a bread-and-butter Democratic issue, had no salience with these blue-collar Democrats—they were doing just fine, and their friends were doing great too. Minimum wage went no further as an issue in the campaign; it never made it to the benchmark poll, because the issue fell flat on its face in the focus groups.

The order for focus groups and benchmark polls can be reversed. With survey research conducted first, focus-group analysis can later explain and amplify survey findings. Republican pollster Whit Ayres often uses this method.⁶⁴ Starting first with solid survey research findings, tested through a benchmark poll, Ayres then moves to focus-group analysis for extended analysis. Ayres will hone in on focus-group participants whose views represent a larger group of voters and will probe in detail interesting and unusual findings of the survey research.

Campaign focus groups hit their stride in the 1990s. Audio- and videotaped recordings provide nuance and human expression. Focus groups are fluid, the questions are often open-ended, and the moderator can probe further and deeper into areas of inquiry. Political scientists Michael X. Delli Carpini and Bruce Williams note that focus groups are valuable “in revealing

the *process* of opinion formation, in providing glimpses of usually latent aspects of this process, and in demonstrating the *social* nature of public opinion.”⁶⁵ Finally, focus groups are relatively inexpensive, about one-third the cost (if two are conducted in one night) of a traditional poll. Focus groups are a seductive alternative to survey research.

The biggest problem with focus-group research is the temptation to extrapolate the results to the general population. These are the views of twelve focus-group participants, carefully chosen, usually with the goal of some kind of demographic homogeneity. “There is no escaping the fact,” observes veteran pollster Albert H. Cantril, “that a dozen individuals, no matter how carefully selected, cannot be looked to as a microcosm of a larger population.”⁶⁶ This is a reality that faces pollsters and candidates who may mistake compatible focus-group results with public opinion reality. When thirty-four participants in three focus groups think your candidate is a pretty decent fellow, that information may be comforting, but it is no sure reflection of what the rest of the public may be thinking. The media faces similar problems: when focus-group findings are controversial and newsworthy, or fit into the larger story being prepared, it is tempting to report the findings, failing to mention that this is not a true representation of public opinion.

Long-time Republican operative Roger Ailes, at the end of his consulting career, caustically denounced the increased reliance on focus groups. A focus group, he said, “is five professionals in a room who say: We don’t know what to do, so let’s get twenty amateurs to tell us what to do.”⁶⁷

A frustrated Mike Murphy, Republican media consultant who resigned from the 1996 Dole campaign with less than two months to go before the election, wrote in the conservative magazine *The Weekly Standard* a blistering memo to Bob Dole called “How to Win.” His first piece of advice: “Stop all the useless polling and focus groups. Dole for President has polled and focus-grouped its way to disaster. Any poll taken today will give the same toxic advice: Be more like Clinton. Worse, polls and focus groups are behind the really numbskull ideas, like ‘mention the Internet in your big debate close.’ You deserve better.”⁶⁸

Electronic Focus Groups and Mall Testing

Another tool in the qualitative research arsenal is the electronic focus group, variously called dial meters, instant-reaction meters, or people-meter groups. Electronic focus groups take research to another plane of response,

testing fears, beliefs, and prejudices and charting them on a computer printout. Saturday-night television variety shows back in the 1950s used “applause meters” to measure audience approval of the talent on stage; the louder and longer the applause, the further the needle jumped to the right on the audio meter. Now campaigns do a more sophisticated version, with “perception analyzers” (hand-held dial meters), and computers graphing the information, showing spikes of approval or flat lines of disinterest and boredom. The results tell campaigns early on what parts of a candidate’s “appearance, delivery, phraseology or message turns voters towards or against a candidate.”⁶⁹ Electronic focus groups, which first appeared in the 1976 presidential election, are now a standard feature in virtually every presidential and statewide race, and are moving broadly into ballot initiatives and other races.

The participants in electronic focus groups are carefully selected to meet certain demographic and political criteria. For example, they might all be suburbanites in a swing area of the state who had voted for Bill Clinton in 1996 but were now disenchanted with the Democratic Party. The group size is typically much bigger than a focus group, perhaps thirty, fifty, or even a hundred participants.

The electronic-focus-group participants often sit in an auditorium, watch videotape or television, and critique what they see. Each participant is given a dial meter, or “perception analyzer,” a simple hand-held device with a dial that can be moved left to right, from 0 to 100. Each dial meter is hooked up to a computer that graphs the responses of the participants. The measurement is very crude but effective. If a participant agrees wholeheartedly with what is said on the television screen, he moves the dial toward 100; with total disagreement, he moves the dial down to zero.

Participants respond to the words and phrases of a speech; the computer displays their collective reactions. Several test sites can be linked together through a central computer, recording the reactions of participants in, for example, Seattle, Dallas, Denver, Buffalo, and Atlanta. A presidential campaign can find out instantaneously, from dial meter test sites throughout the country, which phrases are resonating with voters and which are falling flat.

Electronic-focus-group analysis can go much further than standard focus-group research by instantaneously measuring reaction to words and phrases. It is far less subtle, far cruder—yes or no, up or down—analysis, but it has the virtue of instantaneous reaction. In one example, the Bush reelection campaign used electronic focus groups to test-market campaign themes. President

Bush's State of the Union speech in January 1992 marked the unofficial kick-off of the presidential campaign season.⁷⁰ The campaign themes and messages were far from developed, Patrick Buchanan was embarrassing the president in early primary states, and Democratic challengers were watching eagerly to see what George Bush would say. The Bush campaign assembled an electronic focus group of about thirty voters from the Chicago suburbs who had voted for Bush in 1988 but were undecided in early 1992.

Elizabeth Kolbert noted that for the first forty minutes of the speech, the dial meters barely moved, not even when the president intoned that "the Cold War didn't end, it was won," or "I know we're in hard times, but I know something else—this will not stand!" or when Bush promised to "get more good American jobs within our own hemisphere through the North American Free Trade Agreement." Bush aides observing the Chicago electronic focus group were distressed. The participants just weren't impressed or moved by anything Bush was saying.

Not until the last few minutes did the needles finally leap with approval. When Bush said, "This government is too big and spends too much," the dial needles jumped to an average of 94. The campaign was finally on to something. The very next day, the campaign filmed a new commercial for use in New Hampshire. President Bush, in the Oval Office, outlined his economic plan: "My plan will work without big government spending" he said, looking directly into the camera.⁷¹ Bush had found his words, and they were repeated over and over during the campaign.

In early 1996 the Dole campaign had already done some focus groups and polling, and now wanted to refine Dole's announcement speech by testing it with small groups armed with dial meters. The groups sat for hours listening to different versions of Dole in drafts of his announcement speech and segments from other speeches he had made throughout his career. For a dial meter group of thirty participants in Atlanta, Dole hit on several well-received themes. He scored 93 on welfare reform: Washington had failed and the federal government had to get out of the way and let the states run welfare programs. He scored 90 on several themes: Dole's charge that under the Democrats government demanded more and more authority over our lives; his pledge to pass a balanced budget; his assertion that government had become the enemy of religion; and a call for a simplified tax system and tougher drug enforcement. There it was, the Dole campaign message, wrapped up in the dial meter high-approval zones. Bill Lacy, campaign manager, had found the Dole message and was adamant: "We are not going to

budge from this. You're going to have to kill me, and if you want to kill me, if you want me to leave the campaign, fine."⁷²

At the 1996 Republican National Convention, campaign operatives carefully monitored the reaction of dial meter groups. In a hideaway room below the convention floor, a bank of computers tracked immediate reactions to the speeches of Colin Powell, Nancy Reagan's tribute to her husband, Elizabeth Dole's talk-show-friendly stroll among the delegates, and Bob Dole's acceptance speech. The computers tracked the immediate reactions of participants in electronic focus groups in Atlanta and Denver. Testing was done by Dole pollster Tony Fabrizio, and participants watched the televised speeches, turning dials. Words and phrases were watched carefully to see which caught the imagination and reaction of the focus groups. What Republican opinion strategists were finding was that carefully selected swing voters were responding better to the convention proceedings than the network analysts were reporting.⁷³

Despite their increased use, dial meters have several major problems. Albert H. Cantril argues that instant-reaction meters "have all of the worst drawbacks of focus groups and none of the advantages." He notes that the simple plotting of audience responses through dial meters onto a computer screen "tells little about why the audience reacts as it does. Was it the demeanor of the speaker, the content of what was said, the cutaway shot, or some other facet of the presentation?" For Cantril, the principal deficiency is that the instant poll "elevates the immediate reaction to an undeserved level of importance and implicit validity."⁷⁴

Public Opinion at the Shopping Mall Mall testing, a variation of focus-group analysis, was used extensively by the 1996 Clinton campaign. Democratic pollster Doug Schoen, together with partner Mark Penn, had doubts about the constant use of focus groups as a mechanism for understanding voter preferences. "A year ago, we saw all the other pollsters holding focus groups, looking for problems. Our sense was that people were more satisfied than not."

Penn and Schoen set up kiosks in shopping malls in sixteen swing states. A participant approached the kiosk, was asked questions about his or her party affiliation and general views of the president; that information was then keyed into a computer. Then the participant viewed different versions of Clinton television commercials and was asked a number of follow-up questions. The whole procedure took about ten minutes, and some two hundred

viewer samples could be taken in a single evening. Viewing commercials at a kiosk was similar to the way most people watch television—by themselves.⁷⁵ Mall testing is an expensive way of determining voter attitudes, and the extensive use of mall testing by the Clinton team could probably be only replicated at the national level or by candidates with very deep pockets, like 1998 California gubernatorial candidate Al Checchi.

Mall testing removed the element of small-group behavior found in focus groups. The mall testers would not have to worry about the impact on the rest of the group of the dominant talker the know-it-all, or the tendency either to whine or say nothing.

The Clinton media team of Bob Squier, Bill Knapp, and Hank Sheinkopf produced fake—and very nasty—campaign ads and then tested Clinton response ads with mall voters. Consultant Marius Penczner used an advertising technique called animatics, video rough cuts using dummy images that could be transmitted by computer to the malls where the pollsters were testing the ads. A quick and cheap spot could be created by inserting the image they wanted to test: a scowling Dole, a forceful Clinton, happy children, kindly senior citizens. Using this method, the Clinton response ads were “tested, refined and retested until they actually left voters feeling better about the President than they had before seeing the original Dole attack.”⁷⁶

Ethical Dimensions

Political polling is an intensely competitive, pressure-packed business. The specialty is relatively easy to enter; there is often the temptation to cut corners, shave costs, and undercut the competition. A polling contract that cost \$15,000 in the early 1990s may cost only \$11,000 today, because of increased competition among pollsters. There is always the pressure to win, whether it’s the contract or the election. Pollsters also bring a certain degree of assuredness to the campaign: of all the consultants, they are the ones with the numbers, the percentages, the cross-tabulations. Looking back on her experience in White House strategy sessions, Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan observed, “In every political meeting I have ever been to, if there was a pollster there, his words carried the most weight because he is the only one with hard data, with actual numbers on actual paper.”⁷⁷ But precise numbers are not the same as accurate numbers; only when methodological safeguards are carefully followed will the findings be valid. No candidate or other consultant should be expected to look over the shoulder of the pollster to assure

that all steps and safeguards have been completed. There is no peer review in the heat of the campaign. “There is a huge reservoir of trust in this business,” observes Republican pollster Whit Ayres. “When you say you’ve done the calls, you’ve actually done them.”⁷⁸

A survey that contains flawed questions does a disservice to the client and is damaging to the reputation of the polling firm. If questions are faulty, or poorly worded and easily misinterpreted, the responses distort the population sample. A disturbing trend is the practice of push-polling, in which anonymous telephone surveyors serve as campaign skills. Under the guise of a legitimate poll, telemarketers call voters and give them damaging or misleading information about a candidate. The tactics of push-polling violate the universal rules of survey research: that questions will not mislead or direct a respondent to a certain answer, will not confuse, and will embrace scientific neutrality. The abuses of push-polling are detailed in chapter 7.

Another ethical problem is the overselling of public opinion research. Candidates generally understand the need for both qualitative and quantitative research; they know it is expensive but necessary for an aggressive and successful campaign. But how much polling should be done? A candidate should not be frightened into spending for more research than necessary. Like direct mail or media consultants, pollsters are competing for scarce campaign dollars, but they cannot push for more and more surveys unless justified by the dynamics of the campaign.

A related problem is promising more than can be delivered. Pollsters might promise thorough scientific methodology in conducting and analyzing survey data, but then fail to deliver. An example of this would be a firm that undercuts the competition in its fee, gets the contract, then cuts corners by not conducting the critical but expensive call-backs to achieve an accurate sampling or using telephone numbers from a phone book rather than random digit dialing. Accurate survey research demands methodological integrity and does not come cheap.

Other problems arise when consultants give clients incomplete or inaccurate data. In the heat of the battle, candidates can rely only on the measured analysis of their pollsters. It is wrong to scare clients with nothing but bad news when in fact the poll results show positive information as well; even worse is to tell clients what they want to hear, though the pressure to do so can be intense.

Finally, there is the problem of giving out information about a poll without the client’s permission. The findings and analysis of a poll belong to the

client who paid for it. It is wholly unethical for a pollster to give out such information without the permission of the client.

Survey research, done right, is “light years ahead of political consulting when it comes to formal standards and mechanisms for ensuring public accountability.”⁷⁹ When conducted properly, survey research results can tell a candidate with considerable accuracy and objectivity what is on voters’ minds. This level of social science integrity comes only through carefully developed questions, rigorous application of methodological standards and sampling techniques, and a solid and sound analysis of results. Focus-group research adds another layer of concern. Because focus-group analysis is qualitative analysis, it requires solid, objective judgment, summarization, and measurement of open-ended comments. When done poorly, polling yields inaccurate results—which are often difficult to spot and do a disservice to a consultant’s client and ultimately to the business of survey research.

The Media, Old and New

It is absolute bedlam out here. . . . With all sides screaming at you about the ballot propositions and the candidates, people just want it to stop.

—Consultant Bill Carrick, on the bombardment of political commercials during the 1996 elections

TV and radio are the old war. The new war is the battle for minds on the Internet.

—Timothy Butler, president of conservative website Town Hall, at its unveiling in 1995

Campaign communications have undergone extraordinary changes in the last decade. Cable television has proliferated, networks have lost market share, and broadcasting has been challenged by a range of narrow-casting opportunities.¹ The television market has exploded with new outlets and many new options for getting campaign messages to the public, which presents campaigns with an enormous new challenge: With a much more diverse audience watching many more stations, where do scarce television advertising dollars go?

There are other challenges facing candidates and campaigns: an increasingly disinterested and distant public; local and national television news reporting that gives little attention to campaigns and issues; greater pressure to mount expensive media buys to offset the loss of free media opportunities; a shifting television culture that highlights the sensational, turns news into tabloid fodder, and cheapens public discourse. Thrown into this mix comes the next wave of communication, online, unfettered, and capable of transforming our whole system of communication.

The Ferocity of the Airwaves

Veteran political reporter David Broder noted that both Republican and Democratic consultants were astonished by the “amount and ferocity” of advertising in 1996. Candidates were broadcasting commercials up to three times more frequently than their counterparts were a decade ago, creating far greater clutter of paid political advertising. This was especially true in the 1996 early presidential primaries. Steve Forbes dominated the airwaves, spending record amounts in Iowa and New Hampshire.² Bob Dole, Lamar Alexander, and Patrick Buchanan fought back with their own onslaught of commercials. In New Hampshire just before its primary there were so many political ads on the state’s only VHF station that the local news had to be extended to a full hour, so that repeated six-minute blocks of back-to-back political ads could be shown.³

Before the 1996 primary season began, the Clinton campaign unleashed a sustained sixteen-month barrage of commercials attempting to define the issues and the race before Republicans had even chosen their candidate. No other presidential campaign had spent so much money in a sustained effort to set the issues and debate this far in advance of election day. Sixteen months before the election, in June 1995, in forty strategically selected television markets, the Clinton campaign hammered home its message against the Republicans and Bob Dole.

The Democratic National Committee spent more than \$50 million on commercials praising Clinton and blasting Republicans on the environment, taxes, education, crime, drugs, and Medicare. The harsh attacks were often couched as the “Dole-Gingrich” plan.⁴

As *Washington Post* reporter Howard Kurtz noted, the television ads, which aired mostly in the Midwest and California, “slipped under the

Beltway radar,” and their occasional exaggerations and distortions were subject to “almost no media scrutiny.”⁵

The commercial that formed the template for later attacks appeared in August 1995:

Voice-over: The Republicans are wrong to want to cut Medicare benefits [showing grainy images of Gingrich and Dole floating beside the Capitol]. And President Clinton is right to protect Medicare, right to defend our decision as a nation to do what’s moral, good, and right by our elderly.

As reporter James Bennet noted, an old-school Democratic approach to this advertisement probably would have taken a class-warfare attack: the rich Republicans against the middle-class Democrats. But the Clinton advertising stressed that cutting Medicare “was a violation of our duties and our values,” according to Bill Knapp, partner in the Clinton-Gore media firm of Squier, Knapp, and Ochs. “This was a huge departure, and a critical, critical difference.”⁶ Lamented Alex Castellanos, the Dole campaign’s third media strategists, “we bounced around too much from drugs to economy to trust to everything. The other guy’s running the one commercial for a year and a half: ‘Dole-Gingrich is extreme, and I’m trying to protect you.’”⁷

Competitive Media Reporting, a firm that tracks television commercials, surveyed the seventy-five top media markets and found that the two major parties and the presidential campaigns broadcast 167,714 total commercials between April 1 and the end of October 1996.⁸ This was only 20 percent of all political commercials (752,891) shown during this time. However, all political commercials represented a mere fraction (1.3 percent) of the total of the nearly 57 million television commercials broadcast in these major markets.

Clinton media consultant Bill Knapp estimated that the Republicans spent roughly \$60 million, and Republican firm National Media estimated that the Clinton-Gore and Democratic National Committee spent some \$70.2 million during that same time in television spots.⁹ The Clinton-Gore campaign and the Democratic National Committee bought over 93,000 television advertisements, mostly thirty-second spots, in the seventy-five largest media markets, while the Dole-Kemp campaign and Republicans purchased nearly 75,000 spots.

The advertising was strategically aimed: markets were chosen because they were key to winning the electoral votes in critical states. Altogether, Los

Angeles was the most targeted television market, with a total of 3,543 spots aired for the Republicans and 2,159 spots aired for the Democrats. Also heavily targeted were Sacramento (5,270 total spots), Denver (5,024), Cleveland (4,629), Tampa (4,607), and Cincinnati (4,512). Voters living in the Washington, D.C., media market probably wondered if an election were going on. Washington, Chicago, Boston, Minneapolis, Baltimore, and New York and many smaller media markets received less attention because the outcome for electoral votes was far more certain than in the critical battleground states.

Despite all the money spent trying to persuade voters, many citizens in 1996 felt that the presidential campaign commercials were not very helpful. According to one survey, in the 1992 presidential campaign, 38 percent of the voters felt that the presidential campaign commercials were helpful, while 59 percent felt that the commercials were not helpful. By contrast, in 1996 campaign, only 25 percent of the voters felt that campaign commercials were helpful, and 73 percent said they were not helpful. Dole voters were the least satisfied with the information found in campaign ads.¹⁰

Issue Advocacy Ads Flooding the Airwaves Third-party issue advocacy ads have become a weapon of choice after their widespread use in the 1996 elections. Political scientist Darrell M. West observed that “what started as a trickle of ads over the past several decades has become a torrent on almost every conceivable topic. . . . Once the exception more than the rule, television ads have become the latest form of political volleyball on policy issues.”¹¹

The Annenberg Public Policy Center found that in the 1996 election cycle, issue ads were the favorite form of delivering pure attack against an opponent. Both sides were doing it, with nearly the same number of ads supporting Republicans as supporting Democrats and roughly one out of four issue ads focused on Medicare.¹²

Organized labor heavily used issue ads. The AFL-CIO spent \$35 million in 1996 on issues advocacy, with \$25 million going to television commercials. This is a generic ad called “No Way,” used by the AFL-CIO against vulnerable freshman Republican members seeking reelection to Congress:

Woman: My husband and I both work. And next year, we’ll have two children in college. And it will be very hard to put them through, even with two incomes.

Voice-over: Working families are struggling. But Congressman [X] voted with Newt Gingrich to cut college loans, while giving tax breaks to the wealthy. He even wants to eliminate the Department of Education. Congress will vote again on the budget. Tell Congressman [X], don't write off our children's future.

Woman: Tell him his priorities are all wrong.

The AFL-CIO spent an average of \$250,000 to \$350,000 in targeted districts where freshman Republicans were up for reelection. David Broder noted that many of the targeted freshman Republicans “struck back with vengeance.” Their campaigns and allies used million-dollar media buys, driving up the negative ratings of Democratic challengers through tough, hard-hitting commercials.¹³ In several races, the AFL-CIO spent over \$500,000: against Steve Chabot (R-Ohio), who won reelection, and against Dick Chrysler (R-Michigan), Steve Stockman (R-Texas), and Jim Longley (R-Maine), who were all defeated.¹⁴ In the thirty-two targeted districts, twelve Republicans were defeated.

The AFL-CIO issue ads heaped criticism on Republican incumbents. But in doing so, they clearly identified the sponsor (organized labor), and made charges based on votes and policy choices. Other issue ad sponsors were less forthright. There were some “stealth” campaigns orchestrated by organizations with innocuous-sounding names that hid the identity of their sponsors.

One such issue ad appeared in the tight race for the Montana congressional seat in 1996 between Democrat Bill Yellowtail and Republican Rick Hill. This issue ad was considered key to defeating Yellowtail.

Voice-over: “Who is Bill Yellowtail? He preaches family values, but he took a swing at his wife. And Yellowtail's explanation? He “only slapped her.” But her nose was broken.

This advertisement was placed by a tax-exempt, conservative, Virginia-based group called Citizens for Reform, which was active throughout the country trying to defeat liberal incumbents and candidates for Congress and incumbent members. Citizens for Reform spent a total of \$2 million in advertising in congressional districts around the country in 1996.¹⁵

Issue ads were important in several targeted congressional races in 1998. In a special election in California in early 1998 to replace the late Walter Capps, a Democrat, his widow, Lois Capps, defeated Republican Tom

Bordonaro in a closely watched race. The race wasn't simply about Capps or Bordonaro; it was also a fight about abortion. In many ways, the massive infusion of third-party, single-issue money at the end of the race brushed the candidates to the sidelines.¹⁶

The Campaign for Working Families, headed by Gary Bauer, spent \$200,000 to portray Capps as pro-abortion. To counter this, the National Abortion Rights Action League spent \$100,000 attacking Bauer as an extremist who opposed all abortions. Democratic political consultant Martin Hamburger characterized the contest as a "political hall of mirrors, where competing organizations played out their debates against the backdrop of a special election."¹⁷

The abortion fight was not the only issue advocacy battle in this special election. The Capps campaign was aided by \$300,000 in television and radio ads by Americans for Term Limits and U.S. Term Limits.¹⁸ Capps signed a term-limit pledge, while Bordonaro refused to do so. Bordonaro also missed out on \$300,000 that was to have come from the Republican leadership. Apparently he irritated Newt Gingrich by giving him less than a whole-hearted endorsement, and the promised money from Gingrich never materialized.

The result of the heavy issues campaigning had a dampening effect on both campaigns' own media. Hamburger observed that "voters were so terrorized by the torrent of issue advocacy campaigning going on that they paid attention to little or no advertising of any kind." The Capps campaign, late in the contest, resorted to direct mail and grassroots activity instead of television, hoping to get through to voters.¹⁹

The Capps-Bordonaro contest illustrates how outside organizations come in at the last minute to try to win over voters. Other advocacy groups use a different strategy: coming into an election early, trying to set the policy agenda before either the candidates or other interest groups can do so. This is what the Sierra Club, a nonprofit environmental advocacy organization, tried to do in a hotly contested congressional election in 1998. Six months before the election, the Sierra Club took a gamble, buying \$50,000 worth of television time in the Illinois 17th congressional district, trying to get its policy message across before the district was flooded with other issue advocacy ads. This was part of a \$6 million Sierra Club voter education and issue advocacy campaign for the 1998 elections, which targeted twenty-five environmentally important Senate and House races. In this rural district in western Illinois, the Sierra Club's issue was the environmental damage caused by runoffs of

manure from giant hog farms. The Sierra Club blanketed the Illinois district with enough issue ads that the average viewer saw them ten times. The ads clearly aided Democratic incumbent Lane Evans, though they never ask viewers to “vote for” Evans or “vote against” his opponent.

Congressman Evans had never stated a clear position on environmental hazards of large-scale hog waste runoff, but it had clearly been a contentious issue in the district. The Sierra Club used its issue advocacy ads, backed by focus-group and polling research, to raise the issue’s visibility and to try to define the debate in the upcoming election. “The idea is to set the agenda, give our issue a high profile, get information about Lane Evans’s record into the hands of voters and lay down political markers for our involvement,” stated Sierra Club political director Daniel J. Weiss.²⁰

The 1998 congressional contest was not just between Representative Lane Evans (Democrat) and challenger Mark Baker (Republican), it also was a contest for organized labor, abortion rights and abortion opponents, veterans, senior citizens groups, farmers, and others involved. Guy Gugliotta wrote, “In most cases the candidates themselves will not know who is helping or harming them until they see [the issue advocacy ads]. The voters may never know unless they pay close attention to the fine print at the bottom of their TV screen.”²¹ Thus, Gugliotta observed, a new law of politics has begun to emerge: “‘soft’ money drives ‘hard’ money”; that is, outside issue ads, paid for by soft (or unregulated) campaign funds, were setting the tone and debate rather than the traditional candidate advertising, paid for by hard (or regulated) funds.²²

Issue advocacy advertisement will continue to thrive and will fundamentally change the dynamics of high-stakes congressional and other contests in future years. Interest groups have learned how to get around campaign finance disclosure laws, and they are able to spend as much money as they want, hiding under the guise of fictitious, innocuous-sounding organizations and not revealing the source of their funding. They do this by claiming that they do not advocate voting for or against a candidate.

Battling It Out in the Iowa 4th District In competitive elections, congressional candidates are increasingly being assisted by state and national party organizations and by other interest groups. The 1996 contest in the highly competitive 4th congressional district in Iowa, in which freshman incumbent Republican Greg Ganske was challenged by Democrat Connie McBurney, a former television weather reporter, serves as a good illustration. McBurney’s

campaign began its media buys in Des Moines and Omaha during the third week of September, with 746 spots costing a total of \$255,390.²³ She was aided by the Iowa Democratic Party, the Democratic National Committee, and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, which began airing commercials a month before the McBurney ads and altogether aired 647 spots costing \$205,102. The AFL-CIO weighed in with the biggest assistance, starting in late August, mostly attacking incumbent Ganske with 1,859 ads costing \$688,734. Of the \$1,149,226 in estimated total ad buys for McBurney, only 22 percent came from her campaign. The Ganske campaign had its own assistance as well, and easily outspent McBurney.²⁴ The numbers supplied by the McBurney campaign alone show how difficult it is to estimate accurately how much is spent on behalf of a candidate. Federal Election Commission figures submitted by a candidate show only part of the story. With third-party assistance coming from the state and national political parties, and with issue advocacy money whose amount need not be reported, it is now almost impossible to determine accurately how much money ultimately went into any tight race.

This campaign in western Iowa also shows how crowded the airwaves had become. The Ganske and McBurney campaigns weren't the only ones trying to reach voters. In twenty frenzied days before the election, candidates in other contests were also seeking voter attention. Viewers in the Omaha media market saw commercials for four ballot issues, an Omaha Public Power District election, assorted state judicial contests, a U.S. Senate race in Iowa, AFL-CIO ads, a small number of presidential ads for Clinton, Dole, and Perot, in addition to the congressional ads from the candidates and their allies. The "share of voice"—the percentage of political ads devoted solely to congressional district races (and not just the 4th district)—was only 21 percent.

Here the two candidates in the Iowa 4th congressional district were also competing for viewer attention with congressional candidates in adjacent districts, in the Nebraska 2nd district (Omaha), and in other Iowa congressional districts in the Des Moines media market (the 5th, 3rd, and 2nd districts). What were likely voters, half paying attention to television commercials, to make of all this? Commercials popped up at all times but clustered around the early and late evening local news, in no orderly sequence, some for contests not even in the state. Candidates, parties, interest groups, and ballot issues, all vying for voter support, were sandwiched

between commercials for national hamburger chains, local car dealerships, laxatives and headache remedies, plus interminable promotions by television stations for their own programming.

Early Ads: Following Clinton's Example Many well-heeled candidates took notice of Clinton's early ad campaign and began spending early and heavily for their reelections in 1998.²⁵ Some incumbents, like Senator Alfonse D'Amato, were fighting for their political lives and spent enormous sums of money early in the campaign. D'Amato began airing ads in May 1997, nearly a year and a half before voters went to the polls. Through the end of 1997 his campaign had spent over \$1.4 million, showing 2,538 ads in the five largest New York media markets, trying (but ultimately failing) to regain the public's attention and favor.²⁶

Many unsuccessful candidates have convinced themselves that spending half a million dollars or so a full year before the election will somehow energize an apathetic public, boost their name recognition, and make people start talking about their candidacy. The reality, however, is very different. An early media blitz can be like skywriting during a hurricane. A year away from the elections the public is really not interested, and when the television ads saturate the airwaves, few are paying attention; fewer still remember the candidate's name a week after the advertising, and without a sustained, repeated effort, the commercials are nothing more than a waste of precious campaign dollars that will be sorely missed during the heat of the battle.

Buying Television Time

One of the most important but often overlooked aspects of a media campaign is the placement of ads on television. It is essential for a campaign to have crafted the most effective commercials; it is equally critical that the commercials be strategically positioned for the maximum impact before the right audience at the best available prices. For a large-scale modern campaign, television commercials represent the largest outlay of funds. For media firms, particularly in multimillion-dollar campaigns, the fees earned from the television buys can also mean substantial profits.

What Television Costs As James Bennet observed, television advertising rates "vary wildly, by market, by hour, and even by station."²⁷ While there is

incredible variation in costs, there also are some fundamental market principles of television time and how it is divided throughout the year and throughout the day.

On an annual basis, television time is broken up into four quarters:

1st quarter: January–March (third most expensive for purchasing ads)

2nd quarter: April–June (second most expensive)

3rd quarter: July–September (least expensive)

4th quarter: October–November (most expensive)

The fourth quarter is the most expensive for purchasing commercial time because it is the beginning of the fall season of new shows and because of the holiday market; the third quarter is the least expensive because it falls in the summer, rerun season, when viewership is traditionally the smallest. This is unfortunate for most campaigns: when they need commercials the most, during the early fall, rates are most expensive. When they need commercials the least, during the summer lull, rates are the cheapest.

Television programming is divided into nine day parts:

Early morning: 5:30 A.M.–9:00 A.M. (local morning news, *Good Morning America*, *Today Show*)

Daytime: 9:00 A.M.–4:00 P.M. (morning talk shows, noon news, game shows, soap operas)

Early fringe: 4:00 P.M.–5:30 P.M. (*Oprah*)

Early news: 5:30 P.M.–7:00 P.M.

Prime access: 7:00 P.M.–8:00 P.M. (*Jeopardy*, *Access Hollywood*, *Seinfeld* reruns)

Prime time: 8:00 P.M.–11:00 P.M. (*Dateline*, *X-Files*, *Drew Carey*, *20/20*)

Late news: 11:00 P.M.–11:30 P.M.

Late fringe: 11:30 P.M.–1:00 A.M. (Leno, Letterman)

Weekend: Saturday and Sunday, except for news and prime time (Sunday talk shows, sports)

The Political Rate Card Television stations sell three classes of time for commercial advertisers, all of which are available to candidate advertisers as well:

- (I) Fixed, nonpreemptible: These ads may not be preempted in favor of any other ad; they are also the most expensive.
- (II) Effective selling level: This is the current selling rate needed to clear during any given week.
- (III) Preemptible with notice. This is the LUR (lowest unit rate), which by federal law television stations are required to charge candidate campaigns during a forty-five-day period before a primary and a sixty-day period before a general election.

The following table shows what the political rate card looked like for ABC television affiliate WTVG in Toledo, Ohio, for the spring of 1998.

**POLITICAL RATE CARD
STATION WTVG, TOLEDO, OHIO
SELECTIVE SHOWS, SPRING 1998**

<i>Day</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Show</i>	<i>I— Fixed</i>	<i>II— Current</i>	<i>LUR</i>
M–F	6–7 A.M.	13 Action News This Morning	\$175	\$125	\$75
M–F	9–10 A.M.	Sally Jesse Raphael	\$100	\$75	\$40
M–F	4–5 P.M.	Rosie O’Donnell	\$400	\$325	\$200
M–F	5–5:30 P.M.	13 Action News at 5:00	\$325	\$250	\$175
M–F	6–7 P.M.	World News with Peter Jennings	\$525	\$475	\$400
M–Su	11–11:35 P.M.	13 Action News at 11:00	\$600	\$525	\$375
Tue	9–10 P.M.	Home Improvement	\$1,500	\$1,300	\$1,000
Wed	9–10 P.M.	Drew Carey	\$1,500	\$1,300	\$1,000
Sun	7–8 P.M.	Wonderful World of Disney	\$1,400	\$1,200	\$825

Source: Political Rate Card, WTVG, Inc., Toledo, Ohio, Effective March 21, 1998.

All the quoted rates were for thirty-second commercials. Ten-second commercials were 50 percent of the thirty-second rates; fifteen-second commercials

were 75 percent of the thirty-second rate; and sixty-second commercials were double the thirty-second rate.

Campaigns often cluster their commercial buying around local 5:00 P.M. evening news (here \$175 per commercial at the LUR), or local 11:00 P.M. evening news (\$375), or morning news (\$75), rather than spending in the more expensive prime-time slots. But buying is almost an art form, mixed with the variables of commercial and other political traffic. "Political ad buying is niche buying," states Cathie Herrick, media director of Squier, Knapp, Dunn Communications.²⁸ Buying ad time involves a combination of targeting the right programs to reach the desired demographics (for example, persuadable, high-school-educated female voters), reacting to ads launched by the opposition, and always watching the bottom line of availability of scarce campaign funds. Television stations learned the lesson long ago: political ads must be paid for in advance.

Best-laid plans for buying television commercials can often go awry: the campaign's hard-hitting attack ad is pulled after scorching criticism from the press and the candidate's promise not to show it anymore, a last-minute heavy buy from an interest group throws the campaign off message, or tracking numbers show that the most recent ad is working, and all resources have to be poured into it.

Cost Efficiency and Media Markets A campaign tries to reach as many targeted voters as possible, spending the least amount of money. The following example of the media markets in Washington State demonstrates the cost-effectiveness of concentrating on the Seattle-Tacoma television market. Washington has four media markets, with Seattle-Tacoma the principal market, reaching three out of four voters.

WASHINGTON MEDIA MARKETS AND THE 1992 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

<i>Media Market</i>	<i>Presidential Vote</i>	<i>Percent of State</i>	<i>CPP</i>	<i>CPI</i>
Seattle-Tacoma	1,705,376	74.55	168	\$0.0099
Spokane	275,025	12.02	35	\$0.0127
Yakima	153,774	6.72	20	\$0.0130
Portland, Ore.	153,390	6.71	125	\$0.0815
Total	2,287,565			

Source: Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, unpublished data, 1996.

For the dominant Seattle-Tacoma market, the cost per point (CPP)—that is, the cost of delivering 1 percent (one rating point) of a population group—is the highest (168), but the cost per impression (CPI)—based on projected turnout and the CPP—is the smallest (\$0.0099). It costs much more to reach the audience in Seattle-Tacoma, but it is well worth it, because it is the most efficient market.

Other markets can be far less efficient. New Jersey combines the worst of both worlds: the only two media markets lie outside the state—New York City and Philadelphia; they are also the first and fourth largest in the country and thus are expensive markets. When New Jersey political ads for a statewide candidate are aired in New York, they are also seen by “wasted” audiences, viewers living in New York City, Long Island, western Connecticut, and the Hudson Valley of New York. When aired in Philadelphia, the wasted audiences are in Delaware, Philadelphia, and eastern Pennsylvania. At the more local level, for a congressional campaign, city council election, or other local election, expensive big-city television buys make little sense in places like Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, or Washington, D.C.

The 216 U.S. media markets vary greatly in size and in viewership; hence the cost of airing a thirty-second spot will vary greatly as well. For example, New Jersey governor Christine Todd Whitman, running ads in the New York City media market, spent an average of \$3,506 for each thirty-second spot during the first ten months of 1997. Ted Mondale, running in the gubernatorial primary in Minnesota, spent an average of \$738 for each thirty-second ad in the Minneapolis media market during March 1998, while Mike Johanns during the same time spent \$188 for each ad in the Omaha media market while running for governor of Nebraska.²⁹

Anatomy of a Television Commercial

Television commercials are extraordinarily important vehicles for conveying messages about candidates. Millions of dollars in television time might be committed to a particular campaign spot. While ads depend heavily on the skill and creativity of the ad team that puts them together, much more goes into the preparation of today’s political commercials.³⁰

The following is a hypothetical example of a high-quality, carefully researched and developed campaign commercial for a candidate in a gubernatorial race. Approximately \$2 million will eventually be spent on television

advertising for this gubernatorial campaign, and the first commercial prepared is a six-second biographical piece.

The gubernatorial race is for an open seat, and the commercial will be for Jim Bennister, the current lieutenant governor. Bennister won the lieutenant governor's race three years ago and he received more votes than any other statewide candidate that year. Yet Bennister is largely unknown to voters today. He has been overshadowed by the governor, hasn't used free media as effectively as he would have liked, and as a result he has relatively low name recognition.

The media team advises Bennister that the first commercial needs to be a biographical, soft piece—one that reintroduces him to voters. That decision came through a lengthy process involving research, market testing, and campaign instinct. Nine distinct phases are involved: research, buying decisions, ad concept, ad creation, testing, final production, launching the ad, airing the ad, and, finally, impact analysis.

1. Research Information and analysis come from four sources: candidate research, focus-group analysis, the benchmark survey, and targeting analysis.

Candidate research. The research consultant has been conducting candidate research for almost four months. Lieutenant governors typically have little to do, and this state is no exception—Bennister presides over the state Senate and casts a rare tie vote when necessary. Bennister is also chairman of the commission that is looking into state bureaucracy downsizing—a state version of Reinventing Government under Al Gore. The research consultant has little to work with but does come up with six achievements by Bennister that he thinks will become good thematic material:

- Bennister has led the fight against government waste and bloated bureaucracy (little has been accomplished by the commission he chairs, but at least Bennister can point to his leadership);
- He has achieved a perfect voting/attendance record while in office (this is somewhat disingenuous, because the researcher has to dip back to his days as state delegate);
- He fought to roll back the taxes on personal property (also somewhat disingenuous: Bennister did this eight years ago while in the state assembly, and rode this issue hard to get elected as lieutenant governor);

- He is a proven crime fighter (actually, the only “proof” is some noncontroversial votes during his assembly years and an early endorsement from the state Fraternal Order of Police);
- He promises to make public education the highest priority in his gubernatorial administration (not an accomplishment, just a promise of what he’d like to do); and
- He promises to bring back decency and civility to state government.

In truth, the candidate research yields very little in the way of accomplishments, but these are the best that the research can come up with. Total cost for candidate research thus far in the campaign: \$12,000.

Focus-group analysis. The state is divided politically and culturally between the big urban media market and the four much smaller markets downstate. About 3 million people live in the urban media market, and nearly 2 million live in the four smaller markets. Bennister and his consultants know that they must carry the four smaller markets handily and make a very decent showing in the urban market in order to win. Altogether there are eight focus group sessions, four in the large urban market and two each in two of the smaller markets.

Focus groups are shown video clips of Bennister, old commercials made when he was running for lieutenant governor four years ago, and the focus groups answer questions from a prepared script, which incorporates the six themes from the candidate research plus much more in open-ended and associational questions. The focus-group sessions tell the campaign the following:

- Though he was the biggest vote getter in the last election, only sixteen out of eighty-four focus-group participants could identify Bennister’s name without prompting, just seventeen could identify his picture, and only eleven could identify both the picture and the name.
- After being told who the lieutenant governor was and shown some fairly recent television clips of his presiding over the state Senate, fifty-five out of the eighty-four participants agreed that Bennister looked like a trustworthy, decent individual. Ten more agreed when shown informal scenes at home with his wife and two teenage daughters. Those participants who weren’t too impressed all came from the urban media market.
- The general mood of the focus-group participants was weariness with politicians and political promises, but general contentment with their own

lives. The economy has been relatively strong during the past several years; participants were generally pleased but saw individual achievement and actions, not government, as the cause of the contentment. Especially in the urban media market, participants weren't buying politicians who were promising them great things. Bennister's promise of education fell flat in the urban media groups and only mildly interested participants in the other markets.

- By far the most compelling issue was the rollback of the personal property tax. It didn't matter to most that this issue was eight years old, but hardly anyone knew that Bennister had anything to do with the issue.

Total cost for eight focus group sessions: \$22,000.

Benchmark survey. The benchmark poll gives the consulting team more valuable information:

- The current governor was well respected and liked, especially in the smaller media markets.
- Only 32 percent of respondents could identify Bennister; of those who could, forty-one had a favorable view of him, fifteen had an unfavorable view, and the remaining forty-four had no opinion or were neutral. He was best known in his home region (a small media market), and least known in the major urban market.
- Throughout the state, the biggest issues on people's minds were the high cost of living (54 percent), high taxes (38 percent), and education for their kids (36 percent).
- Bennister was viewed most favorably by high-school-educated men thirty-five to fifty years old, small-business owners, and voters in small town and rural areas.

Total cost of benchmark poll: \$14,000.

Targeting analysis. The consulting firm conducting the targeting analysis has looked at past voting records, demographic data from census information, and other targeting data. From this information, the campaign will be able to determine, down to the city-block level, those who are most likely to vote for Bennister. The targeting analysis confirms much of the benchmark findings

and goes beyond the benchmark data. Bennister's strongest probable votes come from the small media markets, but there is also a significant opportunity to capture suburban voters in the state's one major media market as well. Total cost for the targeting analysis: \$8,000.

2. *Buying Decisions* The media firm has an in-house media buyer whose job is to buy commercial time to have maximum impact, reaching the right audience at the optimum price. The campaign consultants want maximum coverage in all the media markets, hoping to have 2,500 gross ratings points of coverage. But budget constraints prohibit an ad buy this large. The campaign makes a strategic decision, based on the benchmark and targeting analysis, to buy heavily in the major media market, hoping to pull in many of the suburban voters, who could make the critical difference. The campaign will buy ads in each of the markets, concentrating its efforts mostly around the late-evening and early-evening local newscasts. Altogether, the campaign will blanket the state's five media markets with 2,000 gross ratings points, averaging \$745 per sixty-second spot. In all, 360 spots will be aired. Total cost: \$268,200 for the media buys, plus a 13 percent media consultant fee (\$34,866).

3. *Ad Concept* The biographical spot concept is developed primarily by the senior media consultant with the help of the general campaign consultant, the pollster, and the candidate. The final spot concept is a product of the research data and analysis plus the artistic skill and political judgment of the senior consultant team. The consultant team decides to put some policy content into this ad as well. The candidate, who expressed considerable interest in the project early on, particularly during the focus group phase, has basically lost interest and wants only to be shown the final product.

4. *Ad Creation* The media firm has an in-house production staff and regularly subcontracts additional crew for major jobs, such as this one-day shoot, which will provide the majority of the footage used in the final sixty-second spot. The media firm hires a helicopter and a makeup artist for the shoot. The media advance team has made arrangements to film at sites throughout the state: a senior citizens center, an elementary school, a clean room in a high-tech factory, near the computers used in an after-school program, a farmer's field, and a suburban police department's shooting range, complete with squad cars. Visuals are very important.

The candidate and supporting cast are lined up to be in the shoot. Bennister is filmed with his parents and two children; there are vintage photos of the lieutenant governor as a child, and old photos of his family history, going back to pioneer days. The candidate, camera crew, media consultant, and makeup artist all pile into the helicopter.

It is a grueling day that starts at dawn and continues throughout the day at seven different stops. The weather cooperates. Altogether they have traveled eight hundred miles today. The footage of the candidate, with his carefully scripted lines, will be the raw material for the commercials created throughout the campaign. Two hours of high-quality film and four hours of videotape are shot.

The media firm rents time at the national party's media production center, saving about \$2,000 in production costs. The voice-over is provided by an announcer on retainer from the party's media center.³¹ Also coming from the party's media center are the computer-generated graphics, music, and sound effects.

Total cost of ad creation: \$47,000 (for the one-day shoot: \$35,000).

5. Testing Ads Three versions of the biographical spot are produced. Three focus groups are shown these spots, along with other campaign material, and earlier spots from other races. Spot number two gets the most positive feedback from the focus-group participants, who are using a combination of check-off sheets and dial meters to judge the ads. Yet there are two glaring problems even on this version. Half the focus-group participants were confused about something the lieutenant governor said, and nearly half mistook the governor for the state's senior senator. A new visual is added so that Bennister's point is clear, and a chyron overlay, clearly stating "Gov. Jim Forster," is put under the governor's face. A scattering of focus-group participants didn't like this color or that music, but the exasperated media consultant sticks to his artistic guns and the biographical spot goes through. Most of the material from the shoot is not used, and the most effective shots are ones shot around the kitchen table in the lieutenant governor's home, with his photogenic wife and two kids. Bennister himself is quite pleased.

6. Final Ad Is Produced The final version of the sixty-second bio spot is ready for public viewing:

[Upbeat background music]

[Shots of Bennister as a child, montage of family photos, turn-of-the-century shots of his grandparents]

Voice-over: Jim Bennister's family has lived here for four generations. Jim's been carrying on the family business, raising his family, making his hometown a better place to live.

[Shot of Bennister at the family business, work shirt on, sleeves rolled up, looking up at camera while carrying sacks of fertilizer in the family's garden and flower store]

Bennister: Dad taught me the value of hard work, and Mom taught me respect for our neighbors.

[Shots of Bennister with family in kitchen]

Bennister: Sally and I love it here, but we worry about our kids' future. Seems like everything costs more today and we end up just paying more taxes. That's not right.

[Bennister in front of state capitol building, with the governor]

Bennister: I want to be your next governor and finish the good work done by Jim Forster.

Voice-over: Jim Bennister for governor. Good for our families. Good for business. Paid for by Bennister for Governor, Sarah Williams, treasurer.

7. *Launching the Ad* The campaign wants maximum favorable publicity as it launches this first ad buy. Journalists are invited for a preview of the commercial and given a full press kit with biographical information, talking points, information about Bennister's accomplishments, and information about when and where the commercial will run. Bennister is present at the news conference and answers questions, none of which have anything to do with the bio spot. Fortunately, Bennister is well briefed and handles himself fairly adeptly.

8. *Airing the Ad* Four days before the ads are to be aired, the campaign deposits the required funds for the buy. Copies of the ad are express mailed to the television outlets forty-eight hours before they are to be aired. The media buyer is able to stick with the purchasing schedule, and over the course of the next ten days, 360 spots will be shown throughout the state.

9. *Impact Analysis* Three days after the bio has run its cycle, the campaign pollster conducts a short tracking survey. The ads have had some success: Bennister's recognition level has moved up (32 percent of the voters now recognize Bennister, up from 22 percent before the ads ran); further, Bennister's

approval rating has improved slightly (now 41 percent approval, as opposed to 37 percent before the ad ran). Most voters, however, still have not focused on this race, do not know Bennister, and have formed no positive or negative impressions of him. Altogether, approximately \$408,000 has been spent on the creation and airing of this campaign commercial.

Instant Ads Certainly not all campaigns have the luxury of time and resources to produce ads like the one outlined above. Especially in the heat of the battle, during the last crucial weeks, ads need to be produced quickly and cannot be fully researched or tested, and the candidate must rely on the skill, creativity, and judgment of the media consultant.

The abrupt change in leadership in the Bob Dole campaign during the 1996 presidential primaries illustrates this point. The Dole media campaign took a sharp turn when it brought in media consultant Don Sipple as its new chief strategist. Up until this point in the primaries, Dole's ads were sharp, negative attacks on his opponents. Sipple immediately called in Stuart Stevens, who had produced Dole's television ads, and said that they had to throw together a positive ad. By the next day, Stevens and Sipple had put together a script entitled "Proud":

Dole: We have reached a defining moment in America.

Announcer: Americans long for leadership, a strong president with character and courage who shares our conservative values.

Dole: Basic values like honesty and decency and responsibility and self-reliance.

The campaign had no time for focus groups, survey research, or other tools to craft a major advertisement. It was all political instinct, and had a sounding board of just one person, Sipple's wife, Joyce, who after watching the ad said, "That's really nice. He has dignity." Sipple pulled all negative ads and replaced them immediately with "Proud."³²

Negative Advertising

I shall refrain from false or misleading attacks on an opponent or member of his or her family, and shall do everything in my power to prevent others from using such tactics.

—from the Code of Professional Ethics, American Association
of Political Consultants

The negative campaign ad is one of the central features of modern electioneering. Some of the ads are hard-hitting, factual, determined attacks against their candidates' opponents. They are part of the combat of campaigning and political hardball. Other campaign ads step across the line: they are evasive and misleading, untruthful, replete with hyperbole and innuendo, they kindle voter's resentment, suspicion, or envy, or they manipulate personal tragedy for political gain. What do we make of such ads?

Political consultants will generally say that they use negative ads because they work: they drive down the support of an opponent by pointing out the opponent's personal or public flaws. Many social scientists have researched negative ads but have come up with few definitive answers. Political scientists Richard A. Lau and Lee Sigelman looked at all the research conducted by social scientists and found that it has focused on four principal questions (and answers):³³

1. Are negative political ads more readily processed and remembered than positive ads? (There is no strong evidence to show this to be true).
2. Are negative ads more effective in achieving their consequences than positive ads? (Again, there is no reason to believe that this is true—in fact, negative advertising may lead to the opposite effect.)
3. Do viewers really dislike negative ads? (Yes: in six studies negative ads were rated less ethical and less fair.)
4. Do negative ads have serious unintended consequences for the American system of government? (Yes, perhaps, but the jury is still out on this question.)³³

My impression is that negative advertising, however defined and measured, does have a long-term negative impact on voters, particularly on their perceptions of government and candidates. There are plenty of examples of ads that drag up long-forgotten divorces, that blow out of proportion personal idiosyncrasies and past mistakes, that, through raw and blurred images or sarcasm and grating sound effects paint the candidate's opponent in the worst light. When a candidate's votes or policy preferences are attacked, they are invariably taken out of context, and small issues or votes are pumped up to look like enormous faults. In the long run, all of this in the guerilla theater of modern politics must have some corrosive effect on political discourse and the public's view of politics and public service.

More subtle than blatant negative attacks but far more pervasive are the ads that manipulate or distort reality. Today, with sophisticated digital technology, any image can be manipulated,³⁴ and there is nothing to stop image enhancing of candidates. Photoretouches try to make us look better, covering up blemishes, smoothing out wrinkles. Digital image enhancing can go further: it can slim away unattractive pounds, add hair, make a somewhat lumpy five-foot-six-incher into a slimmed down, handsome five-foot-niner. Image enhancing can provide candidates with makeovers that nature never could produce.

Not all makeovers make people look good. It is standard practice for media consultants to choose unflattering shots of opponents. In grainy black-and-white shots, candidates are shown with scowls, bags under their eyes, goofy looks on their faces—just plain unattractiveness writ large. Digital imaging that can do wonders can also do much harm.

This image manipulation has always been a factor in media campaigns. Researchers at the University of Oklahoma's Political Communications Center analyzed more than two thousand commercials from 1952 through 1992, and found that 15 percent contained "some ethically questionable use of technology." A follow-up study for the 1996 presidential campaign found that 28 percent of the 188 commercials examined contained questionable use of technology: news conferences that were never held, debates that never took place, use of audio or video tricks to stereotype or ridicule opponents.³⁵ With digital technology now widely available, there will be greater temptation to alter reality.

Negative advertising and the skulduggery of opposition research also have long-term dampening effects on potential candidates. How many exceptionally talented persons are dissuaded from careers in elective office because they are not willing to have their families, personal lives, and reputations besmirched by thirty-second spots at 2,000 gross ratings points? Yet, for campaigns, candidates, and media consultants, thinking of long-term implications is a luxury in which they cannot often indulge. The pressure on the campaign to win is enormous. In the heat of the battle, campaigns are operating with precious few dollars left, gambling on a last-ditch media buy, frustrated by the barrage of attack ads from the opponent, with the threat of a last-minute issues advocacy ready to kill them off—and a nervous candidate who has spent millions of his own money and does not intend to lose. That is the reality of media decisions. Ultimately, however, the decision to launch a barrage of negative advertising rests with the candidate alone.

Using Free Media

During the 1996 presidential campaign, Don Sipple was convinced that the best way to get the public's attention was through free media. "You have to forge your theme in the free media. The public gets sixteen hundred sales pitches per day. That's ads, billboards, magazine articles, everything. And except for the Willie Horton ad of 1988, which was publicized relentlessly by the free media, when was the last time anybody could even remember a political ad?"

"Forget ads," Sipple said. "The candidate is the salesperson. *It doesn't work without the salesperson.* It's stage management. The Dole campaign underestimated the importance of the *candidate.*"³⁶

Many candidates in the 1990s saw the value of free media and clearly went after it as a part of their overall communications strategy.³⁷ Bob Dole had his chance to use free media, from his position as Senate majority leader, presidential candidate, even as a guest on the David Letterman show. But Dole was up against the master of communication, Bill Clinton, who simply by virtue of being president soaked up an enormous amount of free media.

During a presidential campaign, some of the best platforms for free media are the political parties' national conventions. Over the years, the conventions have become events made for television. The Democratic convention in 1992 paved the way. Clinton pal and television executive Harry Thomason produced "Man from Hope," the made-for-television biography showing Bill Clinton's rough childhood upbringing and his triumph over despair. Earlier conventions had also been well scripted for television, like Ronald Reagan's "Morning in America" themes in 1984 and the tightly controlled Republican convention in 1968. But there was nothing like the 1996 Republican convention. Staged, scripted, controlled, smoothed over, it was the most made-for-television of all conventions. The quadrennial national political convention itself, which may be nothing more than an antiquarian invention of earlier days, became a four-day infomercial for the Republican Party. Republican leaders with the highest negative public ratings—Newt Gingrich and Pat Buchanan—were shunted off the center stage and given only minor roles. No more vitriol from Buchanan, who had scored big points with his conservative faithful in Houston in 1992 but hurt the party's image with the larger public. Even protesters were confined to a limited, chain-link-fenced area and given fifty-five minutes (and no more) to make their statements.

The Republican platform had the strong edges of the Christian Coalition and the hard conservative wing of the GOP. Yet the image presented to the

viewing public was one of diversity, the GOP version of a rainbow coalition, with African Americans J. C. Watts, Colin Powell, and other minorities making cameo appearances. This despite the fact that only three percent of the delegates were minorities.³⁸

The entire production, from the colors used on stage to the tightly scripted schedules, played to television. No surprises, no long-winded speeches, no controversy, nothing unplanned, access to delegates and politicians tightly controlled; and all the while, focus groups and dial groups were giving convention managers instantaneous feedback. The center point of the convention, the podium, was given special attention. “We had to tear down that wall, tear down that podium, we had to get rid of that battleship look that had dominated conventions since the 1930s and towered over everything,” said Michael Deaver, Ronald Reagan’s image maker and the architect of the made-for-television look in 1996.

The television branch of the Republican Party, GOP-TV, broadcast from the convention a “slickly produced propaganda in the guise of news, a sort of conservative fantasy of what television would be like without pushy journalists,” observed Howard Kurtz.³⁹ The GOP spent \$1.3 million airing its version of the convention on Pat Robertson’s cable television Family Channel.

But, ironically, fewer people were watching. The networks had long abandoned gavel-to-gavel coverage, with only the cable stations CNN, C-SPAN, and MSNBC doing full coverage. ABC’s Ted Koppel noisily left San Diego after the first day, proclaiming that there wasn’t any news to cover. Nielsen Media Research revealed that the San Diego convention drew 22 percent fewer viewers during its four days than the Houston GOP convention had in 1992, and that during Dole’s acceptance night the drop-off was even bigger, at 30 percent.⁴⁰ The biggest winner of the television night was a rerun of *Seinfeld*.

The Democratic Party convention in 1996 was filled with its moments of pathos—tearful moments with James Brady and Christopher Reeve. It was staged and produced almost to the same level of made-for-television perfection as the Republican convention. Network television covered fewer and fewer events—indeed because there were fewer real events to cover. President Clinton ended the Chicago convention with a rousing speech that probably ended an era. The 2000 conventions basically were a replay of 1996: made for television, relegated to cable, and watched by few.

Throughout the course of the 1996 general election, media coverage was approximately half of what it was in 1992, and 11 million fewer people

voted. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press found that voters were less likely to get their news from television in 1996 (72 percent) than they were in 1992 (82 percent). The biggest losers were the television networks, who fell 19 percentage points from 1992 (55 percent) to 1996 (36 percent). The networks suffered their biggest loss of news consumption from those under thirty years of age. Radio use, however, increased from 1992 (12 percent) to 1996 (19 percent), with Republicans more likely than Democrats or Independents to report receiving their information from radio sources,⁴¹ presumably due to the rise of talk radio.

Since the 1996 elections it appears to be much more difficult for candidates to obtain free media coverage. In the 1998 California gubernatorial primary, it seemed almost impossible. As Todd Purdum observed, the campaign for governor, one month away from primary day, was “all but invisible on television news and only sporadically [got] front-page newspaper coverage.”⁴² That leaves paid television commercials, and the millions of dollars they require, as the principal medium through which the public gets its information about candidates and issues. “The balance between the paid and unpaid media has never been so great,” observed political analyst Sherry Bebitch Jeffe.⁴³

In California in 1998 few people seemed interested in elections. Instead of steady, comprehensive coverage of the primaries, television was more interested in the busy May sweeps period—giving viewers a heavy dosage of sensational, visual events—fires, freeway shootings and chases, the effects of *El Niño*—not boring politicians and campaigning. Al Checchi and Jane Harman spent their millions buying television commercials because they were relatively unknown to California voters and because local television just wasn’t interested in covering the primary election.⁴⁴

What happened with the press in California goes to the heart of the argument of media critics who complain about the cynicism of the press and the decline in public affairs reporting. Many critics have pointed to “pack journalism” and the pessimism of the press toward candidates and officeholders. Larry Sabato describes another phenomenon, “feeding frenzy: the news media, print and broadcast, go after a wounded politician like sharks in a feeding frenzy. The wounds may have been self-inflicted, and the politician may richly deserve his or her fate, but the journalists now take center stage in the process, creating the news as much as reporting it.”⁴⁵ Robert M. Entman argues that the inability of the press to educate and stimulate the public is demonstrated by the fact that fewer people participate in the political process in an intelligent manner.⁴⁶ James Fallows likewise contends that

citizens are choosing to disengage from the political process, thereby endangering the health of our democratic institutions. People no longer see the relevance of participating in the public dialogue, and view the work of politicians as meaningless in their lives.⁴⁷

Worse than press hostility is press neglect. The real danger is when politics and campaigning for office are viewed as nothing but an irrelevant sideshow, and the media don't even bother to pay attention.

Not only are free media in jeopardy; so, too, are paid media. While federal candidates for office are guaranteed lowest market rates and unlimited access, state and local candidates do not enjoy such privileges. The 1997 Virginia governor's race may be a taste of the cutbacks to come in paid media. The four largest television stations in Washington, D.C., sharply cut sales of advertising spots to Virginia political candidates, in profit-boosting moves. In early October, with less than a month to go before the election, the stations informed the gubernatorial candidates that they would limit air-time purchases by roughly 40 percent between then and election day. One station gave this reason: open-market competition and limited audience interest in the Virginia campaigns among Washington and Maryland viewers. The ABC affiliate stated it would no longer sell time to lieutenant governor and attorney general candidates at the customary discounted rates for politicians. The NBC, CBS, and Fox affiliates cut back down-ticket campaigns from discounted ads in lucrative prime-time and news slots.

The danger of limiting paid television communications was clear to Ellen S. Miller, executive director of Public Campaign: "If we can't even get them [television stations] to provide paid time, what's the potential for getting free time for debates. It has enormous ramifications for the ability of candidates to make their voices heard in races."⁴⁸

For many campaigns, television is the best vehicle for communications. But the costs are high: campaigns have to hire professional media advisers to design and create television commercials, they have to raise significant amounts of funds in order to produce and air the advertising, they depend upon advertising slots being available (and affordable), and when campaigns seek out free media they must depend upon the whims and priorities of local television newscasts. Many campaigns cannot afford to pay the high price of television and so turn to cheaper forms of communication, such as radio advertising or direct mail. But now, with the Internet revolution, a whole new form of communications is open—at a relatively low cost, with no barriers

between the campaign and voters and accessible twenty-four hours a day to anyone who wants to visit a campaign's website.

Online Communications

When will the Internet become the dominant vehicle for political communication? Is the age of television about to be replaced by the age of the Internet? Will there be a fundamental shift in the way campaigns connect with voters? Party strategists, consultants, and candidates are increasingly playing this guessing game. At a time when television is still the dominant form of campaign communication, some are convinced that we are entering a new era in campaign communications.

Internet usage has grown dramatically but still is far from the stage of critical mass, where it becomes a dominant communications vehicle for the general public. In 1996 it was in its infancy. In late 1996 the Media Studies Center found that 28 percent of voters had access to the Internet, but less than one percent said they relied on the Internet for information about the presidential campaign. Further, just six percent of all voters stated that they visited politically oriented websites.⁴⁹ Not surprisingly, younger, better-educated voters were more likely to use the Internet and visit politically oriented websites. The Pew Research Center for People and the Press found in 1996 that just one voter in ten received information from websites, while 72 percent of voters received information from television.⁵⁰ Since then, Internet use has surged, but it will be many years before voters in significant numbers make the Web the dominant form of political communication.

For those who use it, the Internet is a treasure trove of information about politics and campaigns. Each of the major television and print news organizations has its own website, with considerable coverage of politics and elections. The true political junkie can turn to *National Journal's* Hotline for a summary of campaign stories from throughout the country on a daily basis. Virtually all political columnists have their own websites, and several sites serve as clearinghouses for campaigns and politics.⁵¹

Citizens can tap into a vast array of policy and special-interest websites. One of the most comprehensive is Policy.com, a nonpartisan clearinghouse for think tanks, advocacy groups, government agencies, the media, and others interested in public policy.⁵² Voters looking for conservative viewpoints can tap into Town Hall or ConservativeNet. Those looking for liberal perspectives

can search the Electronic Policy Network for a collection of liberal publications, think tanks and organizations, or they can go to TurnLeft, the self-described home of liberalism on the web.⁵³ House Republicans have created a website that will have links to radio newscasts, members' individual sites, and a searchable database of news releases.⁵⁴ Third parties and fringe groups alike have website addresses. The Green Party, the Reform Party, Democratic Socialists of America, the U.S. Taxpayers Party, the John Birch Society, the Feminist Majority, and Men's Issues Page all have established websites, truly creating a marketplace of ideas in cyberspace.⁵⁵

Internet users can examine voting records of members of Congress through Project Vote Smart or VoteNet, or they can find legislative heroes or villains through the websites of the Christian Coalition, National Rifle Association, and the League of Conservation Voters.⁵⁶ Voters convinced that all politicians have feet of clay will have their suspicions confirmed by Skeleton Closet, a website whose purpose is to "attack all presidential candidates with brutal fairness."⁵⁷

The Internet has been an ideal communications tool for alternative voices and viewpoints. Chat lines, discussion and support groups, and alternative magazines proliferate and sometimes flourish in cyberspace. Through no other medium, except talk radio, could a Matt Drudge gain national celebrity.

The Internet has made it much easier for people to register to vote and receive information about election day. Citizens can download the National Mail Voter Registration Form available from the Federal Election Commission, acceptable in twenty-three states. The Checchi for Governor website, among others, offered a handy link to the FEC site, helping California citizens register to vote and also assisting them with a link to where they could obtain absentee ballots.⁵⁸

In 1996 Clinton and Dole and their respective parties had sophisticated, appealing websites loaded with voting and policy information.⁵⁹ Patrick Buchanan aggressively recruited volunteers for the "Buchanan Brigade" during the 1996 primary season. Democratic senator John Kerry from Massachusetts, running in a tight race for reelection, also used the Internet as an effective tool for recruiting volunteers. James Gilmore, running for governor of Virginia in 1997, invited citizens to calculate directly on his website the amount of money they would save if Gilmore's automobile tax plan were enacted.⁶⁰ Later, George W. Bush featured a calculator on his presidential website page so that visitors could figure their savings from his tax plan. By

1998, no candidate for statewide office could be without a campaign website, for the website provided useful information, gave it to the voters cheaply, and had the symbolic purpose of saying that this campaign is up to date and technologically sophisticated. In early 1999 Steve Forbes made a second run for the Republican primary and became the first presidential hopeful formally to announce his candidacy on the Internet. Forbes made a conventional announcement on the steps of the New Hampshire state capitol, with just fifty people showing up, but his website linked him to potentially millions over cyberspace.⁶¹

Forbes later used his online connection to let his supporters know bad things about George W. Bush. The Forbes campaign took a press story critical of Bush's younger days, which appeared in an obscure Iowa newspaper, and sent it through e-mail to some 56,000 Forbes supporters. Here was a new communications tool at its best: instantaneous, cheap, interactive, and directed to a very specific audience.

Candidates far down the electoral ladder use the Internet as a campaign tool. It is one of the least expensive ways to get a message across to potential voters. Andrew "Bud" Beaty, 1998 candidate for city council in Wichita Falls, Texas—using the well-worn campaign theme "It's time for a change!"—explained that he was not a part of the northside Wichita Falls "power structure," and implored citizens to "Vote Early . . . Vote Bud." Also using the Internet in 1998, with varying degrees of ingenuity and inventiveness, were Jeanne Krieger for Selectman (Lexington, Massachusetts), Doug Isaacson—"Your Next Borough Mayor"—(Fairbanks, Alaska), Noreen Crowley for School Board (Stafford, Virginia), and hundreds of other candidates.⁶²

One of the first uses of the Internet to attack another local opponent came in 1998, when Virginia Beach, Virginia, city council challenger A. M. "Don" Weeks used his website to chastise incumbent Louisa M. Strayhorn for missing hundreds of votes and spending more than \$24,000 on taxpayer-funded trips during the past four years: "Is Virginia Beach heading in the right direction? Generally speaking, yes. Is Councilwoman Louisa Strayhorn doing her share of the work? No. Never has there been a more obvious lack of leadership on City Council from the Kempsville District."⁶³ As attack ads go, this was pretty mild. But it made the news, receiving considerable free media attention, because the Internet was the vehicle for attack. Undoubtedly, more people learned about the cyber-attack through the local newspaper than saw it on the Internet itself.

The Internet will increasingly be used to criticize opponents. Campaign Internet sites, generally pretty calm and low-keyed today, will most likely adopt a more aggressive look and feel. Parody websites have popped up all over the place, mocking legitimate candidates. A twenty-nine-year-old computer programmer in Boston created www.gwbush.com, a fake George W. Bush for president website, that shows an obviously fake Bush with a straw up his nose, inhaling lines of cocaine. The official Bush website is www.georgewbush.com; however, there are some 260 variations linking George W. Bush and his run for the presidency. Bush wasn't the only target: the parody site www.algore-2000.org has an official-looking letter allegedly from Vice President Gore that says, "working against the American people, we have sparked moral decay across the country." Another site, www.hillaryno.com, has a goofy-looking picture of Hillary Clinton on its home page and this headline: "U.S. Senate: For Proven Leaders, Not a Proving Ground." George W. Bush and some others have loudly protested these parody websites; their creators invariably wrap themselves around the First Amendment right of free speech. Some campaigns take the precaution of buying dozens of potentially embarrassing or very similar domain names to protect themselves from parody site operatives. Some pranksters (or just plain entrepreneurs) buy up domain names similar to that of an official website, hoping to sell the names to the real campaign. These are cyber-squatters, who have the name and are looking to make a profit by selling it. The George W. Bush campaign was offered the parody site, www.gwbush.com, for \$300,000, then the price dropped to \$80,000. Still the Bush campaign wouldn't budge.⁶⁴

Another growing practice is the use of banner ads to criticize opponents. Peter Vallone, in an uphill battle for the governorship of New York, ran banner ads in the online version of the *New York Times* criticizing his opponent, Governor George Pataki. The ads had some impact. In the first-ever study of the effect of negative online advertising, E-Voter 98 researchers Karen Jagoda and Nick Nyhan found that Pataki's favorability rating was seven points lower among persons who had seen Vallone's anti-Pataki banner ads on the *New York Times* website.⁶⁵ For political advertising, whether negative or positive, banner ads could be an important new weapon. American Online (AOL), the market leader for online advertising, has some 22 million users, who could be targeted geographically and demographically with tailor-made banner ads for each specific group targeted.

The Internet seems perfect for amateurs and low-budget campaigns who can hire a smart high school or college kid to design and maintain a basic website for just a few hundred dollars. But major campaigns will develop more and more sophisticated websites, hiring skilled professionals (still probably very young) who will design \$50,000 sites with dazzling bells and whistles that are as remarkable as any high-end entertainment, weather, travel, or sports sites. Future websites will combine the strong graphics and sharp message of print media together with the visuals, voice, and music of television commercials, and they will be interactive. They will have the extra advantage of always being available, day or night, to citizens curious enough to click on the website. For the cyber-campaign, gross ratings points, media buys, and political rate cards will be irrelevant.

Soon, perhaps in the next two presidential election cycles, voters and campaigns will use the Internet throughout the entire campaign. We may wonder how things ever worked in the old days, when campaign volunteers stood fifty feet away from the local elementary school handing out fliers for candidates, while inside, voters stuffed paper ballots into voting boxes. We may even lament the loss of a sense of community and the tangible evidence of democracy at work—the neighbors greeting each other at the polling place, the volunteers helping shut-ins get to the polls—that the Internet may make obsolete.

Future elections will most likely find candidates filing disclosure forms and periodic fund-raising documents online, making them instantly available to the public. Candidates' home pages will become slickly produced (and still expensive) media productions wrapped into the Internet site. Click here if you'd like to view the candidate's three-minute biographical video. Click here if you'd like to see the last three thirty-second commercials. *Habla Espanol?* No problem, just click another icon.⁶⁶ Click to ask the candidate a question, and back comes the canned generic response—complete with video and audio—responding to the voice-activated request. Campaigns will routinely solicit funds and route them electronically to their bank accounts.

The campaign of the future may be sending out daily doses of spam, the electronic equivalent of junk mail, but this time with pictures, sound, 3D, and interactive capabilities. Internet providers will sell information from Web browser “cookies”—the personal demographic information provided by visitors to websites. Using this information, a campaign can fine-tune its market segmentation, making the website an ally (or competitor) of direct mail and list-management organizations. Voters may find

themselves inundated with Internet pleas from candidates, third-party interest groups, and anyone who might have a stake in the election.

Further, the campaign of the future will permit voters the opportunity to register and vote electronically. The first such attempt was the Arizona Democratic 2000 presidential primary. Democrats were encouraged to vote online, but the party was roundly criticized for giving Internet voters five days to cast their votes while giving those who go to polling stations just one day. The heart of the complaint was that affluent computer owners were given unfair access over minority groups and the poor.⁶⁷

Security and voter fraud are also central concerns, but the issues may be no greater than those already addressed by commercial firms selling goods via the Internet. The state board of elections of the future may ask voters to place their left thumb on the television screen so it can be scanned for identification; or voters will be asked to verify their identity by speaking into a built-in microphone, which would confirm an individual's voice patterns. Banks already use thumbprint identification, and voice verification is also available.⁶⁸ A voter will be able to click on choices presented on the screen or simply say into the built-in microphone "My name is Kathryn Anne Henry, my birthday is March 27, and my PIN number is 377-53AQ. I vote for Fong for governor, Fielding for lieutenant governor, Hernandez for mayor, and I vote yes on Initiative 12, no on Initiative 14. This ends my vote."

In its 1998 gubernatorial race, Minnesota may have proven to be a fore-runner in creative uses of the Internet. Minnesota E-Democracy, a non-profit, nonpartisan group, sponsored an Internet debate for the twelve candidates for governor. Every other day for two weeks that spring, the candidates responded with three-hundred-word answers to policy questions on education, taxation, the environment, and government involvement in the Internet. Voters could visit the website or receive e-mail answers from the candidates. The opportunity to be on an equal footing with better-known and better-funded candidates made this Internet project ideal for candidates like Jesse Ventura, candidate of the underdog Reform Party. Ventura noted that the online debate was "truly made for my campaign. It's reaching a huge amount of people at a very low price."⁶⁹ Ventura's campaign later used the Internet to energize volunteers and let people know about his traveling road show. Some have credited Ventura's upset victory to his use of the Internet; however, in a contest as close as his, there are many possible reasons why he won. Probably more than any-

thing else, Ventura's charisma, bluster, and off-beat personality drew many first-time voters to his side.

While the Internet and websites show great promise, they are not panaceas, and the playing field is hardly leveled by cyberspace. Websites are marvelous communications tools for those who are interested and want to listen, volunteer, or give money to candidates. But there seems to be a dwindling number of citizens willing to listen, participate, and vote. Surfers flock to some online sites, but what will motivate them to go to political websites? What will captivate their attention enough to scroll through the electronic debate answers of the candidates for governor? Where is the civic interest and curiosity to go to electronic databases that analyze voting records of candidates? Why watch a politician's commercial over the Internet when there is so much neat stuff to be found on the hundreds of millions of other websites?

Targeting Voters

*There isn't a day goes by that there isn't a
direct-mail piece in the mail.*

—Jo-Anne Coe, veteran Dole aide and fund-raiser, July 1995

*Phone calls are the true communications
stealth technology of the future.*

—Telecommunications consultant Mac Hansbrough

Reaching the Right Audience

One of the most important and difficult communications tasks is to reach the right audience with the right message, using limited campaign resources to their fullest.¹ Campaigns communicate through a variety of sources, from local and network television, cable television, radio, telephone, direct mail, and increasingly through the Internet and e-mail. To reach their intended audiences, campaigns use the highly developed resources of targeting specialists. While a thirty-second political commercial on television, scheduled for

the 6:00 P.M. local news, may reach the largest audience, it will also reach many who are uninterested or ineligible to vote. Cable television reaches a more tightly defined audience; radio has an even greater focus. But for efficiency and precision of communication, nothing can beat targeted direct mail or targeted telephone communications.

Direct Mail—Focused Audience, Precise Messages Targeted direct mail and telemarketing can send out specific messages to a variety of select audiences. For a candidate for governor of Maryland (let's assume she is a Republican), no direct mail would be sent to ineligible voters: non-residents, children, long-standing Democrats, and those who had not voted in prior elections. Separate mailings would be sent to a variety of targeted audiences, with messages tailored to each constituency's interests: thirty-year-old, college-educated, female, Independent voters; rural families with young children; Maryland members of the National Rifle Association; and a wide variety of other groupings. As direct mail consultants Richard Schlackman and Jamie "Buster" Douglas, observe, when used properly, direct mail is the "most precise weapon in a candidate's arsenal."²

Lists, Lists, Lists Whether the goal is to solicit funds, urge citizens to get out and vote, or persuade them to vote for (or against) a candidate, targeted mailings and telemarketing depend upon accurate, up-to-date lists of names, addresses, voting history, party preferences, and other essential information. In today's direct marketing industry, list development and management are a major commercial enterprise, and for campaigns and elections, list management is a vital subspecialty.

Direct marketing specialist David Himes contends that there are six basic categories of lists available to campaigns.³ Starting with the best:

1. The house list, maintained by the campaign itself, with files on past contributors and volunteers;
2. outside lists of contributors to similar candidates or causes;
3. compiled lists, combining categories of donors, such as doctors, business leaders, and so forth;
4. commercial or direct response lists, such as lists of those who buy certain magazines or merchandise through direct mail;

5. universal lists, which list every name and address in a specific area; and
6. voter lists obtained from state or local boards of elections, or from the political parties.

In fund-raising, candidates rely on several fundamental elements: ticketed events (such as barbecue, pig-roast, black-tie dinner, hot dog festival—ticketed events invariably mean fatty foods and alcohol), political action committee events, personal calls by the candidate, telephone solicitation, and direct mail.⁴ To make these events both possible and successful, campaigns turn to their specialized lists.

The house list is by far the most important list a campaign has. It contains the names, addresses, and other vital information of individuals who have contributed funds or have volunteered for the candidate in past elections. These are the persons who can most be counted on to give again. Their response rate and average contribution will be higher than any other group.⁵

In order to expand a house list, campaigns may have to engage in prospecting, sending out thousands of letters to possible donors, hoping to gather a core of givers. Usually prospecting is left to the political parties or to multimillion-dollar campaigns because it takes a considerable amount of time, requires several remailings, and is a very expensive undertaking, usually losing money during the first round of direct mail solicitation.

Republican direct mail consultant Richard Norman recommends to clients that if they can recoup 70 percent of the costs, they should continue mailing. If, for example, there is a million-piece mailing, the costs of production and postage may be a half-million dollars. The mailing may bring in only 20,000 checks—a relatively healthy two percent response rate. If the campaign receives \$350,000 (the 70 percent minimum threshold), it should then continue mailing, and target those 20,000 donors. Norman observes that “in a normal campaign with one year to mail, you could expect to generate a half million dollars in net income by remailing to these contributors.”⁶ The campaign would then repay the cost of the first prospecting (\$150,000), and have a net of \$350,000 raised. Then, after the election is over, the list of donors might be rented for an additional \$150,000 to \$200,000, thus raising the total raised for the campaign to \$500,000 to \$550,000.

Commercial firms compile lists on nearly every conceivable demographic variable. Some of these lists can be generally helpful for fund-raising, but more importantly for persuasion and get-out-the-vote drives. They are either

compiled lists, which are derived from telephone books, newspapers, public records, retail slips, automobile registration, and other sources. Or they are response lists, proven buyers from mail-order catalogues, paid subscriptions to magazines, subscribers to cable television, and others. Compiled lists tend to be more demographic, and response lists tend to be more psychographic.⁷ From such lists, and especially from public record voter files from state election offices, individuals can be isolated by age, sex, race, lifestyle, gender affiliation, party, frequency of voting, home ownership, marital status, children, and so forth. One such firm, I Rent America, advertises some 220 million names on computer files.⁸ Clients can rent the names of the 266,302 active donors to Handgun Control, the 154,551 alumni of Outward Bound, the 338,424 millionaires (or the 14,632 multimillionaires), the 748,213 persons over sixty-five living in Illinois, or the 345,895 subscribers to *Vegetarian Times* magazine.⁹

One list management firm, catering to pro-life, conservative candidates and causes, included the following among the thirty-five lists available: Born Again Doctors Who Vote, Christian Action Network, California Evangelical Political Givers, Evangelical Pro-Life Donors, Texas Christian Activists, Conservative California PAC Donors, and Check Writing Evangelical Activists. Another company rents lists entitled America's High-Income Donors, Conservative Wealthy Arts Donors, Gutsy Jewish Givers, Spanish-Speaking Donors, and Cream of the Crop Jewish Donors.¹⁰

Targeting by Lifestyle When first introduced to the campaigns in 1978, the Claritas targeting system was considered the “the new magic.”¹¹ Invented in 1974 by computer scientist Jonathan Robbin, this new targeting technique sorted the country's 36,000 zip codes into forty “lifestyle clusters.”¹² The clusters were given clever names—“Furs and Station Wagons,” “Golden Ponds,” “Norma Rae–Ville”—and gave a powerful explanation of geodemographic factors, using multivariate analysis. Lifestyle targeting, however, has not been a precise enough tool and was too expensive for most political campaigns.¹³

List compilation is assisted by U.S. Census Bureau data, which offer a wealth of information based on census blocks of approximately eight hundred households and measuring between thirty and fifty economic, family, ethnic, employment, and neighborhood characteristics. These statistics, coupled with voting and geodemographic data integrated into nine-digit zip codes, gives an extraordinary amount of information for targeting purposes.

This information is always fluid, continually in need of updating and purging of extraneous names. One of the leading list management firms, Aristotle Publishing, estimates that the data on one out of six voters will be outdated or wrong by the time the next election rolls around.¹⁴

Online data may have an even greater utility and impact than the traditional forms. America Online (AOL) has approximately 22 million members in its demographic profile database, and other Internet service providers also have a wealth of demographic information available. Political targeting becomes an even more powerful and precise tool with the combination of traditional demographic information and the data obtained from Internet service providers. For example, a candidate may want to reach female voters who live in a particular Congressional district in California, are between eighteen and thirty-four years old, and are registered as Independents. When women in that targeted audience go online, browsing through the Internet for information that may have nothing to do with politics, a banner ad will appear for the political candidate, providing a convenient hyperlink directly to the campaign website. Only the profiled group will receive the banner ad, and the message can be defined precisely to fit the interests of the group. As more citizens use the Internet, online targeting will become a formidable campaign tool. Targeting consultant John A. Phillips observes that this form of online communication combines “the precision of direct mail, the immediacy of television, the efficiency of radio, and the interactivity of the telephone.”¹⁵

Voting and Donor History Aristotle Publishing maintains a voter database of all 138 million registered U.S. voters. Campaigns can purchase access to the names, addresses, and phone numbers of every registered voter in a district and, using CD-ROM software, can select and sort registered voters by party, vote history, age, district, and twenty-five other criteria.¹⁶ Also available is the database called Fat Cats, a listing of all individuals, parties, and PACs that gave more than \$200 to any federal candidate or political action committee since 1986. Aristotle can enhance the list by giving estimated income; identifying homeowners and renters, presence of children in the household, voting history, and specific ethnic groups; and will remove dead voters from the file.¹⁷

Online capability will soon make a difference in how quickly voter information is updated and sent to clients. Now voter information is prepared and updated through paper reports, diskettes, or CD-ROMs. Bill Daly, a pioneer in the field of voter contact services, writes that soon we will be able to get on

the Web “24 hours a day, seven days a week, call up any set of criteria that is coded into a voter file and get a specific count back almost immediately.”¹⁸ Voter files, Daly notes, will not change much, but what will change is the speed of downloading files from a vendor’s voter file.

But for all their add-ons and clever names, many of these lists fall short for direct mail purposes, especially for fund-raising. Consultant Scott Huch echoes the thoughts of many in the fund-raising business: “a list with ten different enhancements based on median income, census tract and ‘lifestyle’ information will never work as well as a tried-and-true list of proven, direct-response donors to like-minded candidates and causes. Period.”¹⁹

Targeting Aided by Statistical Analyses Direct mail consultant Hal Malchow argues that, despite the improvements in census data, the more important development in targeting is the application of predictive technologies that allow voter contact specialists to evaluate all data available to them.²⁰ Malchow’s firm, Crouse and Malchow, created a statistical technology called CHAID (Chi-Square Automatic Interaction Detection) that analyzes how different variables may predict voting behavior. This computer program is operated by first conducting a mini-poll, based on five thousand to ten thousand identification phone calls to randomly selected voters, asking them if they intend to vote and for whom. Attached to responses from these selected voters would be all existing data on them, such as voting history, sex, age, religion, ethnicity, and other geodemographic variables. In addition, the nine-digit zip code is used to match each name with twenty-five census block characteristics. The CHAID program builds “trees” of voters contacted, starting at the top with all voters, then spreading out to three separate branches, Republicans, Democrats, and Independents. Subbranches then look at other variables, such as education levels, percentage of children in neighborhood, and ethnicity.

In its first test, in the 1996 Senate special election in Oregon, Malchow’s firm was able to explore more deeply the voting preferences of voters. The CHAID system told the campaign that Independent voters were just slightly more undecided (32 percent) than voters as a whole (30 percent). But, probing further down the CHAID targeting tree, the campaign found that younger Independents who lived in neighborhoods with less education and many children, were at an undecided rate nearly double (58 percent) that of the Independent group as a whole. Malchow noted that in every race except one that his firm was involved with in 1996, the CHAID results could not have been predicted by traditional voting analysis.²¹

Direct Mail

Using the mail to deliver messages to voters or to solicit funds goes back to the early days of the twentieth century. William Jennings Bryan, in his third bid for the presidency, sought one million contributors for his 1916 campaign; but only 20,000 responded to a mass mailing, and Bryan was barely able to cover the costs of the solicitation.²² Dwight Eisenhower was the first presidential candidate to use direct mail in an effective way, and twelve years later, the Barry Goldwater 1964 campaign broke through with \$4.7 million raised from a mailing to 12 million and created a list of 221,000 contributors.²³ Using information from the Goldwater campaign, political consultant Richard Viguerie compiled the first major donors list, with the names of 12,500 conservatives.²⁴ It took Democrats some time to catch up, but George McGovern's presidential campaign raised direct mail to "a high art form."²⁵ McGovern's 1972 mailing list contained the names of 600,000 probable donors; through this list, he was able to raise \$3 million in prenomination money and \$12 million in the general election in response to 15 million pieces of fund-raising mail sent out.

Since the 1970s direct mail has become a potent fund-raising tool, voter contact, and persuasion weapon for candidates at all election levels, and has proven to be most important in elections below the statewide level.²⁶ In 1997 *Campaigns and Elections* magazine calculated that direct mail was the biggest aggregate cost item in campaigns throughout the country. While large statewide campaigns spent more on television than direct mail, when all other races are counted, from school board and other local races to the presidency, direct mail proved to be the biggest-cost item, with over \$3 billion spent from 1994 through 1997.²⁷

Open This Envelope! As mailboxes are increasingly filled with catalogues, fliers, and other forms of unsolicited material, readers have become adept at separating real mail from junk mail. Political direct mailers face stiff competition, and the biggest, first hurdle is to get people to open the envelope. A number of tricks and gimmicks are used to entice people to open the envelope instead of tossing it into the wastebasket:

Celebrity name. The National Resources Defense Council sent a fund-raising appeal in a large plain white envelope, with only the name "Robert Redford" where the return address would normally appear. The Interfaith Alliance used the same ploy, with just the name "Walter Cronkite" on its business-

sized envelope. Who could resist a “personal” letter from a celebrated movie actor–conservationist or “the Most Trusted Person in America”?

Looks official and important. Both political parties have sent large cardboard envelopes that look almost like U.S. Post Office priority mail, with URGENT, EXTREMELY URGENT, IMPORTANT DOCUMENT ENCLOSED, RUSH PRIORITY, PLEASE HAND DELIVER TO ADDRESSEE, and other phrases urging citizens to open the envelope.

Looks handwritten. Addresses are even generated by laser printer to look as though they were addressed by hand, complete with smudged letters, numbers or letters crossed out, and irregular printing.

Here’s the money. Just about the most irresistible example of this gimmick was an envelope for a National Republican Congressional Committee fundraising appeal in March 1997: a clear plastic 11½-by-8-inch envelope, with a real dollar bill inside, plainly in view, paper-clipped to a response card. The plastic envelope was sealed with a bright orange warning label: “WARNING: Contents of this package are monitored. Any tampering will result in prosecution under Federal Postal regulations.” The message inside, from Newt Gingrich, pressed the point: here is a real dollar . . . “whatever you do, please do not keep this dollar.” Send the dollar back, the letter implores, because it is “absolutely critical” to have every dollar to rebuild the Republican campaign effort and by sending you this dollar, you will see how “serious our financial situation” is.²⁸

The Pitch from the Party: You Are Special All of the national political party organizations have aggressive fund-raising strategies to sign up donors, give them a sense of ownership, and keep them as loyal givers. These are nothing more than elemental, solid, fund-raising tactics. The National Republican Senatorial Committee is particularly good at this, sending out solicitations to a wide variety of potential donors. Here are examples from some letters sent by the NRSC inviting potential contributors to join Republican donor organizations.

The Republican Presidential Legion of Merit promises to be the “highest honor of its type” in the Republican Party, and “only the most loyal and committed supporters” are encouraged to maintain their active membership. Members receive a Legion of Merit lapel pin and a membership card with a

toll-free private hotline, and have their names inscribed on the Legion of Merit Register and kept forever with the Legion's Presidential Papers. "Perhaps someday," notes the membership brochure, "your grandchildren or great-grandchildren will see your name linked historically with one or more of our great Republican Presidents" who are also Legion of Merit members. Donors will also receive "action alerts," letting them know "exactly what action" they must take to help stop "Clinton and his ultra-liberal buddies in Congress from pushing his 'hare-brained schemes' through Congress."²⁹ Membership into the "exclusive" Presidential Legion of Merit is \$60 per year, or on a convenient \$5 per month installment plan.

For \$120 a year, donors can join the Republican Presidential Task Force, "one of the most prestigious and influential organizations within the National Republican Party." Members will have their names permanently inscribed on the Ronald Reagan Founders Wall located in the Honor Courtyard at the Ronald Reagan Center in Washington, D.C. "Your name will be seen by every visitor and dignitary who visits the Reagan Center for generations to come, and stand as a testament to the role you have proudly played in moving our Party and our Nation forward."³⁰

Donors can then work their way up to the Republican Senatorial Inner Circle, "one of the Republican Party's most influential and active organizations," for \$1,000 per person, or in \$500 semiannual installments. Membership includes an annual dinner and after-dinner show featuring Wayne Newton, along with policy seminars such as "Education and School Choice" and "Overcoming Liberal Media Bias."

Next comes the Republican Presidential Roundtable, which is "strictly limited to 400 carefully selected members nationwide" who give \$5,000 a year. The fund-raising letter, from NRSC chairman Senator Mitch McConnell, on expensive paper with a Presidential Roundtable gold seal, notes that "now that a vacancy has occurred among the 20 coveted Presidential Roundtable memberships reserved for [your state], I sincerely hope you will consider stepping forward to claim it."³¹ Members in this category also receive lapel pins and newsletters, a fancy dinner in Washington with party leaders, plus photo opportunities.

These solicitation letters for the National Republican Senatorial Committee have several elements in common in trying to woo potential givers.

Flattery. Donors are very special people: "Whereas [donor] has shown the highest caliber of patriotism, commitment and integrity" (Republican Legion

of Merit certificate). “It’s up to smart, dedicated, concerned Americans like you to make sure our nation chooses the right course” (Republican Presidential Task Force, “American Agenda Survey”).

Insider status. Donors will have a special hotline or newsletter that gives them inside, confidential information not available to the general public. “Due to the confidential nature of this report, we must have verification that you—and only you—received your special report. Please sign this Receipt of Verification and return it immediately” (a confidential strategic blueprint for Republicans to win back the presidency in 2000).

Rub shoulders with Republican leaders. Donors will be invited to Washington for a special dinner with party leaders, with the chance to have their pictures taken with them, or they will have their names listed on the special commemorative wall at Republican headquarters in Washington.

Fighting the good fight against the Democrats and liberals. Donors are assured that they are the best and last hope to fight back against the Democrats, Bill Clinton, and their dreaded liberal policies. In a NRSC fund-raising letter, which accompanied a pitch for a three-by-five-foot ceremonial NRSC flag, potential donors were told that funds were needed to fight against “rich, left-wing Hollywood activists, powerful labor union bosses and shadowy sources.”

Soliciting views, asking for money. A standard practice, not just of the NRSC, is to send a private poll out to potential donors, ask them to answer ten or fifteen policy questions, and then request \$35 to \$100 either to help pay for the poll or to provide for a radio commercial or some other specific event associated with donating money. Pollsters would laugh at the questions asked: many times they are blatantly self-serving and lead to only one conclusion. For example, in this NRSC solicitation sent out with the signature of former vice president Dan Quayle: “Ted Kennedy and the liberals in the Senate are trying to revive the Clinton plan to ration and control health care by hiding it in a bill for ‘children.’ Should the Republican-led Senate continue to fight this deceptive scheme?”³² Yet the purpose of these “polls” is not to solicit public opinion, but to make a partisan point and to rally the faithful to give money.

Above all, direct mail fund-raising solicitation is about developing a dialogue and a relationship between the party or candidate and the giver. It is far

more productive to solicit money from those who have already given and are willing to give again—and are given a sense of participation.

Candidates and Direct Mail Writing in 1988, political scientist R. Kenneth Godwin found that political party mailings tended to stress traditional party themes, such as loyalty, citizen duty, and party issues, while the more provocative, negative, and emotional appeals tended to come from candidates and their direct mail consultants.³³ While direct mail does not have the aural and visual impact of television or radio commercials, it can be a very powerful weapon. Messages unthinkable or inappropriate for television audiences often appear in the mailbox, to be opened in the privacy of the home.

Indeed, Consultants Richard Schlackman and Jamie Douglas have called direct mail the “silent killer” of the campaign.³⁴ Candidates use direct mail to solicit funds, persuade voters, and urge them to vote, and to attack their opponents. In many cases, these messages are interlaced in a melange of urgency, begging, fear-mongering, and castigation.

Jesse Helms, Ollie North, and Their Direct Mail Money Machines Two public figures, Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina and former lieutenant colonel Oliver North, have stood out for their fund-raising abilities, attracting millions from loyal conservative followers.

Throughout his long political career, Senator Jesse Helms has raised enormous sums through direct mail appeals, much of it through small contributions from conservative elderly people living outside North Carolina. In the spirited and ugly 1990 Senate fight against former Charlotte mayor Harvey Gantt, Helms employed his well-oiled direct mail machine to fill his campaign coffers. By the time of the midyear report, Helms held nearly ten times more campaign funds (\$7.9 million) than Gantt (\$0.8 million). Despite that fund-raising lead, Helms’s campaign told his loyal supporters he desperately needed more, because he was in the fight of his life.

In a September 1990 direct mail appeal, Helms said he didn’t want to “cry wolf” but that he desperately needed money for television commercials. “There’s never been a time when I’ve needed your help more than now,” Helms’s plea read, “The wolf is here. He’s at the door. He’s loaded with money, and politically dangerous.” In a statement defending the Helms direct mail appeal, a spokeswoman for Helms said, “Harvey Gantt is receiving the majority of his support from left-wing special interest groups:

unions, homosexuals, NARAL, avant-garde artists and People for the American Way.”

Gantt’s campaign reached far and wide for financial support, only fueling the fire of the Helms direct mail campaign. Gantt fund-raisers were highly visible, hosted by liberal, artistic, feminist and gay/lesbian organizations in New York, Washington, San Francisco, and Los Angeles—just the ammunition Helms needed to show that conservative North Carolina values were somehow being subverted by outside influences.³⁵

Not only was direct mail used to fuel the Helms 1990 reelection campaign, it was also used to suppress voter turnout. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, the Jesse Helms Reelection Campaign in 1990 and the North Carolina Republican party violated the civil rights of the state’s African-American voters by illegally mailing 125,000 postcards to registered voters in eighty-six predominantly black precincts informing them that they were not eligible to vote and warning them that they could face criminal prosecution if they tried. Those voters would undoubtedly have voted in large numbers for Harvey Gantt, who is African-American. The Helms campaign paid \$127,021 in legal bills and \$25,000 in fines for violations of federal election laws. The campaign maintained that it had no knowledge of the mailings, but tacitly accepted responsibility by agreeing to sign the Justice Department consent decree, which outlined the infractions.³⁶

Beginning with the Iran-Contra hearings, Oliver North’s public career has been marked by confrontation, loyal support from conservative followers, and derision and intense opposition from many, including military veterans. Fueled by his nationally syndicated talk show, North ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate seat in Virginia in 1994. In his bid to unseat Senator Charles Robb,³⁷ North’s campaign set a record for direct mail solicitations: through his nationwide appeal North was able to raise \$20.3 million in a single year through direct mail, major donors, telemarketing, and fund-raising events. Approximately \$17 million came from direct mail alone, from 245,000 donors who responded to the more than 13 million letters mailed out.³⁸

North’s fund-raising appeals were laced with urgency and desperation. One letter, sent by UPS rather than the regular mail, pleaded, “I have no choice but to rush you this letter by UPS” and urged the reader to “rush my campaign a ‘DO OR DIE’ donation.” North said he had to raise \$500,000 during the next five days: “our bank account [is] nearly dry . . . and tomorrow won’t do.”³⁹ A total of seventy-nine different letters went out during the

campaign, and during the last eight weeks there was a mailing that went out to the entire contributor file every week. During that same time, recounted one of North's direct mail consultants Richard Norman, all the names on the contributor list that had phone numbers, roughly 60 percent of the total, were called three times.⁴⁰ The direct mail solicitations were enormously expensive: of the \$17 million raised from direct mail, \$11 million was spent on fund-raising overhead.⁴¹

North has maintained his incredible network of potential donors after the 1994 Senate loss. To keep the faithful interested and informed, North offered a monthly newsletter, *Ollie North's Front Lines*, for \$39.95 a year, accompanied by a "black book" of the "25 most dangerous liberals in Washington" or a "spine-tingling videocassette" of speeches by North and other conservatives.⁴²

Direct mail often focuses on enemies, such favorite targets as Ted Kennedy, Jesse Helms, "the liberals," the NRA, and Bill Clinton. Newt Gingrich was often the enemy of choice in direct mail literature sent out by Democratic challengers in 1996. In one example, the direct mail firm Campaign Performance Group, working for Democratic congressional challenger Bill Pascrell, created "Strings Attached," a set of mailings that showed Newt Gingrich pulling the strings of Republican congressman Bill Martini of New Jersey. "When Newt Gingrich pulls, Bill Martini's hand goes up to vote every time." How else, the mailer asks, "would you explain Bill Martini voting with Newt Gingrich 91 percent of the time?" Richard Schlackman and Jamie Douglas wrote that the symbol of Newt Gingrich pulling Martini's strings became a logo for all successive direct mail pieces and in the campaign's media spots.⁴³

While direct mail literature is silent, it also can roar. One tactic is to make the direct mail so provocative and controversial that the opposing candidate makes a public stink about it, and the fight gets elevated into the free media. Direct mail consultant Eva Pusateri has used direct mail to "shock and incite." "Sure enough," observed Pusateri, "our Democratic opponents brandished these pieces to the media, screaming about negative politics and trying to run from their own records." Instead of being outraged and rushing to chastise the campaigns that sent out the mailers, the media saw a story, and dozens of newspaper articles reprinted the damaging message. Through this tactic, many thousands of nontargeted readers heard about the issues through television or newspapers.⁴⁴

More than nine out of ten congressional and nearly all Senate candidates use direct mail. In some races it plays the dominant role for getting out the

candidate's message. For example, in 1996 challenger Loretta Sanchez was able to defeat long-time incumbent Robert Dornan, the arch-conservative firebrand from California's 46th district, largely through her direct mail persuasion literature. This congressional district lies within the very expensive Los Angeles media market. A television advertising campaign would have been too costly and would have been lost in the blur of other commercials and political advertisements. Sanchez targeted women, Hispanics, young Republican women, Independents, and those who did not regularly show up to vote.⁴⁵ The 1996 reelection campaign of Republican senator Bob Smith of New Hampshire credited its victory mainly to a six-page handwritten letter from Smith's wife, called "the Mary Jo Letter," sent to 205,000 Independents and Republican women. According to direct mail consultant Katherine B. Cook, the letter was actually written by the Senator's wife, using little of the draft prepared by Cook's firm, the Lukens Company. The letter made no attacks and did not even mention Smith's opponent by name, but what it did was effectively convey the message that Smith knew and understood issues that were on the minds of the intended audience.⁴⁶

Telemarketing

Hardly any one has escaped the irritating telephone calls, invariably coming at dinner time, that ask customers to switch long-distance service, seek donations for charity, pitch credit cards, or sell sure-fire investment advice. Intrusive telemarketing operations have become a part of the jangle of modern life.⁴⁷

In the bustling business of telephone solicitations, political telemarketers have added their voices, providing campaigns with services such as voter persuasion and identification, volunteer recruitment, get-out-the-vote efforts, fund-raising, mobilization of community activists, and integration with targeted direct mail.

Telecommunications services will argue that they provide a better vehicle for communications than media or direct mail. Veteran telecommunications consultant Walter Clinton argues, for example, that the telephone "is the only true interactive medium which is based on the most fundamental element of communication—response."⁴⁸ This exchange of conversation, according to Clinton, begins a highly personal and effective dialogue between a prospective voter (and donor) and a campaign. To be effective, the dialogue has to go in phases, with repetitive contact and reiteration of the campaign message, and this is what a well-orchestrated telemarketing campaign can offer.

Telecommunications consultants also argue that the telephone is a better communications device for raising campaign funds than direct mail. Professional telemarketing fund-raising costs more than a direct mail solicitation, but the return is considerably more productive. According to telecommunications consultant Vicki Ellinger, telephone fund-raising generates income over and above direct mail programs, a higher average donation and more revenue, and increased response rate to three to ten times that of direct mail, depending upon the application.⁴⁹

Push-Polling One telemarketing application that has received considerable criticism in the past several election cycles is push-polling. This is a well-worn campaign tactic: under the guise of a legitimate poll, anonymous telephone callers feed damaging or misleading information about a candidate, attempting to persuade or change the opinion of the contacted voter.⁵⁰ In the waning hours of a campaign, when voters are numb to television and radio commercials, push-polling becomes one final attempt to spread negative information about an opponent. Before television was used in elections and before the term *push-polling* was even coined, campaigns used this tactic. For example, in 1948 Richard Nixon, running against Helen Gahagan Douglas for the U.S. Senate seat in California, had campaign workers make anonymous telephone calls telling voters that Douglas was a communist sympathizer.⁵¹

In Colorado in 1994, Governor Roy Romer complained that his opponent's campaign used push-polling in violation of a Colorado statute forbidding anonymous campaigning. The poll questions were these: Would you be more or less likely to support Romer if you knew "there have been nearly thirteen hundred murders in Colorado since Romer was elected and not one murderer has been put to death?" Follow-up questions asked if respondents would vote for Romer if they knew that the state parole board had "granted early release to an average of four convicted felons per day every day since Romer has been governor," and that Mr. Romer "is being sued for mismanaging the state's foster care system." In this campaign, the attorney general of Colorado declined to prosecute under the Colorado statute forbidding anonymous campaigning.

Push-polling also drew fire in 1994 campaigns in Alaska, Maine, Nebraska, and Wisconsin, and many other jurisdictions.⁵² "A lot of campaigns do it," said Republican pollster Neil Newhouse. "It's a very effective tactic to communicate with voters late in a campaign when you have nothing left to turn to."⁵³ Push-polling hones in on an opponent's record, often dis-

torting or exaggerating it, attempting to be the last—and definitely negative—message voters receive about an opponent before voting.

Florida governor Lawton Chiles's campaign made at least seventy thousand phone calls to senior citizens, using the names of phony organizations to mask their true identity, and claimed that Republican challenger Jeb Bush wanted to abolish Medicare and Social Security, a charge that was patently untrue. This phone bank operation and its distortion of Bush's record led to a state investigation and a call for legislation to ban such practices.⁵⁴ In Virginia, in the last days of the 1994 Senate race between Democratic senator Charles Robb and Republican challenger Oliver North, a Democratic state party phone bank called probable African-American voters and linked North with Louisiana's David Duke and the Virginia Republican Party with the Ku Klux Klan.

The next step in push-polling is voter suppression phone banking. As one Republican consultant stated, "it is one of the last unrevealed dirty secrets of American politics."⁵⁵ Legitimate phone banks operate to get out the vote, to urge the faithful to turn out on election day. A suppression phone bank aims to do just the opposite: to discourage targeted segments of voters, such as the elderly, farmers, or African-Americans, from voting.

In the 1996 Iowa presidential caucus, vote suppression charges flew back and forth among Republican operatives. But vote suppression operations are hard to detect and almost impossible to prevent. One Dole campaign adviser, on the eve of the Iowa caucus, said that vote suppression campaigns "come in with the fog in the last couple of days and then disappear."⁵⁶

Before the 1996 Iowa presidential caucus, the Dole campaign paid over \$1 million to a telemarketing and phone bank firm, Campaign Tel, to run a secret negative campaign against Steve Forbes, attacking his most important campaign theme, the need for a flat federal tax. From notes taken by a Campaign Tel employee, the script for the telemarketers was this:

My name is _____ and I'm calling with a special message for Iowa's farm families. Iowa's farm bureau has adopted a resolution that opposes the flat tax like the one offered by candidate Steve Forbes. Under the Forbes flat tax, Iowa's farmers would pay an average of \$5,000 more in taxes.⁵⁷

An estimated ten to thirty thousand anti-Forbes calls were made to Iowa farmers, and the phone bank operation, located in a strip mall in Springfield,

Illinois, also made calls on behalf of the Dole campaign to voters in South Carolina, South Dakota, North Dakota, Georgia, Connecticut, and New York—states with upcoming primary elections. The trouble with the Iowa telephone calls was that the Iowa Farm Bureau never passed a resolution condemning the flat tax and that some of the callers indicated that they were representing the Farm Bureau or a nonexistent group called Iowa Farm Families rather than working on behalf of Senator Dole's campaign. Campaign Tel employees were instructed to identify themselves as employees of "National Market Research," and to not mention the Dole campaign. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the Dole campaign insisted that Campaign Tel's main assignment was to conduct voter identification and positive persuasion, not to spread negative information about other candidates.⁵⁸

Before the New Hampshire primary in 1996, voters were getting calls from the "National Research Council," with negative telephone messages that closely paralleled the attack ads that the Dole campaign had run against Patrick Buchanan and Steve Forbes. Some voters were told that the telemarketing came from Dole supporters and other voters were not. New Hampshire voters were told by telemarketers that "Lamar Alexander had raised taxes forty-nine times" when he was governor of Tennessee, or that "Pat Buchanan has written that he advocates the arming of South Korea, Japan and Taiwan with nuclear weapons." Dole television commercials against Buchanan and Alexander stated almost identical language.⁵⁹

Just as there has been legislation introduced in Florida to require disclosure of push-polling or phone banks, so federal-level legislation has been introduced. Representative Carolyn Maloney (D-New York) and Representative Tom Petri (R-Wisconsin), both of whose campaigns were targeted by push-polling tactics, introduced legislation for strict disclosure of advocacy polling.⁶⁰

Push-polling is not polling, and private pollsters from both parties were alarmed that their craft and reputations were being discredited.⁶¹ Republican pollsters Glen Bolger and Bill McInturff wrote an article in the trade magazine *Campaigns and Elections* entitled "'Push Polling' Stinks."⁶² In addition, a bipartisan group of twenty Republican and fifteen Democratic pollsters, representing twenty-three of the top political polling firms, sent a letter to the American Association of Political Consultants pointing out the fundamental differences between legitimate survey research, which they stated they practiced, and the tactics of push-polling, or, by other names, "negative advocacy," "persuasion calls," or "vote suppression" calls.

Bolger, McInturff, and many of their polling colleagues would condemn “sleazy smear tactics often used in negative advocacy phone banks.”⁶³ Republican pollster Ed Goetas echoed this sentiment, stating that “anonymously spreading rumor and innuendo through ‘push-polls’ is sleazy and should have no part in a campaign strategy.”⁶⁴

The polling firms that signed the letter stated the following in trying to distinguish between legitimate survey research and push-polling, which is usually conducted by a telemarketing firm. First, callers for survey research firms provide respondents with the correct name of their firm or the telephone research center. Push-polls, they contend, generally use fictitious names. Second, survey research firms interview a scientifically drawn small sample of voters, whereas push-polls contact “many thousands of voters,” with the goal of swaying—not measuring—voter opinion. Third, survey research firms conduct interviews that are between five and forty minutes in length; push-polls generally last between thirty and sixty seconds. Fourth, a survey research firm “may legitimately test contrasts or negatives about candidates (both about their clients and their opponents), but it uses honest information that may be used in television ads, radio, or mail. It is not designed to persuade the sample called—only to question them.” Push-polls are generally done in the last week of the campaign, with the specific intent of persuading voters. Finally, the pollsters wanted it on record that survey research firms “do not do ‘push-polling.’”⁶⁵

Bill McInturff, reportedly the leader behind the bipartisan letter from pollsters, must have been particularly worried. His firm, a leading Republican polling firm Public Opinion Strategies, was Bob Dole’s official pollster during the early 1996 presidential primaries. The press discovered the massive push-poll operation run by the Dole campaign against Steve Forbes, described above, but it was not conducted by Public Opinion Strategies.

In June 1996 the board of directors of the bipartisan American Association of Political Consultants, in a very unusual move, deemed the following campaign practices unethical: cloaking “persuasion calls” under the guise of a survey; dispensing information meant to change opinions about candidates without identifying the candidate who is sponsoring the push-poll; and delivering false information about opponents during a survey. The AAPC board condemned push-polling as a “clear violation of the AAPC’s code of ethics and a degradation of the political process.”⁶⁶

Fund-Raising on the Internet

The Internet promises to be another fund-raising vehicle in future campaigns, though it had limited use as such in the 1996 presidential cycle. The Dole presidential campaign raised less than \$100,000 through Internet solicitation, but that was far more than the Clinton campaign raised on the Web.⁶⁷ During the 1998 cycle there was a marked increase in online fund-raising, but it has far to go to reach its full potential. In early 1998 only the National Republican Congressional Committee accepted credit card contributions over a secure Internet connection, but now candidates are beginning to have secure credit card connections as well. Senate candidate Scotty Baesler (D-Kentucky) and incumbents Barbara Mikulski (D-Maryland) and Christopher Dodd (D-Connecticut) had online sites that would accept credit card information. Still, however, most campaigns found limited use of their websites for fund-raising in 1998.⁶⁸

New products are being developed that enable donors to look up a candidate's or party's website, choose to make a donation, and have that donation directly transferred from a financial institution to the party's or candidate's account. Electronic banking, electronic stock purchases, and electronic purchases of consumer goods have become commonplace. What is familiar and increasingly acceptable in the commercial market will be used by candidates, parties, and causes as they seek donations.

The 2000 elections demonstrated some of the potential of online fund-raising. In a survey of Web fund-raising, PoliticsOnline found that, as of the September 1999 reporting deadline, some \$1,236,000 had been raised by presidential candidates over the Internet. This represented just one percent of the \$116 million raised altogether by the candidates at that point. But in the two days after his surprising eighteen-point win in the February 2000 New Hampshire primary, Senator John McCain's campaign was flooded with over one million dollars in online contributions, with 40 percent of the donations coming from first-time political givers.⁶⁹ Just as commercial online sites are exploding with new business, so some in the political consulting world feel that online fund-raising will be a major vehicle for obtaining campaign funds in future elections. Consultant John A. Phillips estimates that by the 2004 elections, four out of five contributions from individuals to political candidates in the United States will be made over the Internet.⁷⁰

The Money Chase

Money is distorting democracy now. Money not only determines who wins, but often who runs. If you've got a good idea and \$10,000 and I've got a terrible idea and \$1 million, I can convince people that the terrible idea is a good one.

—Bill Bradley

One way to be able to control the message would be to buy it.

—Donald L. Fowler,
former chairman, Democratic National Committee

The Spiraling Cost of Running for Office

Running for office has become a far more expensive enterprise than ever before. In order to compete, let alone win, candidates for federal, statewide, and many other offices are having to spend more money and devote more time to raising funds.

In many ways, candidates have become more dependent on monied interests to help them get elected: the race for office has become a race for money.

Running for Congress The cost of mounting an effective race for Congress has increased dramatically during the past decade. In the 1989–90 election cycle, U.S. House and Senate races spent \$128.2 million on polling and television and other media, with an additional \$85.5 million spent on fund-raising.¹ In 1996, a record \$499 million was spent by candidates for the House and \$341 million by candidates for the Senate. The average cost of winning a Senate seat in 1996 was \$4.7 million; the average cost of winning a House seat was \$673,000, up 30 percent from 1994.²

The 1996 elections also saw a record amount of spending on issue advocacy advertising. Since funds for issue ads do not have to be reported to the Federal Election Commission, we can only guess at the total amount spent. At the federal level, the best estimate of issue advocacy expenditures in the 1996 election was \$135 million to \$150 million.³ In 1997 alone, at least a year away from the next election, federal candidates raised \$232.9 million, a new record for a nonelection year, according to the Federal Election Commission. Altogether, a total of \$781 million was spent on federal elections during the 1998 cycle, far surpassing the 1996 campaigns.⁴

1996 and 2000 Presidential Campaigns At the presidential level, more money was raised and spent in 1996 than in any other election. Presidential candidates spent \$453 million, and a substantial but unknown portion of the \$900 million spent by the political parties went to the presidential contests. Altogether, approximately \$2.2 billion was spent on federal elections in 1996 and an estimated \$2.7 billion in all elections, federal, state, and local.⁵ With the unprecedented amounts of money raised came serious charges of ethical lapses and violation of federal law. Common Cause, an independent campaign watchdog organization, accused both Republicans and Democrats of “the most massive violations of the campaign finance laws since the Watergate scandal,” and called for the Attorney General to appoint an independent counsel to look into “knowing and willful violations of the federal election laws” by both the Clinton and Dole campaigns and the national political parties.⁶

The campaign spending arms race got off to an even faster start for the 2000 presidential primaries. It soon became apparent that 2000 would be a record year for raising and spending campaign funds. By the end of 1999, George W. Bush had raised an astonishing \$63 million, with Al Gore raising \$28 million, Bill Bradley raising \$27 million, and John McCain bringing in

nearly \$20 million.⁷ Steve Forbes, who had spent \$37 million of his own money in the 1996 primaries, again self-financed his 2000 campaign, spending about the same amount of money before dropping out after the New Hampshire primary. Other Republican candidates just couldn't come close to being competitive with the Bush fund-raising machine and the Forbes check-book. Well before any vote had been cast, Dan Quayle, Elizabeth Dole, John Kasich, and Lamar Alexander dropped out of the Republican race, unable to persuade enough Republican loyalists to open their wallets on their behalf.

Bush and Forbes decided to bypass federal matching funds for their presidential bids. In doing so, they take the gamble that they will be able to raise the funds on their own and not be hampered by federal campaign restrictions on the amount of money they can spend in each of the primaries. Those accepting federal funds, such as John McCain and Bill Bradley, had to find inventive ways to sidestep the federal limitations in the early primaries. For example, candidates who accept federal funds are not supposed to spend more than \$1.1 million in the Iowa caucus or more than \$660,000 in the all-important New Hampshire primary. However, the federal law is so filled with loopholes that the spending limits are easily sidestepped. For the New Hampshire primary, for example, a candidate could spend \$1 million on Boston television commercials, but since only 16.8 percent of the viewing audience lives in New Hampshire, only \$168,000 will count toward the cap. Unlimited amounts of direct mail pieces could be sent to New Hampshire and not count toward the cap if mailed twenty-eight days before the primary. Finally, federal law permits one-half of a campaign's expenditures to be deducted as fund-raising costs, even if they have no relation to fund-raising.⁸ There is a great incentive for campaigns to use federal loopholes as creatively as possible, so that they can front-load their spending in the crucial early primaries.

The torrid pace of spending for the 2000 presidential contest means that, when all funds are tallied after the general election, this will be by far the most expensive presidential contest in the nation's history.

Campaign spending has been unusually high in other contests as well. In California, over \$141 million was spent on ballot initiatives alone in 1996, and the 1998 gubernatorial contest shattered all records, even when counting just the costs of the primary. In several states with full-time professional legislatures, such as California and Illinois, the cost of running for office is well into the hundreds of thousands of dollars.⁹ In a growing number of cases, local contests have cost over a million dollars.

Why It Costs So Much to Run for Office Several factors account for the spiraling cost of elections. First, candidates are more willing to arm themselves with the services of professional political consultants. This means more polling, greater use of television advertising, more money on telemarketing, and greater willingness to pay higher-priced general consultants and campaign managers for their services. Second, more wealthy candidates are now willing to put up their own money to partially or fully finance their campaigns. Third, there is a greater aggressiveness on the part of candidates, especially incumbents, to accumulate large war chests to discourage competitors and to begin campaigning earlier in the cycle. Fourth, since the Republican takeover of the House of Representatives in 1994, there has been a concentrated effort to defeat or protect vulnerable freshman members. Finally, corporations, unions, ideological organizations, and individuals have exploited the loopholes of soft money and issues advocacy, spending extraordinary sums to influence elections.

Not all elections are high-priced. The cost of campaigning will range widely, depending on several basic factors:

- *The cost of media markets.* Media markets, especially television, vary widely, from the expensive urban markets like New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, to the inexpensive markets of Billings, Montana, or Santa Fe, New Mexico.
- *The competitiveness of the race.* A hard-fought election involving several primary challengers and a tough general election fight will take far more resources than a race with no primary and only token general election opposition.
- *The size of the district.* It is far more expensive to reach a voting population of two million in a statewide race than in a congressional district with perhaps 200,000 voters.

Wealthy Candidates Using Personal Funds A growing number of candidates for high office have used personal funds to help finance their campaigns. For 1996 federal elections, a total of \$161 million came from candidates' own pockets.¹⁰ The candidates are almost always challengers trying to defeat an incumbent, using their considerable wealth to purchase name recognition and legitimacy. Most often, these wealthy candidates lose.

Apart from Steve Forbes, the best-known big spender was Ross Perot, who expended \$63 million in his 1992 presidential bid and another \$8.2 million of his own funds in 1996. Businessman Maurice M. Taylor Jr.'s hapless run for the Republican presidential primary in 1996 cost him \$6.5 million.¹¹

Apart from the presidential bids, no amount tops the \$40 million of personal funds spent by former airline executive Al Checchi in the 1998 California gubernatorial primary. Checchi, and his wealthy opponent Jane Harman (\$16 million spent), were both trounced in the primary by lieutenant governor Gray Davis, a man of relatively modest means who relied heavily on contributions from individuals and political action committees. Faced with a media barrage from Checchi and Harman, Gray Davis knifed his free-spending opponents with this tag line: "Davis: Experience money can't buy." Had Checchi won the primary, how much more of his personal resources would he have sunk into the general election?

Ronald Lauder spent \$14 million in a Republican mayoral primary in New York City, losing to Rudolph Giuliani, who spent just \$2.5 million and won 67 percent of the vote. Michael Huffington spent \$5.4 million, mostly his own money, to win a seat in Congress in 1992. He immediately began campaigning against incumbent senator Dianne Feinstein (D-California), spending a record \$30 million, nearly all his own money, but losing in a close contest for the 1994 Senate seat.

In 1996 fourteen candidates for the Senate and five candidates for the House spent more than a million dollars of their own money to run for office. Michael Coles, spending \$2.43 million of his own money, topped the list of House candidates; altogether, Coles spent a record \$5.57 million but still lost to incumbent Newt Gingrich. Mark Warner, spending \$10.35 million of his own money, was the biggest self-financed candidate in the Senate, but he lost to incumbent Senator John Warner of Virginia, who spent less than half that amount of money. Guy Millner, spending \$6.26 million of his own money, lost to Max Cleland for the open Senate seat in Georgia. Big personal spenders did not fare well in 1996: eleven out of fourteen Senate candidates who spent more than a million dollars in personal funds lost; three out of five House million-dollar candidates lost.¹²

In fact, it was very tough for self-financed candidates to win House or Senate seats in 1996. A study by the Center for Responsive Politics found that of the 149 candidates for the House and Senate in 1995–96 who put more than \$100,000 of their own money into their campaigns, only nineteen won.¹³

The 1998 congressional elections gave rich candidates the chance to open their own wallets wide. As many as eighteen nonincumbent candidates running for the U.S. Senate were millionaires; four were worth more than \$50 million.¹⁴ The largest net worth belonged to Darrell Issa, who pumped \$10 million into the Republican senatorial primary in California. Like Checchi, Issa poured in his own money, and like Checchi, Issa lost in the primary to a statewide officeholder, California treasurer Matt Fong.

Not everyone loses. Herb Kohl, two-term senator from Wisconsin, twice ran successfully under the banner of “Nobody’s Senator but Yours,” accepting only small contributions from individuals and spending a total of \$15 million in personal funds. For Jon Corzine, a multimillionaire former Wall Street executive, money was no object. He spent a record \$34 million to win the 2000 New Jersey Senate primary. His opponent, long-time politician Jim Florio, mocked Corzine, calling him the “human ATM machine.” Corzine won by 16 percent and was unfazed by Florio’s jibes: “Make no mistake, I want to invest in America,” said Corzine, “that’s what this campaign will be about.”¹⁵

It is very tempting for candidates with fat wallets to bypass the time-consuming, tawdry, and sometimes humiliating chase for dollars. It is so much easier to concentrate on the business of campaigning when all fundraising can be done by a signature on a personal check. But as the track record shows, dollars alone are hardly ever the answer to a successful campaign.

Skinflint Approach Far rarer is the candidate who spends virtually no money on campaigning. Former senator William Proxmire of Wisconsin and former congressman William Natcher of Kentucky, both noted for their frugality, were able to campaign on a shoestring. Natcher insisted on paying his own campaign bills, usually no more than \$7,000 per election. “Some people are spending \$1 million on House races,” Natcher once said. “That’s wrong. It’s morally wrong. I don’t believe they can really represent their people if they are taking money from these groups [political action committees].”¹⁶ In 1990, Natcher was outspent \$144,315 to \$6,766 and still managed to beat his opponent two to one.

But the Natcher and Proxmire examples occur only under unusual circumstances: Natcher had a safe, demographically and politically stable district; in Proxmire’s case, it was more a testament to the candidate’s unique

personality. Proxmire's successor could not afford the skinflint approach: Herbert Kohl blitzed the Democratic primary with \$7.5 million of advertising during the last six months of the campaign.

Does Money Buy Elections? The lavish, self-financed campaigns of Al Checchi, Jane Harman, Darrell Issa, Ross Perot, and Steve Forbes clearly show that money by itself does not buy elections. There are plenty of other illustrations of candidates throwing money at a campaign and still losing, especially when it is their own money and not funds from hundreds of contributors who see the candidates as winning prospects.¹⁷ Yet money does make a difference. In 1996, 92 percent of the House races and 88 percent of the Senate races were won by the candidate who spent the most money. As Larry Makinson of the Center for Responsive Politics points out, many of those seats were relatively safe, and money probably “reflected the political realities” rather than shaped them. In the open seats, money still was the dominant factor: in forty-three out of fifty-three open 1996 House seats, the candidate with the most money won; in the Senate, twelve of fourteen open seats in 1996 were won by the top spenders.¹⁸ In 1998, the Center for Responsive Politics found that 143 U.S. House candidates—the highest number in at least a decade—were financially unopposed; that is, they had no opponent or no opponent reporting any financial activity. In the 1998 elections, the percentages of big-money winners were even higher than in 1996: 96 percent of House and 91 percent of Senate races were won by the candidate who spent the most money.¹⁹ Further, 260 candidates (60 percent) had at least a ten-to-one financial advantage over their opponent, with incumbents holding the advantage over challengers by a six-to-one margin.²⁰

Voting (In)efficiency Not only did Al Checchi break a record in spending \$40 million of his own money while losing in the 1998 California gubernatorial primary, he also broke a record for vote-getting inefficiency. Each one of his 681,843 votes cost \$58.66. Michael Coles, in his unsuccessful bid to oust Newt Gingrich, was runner-up, spending over \$5.5 million (a record amount for a House race) and receiving 127,135 votes, with each vote costing \$43.26. Charlie Owen, a Louisville multimillionaire, in an unsuccessful bid for the Democratic primary for U.S. Senate in Kentucky, spent an estimated \$6.8 million and received 171,911 votes; each vote cost \$39.55. As seen in the next chapter, a California candidate for state assembly spent an awe-inspiring

\$77.10 per vote, but at least had the satisfaction of winning. Somewhere, old-time big-city bosses are shaking their heads in dismay, thinking how much cheaper it was in the old days of outright bribery and vote buying.

During the 1994 election cycle, the cost per vote was generally in the \$2.50 to \$3.50 range, and on a statewide basis the median cost per vote did not exceed \$5.00.²¹ Very few candidates, for the Senate or the House, spent more than \$10 per vote. William Natcher must come close to the record for the most efficient of contested races: in 1992, he received 126,894 votes, while spending just \$6,624; each vote cost him a nickel.

Raw financial numbers do not tell the entire story. What really matters is not how much money was raised, but how wisely it was spent. Some campaigns will spend lavishly on overhead: expensive campaign office space and full-time salaried employees raising money during the off years. The Al Gore for President campaign was roundly criticized for its excessive spending during the 1999 preprimary months, with heavy expenditures on campaign offices, a bloated campaign staff, and a revolving door of expensive consultants.

In 1998 one of the worst examples of inefficiency was the reelection campaign of Democratic senator Carol Moseley-Braun of Illinois, which Dwight Morris called a “finance nightmare.”²² While Moseley-Braun was good at raising money (\$4,886,749 since January 1993, when she took office), she had only \$590,585 in the bank seven months before the election. Where did all the money go? She had to repay debts from her 1992 campaign (\$631,109); she spent \$1,969,655 on overhead (staff salaries, taxes, rent, utilities, telephone, computers, travel, meals); \$1,188,376 on lawyers and accountants; and \$1,704,843 on fund-raising costs.²³

Indeed, the cost of fund-raising itself can be considerable for any campaign, and such costs distort a campaign’s financial balance sheet. For example, one of the biggest users of direct mail and other fund-raising solicitations was the Oliver North for Senate campaign in 1994. North’s campaign brought in approximately \$17 million in direct mail and telephone solicitations, yet the cost was very high: \$11 million to pay for the fund-raising services. The net income to the campaign was only \$5 million.

Inefficiency can come through using the wrong tactics, the wrong medium, or the wrong message. Al Checchi had some of the most talented, experienced, and high-priced consultants available. His television ads were well crafted and they blanketed the state; he traveled tirelessly throughout California; he was handsome, energetic, and sincere; even his website

sparkled. But his critics, and Monday-morning quarterbacks, were quick to point out that Checchi's message was just flat wrong. Checchi positioned himself as the candidate of change, even telling voters, "if you like the status quo, then don't vote for me." His \$40 million campaign was based on the notion that voters were disappointed, disillusioned, and wanted something better. As Checchi observed after his landslide defeat, "In the exit polls, voters 2 to 1 said we don't want change. How the hell do you overcome that?"²⁴ Voters overwhelmingly favored the most status quo of candidates, lieutenant governor Gray Davis.

Expensive campaigns are certainly not confined to Senate or gubernatorial contests. Early presidential primaries and straw votes can break through the stratosphere of costs per vote. In the Iowa straw vote in August 1999, for example, each Bush "vote" cost \$106 and each Forbes "vote" cost an astounding \$402.

Most illustrations of money and campaigning in this chapter concern federal elections law. In the following chapter, there is further discussion of state financing and especially state and local attempts to reform campaign financing.

Federal Election Law

Before the federal campaign finance reforms were enacted in the 1970s, election financing was "cash-and-carry politics": checks were not required, there were no limits on funds, records were not kept except for internal purposes, and there were no requirements for disclosing sources of funding.²⁵ Each party relied heavily on generous wealthy contributors. Campaign finance expert Herbert Alexander noted that the 1972 presidential campaign was the "high watermark for large donors."²⁶ Both Nixon and George McGovern benefited: three large contributors accounted for \$4 million in donations: W. Clement Stone contributed \$2,141,656 (all but \$90,000 to Nixon), Richard Mellon Scaife gave \$1,068,000 to Republicans (\$1 million to Nixon); and Stewart Mott gave \$822,592 (\$400,000 to McGovern) to liberal candidates and causes.²⁷

The Federal Election Campaign Act amendments of 1974 were designed to curb the influence of wealthy donors, to require reporting of funds received and spent, and to put ceilings on the amount of money that could be spent in campaigns.²⁸

Under federal law, certain kinds of contributions were forbidden: cash contributions of more than one hundred dollars; contributions in the name of another person; money from anyone under 18²⁹; and contributions from people who were not citizens or legal permanent residents. Also prohibited were contributions from labor unions or corporations directly to candidates.

The federal law also restricted the amount of funds an individual could give each year to a candidate or political party. Individuals could give up to:

\$1,000 per election (primary, runoff, general) to each candidate;

\$5,000 per year to a political action committee;

\$20,000 per year to the national political party; and

\$25,000 total per calendar year.³⁰

During the last presidential cycle, millions of Americans gave small donations (less than two hundred dollars) to candidates, political action committees, and political parties. There is no precise figure on how many people contributed, because federal campaign law does not require itemization or disclosure of the names of these contributors. Altogether, these small donations made up \$734 million of the \$2.2 billion raised for the 1996 federal elections.³¹ In 1996 there were 630,000 individual donors who gave more than two hundred dollars each; altogether, they gave \$597 million. Included in this group were 235,000 contributors who each gave \$1,000 or more.³²

These funds are called *hard money* and are regulated by the provisions of the Federal Election Act. Hard money goes directly to candidates, or indirectly to candidates through political parties and political action committee contributions.

Political Action Committees (PACs) The number of political action committees grew rapidly in the 1970s, leveling off in the mid-1980s, and in 1995 there was a total of 4,016 PACs.³³ There are three basic kinds of political action committees. First there are “connected” PACs, which are affiliated with a parent organization such as a labor union, corporation, or membership organization. This is the most common political action committee, generating by far the most hard money for candidates. Connected PACs solicit funds from employees, members, and shareholders. The second kind is the “unconnected” committees, which have no parent organization. These are

often ideological PACs or organizations created by political entrepreneurs. Unconnected PACs are free to solicit funds from any citizen who wants to give money. The third kind is the “personal” or “leadership” political action committee. In June 1998 there were seventy-four leadership PACs registered with the FEC, forty-seven of which were created by Republicans. The political action committees were created to give certain members of Congress leverage in helping other candidates who might run for House or Senate committee or leadership positions. These PACs could spend no more than \$5,000 to elect or defeat a federal candidate, including the honorary chair of the PAC itself.³⁴

In some instances, members of Congress have established state leadership PACs, which are not covered by federal law and its disclosure requirements. Such state PACs become a new form of soft money, and many, depending upon the state law, accept contributions from labor or corporate funds and unlimited personal funds.³⁵

Political action committees are restricted in the amount of hard money they can give to individuals or political parties during a calendar year: \$5,000 per election (primary, runoff, general) to each candidate; \$5,000 per year to another political action committee (usually to a leadership PAC); \$15,000 per year to the national political party.

When Representative Tony Coelho of California took over the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee in the 1980s, House Democrats and Democratic challengers finally had a champion who would aggressively seek out corporate contributors. Brooks Jackson, in his aptly titled book *Honest Graft*, characterized Coelho’s marketing tactics as sometimes resembling “a legal version of the old protection racket.”³⁶ In 1984 Coelho said he went to over one hundred business groups, reminding them why they should keep giving to House Democrats: we “are going to retain control of the House for the remainder of this century. . . . We have the advantage. We’re the incumbents. They have to beat us.”³⁷

Ten years later, that beating was inflicted and then it was payback time. In October 1994 minority leader Newt Gingrich, sensing a historic Republican victory one month later, gave this stark warning to lobbyists: “For anybody who’s not on board now, it’s going to be the two coldest years in Washington.”³⁸ One lobbyist described to Richard L. Berke the “feverish pitch” of the Republicans following their 1994 takeover: “These new Republican members are probably moving faster than any time in history to

exploit their power in fund-raising. It's more open and brazen than any time before."³⁹ Republicans were making special efforts to protect the large number of freshman joining their ranks in November 1994, and were watching closely which lobbyist had donated to whom and "unapologetically cutting off" lobbyists perceived as not loyal. Representative Bill Paxon of New York, new chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee, distributed to Republican House members a tally of the contributions made the previous year by the nation's largest political action committees.⁴⁰ Conservative political consultant Brad O'Leary published his "PAC List of Shame" and the "PAC Legion of Honor," with the political action committees that had contributed to Bill Clinton and Democrats ("Shame") and those that supported Newt Gingrich and the Republicans ("Honor").⁴¹

Following the 1994 election, business and corporate PACs did an abrupt about-face in their spending. Before the election, they had split their money roughly evenly, but by 1996 business PACs had shifted their donations heavily to Republican candidates, by a two to one margin.⁴²

This illustrated a fundamental truth of PAC decision making: political action committees don't lead, they follow. Incumbents reap contributions, insurgents and challengers do not. During the 1996 elections, political action committees gave \$243 million and were a key financial component of reelection campaigns for members of the House and Senate, giving on average \$288,000 to winning House candidates and \$1.1 million to winning Senate candidates.⁴³ PACs predictably follow the ancient wisdom of Chicago's mayor Richard J. Daley: "Don't make no waves, don't back no losers." PACs are the ardent cheerleaders for the powers that be.

Independent Expenditures The Supreme Court in *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976) struck down the 1974 campaign law provisions that restricted total spending for all federal races, independent spending on behalf of federal candidates, and spending by candidates themselves. The Court ruled that:

A restriction on the amount of money a person or group can spend on political communication during a campaign necessarily reduces the quantity of expression by restricting the number of issues discussed, the depth of their exploration, and the size of the audience reached. This is because virtually every means of communicating ideas in today's mass society requires the expenditure of money.⁴⁴

The *Buckley* decision meant that wealthy individuals were permitted to spend as much money as they wanted on their own campaigns. As seen above, many candidates have been willing to dig deep into their own pockets.

Because of *Buckley*, individuals, labor unions, corporations, political action committees, and organizations can spend as much money as they want expressly to advocate the victory or defeat of a candidate for federal office. The vehicle for express advocacy is the independent expenditure. Money spent for independent expenditures is hard money; that is, it must be reported to the Federal Election Commission, and the independent expenditure must be made without the knowledge, consultation, or cooperation of any candidate.⁴⁵ Independent expenditures had always been possible for groups such as NARAL, the National Rifle Association, the Christian Coalition, the Sierra Club, and a host of other organizations that wanted to spend funds to either defeat or to help a candidate. In a fairly new twist, the \$8.5 million that paid for the Willie Horton ads in 1988 came through an independent expenditure organization created by a group of Republican consultants.

Independent expenditures have been given a much wider meaning because of the 1996 Supreme Court decision *Colorado Republican Federal Campaign Committee v. Federal Election Commission*.⁴⁶ The Court, in a deeply divided opinion, ruled that political parties now have the right to make unlimited independent expenditures, just as long as there is no coordinated activity with the candidates. This new tool allowed both Democrats and Republican campaign committees to give valuable direct aid to their own candidates. The Republicans were the first to take advantage of this ruling. The day after the Supreme Court decision, the National Republican Senatorial Committee established a new independent expenditure unit. The NRSC began pouring nearly \$10 million of hard money into key Senate races above and beyond what it had heretofore been permitted to spend in coordination with candidates. The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee was able to spend only \$1.5 million during this same period of time.⁴⁷

The following table summarizes how hard money can be spent and who can receive it.

HARD MONEY CONTRIBUTIONS: A SUMMARY

<i>Contributor</i>	<i>Recipient of Funds</i>
Individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal candidates: \$1,000 limit per election • Political parties: \$20,000 per year • \$25,000 cap on all sources for one year • Independent expenditures: unlimited funds
Foreign nationals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barred to federal candidates and political parties except for “building funds,” and barred from independent expenditures
Corporations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot contribute to federal candidates or political parties, and may not contribute to independent expenditures, except to “restricted class”
Unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot contribute to federal candidates, political parties, or independent expenditures (except to own members)
Political action committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal candidates: generally \$5,000 per election • \$15,000 to national political parties • Independent expenditures: unlimited funds
Party committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute variable amounts to federal candidates, unlimited transfers between party committees, and unlimited funds for independent expenditures
501(c)3 groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barred from contributing to federal candidates or party committees, and barred from making independent expenditures
501(c)4 groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barred from contributing to federal candidates or party committees, but in some cases may make unlimited independent expenditures

Source: Adapted from Trevor Potter, “Where Are We Now?” 22.

Soft Money and Issue Advocacy Hard money is money raised and spent according to the requirements and restrictions of the federal campaign law and is used in connection with federal elections.⁴⁸ Soft money is money not covered by the requirements and regulations of federal campaign law. Two federal actions were key in opening up the floodgates of soft money. In 1979 the Federal Election Campaign Act was amended so that national party com-

mittees could spend money on “party building activities” in their state and local parties without having that money count against hard money spending ceilings. National parties’ funds could now pour into state and local party grassroots campaign materials (bumper stickers, brochures), voter education and registration activities, and get-out-the-vote drives. Technically, the 1979 amendment did not create soft money. It came about through a Federal Election Commission administrative action in 1978 that changed the rules governing party fund-raising. The FEC determined that a state party could use corporate or union funds (both of which were barred as hard money gifts) to finance a share of its voter registration drives. The share of the costs were undefined, and the funds would not be subject to federal limits.⁴⁹

Soft money came in slowly at first, but by 1996 both national parties were aggressively courting wealthy individuals, unions, and corporations to contribute serious sums of money. This was the ideal vehicle for the wealthy individual who had reached the maximum of \$25,000 allowed under hard money restrictions. In 1996 this meant that Edgar M. Bronfman Jr. (Seagrams) could contribute \$435,000; Felix G. and Elizabeth Rohatyn (Lazard Frères) could contribute \$415,000; and Rupert and Ann Murdoch (News Corporation) could contribute \$270,000. Five other wealthy individuals were able to contribute at least \$200,000 each during 1996. These were not quite the Clement Stone numbers, but they were very welcome by the parties.⁵⁰

The potential of unlimited soft money has given a new meaning to the old term *fat cat*. As Charles Babcock and Ruth Marcus note, there has been a “tidal wave of money” gathered through soft money by both the Democratic and Republican parties, giving them a greater role in presidential and congressional races than ever before. “A \$100,000 donation is no longer considered top tier in this season of massive party giving.” The previous elite level of Republican donors were Team 100 donors, who gave a minimum of \$100,000. Now there is another group, even more exclusive—the Republican regents, who contribute \$250,000 or more. Altogether, 739 individuals and corporations that were Team 100 or Republican regents gave nearly \$95 million from the beginning of 1999 up through the Republican 2000 convention.⁵¹

The Republican Party goal for 2000 was to recruit one thousand individuals, called the “Team One Million,” willing to donate one million dollars over a four-year period of time. Democrats have their own big-time club, “Leadership 2000,” whose sixty-seven members were committed to giving or raising \$350,000 each from June 1999 through August 2000.⁵²

Altogether, the national political parties collected \$263.5 million in soft money donations during the 1995–96 election cycle. Republicans raised \$141.2 million and Democrats collected \$122.3 million during this period. A study conducted by the Center for Responsive Politics showed that Republican committees received 96 percent of their soft money donations from businesses and their executives; Democrats received 87 percent of their soft money from businesses and 11 percent from organized labor.⁵³ Executives and corporations from Wall Street and insurance and real estate industries were among the biggest donors.

The big contributors were deeply involved in federal policy fights. Trial lawyers, fighting against Republican attempts to limit liability suits, gave \$8 million to the Democratic committees and \$1.5 million to the Republican committees. Tobacco companies, fighting against the Clinton administration's attempt to further regulate the industry, gave \$5.8 million to the Republican committees and \$1 million to the Democratic committees. Joseph E. Seagrams, Walt Disney, and Atlantic Richfield joined top contributors Philip Morris and RJR Nabisco in giving over a million dollars in soft money, more to Republicans than to Democrats. AFSCME and Communications Workers of America donated all of their million-plus contributions to Democrats.⁵⁴

GROWTH OF SOFT MONEY

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total Soft Money</i>	<i>Republicans</i>	<i>Democrats</i>
1980	\$19.1	\$15.1	\$4.0
1984	\$21.6	\$15.6	\$6.0
1992	\$86.0	\$49.8	\$36.3
1996	\$263.5	\$141.2	\$122.3

Source: FEC records cited in Anthony Corrado, "Party Soft Money."

The search for more and more soft money has been both a challenge and an opportunity for Washington-based lobbyists. Many of them are now taking on the role of super fund-raisers, pursuing ever greater amounts of soft money. On the Republican side, Haley Barbour, now a lawyer-lobbyist, hunts after big donors willing to give \$175,000 over a four-year period, to join the circle of Team 100 players. Brenda Larsen Becker, of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, is a financial powerhouse who chairs the two annual Republican

congressional committee fund-raising dinners. Her association alone gave \$203,575 in 1997 in soft money. Dick Von Dongen, president of the National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors, heads the Republican National Committee's Majority Fund—one hundred PACS, many of which contribute \$15,000 a year in hard money. Juanita D. Duggan is the top House lobbyist for Philip Morris, which has given the most soft money to Republicans since 1996. Other lobbyists helping Republicans are Wayne Berman and lawyer J. Steven Hart, president of powerhouse lobbying firm Williams and Jensen.

Democrats have their own lawyer-lobbyist resources, most notably Tommy Boggs, the late Daniel A. Dutko, former House member Dennis E. Eckart, John A. Merrigan, and long-time ally of Al Gore, Peter Knight. Lobbyists are often glad to aid beleaguered members. As Daniel Dutko once said, "there's so much pressure on the Members themselves to raise money, that it's turned into a frenzy."⁵⁵ Peter H. Stone observed that lobbyists have become "fund-raising major-domos because they can bring in enormous amounts of soft money. Others enter the golden circle because they command vast sums of hard dollars from their clients' PACs. Still others are key players because they can do both."⁵⁶

For others, however, the incessant pleas for money have caused major headaches. Many corporate donors are getting very tired of constantly being badgered to give money, and are frustrated as to where the money goes and how it is "invested." Kenneth L. Fisher, CEO of a California-based financial services firm, bluntly stated: "the process is like insects going after red meat . . . once they figure out who the donors are of size, they keep going after them over and over and over, from different sides and with different stories. And they don't broaden the list."⁵⁷

Some feel their arms are being twisted and that they are threatened by political extortion. Big donors used to say, well, we've "maxed out"—given all the federal law permits. But now big donors do not have that excuse anymore, thanks to the limitless nature of soft money.

The push for soft money has only increased. The Federal Election Commission reported that in 1997 the Republicans had raised \$40.2 million, and the Democrats had raised \$33.9 million, both record amounts for a nonelection year.⁵⁸ For 1998 and 2000, both parties aggressively recruited \$100,000 donors, planning multimillion-dollar fund-raising dinners, hoping to build the soft money war chest.

Through the enormous infusion of soft money, the national political parties have been reinvigorated and have played increasingly important roles in

presidential and congressional elections, giving considerable financial assistance to coordinated campaigns and state and local political parties.

The hard money–soft money shell game. The distinctions between regulated hard money and unregulated soft money are easily blurred. In a way, the difference amounts to nothing more than an accounting shell game. An analysis by the *Washington Post* in 1998 showed that the Democratic National Committee, deeply in debt and scrambling to catch up with Republicans, enlisted a dozen state Democratic parties to swap soft money for hard money. The DNC needed hard money for its congressional and senatorial candidates; it had an excess of soft money that could not legally be used for such purposes. In 1997 the DNC raised millions of dollars in soft money from labor unions, wealthy contributors, and corporations. The DNC then swapped funds with state parties, turning over soft money to the state parties, giving them a 10 to 15 percent commission, and getting back from the state parties hard money that could be used to help finance federal elections.⁵⁹ Soft money became hard money, and through legal fiction and accounting legerdemain, the Democratic National Committee was able to gain much-needed hard money funds. Soft and hard money swaps had been done in earlier years, both by Democrats and Republicans, but the 1997–98 Democratic swap was by far the most aggressive.

“It shows the porousness of the system and exposes the myth that there is some separation between hard and soft money,” said Don Simon, executive vice president of Common Cause.⁶⁰

Issue advocacy. The *Buckley* decision threw the doors wide open for political communications. Any person, group, political party, or any foreign national or country can spend unlimited sums of money advocating any position or policy through issues advocacy. As long as the issue ads or communications do not expressly advocate the election or defeat of a candidate, an individual or group can spend unlimited sums of money and not report it to the FEC.

There is no precise definition of what it means to influence an election, but the FEC has adopted a standard of “express advocacy.” According to FEC definitions, express advocacy means any communication using phrases like “vote for the president,” “reelect your congressman,” or “defeat,” accompanied by a picture of one or more candidates or communications that in context can have “no other meaning than to urge the election or defeat of one or more clearly identified candidate(s).”⁶¹ The AFL-CIO, U.S.

Chamber of Commerce, DNC, and RNC all heavily used issue ads in recent years.

Issue ads leave few fingerprints. If an organization or a wealthy individual is gun-shy and does not want others to know its identity or motivation, issue advocacy ads are the ideal vehicle for spending unlimited amounts of money with no reporting requirements. Tax-exempt organizational status goes even further: give the organization an innocent, motherhood-and-apple pie name, bombard the airwaves with issue ads that go right up to the edge of the law, and then get a hefty tax break as well. Why not let other taxpayers foot the bill?

To insure anonymity, there are even more buffers available. For example, wealthy donors who contributed heavily to the 1996 victory of Sam Brownbeck were able to hide behind three layers of anonymity. Sam Brownbeck became senator in Kansas in 1996 thanks in part to a last-minute infusion of issue ads worth \$410,000 in a campaign in which Brownbeck himself spent \$2.2 million. The ads were sponsored by Triad Management Services, a private firm that advertises itself as an underground version of the Republican Party. The issue ads were paid for by a nonprofit group called Citizens for the Republic Education Fund. Brownbeck stated that he had no knowledge of the ads, but there was extensive behind-the-scenes activity that Triad provided for Brownbeck's campaign, against both his Republican primary opponent, recently appointed senator Sheila Frahm, and his general election opponent, Jill Docking. Democrat Jill Docking spent a little more than a \$1 million on her race, losing 54 to 43 percent.

Triad president Carolyn S. Malenick sent out a fax alert to several hundred Triad clients, urging their support of Brownbeck and the defeat of Frahm. After his primary victory, Brownbeck hosted a thank-you breakfast attended by twenty-five Triad clients and Triad officials at the GOP convention in San Diego.

A Senate committee obtained bank records of the Citizens for the Republic Education Fund, and found that \$1.2 million of the \$1.3 million spent came from an entity called Economic Education Trust. Senate investigators believe that the source of these funds was Charles and David Koch, billionaire owners of Koch Industries of Wichita, Kansas, the second largest privately held company in the United States.⁶² Thus the Kochs (if, in fact, they were the original contributors) were able to funnel money to the Economic Education Trust, which gave to the Citizens for the Republic Education Fund, which paid for the Triad issue advertising.

SOFT MONEY CONTRIBUTIONS

<i>Contributor</i>	<i>Recipient or Activity</i>
Individuals	• May give unlimited funds to political party; may spend unlimited funds on issue advocacy
Foreign nationals	• Barred from giving soft money to political parties; may spend unlimited funds on issue advocacy
Corporations	• May give unlimited funds to political parties; may spend unlimited funds for issue advocacy
Unions	• May give unlimited funds to political parties; may spend unlimited funds for issue advocacy
PACs	• May spend unlimited funds for issue advocacy
Party committees	• May spend unlimited funds for issue advocacy
501(c)3 groups	• May engage, but with some IRS restrictions
501(c)4 groups	• May spend unlimited funds for issue advocacy

Source: Adapted from Trevor Potter, “Where Are We Now?” 22.

Tax-exempt organizations. In 1987, in front of a congressional committee, former Internal Revenue Service director Sheldon S. Cohen sketched out a scenario showing how a political candidate could skirt the federal tax laws. First, Congressman John Doe would have his supporters create a foundation to promote a public policy agenda consistent with his views. Even better, they would take over an existing but dormant group, thereby avoiding close IRS scrutiny when trying to obtain tax-exempt status for a newly formed organization. The directors of this organization would be key friends and supporters; former staffers would be hired to gear up for the next campaign. Congressman Doe would then solicit donations for the foundation and would appear at events it sponsored. To stay within the letter of the law, the organization would stop short of explicitly trying to influence the outcome of the election.⁶³

Much of what Cohen warned about in 1987 is now standard practice. Larry J. Sabato and Glenn R. Simpson conclude that the use of tax-exempt organizations for political purposes is becoming a “commonplace and increasingly worrisome practice.”⁶⁴ Tax-exempt organizations have found ways of using campaign money that is “softer than soft money.”⁶⁵

Such organizations fall into one of two categories, 501(c)3 groups, which are charitable or educational groups, and 501(c)4 groups, nonprofit civic groups. Their unwieldy designation comes from the section of the Internal Revenue Code that sets the conditions for tax-exempt status.

In 1995 there were 626,226 of the 501(c)3 organizations, including a number of well-known organizations like the Brookings Institution, Heritage Foundation, Cato Institute, and the Progressive Policy Institute. They also include organizations with a greater interest in campaigns, such as Americans for Term Limits and Newt Gingrich's Progress and Freedom Foundation. These groups can accept unlimited tax-deductible donations, which are not publicly reported. They cannot give money to candidates, nor can they spend it to influence legislation, and their donor lists are not be publicly disclosed. Groups in this category cannot engage in any political activity or "substantial" lobbying.⁶⁶

In 1995 there were 139,451 of the 501(c)4 organizations. They can also accept unlimited donations, but those donations are not tax-deductible and not publicly reported. They cannot give money directly to candidates but can run issue ads, and the donor lists are not reported to the IRS except during audits. Groups with 501(c)4 status can lobby for a particular cause but they cannot push a particular candidate.

Some groups have pushed hard against the limits of the tax code in their political activities. In 1997 Cohen observed that "some of these groups are skating right up to the line. And some are skating right over it."⁶⁷

Congressman Cal Dooley, a Democrat from California, felt the sting of a tax-exempt organization in his 1996 bid for reelection. A group created in 1995 by Republicans called the Coalition for Our Children's Future, whose stated mission was to promote a balanced budget amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ran a barrage of television ads against Dooley during the last three weeks of the campaign. The ads said nothing about balanced budgets, but denounced Dooley for being against the death penalty and welfare reform. Dooley immediately claimed the ads unfair, stating that he voted for the death penalty twenty-six out of twenty-seven times, voted for welfare reform, even voted for a balanced budget amendment. Dooley survived this \$300,000 onslaught of issue ads against him and won with 55 percent of the vote. But he was galled at the tactics: "If that's not a political ad, I don't know what is." Dooley continued, "It's frustrating because you have no idea who is behind the ads."⁶⁸

Each year, the IRS audits about fifteen hundred organizations that have 501(c)3 status and four hundred 501(c)4 organizations.⁶⁹ In 1997 the IRS

was looking closely at fifty tax-exempt groups from all reaches of the political spectrum. The IRS has challenged the nonpartisan nature of the National Policy Forum, a 501(c)4 organization headed by former Republican Party chairman Haley Barbour.⁷⁰ The IRS has sued the Christian Coalition, which was designed as a 501(c)4 entity, claiming that it has made illegal and unreported contributions to federal candidates through its “voter guide” activities. The Christian Coalition has gone so far as to take credit for Republican victories in the 1994 election and created a multimillion-dollar “war room” at the Republican National Convention in 1996.⁷¹

Foreign money. Federal law forbids campaign funds from foreign citizens, corporations, and governments. But like so much else in money in politics, there are exceptions and loopholes. For example, U.S. subsidiaries of foreign-owned companies are permitted to make political action committee and soft money contributions as long as the U.S. affiliate, and not the parent company, makes the decisions on contributions. Contributions can also come from “foreign agents,” U.S. citizens registered with the State Department who are lobbyists acting on behalf of foreign governments, businesses, or other associations.

The Center for Responsive Politics identified 128 U.S. subsidiaries of ninety-three foreign-owned companies, in sixteen different countries, that gave soft money or PAC contributions to federal candidates during the 1996 election cycle. The subsidiaries of these ninety-three companies contributed over \$12.5 million, with \$8.4 million going to Republican candidates and \$4.1 million going to Democrats. Of that \$12.5 million, a little over \$8 million was in soft money contributions.⁷² The biggest contributors, who gave through their American subsidiaries, were the Seagram Company (Canada), giving \$2.19 million; BAT Industries (United Kingdom), \$1 million; News Corporation (Australia), \$929,000; and Glaxo Wellcome (United Kingdom), \$921,000.

When political action committee money or soft money is given by a subsidiary, is it the funds of the American subsidiary or the parent international company? Is the contribution a part of the political-business strategy of the subsidiary or the parent? As former chairman of the FEC Trevor Potter stated, “while it’s possible most of the time to discern whether a company is a subsidiary of a foreign-owned parent, it’s virtually impossible to figure out whose money” has been donated.⁷³

Veteran campaign consultant Ed Rollins in his 1996 tell-all book gave a tantalizing hint of the role of foreign money. According to Rollins, some \$10

million in cash had come undercover from the Marcos regime in the Philippines, via an unnamed lobbyist, to the Reagan-Bush reelection committee. The Justice Department reviewed the allegations in late 1996, but department lawyers had concluded that the statute of limitations had probably run out.⁷⁴

The issue of foreign money surfaced in full force during the 1996 presidential elections with revelations of vast sums of money coming from foreign individuals and corporations, mostly going into Democratic coffers. Many foreign contributors were involved, and the Clinton campaign and the Democratic National Committee were compelled to return money illegally given. Two of the central connections with dubious foreign money were James Riady and John Huang. Riady, the U.S.-educated son of Mochtar Riady, the head of the Indonesian Lippo conglomerate, had worked in a bank in Arkansas, gotten to know Governor Bill Clinton, raised money for his presidential campaign, and later opened the doors for funds from other members of the influential Indonesian family and its corporate holdings.

The Riady family and executives of the Lippo group business interests had donated more than \$270,000 to the Democratic Party committees between 1992 and 1996. Lippo had aggressively pursued business interests in the United States. Thanks in part to trade-promotion trips by Clinton and the late commerce secretary Ron Brown, Lippo was able to sign more than a billion dollars' worth of business in China and Indonesia with U.S. companies, including Entergy Corporation (the parent company of Arkansas Power and Light) and Arkansas-based Wal-Mart Stores.

As Keith B. Richburg noted, for the Riady family—ethnic Chinese who had changed their name—financial support of the Clintons and the Democratic Party was “simply common sense and a standard operating procedure” for ethnic Chinese businessmen for whom *guanxi* (connections) is a “central element of business success.” Hong Kong businessman William Overhold of Bankers Trust observed: “For these guys, that’s tin money. It’s sort of like buying membership in a club. They’d just like to be members of the club of people who say, ‘Hey, I can talk to these very important people.’ To join a good golf club in Asia costs a million dollars. To pay half that and be able to say, ‘I had lunch with the president of the United States,’ it’s in the range.”⁷⁵

Republican critics were fast to pounce on the Democrats and President Clinton. Speaker Newt Gingrich, no slouch himself in both raising money and raising ethical issues, declared that the Asian money controversy was part of a pattern for the Clinton administration “that reeks of corruption. We have

never had this large a scandal be a part of the American presidency.” During the latter weeks of the presidential campaign, Senator Bob Dole attacked Clinton for taking foreign money, while the Democrats shot back that Dole and the Republicans themselves had accepted \$2.4 million from foreign interests.⁷⁶

With much fanfare, the Senate investigated the alleged illegal fund-raising activities of the 1996 campaign, concentrating especially on foreign money going to Clinton and the Democrats. The Senate committee, led by Republican senator Fred Thompson of Tennessee, concluded that the Clinton campaign “eviscerated federal fund-raising laws and reduced the White House, key administration offices, and the Presidency itself, to fund-raising tools.”⁷⁷

Seeing an opportunity both to condemn the president and to raise additional funds, the National Republican Senatorial Committee sent through a direct mail solicitation a very official-looking “Statement of Support” demanding that Bill Clinton fully disclose all illegal foreign cash activities. To make the point, the letter to potential Republican donors included a fake Chinese one hundred-yuan banknote and asked on its envelope, “Has Bill Clinton Sold Out America For Illegal Foreign Cash?” The letter, signed by Senator Mitch McConnell, warned of a “nightmare scenario” where the “most unethical Administration in my lifetime” could funnel “millions in ILLEGAL FOREIGN CASH to Liberal Democrats” and even take back the Senate in 1998. The letter implores: “Money laundering. Giving top-secret security clearances and sensitive intelligence to foreign donors and communist Chinese agents. Renting out the White House like a Motel Six. Schmoozing drug dealers and illegal arms dealers.”⁷⁸ For only thirty-five dollars, enraged donors could sign the NRSC’s “Statement of Support.”

Foreign money has crept into other campaigns as well. Lalit H. Gadhia, an Indian-American lawyer, had “a talent for fund-raising,” especially for receiving small amounts of money from waiters, busboys, and kitchen workers in Indian restaurants in Baltimore. Gadhia collected \$46,000 in 1994, all to go to members of Congress considered sympathetic to India on issues such as trade and military assistance.⁷⁹ Gadhia ultimately ended up in federal prison because the money raised actually came from an official in the Indian Embassy in Washington; as modest checks were written by busboys and others, they were handed an equivalent amount of cash.

The largest penalty against a foreign company accused of illegal campaign contributions was an \$895,000 fine imposed against a Taiwan-based company in 1993 for laundering \$200,000 in donations to officials in Los

Angeles and Sacramento.⁸⁰ In 1994 the Federal Election Commission established that twenty-six Japanese businesses, private individuals, and a government entity had made more than \$300,000 in illegal contributions to more than a hundred forty political campaigns in Hawaii. The FEC announced \$162,225 in fines against the Japanese interests.⁸¹

Other Inventive Ways of Raising Money The search for money, and ways around the federal election law, never stops. The parties and candidates have come up with creative, inventive ways of collecting campaign funds.

Bundling. This is a hard money strategy of collecting funds from a variety of individual contributors and “bundling” them together so that they make a much greater visible impact. EMILY’S List, the organization that promotes women candidates, has used the bundling technique, channeling its money to favored candidates. Organizations made up of small-business owners are good candidates for bundling. Senator Bob Packwood, for example, received \$184,000 of bundled money from insurance agents acting on behalf of a large insurance company.

Tally sheets. A little-known device for directing funds to a favorite Democratic candidate is the tally sheet. Contributors who have given the maximum in hard money to a candidate—say, a Senate candidate—could then funnel dollars to the Democratic Senatorial Committee to be tallied to that Senate candidate’s account. When the dollars are spent, the Senate candidate can draw upon the tally, having the party spend money on supposedly independent advertising, phone banks, or other party activities.

The Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee, which doesn’t use the tally system, has cried foul, accusing the DSCC system of being a blatant violation of campaign rules, because tallying amounts to illegal earmarking of contributions to individual senators. In response, Steve Jarding, DSCC communications director, said: “All I need to do is comply with the law and the FEC says that a tally is legitimate. Does it violate the spirit of the law? Yeah. Welcome to American politics in the ’90s.”⁸² In 1995 Democrats paid a \$75,000 fine to settle a Republican complaint about the tally system.⁸³

Phony voter data cards. The National Republican Senatorial Committee sent out “Official 1990 National Voter Data Cards” to 500,000 recipients, who were told that “this card must be filled out and returned,” with

instructions that specified the inclusion of a “processing check of at least \$9.” There were disclaimers, but the piece prompted FEC inquiries from state and local election officials who were concerned that people would be fooled into thinking that they had to follow the instructions and pay money in order to vote. The NRSC chairman, Senator Don Nickles of Oklahoma, withdrew the program.⁸⁴

Bank draft gimmick. One obstacle to cost-effective mail solicitation is the cost of processing, which in 1990 was \$1.39 per envelope received. To get around that expense and also to have a continuing flow of funds, the NRSC’s finance director, Albert Mischler, developed Candidate Escrow Funding. The NRSC had successfully and quietly collected money through bank drafts for seven years, gaining \$9 million in average monthly contributions of \$11, with a service cost of \$300,000. The gimmick for the Candidate Escrow Funding program was a \$25 check that was sent to hundreds of thousands of Americans as a come-on. By depositing the \$25 check, the recipient would authorize the NRSC to electronically draft \$12.50 a month in perpetuity from the person’s account unless the contributor canceled.⁸⁵

Nonprofit corporations. In preparation for his 1996 presidential bid, Lamar Alexander raised \$5.5 million, some of it in \$100,000 contributions, to finance the nonprofit Republican Exchange Satellite Network corporation. The network would promote Republican causes and issues—and certainly Lamar Alexander. Bob Dole raised \$4 million in 1994 for his Better America Foundation, a nonprofit organization that featured Dole in its television ads. These organizations may accept unlimited contributions, including corporate funds, and are not required to identify donors.

Newt Gingrich’s far-reaching fund-raising empire came under scrutiny by the Internal Revenue Service, the FEC, and the House Ethics Committee. Gingrich’s fund-raising and issue vehicles included GOPAC (the Republican political action committee), the Progress and Freedom Foundation (a tax-exempt think tank), and the Abraham Lincoln Opportunity Foundation (a tax-exempt charity). Gingrich and his allies were accused of using this network of tax-exempt organizations to finance their political projects, in violation of the U.S. Tax Code and FEC law. Gingrich was investigated by the House Ethics Committee and reprimanded on the House floor, and he agreed to pay a \$300,000 fine for failing to seek proper legal advice in using

tax-exempt organizations and for giving the Ethics Committee false information about GOPAC's relationship with other organizations.⁸⁶

Compliance committees. Democrats and Republicans have each set up compliance committees, with budgets of \$6 million, to pay for the cost of complying with federal election laws. Individuals can give an additional \$1,000 donation to one of these committees.

Local host committees. For the 1996 and 2000 Democratic and Republican conventions, local host committees were allowed to establish tax-deductible accounts for corporate donations to help offset the cost of running the conventions. Each party raised about \$25 million in addition to the \$12 million received from the federal government. Like the Olympics and other sporting events, the conventions have been underwritten by corporate America, with all the trappings of logos, hospitality suites, special access, and the rest.

Federal Campaign Finance Reform (and Lack Thereof)

Take away soft money and we wouldn't be in the majority in the House and the majority in the Senate and couldn't win back the White House. . . . Hell is going to freeze over first before we get rid of soft money.

—Senator Mitch McConnell (R-Kentucky)⁸⁷

Before and after the stench of the 1996 presidential campaign financing controversies, it seemed as if every politician was for campaign finance reform.⁸⁸ During the 104th Congress (1995–96), members of Congress introduced more than seventy campaign reform measures, then promptly ignored them.⁸⁹ During the campaign, Clinton, Dole, and Perot each called for campaign finance reform, deplored the current system, and, especially Dole and Clinton, proceeded to take advantage of its loopholes.

Reform measures sprung up all over. Senator Fred Thompson's investigation of Clinton campaign abuses produced a final report lambasting the involvement of foreign money, but then the committee died off without further action. Many legislators got into the act of producing their versions of reform, some tepid, others more far-reaching.

Some, like Bill Bradley, saw the main obstacle to reform as the Supreme Court's decision in *Buckley v. Valeo*, which determined that campaign spending is protected by the First Amendment as an element of free speech. Under current constitutional thinking, *Buckley* permits unlimited spending by candidates on their own campaigns, unlimited spending on soft money, and unlimited spending on issues advocacy. Bradley has called for a constitutional amendment to overturn *Buckley*.⁹⁰

The reforms advocated by senators John McCain (R-Arizona) and Russell Feingold (D-Wisconsin) received the most attention from Congress. Their proposal would ban soft money contributions to national political parties from unions, corporations, and wealthy individuals, would require a disclosure of contributions for last-minute issue ads that target specific candidates, and would ban the use of union and corporate funds for such ads. In early 1998 the McCain-Feingold bill was pulled by Senate majority leader Trent Lott of Mississippi after the Senate in a fifty-one-to-forty-eight vote failed to end a Republican filibuster against the bill—nine votes short of the sixty needed to override a filibuster.

Several reformers have pushed for the ban of foreign money. One suggestion is not to permit permanent resident aliens to be exempted from the ban on foreign national donations. Those who support this reform state that if one cannot vote in a U.S. election, then one should not be allowed to try to influence the election by giving funds. Opponents argue that green card holders should not be prohibited from making donations; such individuals pay taxes and perform other duties of citizenship, and a prohibition would not be fair to them. A second proposal, which was addressed in the mid-1980s, would prohibit subsidiaries that are at least 50 percent owned by foreign companies from setting up a political action committee.⁹¹

Others have called for public financing of elections to varying degrees, from complete financing to an expansion of the partial the financing that already exists in presidential elections.

Scholars on campaign finance have also weighed in. In a thoughtful analysis of campaign reform, Herbert Alexander and his colleagues rightly argue that campaign finance has entered a new era, what they call the “new realities” of soft money, issue advocacy, tax-exempt organizations, and independent expenditures.⁹² Among their recommendations are a ban on soft money and leadership PACs, more rigorous FEC enforcement, and partial public financing of congressional campaigns.

Congress was inundated with proposals for reform but failed to address campaign finance reform in 1998 and barely addressd reform before the 2000 presidential elections. The track record of Congress has not been good on campaign reform. The nonpartisan citizens group Public Campaign reminds us that over the past decade, the Senate has had twenty-nine hearings, 522 witnesses, seventeen filibusters, and 113 votes on campaign fundraising reform—and there is no reform in sight.⁹³

The most interesting campaign finance reform is occurring in state and local governments. There have been extraordinary changes made in the states since 1990, with many grassroots efforts under way to transform campaign spending without waiting for federal reform. The next chapter highlights those efforts.

3
PART

**WIDER
REACH
OF
POLITICAL
CONSULTING**

Ballot Issues, Local Elections, and Consultants

I especially enjoy running initiative campaigns. These campaigns have little relation to politics in any conventional sense. An initiative has no political party, no public record to defend or promote, no personality to charm or disgust the voters. And there are no brothers-in-law who need a job. An initiative is just waiting for you to define it and give it life.

—Political consultant Robert Nelson

If you have \$1 million, you can get anything on the ballot.

—Robert Stern, Center for Governmental Studies

Ballot Initiatives

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Great Plains and western states, along with several eastern states, enacted legislation and amended their constitutions to permit citizens to have a greater voice in the creation of law and public policy.¹ Direct democracy, through initiatives and referenda, was seen by proponents as a way to “diminish the impact of corrupt influences on the legislature,

undermine bossism, and induce legislators to be more attentive to public opinion and the broader public interest.”² Spurred on by principles of Jeffersonian democracy, reform politics, nineteenth-century populism, and an inbred suspicion of big government, twenty-two states had adopted initiative and referendum mechanisms by 1915.

Today, ballot initiatives are a curious mixture of grassroots civic mindedness, individual entrepreneurship, corporate megabucks influence, and professional political consulting. What was once the province of individual grassroots efforts is now a battleground for contentious policy issues, waged in multimillion-dollar campaigns choreographed by professional consultants.

Twenty-four states and the District of Columbia have some provision for direct citizen involvement. Twenty states permit direct initiatives—ballot measures created by individuals, citizens groups, or corporate interests and voted on directly by the people. Nine states have indirect initiatives—ballot measures that go first to the legislature for vote; if the legislature fails to pass the measure, it can then be decided by the people. Twenty-three states have adopted the popular referendum—measures passed by the state legislature that must first be ratified by voters before becoming law.³

Altogether, eighteen states allow constitutional amendments by citizen initiative, twenty-two states allow statutory amendments by citizen initiative, and sixteen states allow both constitutional and statutory amendments.⁴ During the past decade, three overarching issues have appeared on many state ballots: gambling, term limits, and campaign finance reform. Many other issues have been presented to the voters as well: halting bilingual education and advocating “paycheck protection” for union dues in California; banning cockfighting in Arizona; restricting the size of hog farms in Colorado; permitting dental technicians to sell false teeth directly to patients in Florida; limiting black bear hunting in Idaho; allowing medical use of marijuana in Maine; permitting assisted-suicide law in Michigan; restricting bear wrestling in Missouri; and banning hunting of mourning doves in Ohio.⁵

California and Ballot Initiatives While ballot issues have played an increasingly important role nationwide during the past decade, California stands out as the state with the biggest, most contentious, and most expensive issue debates. For consultants who specialize in ballot issues, California truly has been the golden state.⁶

For many years, ballot initiatives were seldom used in California. Between 1922 and 1978, there was no year in which more than ten initiatives received

enough signatures to qualify for the ballot; and in no decade had more than nine such initiatives ever passed. All that changed with the success of Proposition 13, the 1978 measure spearheaded by Howard Jarvis and Paul Gann that forced property taxes to be cut by half. Proposition 13 spurred tax-cutting proposals throughout the country and encouraged conservative interest groups to use ballot proposals to achieve policy objectives.⁷

Proposition 13 also helped launch the specialty business of ballot issue consulting.⁸ Jarvis and Gann hired direct mail consultants William Butcher and Arnold Forde, who built an impressive grassroots mailing list that became the backbone of Proposition 13 support and antitax initiatives for years to come. By the early 1980s, their firm, Butcher-Forde, had managed a half-dozen of Jarvis's post-Proposition 13 campaigns, including a drive to reduce the state income tax by one-half, to remove Chief Justice Rose Bird from office, and to close loopholes in the original Proposition 13. Butcher-Forde, which signed a nineteen-year contract with Jarvis, developed and constantly updated a mailing list of more than a million faithful contributors and petition signers to Jarvis's causes. Even two years after his death, an 800,000-piece mailing, using Howard Jarvis's name and picture, promised a "1987 Property Tax Analysis," and also asked for twenty dollars to help pass a "new Proposition 13."⁹

By the 1980s political scientists and journalists were commenting on the rapid growth and impact of ballot issues in California.¹⁰ Peter Schrag observed that ballot initiatives were "rapidly crippling representative government" in the state.¹¹ Similarly, Michael Reese found that initiatives "completely dominate the state's political life. They affect voter turnout, set the tone of campaign debate, even influence the outcome of local and statewide elections."¹² Larry Berg observed that the rampant use of initiatives "symbolizes the near and total breakdown of government in California."¹³

In 1988 California voters were faced with a total of eighteen ballot initiatives plus twenty-three other matters, such as bond proposals and constitutional amendments, for a total of forty-one ballot questions. A total of \$100 million was spent fighting initiative actions, including an estimated \$15 million by the tobacco industry to fight antismoking measures and \$43 million spent by the insurance industry against measures to cut automobile insurance rates.¹⁴

Election day became much more complicated for voters, now faced with far more decisions on a wide variety of issues. "It's madness," said Kim Alexander, president of the California Voter Foundation, a nonprofit group

that tracks campaign spending. “The [ballot measure] ads are designed to scare voters, manipulate voters, do everything but inform voters. I think people are going to wonder whether we have too much democracy in California.” In the California 2000 primary elections, interest groups spent \$120 million showing thirty-second television commercials to convince citizens to vote for or against insurance reform, Indian gambling, clean water, gay marriages, and a wide variety of other policy issues. The avalanche of ballot initiative commercials all but drowned out the ads of the presidential contenders. For Alexander, who watches elections carefully, and for average California voters, who may pay just marginal attention to politics, there will be over eighty candidates on the ballot and twenty-nine policy decisions for them to make.¹⁵

Two-thirds of all money spent on California initiatives in 1990 came from business interests, while just 12 percent came from individuals.¹⁶ In 1992, 67 percent of all money donated came in amounts of \$100,000 or more, with 37 percent coming in \$1 million or greater lumps. In five competing and sometimes overlapping auto insurance initiatives in 1988, \$101 million was spent; at the same time, the governor’s race cost \$29 million. Anheuser-Busch spent \$8.3 million on two alcohol tax initiatives in 1990; cigarette companies spent \$21 million to battle a tobacco tax increase.¹⁷

During the 1990s California voters have been faced with even more ballot choices, many of them involving highly controversial public policy, including affirmative action, cutting off public assistance to illegal immigrants, ending bilingual education, medical use of marijuana, and others. California had changed dramatically. Ballot issues, often backed by well-financed special interests and orchestrated by professional consultants, were supplanting a state legislature transformed by term limit restrictions. As Peter Schrag states, California citizens are “in nearly constant revolt against representative government” and the state is now in a condition of “permanent neopopulism.”¹⁸

By 1998 outside interests were joining California issue battles, adding their money to issue advocacy advertising and fueling the debate on contentious issues. For example, five national labor and teachers unions poured nearly \$20 million into a successful effort to stop Proposition 226, the so-called paycheck protection issue. The campaign for Proposition 226 started with two outsiders: J. Patrick Rooney, an Indianapolis insurance company owner, gave \$50,000 to jump-start the signature gathering campaign, and Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform contributed \$441,000 to help

pay for a letter sent out by Governor Pete Wilson to gather signatures. Two other organizations, Citizens for a Sound Economy and the National Taxpayers Union, aired issue ads in favor of Proposition 226.¹⁹

California has been the land of milk and honey for political consultants who specialize in ballot measures. In 1996 a total of \$141,274,345 was raised to qualify, support, or oppose twenty-seven ballot measures in the primary and general elections in California. This was almost as much as \$153 million taxpayers gave Clinton, Perot, and Dole for the entire 1996 presidential campaign.²⁰ The most expensive single initiative, Proposition 211 in 1996, cost an estimated \$52 million.

Proposition 211 was a measure to expand lawsuits against publicly traded corporations over stock fraud. Dan Morain dubbed this the “mother lode for consultants, pollsters, public relations experts, opposition researchers, fundraisers, lawyers and direct mail specialists.”²¹ Proposition 211 was created by San Diego trial lawyer and securities specialist William Lerach, with backing from labor groups, senior citizens, and others who argue that this measure would protect their pensions from the damage caused by another savings and loan scandal. Funds to qualify and back Proposition 211 came from a coalition of “high-roller law firms that specialize in securities fraud class action lawsuits.”²² If enacted, Proposition 211 would have created consumer rights under California law in conflict with a new federal law created when Congress overrode a veto by President Clinton. Under the provisions of 211, a shareholder could file suit for fraud, but only in California courts, if a company’s stock price dropped sharply. Lerach, who had been active in Democratic politics, hired as his chief strategist Bill Carrick, who also served as the senior Clinton-Gore reelection strategist in California.²³

The fight over Proposition 211 illustrates the widespread use of political consultants in a high-stakes, expensive ballot initiative fight.²⁴

- *Petition signing.* Kimball Petition was paid \$1.04 million to circulate the petitions, gather signatures needed, and qualify Proposition 211 for the November 1996 ballot.
- *Television ads.* Bill Carrick and his media firm were paid \$9 million to produce and place television ads supporting Proposition 211 (and opposing an earlier March 1996 ballot). Typically, a media firm would earn up to a 15 percent commission on the ads placed on television.

- *Coalition building.* Stoorza, Zieghaus, Metzger, and Hunt was paid \$299,932 to line up a coalition of groups, celebrities, and public officials to oppose Proposition 211.
- *Door-to-door campaigning.* Voter Revolt was paid \$205,000 to have its workers go door-to-door in opposition to Proposition 211.
- *Polling and focus groups.* Holm Group and Charlton Research received \$325,000 and \$246,404, respectively, to conduct focus groups and statewide survey research.
- *Public relations.* Edelman Associates, a large national public relations firm, was paid \$257,022 to generate stories in newspapers and television and to serve as spokesman for the campaign.
- *Opposition research.* The Dolphin Group received \$15,000 to investigate lawyers and others who were backing Proposition 211.
- *Direct mail.* Forde and Mollich received \$585,524 for direct mail services.
- *Fund-raising.* Anne Hyde was paid \$314,900 to raise funds against the proposition.
- *General consultant.* The biggest payments went to Goddard/Claussen First Tuesday, the firm hired by the opponents of Proposition 211. Goddard/Claussen took in at least \$24.2 million and another \$4.6 million for several other ballot initiatives they were working on at the same time. Of the nearly \$29 million in receipts, Goddard/Claussen kept between \$3 and \$5 million in profits, with the rest going to subcontractors and to television stations to purchase air time for anti-Proposition 211 commercials.

Those lining up against Proposition 211 spent some \$37 million, while proponents spent \$15 million. Altogether, a total of \$52 million was spent, making it the most costly initiative in the history of California and, indeed, the nation.²⁵ After the dust had settled, California voters overwhelmingly rejected Proposition 211 with 74.4 percent voting against and 25.6 percent voting for, roughly mirroring the percentage of money spent by the opposing sides.

The Role of Consultants Ballot issues present consultants with a different set of challenges and opportunities from those found in campaign elections. The biggest difference, of course, is that there are no candidates involved in

ballot issues. Ballot consultants do not have to worry about a candidate's past voting records and performance in office; they don't have to put up with the second-guessing of a candidate's spouse or former law partners; ballot consultants don't have to contend with a candidate's irritation and fatigue or a candidate who goes off message. Further, political parties generally do not intervene on ballot issues debates.

While there are no candidates in ballot issues, sometimes elected officials stake their reputation on them. Increasingly in California, elected officials have played prominent roles in advocating ballot initiatives. In 1990 elected officials played an important role in advocating eleven of the eighteen ballot issues. Pete Wilson, both as senator and as governor, backed several highly charged measures. In 1990, when he was running for governor, Wilson backed Proposition 115, the Crime Victims Justice Reform Act, positioning himself as the conservative, crack-down-on-crime candidate. As governor, Wilson in 1994 backed the divisive and controversial Proposition 187, the measure that would deny most state benefits to illegal immigrants.²⁶ Then in 1996, with his eye on the presidency, Wilson backed the equally controversial California Civil Rights Initiative, Proposition 209, to discard affirmative action programs in public education, employment, and contracting. In 1998 Governor Wilson loaned Californians for Paycheck Protection \$550,000 from his own political action committee for last-minute television advertising in support of Proposition 226.²⁷

As David Magleby and Kelly Patterson note, in ballot issue campaigns, professional consultants "exercise a tremendous amount of control. . . . They define the message, construct the ballot wording, and in some cases suggest issues to be placed on the ballot."²⁸ Consultant Rick Claussen observes, "with ballot issues, you build your own candidate."²⁹ Ballot issues give consultants the control and opportunity that many campaign consultants probably wish they had. At some time or another, nearly every campaign consultant has been exasperated with his candidates and has said: if I could only get rid of this candidate, I could really win this election. Ballot issues give consultants that chance. They can take the cynical, candid view of consultant Kelly Kimball, and take the money and run: "I've never met a consultant who's in this because he believes in the causes. . . . The professional consultant world is in this for the dough."³⁰ Or they can be policy entrepreneurs, true believers in issues and causes, ready to bring them directly to the people.

Political gadflies Howard Jarvis and Paul Gann hit a vein of citizen anger and resentment over high property taxes. So too did Bill Zimmerman and

Harvey Rosenfeld. Their organization, Voter Revolt, fed on the anger of California voters over high auto insurance rates. Despite being outspent thirty-two to one, they prevailed in passing Proposition 103, a radical auto insurance reform referendum, in 1988. The measure called for a minimum 20 percent cut in premiums and promised to reduce rates further through later measures. Rosenfeld, a protégé of Ralph Nader, decided in 1986 to take action after he had seen California's car premiums soar by 74 percent from 1982 to 1987, making them the third highest in the United States. Greg Anrig Jr. described how Rosenfeld, working on his own initiative, wrote much of the language of Proposition 103 on Thanksgiving Day 1987 in his small Santa Monica apartment.³¹

In 1994 California voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition 187, the measure to deny state benefits to illegal immigrants. Proposition 187 was created by a self-appointed committee of ten, calling itself the "Save Our State" campaign. One of the ten was Richard Kiley, a California political consultant who until that year had never managed a major statewide campaign, and his wife, Yorba Linda mayor Barbara Kiley.³² The Kileys also served as political strategists and advisers for the ballot proposal. The budget for Proposition 187, the illegal immigration measure, was only \$700,000, but got a major boost when Governor Wilson decided to spend more than \$2 million for two television commercials supporting 187.³³ One of the most provocative of the commercials, produced by media consultant Don Sipple, was shot in black and white, showing people—presumably illegals—fleeing across the international border into California. In ominous tones, the narrator says: "They keep coming."³⁴

Later, Richard Kiley was brought to Orlando, Florida, by Doug Gutzloe, a local political consultant, to help create a possible constitutional amendment to the Florida constitution on illegal immigration.³⁵ Said Kiley, "If you come into this country illegally, you've already broken laws and shouldn't get any tax dollars. We're going from state to state to make immigration policy align itself with the laws of the land."³⁶ In Arizona and Florida the initiatives, however, went nowhere because of lack of funds, lack of organization, and the "general failure" to galvanize the voters' interest.³⁷

Following in the footsteps of past policy entrepreneurs has been Ron K. Unz, who in 1998 took policy entrepreneurship to a new level. Unz successfully promoted Proposition 227, a statewide initiative in California to halt bilingual education. Bilingual education "struck him as a paradigm of a government program wrapped in lofty theories but miserable results." As Frank

Bruni described him, Unz has emerged “as a new force and a new kind of figure in California politics, the ardent ideologue who circumvents the telegenic requirements and messy compromises of a traditional candidacy by working his will through a voter referendum.” In fact, so closely was Unz tied to the Proposition 227 that it was called the Unz Initiative.

Unz, who owns a software company, had a staff of just two and spent less than \$300,000 on commercials and paid promotions for Proposition 227. He relied mostly on free media. Altogether, the initiative cost \$1.2 million, of which he contributed \$700,000. Proposition 227 was supported by 61 percent of the voters. Unz was back in 1999, with a sweeping campaign finance reform initiative, which is discussed below.

The Built-In Advantage of “No” and Ballot Wording In 1990 agribusiness, timber, and pesticide interests spent an estimated \$16 million to defeat, by two to one, a mega-initiative known as Big Green. This environmental measure lost because it fell victim to a backlash by California voters that year, who had to face twenty-eight ballot propositions altogether, and because Big Green was a sixteen-thousand-word, complicated, and unfocused “laundry list of aims,” including a ban on cancer-causing pesticides, phasing out of chemicals that cause ozone depletion, and the creation of an oil-spill clean-up fund.³⁸

Even the most conscientious voter, faced with fifteen or twenty ballot issues couched in complicated and technical language, will not hesitate in voting “no” on every issue on the ballot. Given their choice, consultants prefer managing opposition—or “no”—on a ballot initiative. Consultant Wally Clinton observes, “it is easier to present a negative message than to present a concept.”³⁹ This is accomplished by simply hammering home the point “Vote No,” or, in the more artful and persuasive forms of advertising, using fear or self-interest, pointing out the extra tax or bureaucratic burdens, or a whole variety of tactics.

The politically influential Sacramento law firm of Nielsen, Merksamer, Parrinello, Mueller, and Naylor has helped write or defeat forty-one initiatives since 1990. Gene Erbin, of Nielsen, Merksamer, observed that the key to an initiative is “to understand that it’s not merely a law. It’s also a political document. Voters will read it. So the proposal can’t be too confusing.”⁴⁰ A proposed ballot issue may undergo a lengthy drafting and refinement of language so that it not only satisfies the technical, legal language, but also clearly and convincingly summarizes what the ballot issue is all about.

Consultant David Hill noted that most referendum voting takes place “in a virtual vacuum.”⁴¹ That is, referenda are usually the last items on the general ballot and are often uninteresting (despite some very high-profile, contentious ballot issues in recent years) and technical in language. Hill stated that pollsters, in pretesting voter reaction to ballot propositions, have to take into account “rolloff”—the tendency of voters to make ballot choices at the top of the ballot (president or governor), but then make fewer choices as they move down the ballot. Pollsters have to measure the salience of down-ballot issues to determine how likely it is that an individual will vote, not simply whether they’ll vote “yes” or “no.” Hill stated that the way to get around language problems is to plan well in advance: do extensive polls and focus-group testing designed to produce ballot language that is “brief enough to avoid troubling voters, but just detailed enough to elicit interest and sympathy.”⁴² Unless language is clear and persuasive yet simple and easy to understand, voters will shut off and vote “no” or refuse to vote.

Professional Signature Gathering Getting enough valid signatures to qualify a ballot initiative is a very difficult task, and it is almost impossible to gather enough signatures without professional help. David Magleby and Kelly Patterson observe that “few statewide measures in any state in the 1990s were placed on the ballot without the assistance of paid signature-gathering firms.”⁴³ It is not simply a matter of having the required percentage (from 2 to 15 percent) of qualified voters, but other thresholds also have to be met, such as a geographic distribution—having a sufficient numbers of signatures from a minimum number of counties.⁴⁴ Signature collecting became a professionalized business in the late 1960s and was still something of a sideline until direct mail and petition circulation consultants William Butcher and Arnold Forde were hired by Howard Jarvis to raise money for Proposition 13.⁴⁵

In the 1992, 1994, and 1996 election cycles, there were 1,316 statewide ballot initiatives circulated throughout the country; altogether 249, or 22 percent, were certified for the ballots and were voted on. Richard Arnold, president of National Voter Outreach of Carson City, Nevada, stated that professional signature-gathering firms like his were responsible for “90 percent” of the successful petitions during this period.⁴⁶

Petition signature requirements vary throughout the country. Oklahoma has the most difficult requirements, allowing just ninety days and requiring 8 percent of the highest recent vote to qualify a ballot initiative and 15 percent for a constitutional amendment; Arizona also requires 15 percent for constitutional

issues and Wyoming requires 15 percent for statutory issues. On the low end, Massachusetts and Ohio require only 3 percent for statutory issues. California requires 5 percent of registered voters in the latest gubernatorial contest for a statutory ballot issue and 8 percent for a constitutional amendment.⁴⁷

The general rule of thumb in the petition-gathering industry is to collect eight raw signatures in order to ensure five valid signatures. This means that to obtain a hundred valid signatures, a hundred sixty raw signatures must be collected (and paid for).⁴⁸

Just four states (Arkansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, and South Dakota) presume signatures to be valid.⁴⁹ Colorado signatures are not considered eligible unless 147 percent of the legally required number are submitted. In Oklahoma and South Dakota, signatures will be invalidated only if someone challenges them. Eight states do random sample checks; if a random sample fails, a full check may be executed if time permits. That is what happened in California in a 1994 school voucher initiative: the gathered signatures failed a random sample test, but the initiative was placed on subsequent ballot after a full check of the signatures deemed them sufficient. Sixteen other states check every signature by comparing them to actual voter registration.

To complicate matters, there is the element of time it takes to validate signatures. In California, about one million signatures are needed to get a measure on the ballot. For the 1998 ballot, California elections officials recommend signatures be turned in by February 1998 to guarantee enough time to check them prior to certification. If signatures are not turned in by then, the state could not guarantee ballot access no matter how many signatures have been collected.⁵⁰

Got a million? Most states require a filing fee of \$200 or \$250 to register a ballot initiative with the state board of elections. But then, of course, there is the cost of gathering signatures. In California, with approximately one million signatures needed, and a going rate of \$1 or \$1.20 for each signature obtained, a ballot initiative will cost at least a million dollars, without a dime being spent on lawyer fees, focus-group analysis, issue research, television and radio commercials, billboards, or any other element of a successful campaign. The per-unit cost will also vary given other factors—how late the petition gathering begins, how popular or unpopular the cause is, how simple or complex the issue is to explain, and how many competing initiatives are vying for the attention of citizens.⁵¹

In California, there are about fifty subcontractors who are hired by the five major petition-gathering firms.⁵² Those subcontractors have their regional

coordinators and crew chiefs, who hire petition gathers, many of whom hold other part-time jobs, are college students, real estate and insurance agents, and others. A petition collector may be juggling five to ten petitions at once, trying to get voters to sign up. When a lucrative assignment comes along, it goes to the top of the list. For example, in 1998 when a coalition of thirty-two Indian tribes in California decided late in the petition process to collect 403,269 valid signatures, they had to pay a premium rate of \$1.50 per signature. Following the simple logic of the profit motive, professional signature gatherers gave this petition highest priority.⁵³ In this simple illustration of petition signing, street-corner democracy has its price and its priorities.

Collecting voter signatures, especially for a price, sometimes leads to shortcuts and even fraud. In 1994 state and local officials in four states—Nebraska, North Dakota, Utah, and Oklahoma—undertook criminal investigations to determine if fraudulent signatures were submitted and petition gatherers from out of state were used illegally in petition drives.⁵⁴ Further, the states of Maine and Washington have passed legislation banning the practice of paying petition gatherers for each signature they obtain. However, an earlier ban on paying petition gathers in Colorado was found to violate the First Amendment in a 1988 Supreme Court decision. Colorado had also enacted legislation curbing petition gatherers by requiring them to be registered Colorado voters and to wear badges identifying themselves by name, and requiring the sponsoring organizations to make monthly and final reports listing the names and addresses of the petition gathers and the amount they received in compensation. In early 1999 the Supreme Court struck down these Colorado restrictions on the petition-gathering process, ruling that they violated the First Amendment's value of uninhibited communication with voters.⁵⁵ Fourteen other states, mostly in the West, have rules similar to those that were struck down by the Supreme Court.

In 1992 there seemed to be a shift away from high-dollar fund-raising to volunteer-driven activities. Political consultant Richard Arnold observed: "in the wake of talk show campaigns, and the Perot movement, far more people are now willing to involve themselves in the making of public policy; they want to have more direct influence over political decisions and are volunteering in record numbers." In 1992 many of the ballot initiatives collected signatures by using volunteers, "reversing a long-term trend toward the use of private companies and paid canvassers."⁵⁶

However, Jennifer Mears noted just two years later that more and more groups seeking ballot access were turning to paid circulators.⁵⁷ Indeed, of the

519 initiatives that were filed throughout the states in 1994, only seventy-six got on the ballot, and “nearly every initiative that has made it to the ballot got there with the help of paid circulators.”⁵⁸

There are several reasons why professional petition signing is a thriving business:

1. Laws meant to restrict access to the ballot make it difficult to obtain the requisite number of signatures and to comply with state election law hurdles;
2. Booming populations, particularly in California and other parts of the West, make it difficult to obtain the required number of signatures—especially if only volunteers are used; and
3. Changing social climate—people are more willing to pay someone else to get the signatures than sacrifice their own time.⁵⁹

Further, there is the difficulty of obtaining signatures from persons who are increasingly wary of strangers and do not like to be bothered by persons knocking on the front door, just as they don’t want them calling to solicit phone business. Finally, it is easier to train, less expensive, and often more reliable to use paid workers to do the grunt work of gaining petition signatures.⁶⁰

The ballot measure business has been very good for many of the traditional political consulting professions, from pollsters who conduct survey research and focus-group analysis, to media firms who create advertising, direct mail firms who blanket the states or communities with targeted messages, and telephone banks that urge citizens to vote “yes” or “no” on election day.

Ballot issues have also have been good business for the professional petition gatherers, the one unique field of political consulting that thrives on initiatives and referenda. In other chapters we have seen how amateur campaigners are shunted aside or simply do not have the technical skills and experience that count. Here we find that even the one job that seems so fitted to grassroots involvement—going door to door, gathering petitions—is no place for amateurs. Many grassroots petitions are launched, but few succeed. The enthusiasm of Perot-like movements in the early 1990s has dissipated. Only those petition drives succeed that are farmed out to professional petition gatherers, with their corps of part-time workers standing in shopping mall parking lots, seven or eight petitions on clipboards dangling from their cut-off jeans, shouting out their pitch like a barker in the circus, gathering signatures at \$1.15 a pop.

Yet all this might be changing, thanks to the Internet revolution. Websites devoted to political advocacy and policy issues have enormous potential for rallying like-minded citizens, sending electronic petitions to Congress or state legislators, and coalescing new political forces. One of the best examples of the potency of online democracy is the creation of MoveOn, an online citizens activist organization that came out of nowhere in September 1998. It was created by two Silicon Valley entrepreneurs, Joan Blades and Wes Boyd, together with their families and friends, who were frustrated by Congress and its impeachment of Bill Clinton. Blades and Boyd, neophytes to the world of politics, created a website and through it were able to generate more than 250,000 telephone calls and a million e-mails to Congress. MoveOn has taken advantage of the incredibly inexpensive costs of communicating over the Internet. They call it a “flash campaign.” As Blades and Boyd described it, “MoveOn literally sprang from nowhere, with no affiliations or external funding. This is only possible in a world where you can communicate with 100 million people for \$89.95.”⁶¹ MoveOn then developed its “We Will Remember” campaign, created its own political action committee, and vowed to target vulnerable incumbent members of Congress who voted for impeachment or removal of President Clinton. As of the end of 1999, MoveOn states, it has received pledges of \$13 million and 750,000 hours of volunteer time for the 2000 campaigns.

The astounding success of MoveOn shows clearly that in the new age of electronic advocacy, when there is a political vacuum it can quickly be filled. Others have also come to the electronic advocacy business. One entrepreneur, Alex Sheshunoff, traveled 24,000 miles across the United States on the Grassroots Express, a bus wrapped to look like a giant mailbox. He was promoting a new website called E-thepeople, which dubs itself “America’s Interactive Town Hall.” Individuals can write their own petitions using E-thepeople, and just after its launching, more than 25,000 visitors to the site signed petitions on over four hundred issues. Many of the petitions have a distinctly local flavor, such as “Remove Family Court Judge Harold J. Lynch,” or “Lack of traffic light at Robbins and Walker Streets.” Following up on the initial successes of this electronic advocacy vehicle, more than forty newspapers and media affiliates will be using E-thepeople’s software on their own websites.⁶²

Electronic advocacy cuts out the middlemen, the professional consultants, and lets virtually anyone with a Web address and a good (or bad) idea get involved. We are now at the very beginning stages of online voting: the U.S.

Army is experimenting with allowing overseas personnel to vote online, several elections in Washington State have been held online, and Arizona Democrats were able to vote online in their 2000 presidential primary. California, Florida, and Minnesota are officially considering online voting, not only for candidates but for ballot initiatives as well.⁶³

What would truly be extraordinary is if states permitted online petition gathering. Pure democracy, spurred on by its most democratic tool, the advocacy website, may mean that the most ephemeral, mundane, whimsical, or even crackpot ideas could become ballot issues. State election officials in charge of verification of petition signing could be faced with a nightmare of validating addresses and names, and weeding out electronic fraud. Citizens in ballot issue states, accustomed to perhaps eight to ten petitions on their ballots, might find twenty-five or fifty ballot issues they must decide on, no matter how arcane or complex the issue, no matter how much or little interest they may have in them. Critics rightly worry about the crippling effect that government by ballot initiative has on representative democracy. Online advocacy, bypassing the flawed but traditional forms of representative democracy, might be an even greater cause for concern.

Local Elections and Consultants

*They're taking all the patronage out. Electronics has taken
all the loyalty out of politics. They go with whoever
waves a dollar in front of 'em.*

—Jimmy Dean, mayor of Johnston City, Illinois,
complaining about political consultants and modern techniques⁶⁴

*There's hardly a county council race that
doesn't have a consultant involved.*

—Consultant Brad O'Leary⁶⁵

For better or worse, an increasing number of candidates for state and local office are spending more time chasing after campaign funds to pay for professional consulting services. Like statewide and congressional candidates, they are investing in polling analysis, direct mail, candidate and opposition research, and radio and television commercials.

Million-Dollar Local Races California not only has some of the most expensive statewide candidate races and ballot propositions, it also has some very costly local contests. Figures from the California secretary of state office indicate how campaign expenses have mushroomed in recent decades. In 1995–96, \$141 million was spent on ballot issues and another \$138.2 million on state candidate elections.⁶⁶ Additional millions were spent on congressional and local races. California legislative races have gone from a total spending of \$15 million in 1976 to a total spending of \$105.7 million in 1996. Even adjusting for inflation, the increase is extraordinary. The cost of the average general assembly seat in California has gone from \$22,064 in 1976 to \$154,883 in 1996. What is most striking is the ratio of money spent by incumbents versus challengers. Incumbents almost always have the advantage in fund-raising, but for the state assembly seats, that advantage has stretched from a three-to-one-ratio in 1976 to eighteen to one in 1996. With such an overwhelming advantage in fund-raising, which in turn buys the services of consultants and communications, it is very difficult for a challenger to break through to voters.⁶⁷

In the California state Senate races, ten of the forty candidates each spent over a million, with the unusual circumstance of five sets of million-dollar races going against each other.⁶⁸ At a time when many congressional campaigns cost more than a million dollars on each side, it is not surprising that the California Senate races are likewise becoming expensive. California is unusual in that its state Senate districts are larger in population than its congressional districts; there are forty Senate districts in California and fifty-two congressional districts. Those well-financed local races at times take on the nasty complexion of many professionally run congressional contests. In one of those races, the 15th Senate district, Democrat Rusty Areias spent nearly \$2 million, while the winner, Republican Bruce McPherson, spent at least \$1 million. As the *California Journal* summarized this race, “locals were treated to the most relentlessly negative campaign, from both sides, that they had seen in recent memory, provoking cries of disgust from newspapers and citizens alike.”⁶⁹

In many ways California is unusual. It sets records for campaign spending and for the use of professional consultants. In other states, political consultants are much less of a factor. There is a great variation throughout the states in the amount of funds spent for state legislative and local campaigns. As Gary F. Moncrief writes, a person could “easily spend more on a home computer than what the average candidate spends” to run for the state assembly

in Wyoming, Montana, or Maine.⁷⁰ In many states, the average cost of a legislative campaign is no more than \$20,000 to \$25,000. At this level, professionalized races are far from the norm.

Several party officials in a number of states with small populations and small budgets agreed that professional political consulting was quite limited.⁷¹ One party official in New Mexico observed that while there is more professionalization of campaigns, it still has only a limited extent in his state: “Many state House and Senate candidates don’t even have fax machines, let alone political consultants.” In Utah, few campaigns use professional consultants. An official at the Utah Democratic Party observed: “of 399 candidates filing for office in Utah in 1996, I’d be surprised to learn that more than 20 candidates use a professional consultant (outside of Party services). Most of those candidates would be running for statewide and federal office.” In Vermont, consultants generally have a difficult time finding business. As one official in the state Democratic Party noted, in a small state like Vermont: “it’s a matter of community and economies of scale. ‘Outsiders’ are not readily welcomed and generally don’t know the scene as well. In addition, the amount of money that consultants cost is prohibitive.” In Montana there is an economic disincentive to hiring professional consultants. State politicians, noted an official from the Republican Party, are among the lowest paid in the country, and the legislature serves only ninety days every two years.

State legislatures differ greatly in size, professionalism, length of terms, and other factors. Some state legislatures—especially those in California, New York, Illinois, Oregon, New Jersey, New York, and Wisconsin—are year-round, full-time, and highly professional, with well-paid full-time legislators, staff, and support services. Others—such as those in Maine, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, and Montana—are citizen legislatures which may meet for sixty or ninety days a session, or perhaps every other year, with legislators paid only nominal salaries with no professional staff.⁷² Size of legislative districts, the costs of media, urbanization, and other factors also come into play. In California, for example, the assembly districts each average 375,000 constituents, with many located in expensive urban markets; in Vermont, on the other hand, House districts average 3,900 constituents in rural or small-town markets.⁷³

California is by no means the only state where political consultants are being widely used in state and local elections. In New Jersey, professional consultants have been working at the local level for well over a decade. Noted one official from the New Jersey Republican Party: “since 1985, professional

consultants have worked on the legislative races and many county races. Their influence is definitely spreading downwards into local races.” Here the influence of professional consultants “seems to feed upon itself. As a consultant builds a relationship with, say, an assemblyman, that assemblyman will often refer or even pay for that consultant to help a local race. It becomes an investment and self-fulfilling prophecy.”⁷⁴

In a number of states, the political parties have tried to make their state legislative campaigns more competitive—and more professional. They have brought in pollsters, media advisers, opposition researchers, targeting professionals, and professional strategists to work for the party, groups of legislators, and individual candidates. For example, an official with the Missouri Democratic Party noted that professionalization had “grown dramatically” in Missouri because the state Democratic Party pushes it. “We will not keep a campaign that will not help itself.”⁷⁵

Buying Professional Help The decision to use professional consultants often boils down to the hard reality of campaign finances. When campaigns have budgets of less than \$100,000, it becomes difficult to afford many professional services. For example, a benchmark poll (\$12,000), considered a necessity in well-financed campaigns, becomes a luxury for a campaign that has a budget of just \$100,000. Typically, a campaign spends about 5 to 10 percent of its budget on polling and voter research, making a benchmark poll very expensive.⁷⁶ Yet polling, along with direct mail, is the most sought-after professional service for local campaigns. To save on expenses, small-budget campaigns will share a poll with other campaigns or piggyback questions onto a poll paid for by the party, the legislative caucus, or a well-funded campaign. This shared approach is definitely a compromise: the campaign may not get more than one or two questions on the poll, and the poll may not be conducted at the optimal time for the campaign.

An alternative to a shared poll is a stripped-down version of a political poll. One such example is offered by two Republican firms, Spalding Group and Hill Research Consultants, who created ExpressPoll, which advertises affordable polling services for Republican candidates for countywide, legislative, and state races. This service (and inevitably others will join it) targets races that in past years would not have used professional consultant services. The unique aspect of ExpressPoll is its flat, publicly disclosed price of \$2,495, making it well within the budget of many smaller campaigns.

Candidate and opposition research, while generally not an expensive professional service (\$8,000 to \$15,000) becomes unaffordable for campaigns with budgets of less than \$100,000. Many campaigns will not be able to afford media consultants and will rely on less-expensive and better-targeted direct mail or telephone banks to get out their messages.

Who uses professional services? Congressional Quarterly's *Campaign Insider* each week lists political consultants together with their newly signed clients. Along with the sign-ups of congressional, senatorial, and gubernatorial candidates is a growing variety of other statewide and local candidates. In mid-1998, in one week's sampling, a Harris County (Houston) commissioner candidate, a candidate for Florida secretary of state, a candidate for Texas Supreme Court justice, and a candidate for Norfolk County (Massachusetts) district attorney all chose media consultants. Candidates for the San Francisco Superior Court, the California Board of Equalization, the South Carolina Agriculture Commission, and a sheriff candidate in Massachusetts all hired consultants.

As an example of local campaign consulting, Repper, Garcia and Associates, a general consulting practice in Florida, listed seven Florida state legislative races, two judicial Circuit Court races, a candidate for Pinellas County Court, two candidates for Hillsborough County Commissioner, county commissioner candidates in Martin, Pinellas, and Manatee counties, a candidate for Hillsborough tax collector, and two candidates for the Pinellas County School Board.⁷⁷

There is no fully accurate, complete listing of which local candidates have hired consultants. A compilation from the *Campaign Insider* and *Campaigns and Elections*' annual "won-lost" for consulting firms gives the most accurate listing available. Most often, professional consulting is used by candidates for state House (or assembly) and state Senate races, followed by statewide offices (other than governor, attorney general, and lieutenant governor)—state supreme court, state treasurer, and secretary of state, plus local races such as mayor, city council, sheriff, even school board.

Fueling more professionalization at the state legislative level is the push by both political parties to coordinate funds and use legislative caucuses to coordinate campaign finances and the hiring of consultants. Partisan competition in state legislatures is a driving force, and the availability of soft money is another. In state after state, legislative caucuses are raising funds to develop professionalized services for legislative candidates. Daniel Shea has noted that

in the early years of state legislative caucuses, their principal role was to collect money from political action committees and channel it to caucus members.⁷⁸ But in recent years, the role of the legislative caucus campaign committees has gone from just parceling out money to incumbents and challengers to giving them a wide variety of campaign assistance, from seminars on running campaigns and computer assistance, to the services of professional consultants.

The Republicans were first aggressively to use legislative campaign committees, and Democratic caucuses were sometimes slow to catch on. But in recent election cycles, state House and Senate caucuses have been much more active in recruiting professional consultants to assist the caucuses and their candidates.

For example, in 1996 Democrats in the North Carolina Senate organized their first campaign committee to help candidates implement “modern, effective campaigns.” During the 1998 election cycle, the North Carolina Senate Committee was to implement a comprehensive campaign plan with a budget of \$1.5 to \$2 million targeted to approximately ten races. The North Carolina Senate Committee sent out a “Request for Proposal” to Democratic consulting firms, seeking bids from professionals for these services: polling—firms to bid on an eight-hundred-sample statewide issues poll, a minimum of five polls with four hundred samples, a fifteen-minute benchmark poll, and a minimum of five ten-minute tracking polls; opposition research—ten research assessments on vulnerable Republicans; direct mail—proposals to produce eight mail pieces for a minimum of five campaigns, to average 25,000 households (a total of one million mail pieces); media—proposals for producing a minimum of nine radio and nine TV spots for three campaigns with a three-week saturation media buy; and telephone banks—proposals for persuasion and GOTV calls.⁷⁹

North Carolina Senate Democrats, like many other state legislative caucuses, were willing to raise the funds to bring a level of professionalism that was unknown in recent years.

Soft Money Fueling State and Local Party Resurgence The extraordinary flow of soft money from national party organizations to state and local party coffers has led to a general resurgence of state parties, particularly as conduits for campaign money. State parties now have more funds available to do party-building activities and to offer professional services. In the race to raise more and more campaign dollars, the Republican and Democratic national committees are in a constant search for dollars. The statewide and state leg-

islative elections in Virginia give an example of how money pours in and how the national Republican fund-raising edge made the difference.

Virginia 1997 Elections: A Tale of Two Political Parties.

Virginia has been undergoing a remarkable transition at the state and local level as Republicans have regained power at the statewide offices and have made extraordinary gains in the state legislature. The once impossible dream of Republicans becoming the majority party in both the general assembly and the Senate was almost a reality. In hard-fought races in 1997, both at the statewide level (governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general) and state legislative races, extraordinary amounts of money were invested in professionally run campaigns. Virginia in 1997 was also a tale of two parties: national Republican Party organizations pouring in vital millions in contributions, while Democratic Party organizations struggled and gave far less.⁸⁰

At the top of the ticket, the Republican candidate for governor, James Gilmore, received a total of \$2,459,581 from various political party organizations and from other candidates. By contrast, his rival, Democrat Donald Beyer, received only \$301,716 from political party organizations and other candidates.

The Republican National Congressional Campaign Committee, which helps fund elections for congressional candidates, and the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee, which assists U.S. Senate candidates, funneled in over \$1.4 million to the Gilmore for Governor campaign.

In addition, the Virginia State Republican Party made thirty-three contributions, ranging from \$32,000 for Gilmore to many \$200-to-\$300 contributions to legislative candidates. The Virginia Republican Joint Caucus made forty-one contributions, most in the \$3,500-to-\$5,000 range, but as much as \$67,000 for one legislative candidate. Altogether, fifty-two Republican Party organizations listed as national or state contributed to the Virginia elections, including the Arkansas Republican Party (\$5,000), the Arizona-based Campaign America (\$14,300), the Florida Republican Party (\$25,000), and the Tennessee Republican Party (\$4,000). Another eighty-nine local Republican committees also contributed to the elections.

By contrast, the Democratic candidates received far fewer dollars from party sources. The disparity in giving is remarkable: the Democratic National Committee basically abandoned the Virginia races, and other Democratic party organizations fell far short of their Republican counterparts. The biggest national support came from the Democratic Governors' Association funds. Other Democratic Party organizations gave funds, but in small

amounts: the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (\$10,000 to L. F. Payne, running for lieutenant governor) and the Virginia State Legislative Black Caucus (\$45,000 to various candidates). The biggest giver of funds was the Commonwealth Victory Fund, which served as a funding conduit that gave \$677,000 to the Virginia Democratic Party.

Democrats received minor assistance from other state or national Democratic organizations, such as the Blue Dog Democrats (\$7,500 to L. F. Payne) and the Indiana Democratic Party (\$5,000 to the Virginia Democratic Party). Altogether, thirty-eight Democratic state or national organizations made contributions, together with a hundred and ten local Democratic organizations.

High-Stakes Local Elections.

Sometimes local elections take on far greater importance, especially when the control of the state legislature is at stake. Under such circumstances, professional consultants are soon at center stage, as seen in this second Virginia example.

Even after the 1997 general election in Virginia, high-stakes professional politics continued. When long-time Virginia state senator Virgil Goode was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in November 1996, the vacancy created in the Virginia state senate led to a flurry of activity, with political consultants rushing to the rural backwaters of southwest Virginia for a five-week special election that would determine which party would win control of the Virginia Senate. Democratic lawyer and eventual winner Roscoe Reynolds and his Republican opponent Allen Dudley, a small-town banker, managed to spend nearly \$400,000 in a hard-fought battle over the 20th Senate district. Professional consultants came from Washington, Richmond, and Raleigh, North Carolina, “unleashing their attack ads, opinion polls, response tests, telephone banks and voter-turnout models.”⁸¹ For the first time in eleven years as an elected official, Roscoe Reynolds and his campaign bought television commercials, his pollster tested responses to Reynolds’s and his opponent’s ads, and a Chicago direct mail firm blanketed the 20th district with fliers that stated in harsh terms: “When our children needed Allen Dudley, he just wasn’t there,” and “Don’t let politicians like Allen Dudley sell out our families.”

Professional consulting had come to the small cities of Rocky Mount and Martinsville and rural Henry and Franklin counties. This is a region of the state unaccustomed to persistent telephone calls from professionally orga-

nized phone banks, attack ads on local television, and celebrity appearances by the governor, the Republican senator, and Oliver North. The rhetoric was sharp, the charges were flying, and a small voter turnout backed Reynolds.

In probably any other election, not a single professional consultant would be found in far southwestern Virginia, but with the legislature's balance of power at stake, this became an expensive, divisive battleground.

Alabama, Trial Lawyers, and Tort Reform When powerful interest groups clash, backing opposing candidates for elected office, the stakes can be quite high. Inevitably, professional consultants are brought in, and many times the contests turn bitter and negative. In Alabama, the fight pitted trial lawyers against business and corporate interests. As Dale Russakoff noted, Alabama politics has “fallen into the grip of a national showdown between two of the country’s most powerful interest groups, trial lawyers and business groups, whose money now overwhelms elections for once-obscure offices” in Alabama.⁸²

Since the mid-1980s, Alabama has been a battleground between trial lawyers and business interests. It turned increasingly political as wealthy trial lawyers tried to get friendly candidates elected to the state Supreme Court. In 1986 many legislators were elected with the help of generous amounts of pro-business money. As one business lawyer said about the 1986 election: “You can’t buy legislators here, but you can rent them. In 1986 business rented a lot of them.” In 1987 a tort-reform package became law, significantly reducing the amount that could be awarded for punitive damages to \$250,000—a damages cap that threatened the livelihood of trial lawyers.

The following year, the trial lawyers struck back: the head of their state association, Ernest “Sonny” Hornsby, was elected chief justice over a business-backed candidate. Candidates spent an unprecedented \$800,000, and were engaged in a battle between the interest groups. With Hornsby as chief justice, the Alabama Supreme Court struck down most of the major 1987 tort reform legislation and unleashed several major punitive-damage cases, including the infamous BMW judgment. BMW had been slapped with \$4 million in punitive damages by a local jury because the car maker had sold as “new” a car on which paint damage had been repaired but not disclosed to the buyer. The actual damage had been \$4,000. The U.S. Supreme Court ultimately decided that the \$4 million damages, which were cut down to \$2 million by the Alabama Supreme Court, were “grossly excessive.”

In the next election, Hornsby was defeated in a contest so close it ultimately had to be decided by a federal court. The federal court invalidated some two thousand absentee ballots that were not properly notarized or witnessed. The Alabama Supreme Court, including justices who had contributed to Hornsby's campaign, had earlier voted to count the contested ballots that would have given Hornsby the victory.

In amounts normally reserved for a Senate race in a major state, the Alabama 1996 campaign for Supreme Court justice reached more than \$5 million, and state legislative races approached \$500,000, unprecedented figures in Alabama. The challenger in the 1996 Supreme Court race, Harold See, a Republican, reportedly raised more than \$3 million and retained veteran political consultant John Deardourff. The incumbent, Associate Justice Kenneth Ingram, spending approximately \$2 million, hired Democratic media consultant Hank Sheinkopf.

Harold See was subjected to blistering attacks on his personal life and his record. One ad, sponsored by the Committee for Family Values, and financed by a number of trial lawyers, accused See of having a "secret past," saying that he had "abandoned his wife and two children, had a love affair . . . and fled Illinois for Alabama" twenty years earlier. See and his former wife vehemently denied the characterization in these campaign commercials. Despite all this, Harold See was able to win with 53 percent of the vote.

In 1998 the terms for three of the nine justices were up, along with that of the governor and lieutenant governor—a sure bonanza for political consultants fighting for both the trial lawyers and pro-business groups, though some are having second thoughts about subjecting judges to popular approval. Alabama Bar Association president Warren Lightfoot has called for an end to election of judges in favor of merit appointments, stating: "Our courts will not be able to function if justices have to engage in this kind of campaigning."⁸³

In 2000 campaigns for top state judgeships were even more expensive and nastier. Candidates for a seat on the Ohio Supreme Court spent an estimated \$12 million, and judicial elections in Illinois, Michigan, Alabama, Idaho, and elsewhere brought charges of influence peddling, race baiting, and dirty politics.

As Dale Russakoff observed: "as Washington gives more power to states to regulate issues from the environment to banking to welfare, well-financed groups are pouring resources into political races in capitals from Albany, N.Y., to Sacramento."⁸⁴

Local or National Consultants? Local campaigns are often faced with the question of whether to go with local- or state-based consultants, or with national consultants. Many state party professionals prefer using local or statewide talent whenever possible.⁸⁵ For example, an official with the Texas Republican Party observed that locally based consultants are better than nationally based “in just about every way. They are much more responsible to campaign needs, more accessible, more understanding of Texas, better able to tap human and capital resources in Texas.” Nationally based political consultants are better “only when a campaign needs to tap national resources,” such as the Republican National Committee. An official of the Utah Democratic State Coordinated Committee was even more emphatic: locally based consultants were better in “damn near every way—cost less, know what’s going on, know the players, understand the composition of the electorate, work harder for the specific campaign, and have closer proximity to the campaign and the candidate.”

A South Carolina Republican Party official noted that in addition to having a better feel for the state and state issues, locally based consultants “won’t skip town if the race is lost or screwed up. They live here and have to see you for the rest of their lives!” As one party executive director from the middle South stated: “the bias that local candidates have for national political consultants and managers is unfortunate. They think by hiring nationally, they are obtaining an advantage when, in fact, in many cases all they are obtaining is a very hefty monthly consulting fee.”

The better-financed campaigns are able to afford national political consultants, who tend to charge higher fees. In 1992 Tom Cole, the executive director of the National Republican Congressional Committee, noted that local and regional consulting firms charge “70 percent of what a national firm would charge,” and campaigns, in addition, “don’t have to pay travel costs.”⁸⁶

Local, state, or regionally based consulting firms have been successful in exploiting their built-in advantages: they generally know the states, regions, and players better than nationally based firms, and they are able to hold their costs to a competitive advantage.

Using Amateurs and Volunteers Why not use volunteers instead of professionals? That is the question candidates inevitably ask at campaign training seminars. I have attended enough of those seminars to see the predictable answer: if you can’t afford professionals, then go ahead and use volunteers, but if you want to win, you are better off with professionals. These are usually

self-serving answers given by campaign professionals to worried candidates who haven't raised a lot of money. But very often, the professionals are right: if you want to win, go with pros, if you want to feel good about democratic participation, go with volunteers.

Probably not even the hardest-bitten professional would deny that amateurs and volunteers are important at some level of campaigning. But pros would argue that volunteers have no place in the specialist and certainly not in the strategic category of campaign services. Let the candidate's law firm partners devote their energies to raising money from friends, but don't let them get near campaign strategy. Let the local college professors write campaign position papers, but make sure those papers never see the light of day during the campaign, unless they are right on message and are cleansed of anything that will offend important interest groups and snare the campaign. Let the candidate's brother-in-law and other well-meaning supporters carry mail sacks down to the post office, but don't let them design the direct mail pieces. Volunteers are fine for answering the telephone, licking envelopes (as long as there are not ten thousand that need to go out the next day), driving people to the polling booth, and other last-minute activities that require a lot of hands. But, professionals would say, keep them away from the important activities.

As seen in the earlier chapters, the modern campaign depends on the use of sophisticated technology and advanced social science techniques. Campaign specialists, like opposition and candidate researchers, direct mail writers, focus group moderators, voice-over artists, speech and debate preparers, targeting and voter file specialists, and more have the information, know the techniques, understand the language, and have the experience to run campaigns. These skills and levels of experience cannot be readily picked up by the volunteer or campaign amateur.

One example shows how volunteers can be detrimental to a campaign. Many professionals would keep volunteers away from the telephones, especially when trying to conduct telephone polling. A campaign might, however, be tempted to cut the cost of administering a poll by using volunteers to make telephone calls instead of hiring a professional phone bank. There are two problems involved with using amateurs:

Problem of accuracy. The individuals answering the telephone often want to please the interviewers. When the volunteer interviewer is excited about the candidate, as an amateur often is, that enthusiasm can creep into the conver-

sation through subtle voice cues. Democratic pollster Mark Mellman and his colleagues observed that this problem is “difficult to detect but can produce significant bias, and you’ll never know how wrong your polling might be.”⁸⁷ Because professional callers usually are from out of state and have no commitment or built-in empathy toward the candidate, they are much less likely to produce interviewer bias.

Burnout and lack of discipline. Telephone work, especially trying to administer a complicated ten- to fifteen-minute poll, is wearing business. To complete a benchmark poll, a team of ten to fifteen volunteers must be trained and prepared to devote three to seven nights in a row at a telephone bank. Few volunteer campaigns can do this: people drift in and out, and it becomes very difficult to administer the poll to the minimum of three hundred or so voters needed to make the poll accurate.

In the modern campaign, in which fund-raising is a premium goal and in which professional consultants dominate, the amateur campaigner is most often left on the sidelines to be content with doing the menial grunt work of the campaign.

The Committed Grassroots Campaign Campaigns can be successful without the domination of professional consultants, but they must have the key ingredient of committed volunteer support. Often, those best able to sustain the level of grassroots volunteer commitment come from the energized religious right or from organized labor. The Republican primary election for attorney general in Virginia provides a good example. Three of the four Republican candidates for the 1997 primary for the Virginia attorney general’s race hired a battery of professional consultants and purchased television advertising. The winning candidate, State Senator Mark Earley, hired no professional consultants and bought no advertising time. Earley, the candidate of the Christian Coalition, counted on four things: a field of multiple candidates, low voter interest and voter turnout, a corps of true believers, and a concerted effort to get out his supporters. In the primary, only 5 percent of Virginia registered voters turned out—the lowest figure since 1949. Earley relied on Christian Coalition supporters and like-minded fundamentalists who believed fervently in his anti-abortion, anti-pornography, pro-charter schools campaign. There were no billboards, no news conferences, no rallies; instead, Earley relied on some 600,000 pieces of direct mail (through a direct

mail firm) to religiously conservative supporters, and a network of three thousand preachers to spread his candidacy. Earley's own pastor, the Reverend A. George Sweet of Atlantic Shores Baptist Church in Virginia Beach, sent an endorsement script to fellow ministers. Careful of the Internal Revenue Service restrictions for tax-exempt organizations, the script read: "The IRS guidelines say I can tell you who I am going to vote for and why, as long as I don't tell you how to vote. I am voting for Senator Mark Earley, who has been our true pro-life, pro-family standard-bearer."⁸⁸

Earley won the primary, but there was considerable speculation that he could not duplicate that success in the general election. "You can't run a general-election campaign underground," observed Mandy Grunwald, Democratic media consultant. "The true believers are not going to win it for you. There just aren't enough of them."⁸⁹ That general principle, so true in many other contests, did not apply here. The Republicans swept the three top statewide elections, including Mark Earley's win in the attorney general's race.

The Christian Coalition and like-minded organizations are not the only ones pursuing grassroots election mobility. Reenergized organized labor, through the AFL-CIO, spent approximately \$25 million in campaign advertising and other activities during the 1996 elections. In 1998 the AFL-CIO planned to spend \$7 million helping labor-sympathetic congressional candidates. As seen in chapter 6, the AFL-CIO began running its own issue advocacy advertisements. In addition, the AFL-CIO provided volunteers to help favored candidates. As Guy Gugliotta observed, "no other membership group in the country executes the two parallel strategies with the same sophistication" as the AFL-CIO.⁹⁰ At its George Meany Center in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C., the AFL-CIO trained three hundred political coordinators who served as "political shock troops" in the 1998 elections.

Campaign Reforms at State and Local Levels

Campaign reform is not coming out of Congress or the federal regulatory agencies, it is emerging from state legislatures, ballot initiatives, and city councils. The reforms thus far form a patchwork of attempts to curb the abuses of modern campaign practices. Two basic sets of reform have been enacted. The first set concerns campaign commercials, with legislation and voluntary codes attempting to bring honesty and fair play into campaign ads. The second set of reforms attempts to limit the influence of money in campaigns. What the federal government will not do, the state and local commu-

nities are attempting, with important results. The irony is that political campaign reform is most successful in states and localities where professionalization has not yet firmly taken hold.

“Truth in Communications” The National Fair Campaign Practices Committee, a group consisting of political consultants and practitioners, developed a code of conduct that candidates for public office should be obligated to uphold. The code embodied basic principles of decency, honesty, and fair play, while condemning personal vilification, character assassination, whispering campaigns, and prejudicial statements based on race, creed, gender, or national origin. Candidates were to repudiate any individuals or groups who use such tactics.⁹¹ Following the guidelines of the National Fair Campaign Practices Committee, a number of states have considered or have enacted “truth in communications” codes.⁹² California, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Nevada, Washington, and West Virginia have adopted such codes. Montana made it unlawful for a person to make a “false statement” about a candidate’s public voting record, character, or morality. North Dakota banned campaign advertising statements that are “untrue, deceptive or misleading.” Oregon banned “false statements,” accompanied by a severe penalty: “if the finder of fact finds by clear and convincing evidence that the false statement of fact reversed the outcome of the election, the defendant shall be deprived of the nomination or election.” In Washington state, campaign ads must not contain any “false statement of material fact” or candidate pictures that are more than five years old.

Wisconsin exercised a law written in the late 1970s requiring groups or individuals to register with the state board of elections and disclose donors if they intend to influence elections. During the 1996 election, several ads critical of state legislators were forced off the air because they did not disclose their contributors. In Minnesota, there are two campaign commercial codes. The more aggressive approach came from the Citizens Campaign Advertising Code, which called for candidates to display the logo of the CCAC to show that they have signed the code, and to get state voters to sign a petition stating that they would not vote for candidates who did not sign the pledge. The second code, called the Minnesota Compact, sets ten standards of clean campaign ads and asks candidates to adhere to them. Both of these codes were in place for the 1996 campaigns, but as Darrell M. West has noted, “despite extensive group efforts, there were no noticeable improvements in the civility of campaign discourse” during the U.S. Senate race.⁹³

Campaign Finance Reform While Congress has been unwilling to enact campaign finance reform, state and local governments and reform groups have taken action. From 1972 to 1996 there have been at least forty-two initiatives, referenda, and constitutional and charter amendments, and in thirty-three cases, voters have supported campaign reform enactment. Interest in campaign finance reform at the state and local levels picked up speed in the 1990s. As the Benton Foundation has noted, since 1990, twenty-eight states have radically changed their campaign finance law, fifteen of them between 1995 and 1996.⁹⁴ Twenty-two states now have statutes providing some degree of public financing for election campaigns, and twelve states have some expenditure limitations. No state has mandatory spending limits in effect for candidate campaigns.

Through ballot initiatives and legislative actions, the states have been active in redefining campaign contributions:

Contribution limits. Some states have limited contributions to candidates at the \$100 level (Arkansas, Colorado, and California); others, like New York, Ohio, and Alaska, have much higher limits. Five states (Arkansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Oklahoma) give tax credits of up to \$50 for individual contributors; Hawaii and Oregon also have tax credits for contributors, but only if the candidate voluntarily limits spending. In Iowa, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, and Texas, labor unions, regulated industries, and associations are prohibited from contributing to candidate campaigns.⁹⁵

Public financing. This is a popular reform option, with eleven states⁹⁶ adopting voluntary spending limits combined with public financing. The spending limits vary with the office sought, and six of the eleven states have public financing only for gubernatorial candidates.⁹⁷ Public financing is usually funded through a voluntary check-off (from \$1 to \$5) on the state income tax form, though many states are having difficulty raising sufficient funds from this source.⁹⁸

Independent expenditures and PAC contributions. Most states have reporting and disclosure of independent expenditures. In every state except Louisiana, campaigns must have a political advertising disclaimer stating who paid for the commercial. Arkansas, California, Connecticut, and Kansas limit contri-

butions to political action committees or political parties; the limits generally fall into the \$15,000 to \$40,000 range.⁹⁹

Maine's public financing model law. In November 1996 Maine voters passed by ballot referendum the nation's first sweeping, full, public financing law, called the Maine Clean Election Act. Initiated by a reform organization called Maine Voters for Clean Elections, voters were asked to vote on this simple but at the same time complicated ballot issue: "Do you want Maine to adopt new campaign finance laws and give public funding to candidates for state office who agree to limit spending?"¹⁰⁰ Dana Milbank of the *Wall Street Journal* pointed out that more than half of the funds for the Maine campaign ballot came from out of state, where similar groups were counting on Maine to spark a movement.¹⁰¹

Maine voters easily approved the measure, with public financing rules going into effect in 2000 for legislative races and in 2002 for gubernatorial elections. Ironically, while the costs of elections in Maine had risen dramatically, the costs of campaigning in this state were relatively small in comparison to others. Over the decade, the Maine legislature had rejected forty campaign finance reform laws until this one, which has become a model for ballot and legislative initiatives in other states.

Under the new law, there will be two categories of candidates: (1) those choosing the Clean Election Option; and (2) those choosing the "old-fashioned" method of funding through private donations. Under the Clean Election Option, the candidates must: (a) demonstrate that they have public support by collecting a specific number of five-dollar contributions; (b) agree not to accept or spend any additional private money on their campaigns; (c) agree to reasonable limits on how early they start campaigning; and (d) return all unspent funds to the state's Clean Election Fund. In return, Clean Election candidates will receive a set level of campaign funding (based on average amount spent during last two election cycles) and limited matching funds (if they are outspent by a privately financed opponent).

Under the private donations option, a candidate must accept lowered contribution limits and file more frequent campaign finance reports with the State Ethics Commission.

The law was immediately challenged by the National Right to Life Committee and separately by the American Civil Liberties Union and its Maine chapter. The National Right to Life Committee challenged the

constitutionality of the law's matching funds provision and political action committee contribution limits. The ACLU launched a broader attack, challenging the act's increased lobbyist fees, qualifying contributions, contribution limits, and public financing option. In 1997 a federal judge dismissed both suits, finding that the plaintiffs acted prematurely in seeking judicial relief. As none of the provisions of the act were to apply until after the next election cycle, the plaintiffs could not claim to be suffering any current harm.¹⁰²

In 1997 the Vermont legislature enacted a campaign reform measure which, like Maine's, is modeled on the Clean Money Campaign Reform proposals sponsored by the nonpartisan grassroots reform organization Public Campaign. Other grassroots and government reform organizations have also joined in: Common Cause, the League of Women Voters, the American Association of Retired Persons, the American Association of University Women, the Maine Council of Churches, as well as other environmental and social justice organizations. Public Campaign observes that reform organizations in fourteen other states are pushing for Clean Money Campaign Reform proposals.¹⁰³

The National Civic League also tracks and encourages state and local campaign reforms. The National Civic League established the New Politics Program to "recognize and promote innovative political reforms" at the state and local level. Its first project, funded by a grant from the Ford Foundation, was a study of local campaign finance reform. In 1998 the New Politics Program counted thirty-three reforms adopted in California communities, eight in Colorado, four in Washington State, three in Delaware, and a scattering of other reform measures enacted or proposed.¹⁰⁴

Local communities have adopted several kinds of campaign reform:

Public financing. Tucson, Arizona, has the oldest local public financing law, dating back to 1985. Los Angeles, Long Beach, New York City, Austin, and four counties in Hawaii use public financing as an incentive for voluntary spending.

Time limits. Several jurisdictions have time limits on fund-raising. One of them is Little Rock, Arkansas, which since 1997 has limited campaign fund-raising for city candidates to six months, from June 1 to December 1 of an election year.

Contribution limits. Several jurisdictions have passed ordinances limiting the amount that can be contributed. Fort Collins, Colorado, for example, first

passed a \$100 contribution limit for city council and mayoral candidates in 1981, then lowered that limit to \$50 in 1986. An ordinance in Cincinnati, Ohio, capped the amount of funds a city council candidate could spend at three times the annual council member's salary, or \$140,000. This ordinance, which was a direct threat to *Buckley v. Valeo*, was challenged by candidate John Kruse, who asserted that such a cap would favor better-known incumbents. When this case reached the U.S. Supreme Court, Cincinnati officials defended the campaign limitation, noting that "unlimited spending has seriously undermined public confidence in our electoral process and in our democratic institutions." In this first challenge to *Buckley*, the Supreme Court refused to take up the case and reconsider its ruling that limitations on campaign expenditures violated an individual's First Amendment rights of free speech.¹⁰⁵

A second potential challenge to *Buckley*, called *Nixon et al. v. Shrink Missouri Government PAC et al.*, was argued before the Supreme Court in late 1999. In 1994 Missouri enacted a statute limiting contributions to candidates for state and local office, under the theory that such limits are necessary to guarantee the integrity of the state's political process, prevent corruption, and foster confidence in the system of representative government. A candidate for state auditor, Zev David Fredman, and the Shrink Missouri Government PAC challenged the state law, arguing that it violates the basic First Amendment rights as articulated in the *Buckley* decision.¹⁰⁶ Many election law observers were watching this case closely to see if the Court would reverse the *Buckley* decision. However, by a six-to-three vote, the Supreme Court reaffirmed *Buckley* and endorsed the Missouri law barring individuals from giving more than \$1,075 to a candidate per election.

Voluntary reform. Albuquerque, New Mexico, enacted mandatory spending limits in its city charter in 1975. The mandatory limits were struck down by a federal court in 1997, but they still served as a deterrent to spending. As the National Civic League report surmised, in Albuquerque, "everyone knew that the mandatory limits were unenforceable, but all of the candidates abided by them. In that sense, they were voluntary and helped create a culture of campaign spending restraint."¹⁰⁷

Small-town campaign finance reform. Alta, Utah (pop. 397) passed an ordinance in early 1997 setting voluntary contribution limits of \$200 and voluntary spending limits of \$500 for council seats and \$1,000 for mayor. Crested

Butte, Colorado (pop. 1,000) established in late 1997 a \$200 voluntary spending limit for city council and mayoral candidates. Through this ordinance, the town clerk is required to publish a list of candidates in the local newspaper, noting which candidates have and which have not agreed to spending limits.

Ric Bainter, director of the New Politics Program, observed that what compelled smaller communities to adopt campaign finance reform, generally, was “one bad experience,” for example, an unusually high-priced campaign in which consultants were brought in and unprecedented amounts of money spent by a candidate. Often such a campaign revolves around development issues, pitting slow-growth advocates against developers.¹⁰⁸

Voting and Election Information Online In October 1997 California enacted landmark legislation mandating electronic filing of state political disclosure records. California joined thirteen other states that passed legislation in 1997 promoting digital disclosure, along with seventeen other states that had mandatory or voluntary electronic voting and online disclosure operational or in the works.

The California law is probably the most comprehensive, requiring electronic filing for all statewide and legislative candidates by 1999–2000 who raise or spend \$50,000, along with mandatory electronic filing for all other entities that file with the secretary of state—political parties, political action committees, lobbyists, major donors, and slate mailer committees. The California Voter Foundation maintains a website, Digital Sunlight, which monitors financial disclosures in California elections and has links to many useful database and disclosure resources.¹⁰⁹

California entrepreneur Ron Unz teamed up with Democrat Tony Miller to propose a ballot initiative called Voters’ Bill of Rights, which appeared on the March 2000 ballot. Under this sweeping initiative, contributions of \$1,000 or more would have to be disclosed on Internet websites within twenty-four hours of receipt; candidates would be barred from raising money prior to the twelve months before the election and would not be allowed to carry campaign funds over to future elections; voluntary spending limits for gubernatorial candidates would be \$6 million (\$10 million in a general election) for candidates who agree to accept partial matching public funds; and, probably the most contentious of the provisions, the initiative would give the task to redrawing the state and congressional district lines after the 2000 census to a commission of retired federal judges.¹¹⁰

While Congress and the White House posture—more accurately, dawdle—on campaign reform, the states and local governments and citizens through ballot initiatives have attempted to bring a measure of balance and fairness to campaigning. Some of what has been enacted will have only a hortatory effect: codes of conduct and decency set the boundaries of fair play but do not bar the name-calling and rough-and-tumble of campaign advertising. Candidates for office are supposed to have thick skins—by the nature of the public arena they seek to enter, and by the dictates of the First Amendment. Voluntary codes might help soothe the debate, but they cannot and should not temper the essential adversarial nature of campaigns. State and local limitations on fund-raising bring more promise of changing the nature of campaigns by limiting and leveling election funding. All such reforms, however, operate within the shadow of *Buckley v. Valeo*, with its mandate that, as an element of free speech, candidates may spend as much as they want on their own campaigns. Working around *Buckley*, however, state and local governments have patched together interesting and potentially transforming changes in campaign finance practices.

Citizens, Voters, and Democratic Choice

*I will not indulge in any activity which would corrupt
or degrade the practice of political campaigning.*

—First article in the Code of Professional Ethics,
American Association of Political Consultants,
adopted unanimously by AAPC members at annual meeting
in Las Vegas, Nevada, January 28, 1994

*[Politics] is a world of taunts, jeers, jabs, pointed fingers
and mudslinging. . . . Fear, anger, envy, indignation and shame are
powerful emotions in the political arena. . . . Negative
campaigning is rarely pretty. Sometimes it doesn't feel very good
either. But once you've made the decision to inform the voters of
your opponent's shortcomings, stick to your guns. . . .
Remember, you're playing to win.*

—Political consultants Richard Schlackman and Jamie “Buster” Douglas

The Uneasy Relationship between Candidates and Consultants

This book begins with Bill Clinton chewing out his consultants, Dick Morris and Doug Schoen, warning them not to undermine his presidency. When the Dick Morris scandal erupted during the

summer of 1996, frustration with celebrity political consultants had reached a boiling point. Senator Jay Rockefeller expressed what many elected officials felt about high-profile consultants: “I don’t like it,” he said, “they’ve become the interpreters of everything. They get on TV shows and reveal how they tell the politicians where to go and what to do.”¹ Senator Patrick Leahy also weighed in: “I think it’s wrong. It’s the people who elect the candidate, not the consultants. If their egos become so great, it can lead to the sort of trouble we’re seeing here [with Dick Morris]. I don’t think necessarily you should fire them. Maybe just draw, quarter and behead them.”² Even former political consultant Lyn Nofziger was in the mood to get rid of them all: “You’d think that the nation had never gotten along without them. But I will tell you this: we’d still have elections, and someone would win and someone would lose, if we assassinated every one of the consultants, and the country might be better off.”³

Most irritating were the few consultants who would publicly gloat about their importance in the campaign or, worse, disparage their clients. Former political consultant Ed Rollins, ever willing to burn his bridges, was one of them. He trashed candidate Michael Huffington and his high-profile wife, Arianna, and bragged about his own political acumen. “I had star quality,” boasted Rollins, “and I had people interested in meeting me as much as meeting the candidates.” Rollins wrote that George Nethercutt, another of his clients, “could never have beaten Tom Foley in 1994 without me and the professionals I put around him. And Speaker Foley, even after winning fifteen previous elections, wouldn’t have made it competitive without his imported hired guns.”⁴ Many consultants have felt the same way as Rollins, but few have had the audacity to name names and proclaim it in print.

Bob Dole’s consultants in the 1996 presidential campaign could not keep quiet about their client’s shortcomings. What was consultant Don Sipple able to convey to Bob Dole? “Virtually nothing,” Sipple wrote. “The cosmetics of modern campaigning is something Dole thinks should not make a difference. The appreciation for the picture, the aesthetics of the road show, the lighting, the sound. He didn’t think it should *count*.”⁵ Mike Murphy, Dole’s media consultant, had the temerity to write an open letter to Dole, giving him campaign advice, after having resigned just two months before the election.⁶ Open criticism, unsolicited advice, and candidate trashing further irritate the inherent tensions between candidate and handlers.

Notoriously uncommunicative with both staff and consultants, Bob Dole had a particularly difficult time during his runs for the presidency. In 1988

Dole abruptly fired his two senior consultants, David Keene and Donald Devine, literally tossing them off the campaign plane. As Scot Lehigh observed, “It was a case of wheels down, consultants off, wheels up.”⁷ In 1996 Dole’s first set of senior consultants, Bill McInturff and Bill Lacy, were replaced during the primaries by Don Sipple and Mike Murphy, who lasted until early September, then were replaced by Greg Stevens, Alex Castellano, and Chris Mottola, who themselves were discarded in the waning days of the campaign.⁸ Little wonder that the 1996 Dole campaign has been described by Evan Thomas and his colleagues as “one of the most hapless campaigns in modern political history.”⁹

For Al Gore’s presidential campaign, 1999 was very rocky going. Nearly all of Gore’s trusted longtime senior staff and top loyalists were brushed aside, and a battery of high-priced consultants came in, often giving conflicting advice. The campaign wasted precious time trying to gain its footing, define and then redefine Gore’s image, and figure out just what Gore stood for. During much of the preprimary stage, the Gore camp was acting a lot like the dysfunctional crew of the Dole campaign four years earlier. By contrast, George W. Bush’s campaign, under the guidance of the low-profile but highly effective consultant Karl Rove, was doing everything right in 1999: raising enormous amounts of money, lining up key Republicans, developing its strategy and message in preparation for the crucial first primaries in 2000.

Candidates are sometimes at odds with their consultants, complaining that they charge too much money, manipulate candidates to say and do things they instinctively would not do, and give advice that backfires and hurts the campaign. But it works both ways: while candidates are sometimes leery of consultants, consultants often wish they did not have to put up with candidates. In a provocatively titled report, “Don’t Blame Us,” the Pew Research Center found that political consultants “have a mixed view at best of their own clients.” Fifty-two percent rated their clients as either good or excellent, but 48 percent rated their clients as poor or fair. Forty-two percent of the consultants felt that candidate quality was slipping, and 44 percent of the consultants who helped elect candidates to office were later sorry to see them serve.¹⁰

Once in a great while the shoe is on the other foot, and a political consultant will run for public office. Veteran Democratic consultant Clinton Reilly ran unsuccessfully for mayor of San Francisco in 1999, proclaiming that he was “not your ordinary candidate” but was someone who had a “thirty-year track record of fighting progressive causes against the political machine.”

Another consultant who ran for office was Phil Noble, longtime opposition research specialist before turning to international consulting and Internet political services; he ran unsuccessfully for lieutenant governor of South Carolina in 1994. Like Reilly, Noble ran on a populist theme, tweaking elected officials all the while. One of his direct mail pieces touted his plans for the state and proclaimed, “Politicians Think I’m Stupid.”¹¹ What better way to run for office than to ridicule politicians or rage against the political machine?

While there have been abuses and certainly a natural tension between consultants and clients, most consultants do not behave badly. Consultant Gary Nordlinger, chair of the AAPC’s Ethics Committee, observed that “the overwhelming majority of consultants are ethical, respectful of both their clients and the process and truly put their clients’ interests before their own. When they fail to, the marketplace often puts them out of business.”¹²

The political consulting industry gets a bad reputation because of the abuses and missteps of a few. While Nordlinger may be a little too optimistic about the forces of the marketplace, he is right about the behavior of political consultants: most respect their clients and serve them well. They remain behind the scenes out of the campaign spotlight and focus on getting their client elected. Political consultants are no more and no less ethical or moral than any other professionals. The very nature of their work—the battleground of public opinion, policy, and personality—invites controversy and confrontation. Certainly, like lawyers or athletes, they are aggressive and competitive. Consultants are often highly partisan, believing strongly in their political party or its underlying ideology. While they work for clients who are not always the best of candidates, rarely do consultants operate strictly as hired guns, working for anyone who will pay the bills.¹³

Some political consultants at times suffer the same lapses as other professionals: conflict of interest, overbilling or other financial irregularities, failure to deliver promised services, breaches of confidentiality, or poor performance and shoddy work.¹⁴ These are lapses not endemic to the political consulting profession. Yet political consultants are particularly vulnerable because they and their clients communicate with the public in a most fundamental way. While political consultants may employ many of the marketing techniques of Madison Avenue, there are deep underlying differences. Consultants are not selling soap or mouthwash, they are communicating to the public about the character, reputation, and principles of very human candidates. They are also criticizing, sometimes ridiculing, the foibles and character flaws of oppo-

nents. They are sharpening the lines of debate on issues and policies that matter to voters. Political consultants are not participating in an end-of-the-season used car sales campaign, they are injecting themselves and their candidates into the sometimes messy process of democratic choice. To a considerable extent, consultants and their clients set the tone of elections. What voters see on television, what they receive in their mailboxes, what unsolicited voices say to them over the telephone are the end products of consultants' work.

What particularly tarnishes the reputation of the profession is the win-at-any-cost attitude and practice of some consultants: those who engage in character assassination or guilt by association. Worse still are those consultants who attempt to suppress voter turnout by discouraging people to vote through vicious media attacks or last-minute telephone or direct mail solicitations.

But in truth, the public does not focus on individual consultants or their tactics. They do not hold consultants responsible, even the occasional celebrity consultant. A *New York Times*/CBS News poll taken a week after the Dick Morris sex-tabloid affair found that 86 percent of voters said the information they heard about Morris had not influenced their opinion of President Clinton; only 9 percent said the affair made them think worse of Clinton. Some 37 percent of voters said that the Dick Morris scandal made them more likely to vote for Clinton.¹⁵ James Carville, who has probably dusted up as much controversy as any political consultant, rightly observes that consultants simply do not factor into voter decisions. When Dole's last round of consultants departed in 1996, Carville observed: "Find an exit poll where someone says, 'Gee, I didn't vote for Bob Dole because they fired Don Sipple.'"¹⁶ It simply is not going to happen.

Only within the small fraternity of the consulting industry, and perhaps only for a brief time, will people remember the consultants responsible for Al Checchi's hugely expensive, disastrous defeat in the California gubernatorial primary or recall the consultants in the nasty media fight between Dick Zimmer and Robert Torricelli in the New Jersey Senate race. The creators of the infamous Willie Horton commercial, the ads linking congressional candidates to Polly Klaas's murderer, the character assassinations in the Alabama Supreme Court justice races—none of these consultants are held accountable by the public or even by the consulting industry itself.

Campaigning can be a very tough business, and fighting electoral battles year in, year out wears down even the best of consultants. In talking with

many consultants over the years, I've gotten the sense that for them much of the joy of campaigning seems to have been lost, the campaign is more of a business than a crusade, and bonds of loyalty and trust between consultants and candidates have been loosened. Many consultants have seen it all: candidates who have let them down, the tides of politics over which they have no control, strategies that have backfired, and messages that have fallen on the deaf ears of voters.

But consultants can also take heart in the fact that they are indeed appreciated by most candidates, and their services and professionalism are acknowledged and respected. A recent survey of state and local candidates found that they welcomed the advice and professional experience of their consultants.¹⁷ Celebrity political consultants make the news and enjoy the talk-show circuit, but the real story is the important role that the relatively anonymous consultants play in making modern campaigns work.

Ethics and Campaign Consulting

A few years ago, *George* magazine posed this question: "How moral are political consultants?" For some political consultants, that question really has no bearing on what they do. Consultant Dan Schnur responded, "It's an irrelevant question. Political consultants are supposed to win campaigns, not have morals." Other consultants defended their craft and their colleagues. Thomas M. "Doc" Sweitzer responded, "We're certainly more honest than the legal profession. And we're definitely more honest than the advertising profession. I don't sell cigarettes to kids." Senior adviser for the Gore for President campaign, Carter Eskew, whose client list included tobacco companies, insisted, "Certainly [political consultants are] more moral than used-car salesmen, pro athletes and most local police."¹⁸

The American Association of Political Consultants, the principal professional association of campaign consultants, requires each of its members to sign and adhere to a code of conduct. Yet there is little enforcement of the code. Gary Nordlinger, the chair of the ethics committee, observed that enforcement of the AAPC code of ethics "doesn't happen very much because not very many people file complaints with us. I guess they tend to be very happy with the conduct of our members."¹⁹ A poll taken in 1994 backs up Nordlinger's point, at least when it is confined to consultants themselves. Eighty-four percent of the political consultants surveyed rated their own profession's ethics as either "fairly high" or "very high."²⁰

Others consider the code unworkable or irrelevant. “We’ve never come up with anything that is workable,” said one of the AAPC’s founders, Joseph Napolitan; this is a sentiment shared by many consultants. In the 1998 poll “Don’t Blame Us,” nearly two-thirds of the consultants were familiar with the AAPC’s code of ethics, but 81 percent said the code had “little or no” effect on their conduct or the conduct of other others in the profession,²¹ while 62 percent in the 1994 poll said there was no need for a well-enforced code of professional ethics.

Consultants can get testy and defensive when asked about campaign conduct. In the 1998 study, nearly all of the consultants surveyed (97 percent) believed that negative advertising is not wrong and that consultants are not to be blamed for the public disillusionment with the political process, and a majority of those surveyed did not believe that campaign tactics like those that “suppress turnout, use scare tactics and take facts out of context are unethical” although they may be considered “questionable.”²² They did draw a clear line on certain activities. Consultants almost unanimously believed that making statements that are factually untrue is “clearly unethical,” and the great majority felt that push-polling was clearly an unethical practice.²³

The survey results, according to Andrew Kohut, director of the Pew Research Center, gave an “in-your-face response to the consultants’ critics. They were sort of like hired guns. They were saying, ‘Don’t blame us for the level of violence. We’re just doing a job.’”²⁴ James Thurber took issue with the consultants, arguing that they need to take “some of the blame, stop pointing the finger elsewhere and to try to improve the quality of campaigning so that we may have better governance and improve our democracy.”²⁵

When campaign abuses do occur, consultants certainly can and should be blamed, but the ultimate responsibility falls on the shoulders of the candidate. Every negative advertisement, every line of print in direct mail pieces, every phone banked message is, in the end, the responsibility of the candidate. Office-seekers have a public duty to own up to that responsibility.²⁶ Yet, as veteran political writers Jules Witcover and Jack W. Germond observed, candidates are often: “content to let the professionals run their campaigns as they see fit. After all, they are paying big money to these experts. If something goes too far, you can always take responsibility, replace the consultant and move on. Nobody will blame you, and the consultant can always find another candidate looking for someone with good ideas.”²⁷

One candidate who did own up to a mistake was Senator John Warner, a Republican from Virginia. In his hard-fought contest for reelection, Warner

demonstrated clearly and decisively the sometimes forgotten principle that the candidate ultimately bears the responsibility for the decisions and judgments of the campaign. During the latter weeks of his Senate reelection contest against Democratic challenger Mark Warner, John Warner's media team, Greg Stevens and Company, doctored a photograph of President Clinton, former Virginia Governor Douglas Wilder, and Senator Charles Robb that was used in a campaign television commercial. Senator Warner quickly fired his media advisers and the next day took full responsibility for the action and apologized to his opponent, stating, "although I had nothing to do with it, knew nothing about it [beforehand], I accept the responsibility, and extend an apology to all Virginia voters, including Mark Warner."²⁸ Yet this example also shows the validity of Germond and Witcover's observation: John Warner was embarrassed and his campaign slightly damaged, but his fired media firm, its reputation just slightly dented, soon moved on to other contests. Few consultants ever suffer permanent damage to their reputations because of past misdeeds.

States and Communities Respond

E. J. Dionne Jr. has written that Americans hate politics because liberal and conservative politicians offer voters false choices that have no connection with most Americans' values or concerns.²⁹ He stated that Americans hate politics as it is now practiced "because we have lost all sense of the public good," and that "politics these days is not about finding solutions. It is about discovering postures that offer short-term political benefits."³⁰ What Dionne wrote in 1991 is just as true today, and modern campaign tactics have pushed the American voter's patience even further.

As seen in the preceding chapter, state and local governments and citizen groups are responding to abuses of campaign financing and campaign conduct. While no federal legislation on campaign finance reform or campaign conduct seems imminent, states and local communities are taking the lead, acknowledging a clear public sentiment favoring cleaner campaigns.

A mid-1998 survey conducted for the Project on Campaign Conduct indicated strong support for campaign codes of conduct as ways to improve the quality of elections.³¹ In this survey of sixteen hundred registered voters in Ohio and Washington, over three-quarters of the respondents said they would have more respect and would be more likely to vote for a candidate who signed and abided by a campaign pledge, and that negative, attack-

oriented campaigning produces “leaders who are less ethical and trustworthy.” As part of a code, voters wanted candidates to agree not to make personal attacks on their opponents, not to use any language or images that define other candidates based on their race, sex, or personal characteristics, and not to question publicly an opponent’s honesty, integrity, or patriotism.

One key focus for election reform is the meager television coverage of state and local campaigns, which are often overshadowed by crime reports and other more sensational news. Former journalist Paul Taylor, who heads Alliance for Better Campaigns, observed: “The culture we run into on the news side is that politics is boring, politics is bad television, people don’t care. And the candidate culture says anything that’s unscripted is risky. They’re more comfortable in a world of thirty-second ads.” Taylor’s group, funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, is working with ten state civic organizations, which in turn will press local news directors to devote more resources to politics.³²

Thus far, states and localities have focused on laws and restrictions on campaign spending and communications. One city, however, has placed before voters the activities of consultants themselves. San Francisco citizens in two successive years considered ballot measures affecting the activities of political consultants. In 1996 they passed an “honest elections” proposal requiring consultants to refrain from lobbying their former political clients. Mayor Willie Brown, however, vetoed this measure. Then in 1997 voters considered Proposition G, a measure that would require consultants operating in San Francisco and making more than a \$1,000 per year running campaigns to register, pay a fee, endorse a code of conduct, and file a quarterly disclosure statement that names the consultant’s clients and how much they are paying. The ballot issue—both modest and flawed—failed, while political consultants from throughout the country poured in \$67,500 to defeat it.³³

More states and communities will doubtless attempt to pass campaign finance and good campaigning laws. They may have some success in reining in campaign costs, though the biggest hurdle remains the Supreme Court’s interpretation of the First Amendment’s protection of unlimited campaign spending by candidates and advocacy interests. Laws attempting to impose codes of conduct and standards of good campaigning by most candidates will be more problematic. One of the more promising voluntary codes, however, is the Minnesota Compact, which sets out the responsibilities of the candidates, media, and citizens in the electoral process. During the 1996 Minnesota elections, 283 candidates for state and local office endorsed the compact and promised to abide by its principles. First analyses of the

compact suggest that voters rejected television ads aired by Senate candidate Rudy Boschwitz that were perceived as “unfair,” and that newspaper coverage provided more coverage of issues and less on the horse-race components of the Senate race.³⁴

Voluntary codes may help, but they can only go so far. Invariably they bump up against the very nature of campaigning. Political communication should be robust, even contentious. It should draw clear distinctions between candidates and issues; legitimate candidate shortcomings should be brought to the attention of voters. Good campaigning demands it, and constitutional protections of free speech ensure nothing less. Candidates willingly enter the political spotlight and have to expect scrutiny and criticism of their positions, background, character, and promise. This inevitably leads to sparks, contention, and cries of unfairness.

The greatest restraint on the perceived harshness of campaign activities will not come through legislation or through volunteer codes but by a public that no longer tolerates abusive commercials, personal insults, character assassinations, and fear-mongering. But that is a tall order. We have seen in the last decade a citizenry numbed by frontal assaults of the coarser side of popular culture.

Consultants will state, without flinching, that their role is to do their best to help their clients win. For many, the question of morals is irrelevant. The ultimate test is what the electorate will believe and what the electorate will bear. This is an era in which politics is an extension of entertainment, where the foibles of politicians provide the laugh lines. Many citizens believe that all politicians are liars, and many others have tuned out of politics and civic life altogether. If we are not appalled by the corrosion of popular culture, where is the sustained anger and outrage that will rid our airwaves and mailboxes of the shocks of modern campaigning? What penalties do candidates and consultants pay for playing hardball—or gutter ball?

The Web Citizen and Electronic Advocacy

In the political domain, the Internet has been seen merely as another media outlet. We are forging a new way to use the Internet—for participation. After the Internet, democracy will never be the same.

—Joan Blades and Wes Boyd, founders of MoveOn³⁵

The Internet revolution has incredible potential for campaigns, elections, and, most of all, citizen participation. For those truly interested in politics and public policy, there can be no better time than right now and in the electronic years to come. For those who are pure political junkies, the Internet is a virtual candy store of information. There is now almost unlimited access to campaign information, policy issues, voting records, and fund-raising information. Many state governments are now requiring electronic filing and online disclosure of candidate and contribution information, and that information is available on the Web. Bill Jones, the California Secretary of State, has been a leading proponent of online disclosure, and the Political Reform Division of his office has published invaluable online reports on lobbying expenditures and campaign contributions. Online disclosures of federal campaign finance data are found on sites of the Federal Election Commission, the Center for Responsive Politics, and Public Disclosure; the National Institute on Money in State Politics, and the Campaign Finance Information Center provide information on state campaign finances.³⁶

Digital Sunlight, a project of the California Voter Foundation, is at the forefront of electronic disclosure and provides helpful links to a variety of other online sources. Through the California Voter Foundation website, citizens in many California jurisdictions can simply type in their zip codes, and the website will display all candidates and ballot issues for the next election.

DNet, a project of the Center for Governmental Studies, and the League of Women Voters Education Fund have joined forces to provide websites in twenty-eight states, giving valuable information on candidates, ballot measures, election calendars, voting information, and officeholders. Citizens can ask candidates questions, check their views on issues, and follow a virtual debate. Soon DNet will add customized ballots and news, candidate videos, and other information.

Through Project Vote Smart, voters can obtain information on some thirteen thousand candidates and elected officials, including their biographies, positions on issues, voting records, campaign finances, and the evaluations of special interests. Children can learn more about democracy and the voting process through Kids Voting USA, a website that encourages students to vote and sponsors a recommended civics educational curriculum for primary and secondary students.

America Online launched in December 1999 a new project called governmentguide.com, which will connect AOL subscribers to the White House,

federal agencies, and state and local government offices. With the enthusiastic backing of the federal government, AOL members can ask questions of the president and cabinet members and receive information about federal programs and other federal government issues.

With the wealth of information now available, there is absolutely no excuse for citizens to feel uninformed about candidates, issues, and voting. There are many more websites available for the interested citizen; several of them are listed in the “Citizens’ Internet Resource Guide,” found in Appendix A.

Online advocacy is just beginning to make an impact on elections and public policy but might be an extremely important vehicle in the electronic future. The potential for citizen participation over the Internet was seen when MoveOn was able to generate 500,000 digital signatures during the Clinton impeachment debates. It is seen, too, in new websites like E-thepeople, which encourages petition writers and online activists.

Even one of the oldest hands at traditional political consulting, Dick Morris, is getting into the electronic advocacy business. In a recent book, *Vote.com*, Morris goes so far as to call it the new force in American politics, the Fifth Estate—a community of citizen activists who are wired to the Internet.³⁷ In a whirl of entrepreneurship, Morris and his wife, Eileen McGann, have created an online citizen advocacy website, also named Vote.com, and an online magazine, *Fifth Estate*. Morris’s and McGann’s website is one of a growing number of Internet-based vehicles through which citizens can sign online petitions and have them sent to policy makers. In December 1999 the Vote.com website asked questions like: “Should kids who kill be tried as adults?” “Should tax money be used to buy computers and textbooks for religious schools?” and “Should China be admitted into the World Trade Organization?” The website provides pro and con statements and promises to e-mail the results to members of Congress, governors, or other officials.

There is a delicious irony here: this book begins with Dick Morris in the traditional guise of the insider political consultant, whispering advice in President Clinton’s ear, and ends with Dick Morris, political entrepreneur and new convert to citizens’ advocacy through the Internet, creating his website and writing his books, to “give us all a chance to be heard so our voice gets loud enough to drown out the special interests that run Congress.”³⁸

There certainly is a sense of civic duty and citizen participation in these websites, but there is also money to be made. The electronic advocacy web-

sites sell advertising space and they are able to collect that mother lode of information, the e-mail addresses of interested citizens. We can expect more entrepreneurs like Alex Sheshunoff, Dick Morris, Eileen McGann, and John Philips to enter this marketplace.

The Internet provides incredible amounts of information about politics and candidates, giving citizens the opportunity to interact with campaigns, sign up as volunteers, give money to candidates, and act on their own as electronic advocates. Yet the Internet is no cure-all for the ills of citizen apathy, poor voter turnout, and general disinterest in politics. Indifferent citizens will have no incentive to reach out to the many information-rich websites; apathetic nonvoters will not click on a website to see who will be on the ballot during the next election; unconcerned individuals will have no more incentive to sign an electronic petition than a paper petition on a clipboard thrust at them in front of the neighborhood grocery store.

Electronic democracy shows us clearly the great divide in American politics. On one side of the divide are those citizens who have access to the Internet and vote, and on the other side are those who do not have access and do not vote. Those with better education and higher incomes are more likely to vote; they are also more likely to have access to the Internet and have an interest in Web-related campaign and advocacy sites.³⁹ Those on the other side of the divide, by and large, will neither vote nor bother with campaign and advocacy websites.

There is a place for amateurs, certainly, and at all levels of campaigning and electioneering. The vast majority of campaigns at the local level depend on citizen involvement; the hundreds of thousands of local contests could not be held without friends, neighbors, and loyalists willing to roll up their sleeves and help. Local ballot initiatives springing up from grassroots movements would never get off the ground without volunteer activism. Candidates for the presidency depend heavily on grassroots support and volunteer organization. Armed with new tools of electronic advocacy, citizens can exert their voices in extraordinary new ways. All that is needed is the interest in politics and a willingness to become involved in elections.

Despite the enthusiasm of Joan Blades and Wes Boyd for Web advocacy, electronic democracy will not supplant old-fashioned, professionally run political campaigning. Over the years, professional campaigns have added the thirty-second television spot, direct mail, demographic and computer-aided targeting techniques, focus-group analysis, dial meter research, and online database research to their arsenals. Now they have added the Web. Smart,

aggressive, professionally run campaigns have coopted the Internet and are making campaign websites, e-mail, and other electronic tools integral parts of their communication strategies.

Professional campaigns and the political consulting industry will flourish in the decades to come. Candidates for public office—both incumbents and challengers—will not hesitate to raise increasingly larger sums of campaign funds to pay for professional consultants and their services. Despite the occasional outburst from elected officials or the public, candidates need, want, and for the most part appreciate the assistance they receive from professional consultants. We may see profound changes in campaign financing, communications, and technology. Through it all, professional consulting will endure, adapt, and prosper. Professionals have become indispensable players in modern campaigns.

Citizens' Internet Resource Guide

The Internet now provides a rapidly growing list of sites that give information about candidates, elections, campaign financing, voter registration, and public policy. Voters have never had so much solid, objective, nonpartisan (and strictly partisan and advocacy) information available to them.

Alliance for Better Campaigns www.bettercampaigns.org

This site “seeks to improve elections by promoting voluntary, realistic standards for campaign conduct,” promoting ad watches, codes of conduct, and issue ad disclosure. Funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Open Society Institute, the Ford Foundation, and the Joyce Foundation.

Benton Foundation Destination Democracy www.destinationdemocracy.org

“Destination Democracy is committed to the view that one way to advance our various number one issues is to make sure that their fates are determined by political leaders unswayed by campaign contributors. That means addressing campaign finance.” The site lets voters take a “road test,” which, when they answer a series of questions, determines where they fit in terms of Destination Democracy’s “Campaign Finance Architecture.”

California Voter Foundation www.calvoter.org

The California Voter Foundation is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that provides a database to help California voters track campaign money and provides an online voter guide, news, and links to other relevant sites. In many California jurisdictions, voters can type in their zip codes, and the site will display all candidates and ballot issues for the next election.

Capitol Advantage www.capitoladvantage.com

Voters can order personalized versions of the congressional directories online. Through *Capitol Wiz*, voters can link their own Internet site to Congress and state legislatures. With *Election Wiz*, candidate, party, and election resources are provided to clients based on the clients' needs.

Center for Responsive Politics www.crp.org and www.opensecrets.org

A nonpartisan, nonprofit research group specializing in the study of Congress and the role money plays in its elections and actions. The center conducts computer-based research on campaign finance issues for the news media, academics, activists, and others interested in Congress. The site includes a do-it-yourself congressional investigation kit, ways to track donations to election officials and those running for office, a list of potential presidential candidates, and a database of those who have slept over at the White House or attended Clinton fund-raising coffee mornings.

CNN's All Politics www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS

Covers state, local, national, and international political issues as well as campaign coverage through its Election 2000 site. Links to *Congressional Quarterly* and *Time*, in addition to political cartoons.

Congressional Quarterly's American Voter www.voter.cq.com

Provides news updates, links to check on members of Congress, and ratings of members. Also provides a list of *CQ's* favorite political websites and their links.

The Democracy Network www.democracynet.org

DNet bills itself as the “premier site for national public affairs information,” and is provided in partnership with the League of Women Voters Education Fund, the Alliance for Better Campaigns, and others. Provides online publication, *DNetizen*, for those interested in politics.

Digital Sunlight www.digitalsunlight.org

This site is provided by the California Voter Foundation, giving visitors detailed information on campaign financing for California candidates and ballot issues, and an online voter guide.

Kids Voting USA www.kidsvotingusa.org

Kids Voting USA is a nonprofit, nonpartisan “grassroots organization dedicated to securing democracy for the future by involving youth in the election process today.” The site includes a list of sponsors, a recommended K-12 curriculum, online activities for students, and information for students and teachers on contacting their local branch of Kids Voting USA.

League of Women Voters www.lwv.org

The site includes a connection to the League of Women Voters Election Central, providing information on registering to vote and becoming involved in voting and elections at the local level.

Minnesota E-Democracy www.e-democracy.org

A nonpartisan citizen-based project whose mission is to “improve participation in democracy in Minnesota through the use of information networks.” Links to websites of candidates, previous elections, candidate debate forums, and guides to politics and the media.

MSN Insider www.msn.com/insider

The Insider is a subsidiary of MSN's webpage. Its Election Connection encourages visitors to follow upcoming elections by registering to vote, finding nonpartisan information on the Web tracking donor money and campaign spending, and joining political Web communities.

National Journal's Cloakroom www.cloakroom.com

The site covers political news and current hot-button issues, but also includes information on upcoming elections and campaigns, including political advertisements. Also listed are a congressional calendar and a news archive.

PBS Online www.pbs.org

An online version of the public television network that provides links to its Election site, which allows visitors to learn about the candidates and positions, how to view political advertisements with a critical eye (one area of the site shows how television spots have changed American politics), how to speak out through PBS political polls, and how to receive classroom materials and other election resources.

Pew Research Center for the People and the Press www.people-press.org

This site is operated by the Pew Charitable Trusts and features its studies on attitudes toward the press, politics, and public policy issues. Visitors to this site can express their opinions on issues, look at recent survey results, and answer a questionnaire to determine how they fit under certain political typologies.

Policy.com www.policy.com

"Policy.com showcases leading research, opinions and events shaping public policy on dozens of issues including education, technology and healthcare." The site provides a daily news briefing, and a look at Washington current events, and offers voters the opportunity to express their opinions on survey research.

Politics1 www.politics1.com

Comprehensive links to all the presidential, gubernatorial, U.S. Senate, and congressional candidates and political parties across the spectrum, with election results and news throughout all fifty states.

Politics Online www.politicsonline.com

News about politics and the Internet; provides online tools and news coverage of the uses of websites and online services in campaigns.

Project Vote Smart www.vote-smart.org

This site provides facts on thirteen thousand candidates and elected officials, including biographies, addresses, issue positions, voting records, campaign finances, and evaluations by special interests. The site is funded by foundation grants and contributions from fifty thousand members.

Roll Call www.rollcall.com

Roll Call is a newspaper devoted to covering Congress. This site provides election coverage, news and commentary, policy briefings, and a guide to Congress.

Smart Voter www.smartvoter.org

This site is operated by the League of Women Voters; it includes information on registering to vote, judging candidates, and frequently asked questions about candidates. Voters can find who is on the ballot by typing in their addresses, get links to other election websites, and receive a kit by mail on encouraging people to go to the polls.

Voter.com www.voter.com

The goal of this one-stop politics and elections site, which is nonpartisan and nonprofit, is to promote a more active and informed electorate. Founding sponsors include the AFL-CIO, BIPAC, Christian Coalition, EMILY's List, Democratic Leadership Council, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Provides links to campaign websites, and legislators, and news about politics and elections.

VoteNet www.votenet.com

"VoteNet is harnessing the power of the Internet for politics. It is building a huge online community of politicians, candidates, and citizens alike. Millions of Americans are finding their political home here." This site offers access to government, political stories, and congressional votes. Candidates are given free campaign software and websites.

Web White and Blue 2000 www.webwhiteblue.org

A comprehensive election site designed to give Internet users more information and an authoritative voice in elections. The site has been provided by the Markle Foundation in collaboration with leading Internet traffic centers. Many of the sites listed in this appendix are linked to this site.

Yahoo! US Elections elections.yahoo.com/election

By typing in a zip code or clicking on a state icon, voters get relevant election information: polling place hours, who is running, how many seats are up for election, and links to state election resources.

APPENDIX B

Leading Political Consulting Firms

Political consulting firms now offer a wide range of services, from general consulting to highly specialized skills of media buying and website design, as seen in the following table.

PROFESSIONAL CAMPAIGN FIRMS BY SERVICES DELIVERED, 2000–2001¹

<i>Service Provided</i>	<i>Number of Firms</i>
Computer services and political software	144
Direct mail	287
Fund-raising	187
General consulting	443
Grassroots organizing	96
Initiatives and referenda	64
Media buying	115
Media consultants	311
Opposition research	42
Polling and research	293
Petition and signature gathering	9
Printing, mailing, and promotional services	304
Speech writing	27
Targeting	23
Telephone and direct contact	143
Voter files and mailing lists	49
Political website developers	42

Among the thousands of firms offering professional campaign services, several have made a significant contribution. This list of leading firms gives the name of the consulting firm, its location, year established, party affiliation, partners or principals of the firm, and client lists and profiles.

Polling Firms

American Viewpoint, Alexandria, Virginia

Republican, founded in 1985

Principal: Linda DiVall

Conducts political and corporate research with an emphasis on survey research, focus groups, dial testing of political advertising, and corporate speeches. The firm has done polling for senators Newt Gingrich (Georgia), Phil Gramm (Texas), Richard Lugar (Indiana), and Fred Thompson (Tennessee), and representatives Nancy Johnson (Connecticut), Connie Morella (Maryland), Clay Shaw (Florida), and John Porter (Illinois), and has worked for AMPAC, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Dow Corning, Pfizer, and Philip Morris.

Ayres, McHenry & Associates, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia

Republican, founded in 1991

Principals: Q. Whitfield Ayres and Jon McHenry

Polling firm for numerous statewide and congressional candidates, especially in the South. Clients have included South Carolina governors Carroll Campbell and David Beasley, and senators Bill Frist (Tennessee), Strom Thurmond (South Carolina), and Jeff Sessions (Alabama). The firm also did the polling for the Lamar Alexander presidential campaign in 1996.

Bennett, Petts & Blumenthal, Washington, D.C.

Democratic, founded in 1992

Principals: Anna Bennett, David Petts, Mark Blumenthal, and Amy Simon

The firm has done polling for over one hundred political clients since its founding. It concentrates on gubernatorial, U.S. Senate, and House races, especially in the South, Midwest, and Northeast. There is also a focus on women candidates and candidates of color. Prior clients have included the Clinton-Gore campaign in 1992, governors Douglas Wilder (Virginia) and Parris Glendening (Maryland), and various state parties and labor unions.

Cooper and Secrest Associates, Alexandria, Virginia

Democratic, founded in 1980

Principal: Alan Secrest

The firm works on a national scope at every ballot level. It specializes in tough open-seat and challenger wins. 1998 clients included Governor Don Siegelman (Alabama), five new members of Congress, and many state legislative candidates.

Decision Research, Washington, D.C., and San Diego, California

Democratic, founded in 1984

Principals: Robert Meadow and Heidi von Szeliski

A leading Democratic polling firm that has several candidates for federal, state, and local office, as well as state party and legislative caucuses in more than thirty states. The firm also conducts polling and focus groups for ballot proposition committees, and states that it has one of the highest winning percentages on ballot measures of any firm in the nation.

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin and Associates, Oakland and Santa Monica, California

Democratic, founded in 1985

Principals: John Fairbank, Paul Maslin, and Richard Maullin

Conducts policy-oriented public opinion research and consulting. Clients include candidates for local, state, and national office, as well as government agencies, non-profit organizations, private companies, and election committees seeking passage of ballot issues. The firm has worked for Governor Gray Davis (California) and senators Harry Reid (Nevada) and Patty Murray (Washington). The firm also conducts international work in countries such as Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Ecuador.

Arthur J. Finkelstein & Assoc., Irvington, New York

Republican, founded in the early 1970s

Principals: Ron Finkelstein and Arthur Finkelstein

The firm specializes in political polling and consulting, survey research, general campaign management, and media services. Clients include the Republican Senatorial Committee, former Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Governor George Pataki (New York), former senator Al D'Amato (New York), and senators Lauch Faircloth (North Carolina), Larry Pressler (South Dakota), Rudy Boschwitz (Minnesota), William Roth (Delaware), Robert Smith (New Hampshire), Don Nickles (Oklahoma), and Connie Mack (Florida).

Garin-Hart-Yang Research, Washington, D.C.

Democratic, founded in 1986

Principals: Geoffrey Garin and Fred Yang

The firm conducts polling and survey research for Democratic candidates and organizations. Clients include senators John Breaux (Louisiana), Byron Dorgan (North Dakota), Russ Feingold (Wisconsin), Robert Graham (Florida), Ernest Hollings (South Carolina), Patrick Leahy (Vermont), Richard Bryan (Nevada), Robert Byrd (West Virginia), Kent Conrad (North Dakota), Dianne Feinstein (California), and Charles Robb (Virginia).

Greenberg Quinlan Research, Washington, D.C.

Democratic, founded in 1980

Principals: Stanley Greenberg and Alan Quinlan

This firm has worked for a broad range of public interest organizations, foundations, unions, political campaigns, and parties. Clients have included President Clinton, Vice President Al Gore, senators Chris Dodd (Connecticut), Joseph Lieberman (Connecticut), and Jeff Bingaman (New Mexico), and mayors Richard M. Daley (Chicago) and Anthony Williams (Washington, D.C.).

Hamilton Beattie & Staff, Washington, D.C., and Fernandina Beach, Florida

Democratic, founded in 1964

Principals: Dave Beattie and Maggie Ryner

The firm provides general consulting services with an emphasis on strategic polling and analysis. For the past thirty-five years, HB&S has conducted statewide political research in all fifty states and in Sweden, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, St. Maarten, and Aruba. The firm has also participated in issue campaigns ranging from gaming to NAFTA and health care reform. Campaign training seminars are provided for international clients.

Kiley and Company, Inc., Boston, Massachusetts

Democratic, founded in 1989

Principal: Thomas R. Kiley

Clients include political candidates, elected officials, labor unions, issue groups, foundations, referenda campaigns, and corporations. Recent political clients include senators John Kerry (Massachusetts) and Ted Kennedy (Massachusetts), Governor Howard Dean (Vermont), and Representative Joseph Kennedy (Massachusetts), among others.

Luntz Research Companies, Arlington, Virginia

Republican, founded in 1992

Principals: Frank I. Luntz and Bob Castro

The firm concentrates on polling, instant response, communications, marketing, and political strategy for public- and private-sector clients across the United States and worldwide. Clients include U.S. Senate and House Republican leadership, Mayor Rudolph Guiliani (New York), and a dozen Fortune 500 companies.

Market Strategies, Washington, D.C., and Southfield, Michigan

Republican, founded in 1989

Principals: Alex Gage, Fred Steeper, Christine Matthews, Paul Welday, Dmitri Pantanzoulos, Janice Brown, Andrew Morrison, Jack Vandenberg, and Michael Malone

A full-service public opinion research and consulting firm that specializes in corporate and industry reputation, issue management, regulatory affairs support, public referenda, and presidential, senatorial, congressional, and gubernatorial elections. Clients include governors George Ryan (Illinois) and George W. Bush (Texas), senators John Ashcroft and Kit Bond (Missouri), and several midwestern congressmen.

Moore Information, Inc., Portland, Oregon, Los Angeles, California, and Washington, D.C.

Republican, founded in 1981

Principals: Bob Moore, Steve Kinney, and Hank Kaiser

Major Republican pollster for California legislative races. Conducted polling for 1996 Dole presidential campaign. Clients include senators Susan Collins (Maine), Conrad Burns (North Dakota), Slade Gorton (Washington), and Gordon Smith (Oregon), Governor Phil Batt (Idaho), and ten members of Congress.

Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates, New York and Washington, D.C.

Democratic, founded in 1974

Principals: Mark Penn, Douglas Schoen, and Robert Green

A full-service Democratic political polling and research firm that specializes in direct mail voter contact and telephone voter contact. Candidates include President Clinton, senators Daniel Patrick Moynihan (New York) and Richard Shelby (Alabama), governors Evan Bayh (Indiana) (Idaho) and Bill Miller, and Representative Beryl Anthony (Arkansas). The firm has also provided services for six foreign presidents and governments.

Public Opinion Strategies, Alexandria, Virginia

Republican, founded in 1991

Principals: Bill McInturff, Neil Newhouse, and Glen Bolger

Large polling firm with a broad range of clients, including senators Jesse Helms (North Carolina), John McCain (Arizona), Olympia Snowe (Maine), and Arlen Specter (Pennsylvania), hundreds of congressional clients, state Republican parties, and local elected officials. The firm has also worked for a long list of corporate and public affairs clients, including Exxon, the National Football League, Procter and Gamble, and Food Lion.

Research Strategy Management, Inc., Rockville, Maryland

Republican, founded in 1982

Principals: Ronald H. Hinckley, Vincent J. Breglio, and Susan B. Bryant

A full range of campaign consulting services, including public relations and lobbying, are provided by this firm. It also specializes in media production and placement, campaign strategy and planning, survey research, and focus groups. The firm works for many congressional and senatorial candidates, in addition to specializing in public policy issues, corporate public affairs, and international public opinion.

The Wirthlin Group, McLean, Virginia

Republican, founded in 1969

Principals: Richard B. Wirthlin, Bruce Blakeman, and Neal Rhodes

Strategists and pollsters to national, state, and local candidates. Chief strategist and pollster for Ronald Reagan in 1980 and 1984. Has also represented the British Conservative Party (under Thatcher) and Israeli Likud Party (under Netanyahu), in addition to representing more than seventy of the top Fortune 100 companies.

Media Firms

Axelrod & Associates, Chicago, Illinois, and Washington, D.C.

Democratic, founded in 1987

Principal: David Axelrod

Clients include Governor Tom Vilsak (Iowa), mayors Anthony Williams (Washington, D.C.), Lee Brown (Houston), and Dennis Archer (Detroit), and representatives Ken Bensten (Texas) and Ron Blagojevich (Illinois), AFL-CIO, and the League of Conservation Voters. The firm has also run successful issues campaigns in Detroit and Houston.

Brabender Cox Mihalke, Washington, D.C., Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Dayton, Ohio, and Sacramento, California

Republican, founded in 1982

Principals: Michael Mihalke, John Brabender, and James Cox

A full-service general strategy and media consulting firm that provides Republican candidates, initiative campaigns, and corporate public affairs clients with campaign strategy, creative media production, media targeting and placement, general consulting, and direct mail services. Clients include Senator Rick Santorum (Pennsylvania), Governor Tom Ridge (Pennsylvania), and representatives Jon Fox (Pennsylvania), Steve LaTourette (Ohio), Mike Oxley (Ohio), Bud Shuster (Pennsylvania), Dave Hobson (Ohio), and Bob Ney (Ohio).

Brockmeyer Media Group, Chantilly, Virginia

Republican, founded in the 1980s

Principals: John Brockmeyer and Dawn Sciarrino

The firm offers Republican campaigns full-service media strategy, production, and placement. Former clients include gubernatorial candidate Ellen Sauerbrey (Maryland), Representative Jerry Weller (Illinois), the National Federation of Independent Business, the Republican National Committee, GOPAC, and the NRCC.

Campaign Group, Inc., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and La Jolla, California

Democratic, founded in 1980

Principals: Neil Oxman, Doc Sweitzer, and Bill Wachob

This firm specializes in the creation and production of electronic media advertising. It provides services in the fields of media consulting, media production, and media placement.

Doak, Carrier, O'Donnell & Associates, Washington, D.C., and Madison, Wisconsin

Democratic, founded in 1995

Principals: David Doak, Michelle Carrier, and Thomas O'Donnell

Clients include senators Charles Robb (Virginia), Herb Kohl (Wisconsin), Paul Sabanes (Maryland), John Glenn (Ohio), and Paul Simon (Illinois), former mayor David Dinkins (New York), Governor Gray Davis (California), and representatives Dick Gephardt (Missouri), Ike Skelton (Missouri), and Ron Klink (Pennsylvania).

The Farwell Group, New Orleans, Louisiana

Republican, founded in 1987

Principal: James P. Farwell

Specializes in strategic and media consulting for federal and state candidates, and corporate issues management. Clients include senators Craig Thomas (Wyoming), and Tim Hutchinson (Arkansas), Governor Mike Huckabee (Arkansas), former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (Georgia), and representatives Greg Ganske (Iowa), Billy Tauzin (Louisiana), and Mac Collins (Georgia). The firm's media specialties are television and radio.

Fenn-King Communications, Washington, D.C.

Democratic, founded in 1983

Principals: Peter Fenn and Tom King

A full-service media production and time buying firm that also focuses on direct mail fundraising and campaign strategy. Worked in more than two hundred fifty campaigns, from president to mayor. Helped elect more Democratic members of Congress than any other media firm. Worked in over a dozen countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Central and South America.

Greer, Margolis, Mitchell, Burns, & Associates, Washington, D.C., and Santa Monica, California

Democratic, founded in 1983

Principals: Frank Greer, Jim Margolis, David Mitchell, and Annie Burns

This political consulting and communications firm focuses on campaign strategy, media production, and placement for candidates, labor unions, public interest campaigns, propositions, and initiatives. The firm also provides public relations, media relations, media training, and graphic arts services, and has experience reaching voters of every region and background. More than eight out of ten of their campaigns have resulted in victory.

Scott Howell & Company, Inc., Dallas, Texas

Republican, founded in 1993

Principal: Scott Howell

A media consulting, media production, advertising, press relations, and media placement firm. Specialties include creative media, media placement, special corporate services, and grassroots campaigns. Clients include the Florida Republican Party, the RNC, Missouri State Victory Committee, governors Jim Gilmore (Virginia) and Jim Geringer (Wyoming), Senator Jesse Helms (North Carolina), and representatives Tom Coburn (Oklahoma), Asa Hutchinson (Arkansas), Steve Largent (Oklahoma), and Clay Shaw (Florida).

MacWilliams, Cosgrove, Smith, Robinson, Washington, D.C.

Democratic, founded in 1990

Principals: Will Robinson, Tom Cosgrove, Matthew MacWilliams, and Tina Smith

A national advertising and communications strategy firm dedicated to helping

public-sector, political, nonprofit, and corporate clients communicate more effectively and win campaigns. The firm consults extensively to initiative campaigns, environmental groups, labor unions, and national foundations. Clients include representatives Brian Baird (Washington), Tammy Baldwin (Wisconsin), Marion Berry (Arkansas), Julia Carson (Indiana), Ron Kind (Wisconsin), Jim McGovern (Massachusetts), Ted Strickland (Ohio), and Bruce Vento (Minnesota).

Morris & Carrick, Inc., Los Angeles

Democratic, founded in 1981

Principals: Hank Morris and Bill Carrick

A general and media consulting firm. Clients include senators Dianne Feinstein (California) and Charles Schumer (New York).

Murphy Pintak Gautier Hudome Agency, Inc., McLean, Virginia

Republican, founded in 1988

Principals: Mike Murphy, Cliff Pintak, John Gautier, and Mike Hudome

This firm provides complete ad agency services, including scripting, production, and placement with print and electronic media. Clients include governors John Engler (Michigan), Terry Branstad (Iowa), and Christine Todd Whitman (New Jersey), senators Dirke Kempthorne (Idaho), Spencer Abraham (Michigan), Paul Coverdell (Georgia), and Governor Tommy Thompson (Wisconsin). The firm also worked on the Bob Dole 1996 presidential campaign and has provided services for Oliver North.

National Media, Inc., Alexandria, Virginia

Republican, founded in 1985

Principals: Robin Roberts, Alex Castellanos, Kathleen Jones, John Stewart, and Pete Pessel

A media consulting firm that focuses on creative political advertising and media placement. Clients benefit from full production capabilities and electronic opposition monitoring. Past clients include Senator Kit Bond (Missouri) and Governor Bob Taft (Ohio).

Nordlinger Associates, Washington, D.C.

Democratic, founded in 1976

Principal: Gary Nordlinger

Has experience in fourteen countries on four continents, as well as considerable experience in congressional races, where the firm has a record of seventy-three wins and just seven losses. The firm has won more than fifty awards for excellence and was rated as one of the top Democratic media firms by *Campaigns and Elections*.

Russo Marsh & Assoc., Inc., Sacramento, California

Republican, founded in 1976

Principals: Tony Marsh, Sal Russo, and Gene Raper

A full-service firm that specializes in campaign management and media consulting for candidates, ballot issues, and initiatives. The firm has experience at all levels, from local to international. Clients include former senator Al D'Amato (New York), representatives Dennis Hastert (Illinois), Greg Walden (Oregon), and Tom Ewing (Illinois), Governor George Pataki (New York), the American Flat Tax Association, the New York Republican Party, and the National Republican Congressional Committee.

Shorr and Associates, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.

Democratic, founded in 1984

Principals: Saul Schorr, Andrea Johnson, and Christopher Klose

A full-service media consulting firm. Clients include governors Mel Carnahan (Missouri) and Don Siegelman (Alabama), senators Patrick Leahy (Vermont) and Richard Durbin (Illinois), several members of Congress, and national teachers organizations.

Shrum, Devine, Donilon, Washington, D.C.

Democratic, founded in 1995

Principals: Robert Shrum, Tad Devine, and Michael Donilon

The three principals have handled the strategy and media for twenty U.S. senators, ten governors, eight big-city mayors, and fourteen members of Congress. They have also been involved in the Clinton presidential campaign and winning campaigns for the presidencies of Brazil and Colombia. Other clients include the British Labour Party, the Israeli Labor Party, organizations such as the AFL-CIO, and corporate clients ranging from Major League Baseball to Fannie Mae and MCI.

Sipple: Strategic Communications, Santa Barbara, California

Republican, founded in 1987

Principal: Don Sipple

This firm provides a range of campaign services and national media consulting to Republican candidates and committees. Clients include senators John Ashcroft (Missouri), John Chafee (Rhode Island), Pete Domenici (New Mexico), Kit Bond (Missouri), and Orrin Hatch (Utah), governors George W. Bush (Texas), Pete Wilson (California), and Jim Edgar (Illinois), and Congressman Christopher Shays (Connecticut).

Smith & Harroff, Inc., Alexandria, Virginia

Republican, founded in 1973

Principals: J. Brian Smith and Edward Blakely

Concentrates on political, nonpolitical, issues management, and advertising for national and international clientele. The firm has a ninety-eight to twenty-seven win-loss record and has worked for Governor Jane Dee Hull (Arizona), senators John McCain (Arizona) and Olympia Snowe (Maine), Representative Connie Morella (Maryland), and many others. Named one of Washington's "hottest agencies" for two years running by *Inside PR*.

Squier, Knapp, Dunn Communications, Washington, D.C.

Democratic, founded in 1968

Principals: William N. Knapp and Anita Dunn

A full-service national media consultant organization. Clients include President Clinton and senators Dale Bumpers (Arkansas), Christopher Dodd (Connecticut), Robert Graham (Florida), Richard Shelby (Alabama), Richard Bryan (Nevada), Robert Byrd (West Virginia), and Jay Rockefeller (West Virginia).

The Stevens, McAuliffe, and Schriefer Group, Alexandria, Virginia, and New York

Republican, founded in 1990

Principals: Stuart Stevens and Russ Schriefer

The firm states that it has elected more Republican governors, senators, and other statewide officeholders than any other GOP media firm. Clients have included governors Tom Ridge (Pennsylvania), Bill Janklow (South Dakota), William Weld (Massachusetts), and Paul Celluci (Massachusetts), senators Chuck Grassley (Iowa) and Richard Lugar (Indiana), and representatives John Kasich (Ohio) and Amo Houghton (New York).

Stevens Reed Curcio & Company, Alexandria, Virginia

Republican, founded in 1997

Principal: Greg Stevens

National media consulting done for both political candidates and issue campaigns. The firm has won races for nine U.S. senators and six governors. In 1998 the firm successfully aided George Voinovich (Ohio), Peter Fitzgerald (Illinois), John McCain (Arizona), and Don Nickles (Oklahoma) in U.S. Senate elections. Governors John Rowland (Connecticut) and Lincoln Arnold (Rhode Island) were also reelected with the help of the firm.

Strother/Duffy/Strother, Washington, D.C.

Democratic, founded in 1978

Principals: Raymond D. Strother, Jim Duffy, and Dane Strother

Clients include Senator Blanche Lambert Lincoln (Arkansas), Governor Roy Barnes (Georgia), and Attorney General Bob Butterworth (Florida). Strother/Duffy/Strother claims to have never lost a race for an incumbent senator or congressman.

Struble, Oppel, Donovan Communications, Washington, D.C.

Democratic, founded in 1979

Principal: Karl Struble

The firm has worked for senators Tom Daschle (South Dakota), Ernest F. Hollings (South Carolina), Patty Murray (Washington), Carl Levin (Michigan), Tim Johnson (South Dakota), Max Cleland (Georgia), and Bob Kerrey (Nebraska). Its clients have included the New York Democratic Party, the Kentucky Democratic Party, and a variety of interest groups and issue advocacy organizations.

Trippi McMahon & Squier, Alexandria, Virginia

Democratic, founded in 1991

Principals: Joe Trippi, Steve McMahon, and Mark Squier

A media and campaign consulting firm that focuses on television and radio production, time buying, and direct mail for fund-raising and voter contact. The firm has an eight-out-of-nine success rate in over one hundred political campaigns. Clients include Senator Ron Wyden (Oregon), Greek prime minister Andreas Papandreu, governors Howard Dean (Vermont) and John Kitzhaber (Oregon), and one dozen initiative and referendum campaigns.

Joe Slade White and Company, New York

Democratic, founded in 1973

Principals: Joe Slade White, Sharon Cosimano, Janet Katowitz, Valerie Biden Owens, Jay Neel, Robbie Dodson, and Pattie Durgin

The firm creates and manages television and radio media campaigns, advises on strategy for Democratic candidates, initiative campaigns, and groups and corporations across the country. The firm has won more Pollie awards for excellence in television than any other Democratic media firm. Recent clients have included senators Joseph Biden (Delaware), and Ben Nighthorse Campbell (Colorado), Governor Tony Knowles (Alaska), and Attorney General Jennifer Granholm (Michigan). Corporate clients have included AT&T, Providence Hospitals, The Paul Allen Group, and the Seattle Seahawks.

Wilson Grand Communications, Alexandria, Virginia

Republican, founded in 1986

Principals: Paul Wilson and Steven Grand

Full campaign services, in addition to media and general consulting, are provided by this firm. Advertising, planning, placement, consulting, media coaching, speech writing, message development, crisis management, and public relations services are provided to political clients. Clients include the Ohio and South Dakota Republican parties, governors Bill Graves (Kansas) and Edward Schafer (North Dakota), representatives Paul Gillmor (Ohio), Chris Cannon (Utah), and Kenny Hulsof (Missouri), and senators Sam Brownback (Kansas) and Pat Roberts (Kansas).

General Consultants**James Carville, Washington, D.C.**

Democratic, founded in 1984

Principal: James Carville

A general consulting firm that provides full campaign services, speech writing, and media coaching to Democratic candidates. Carville has managed more political campaigns than anyone in history. His clients have included President Clinton, Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak, Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso, senators Harris Wofford (Pennsylvania) and Frank Lautenberg (New Jersey), and governors Zell Miller (Georgia), Bob Casey (Pennsylvania), and Wallace Wilkinson (Kentucky).

Cerrell Associates, Inc., Los Angeles

Democratic, founded in 1966

Principal: Joseph Cerrell

This is one of California's oldest and best-known government affairs, public relations, and campaign management firms. It pioneered the field of judicial campaign management.

Karl Rove & Company, Austin, Texas

Republican, founded in 1981

Principal: Karl Rove

General strategy, fund-raising, direct mail. Clients include George W. Bush for president, Governor Jim Edgar (Illinois), and senators Kay Baily Hutchison (Texas), Bob Kasten (Wisconsin), Phil Gramm (Texas), Kit Bond (Missouri), and Orrin Hatch (Utah). Before announcing his run for the presidency, George W. Bush asked Rove, his chief strategist, to dissolve his company, and Rove has done so.

Direct Mail Firms**AB Data Ltd., Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Washington, D.C.**

Democratic, founded in 1980

Principals: Charles Pruitt, Jerry Benjamin, and Bruce Arbit

This firm specializes in providing direct mail services for both fund-raising and voter persuasion. Clients include the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and senators Tom Daschle (South Dakota), Bob Kerrey (Nebraska), Carl Levin (Michigan), and Frank Lautenberg (New Jersey), in addition to more than twenty other political and progressive campaigns and nonprofit advocacy organizations.

Avenel Associates, Washington, D.C.

Democratic, founded in 1981

Principal: Earl Bender

The firm provides candidate and ballot measure campaign consulting for Democratic candidates and progressive organizations. The focus is on strategic planning, political mobilization, and training for these organizations and Democratic Party committees at all levels. The firm also provides direct mail, grassroots lobbying, consulting on redistricting, and campaigning against the extreme right, as well as other strategic topics. Since 1981 the firm has served hundreds of electoral and non-electoral clients at national, state, and local levels.

Bates Neimand, Inc., Washington, D.C.

Democratic, founded in 1992

Principals: Ross Bates and Rich Neimand

The firm was one of the first persuasion mail firms to work nationally in Democratic congressional campaigns. It has worked in legislative caucus efforts throughout the

nation and has helped pass environmental ballot measures from Long Island, New York to Tucson, Arizona.

Blaemire Communications, Reston, Virginia

Democratic, founded in 1991

Principals: Bob Blaemire, Amy Kurtz, and Nina Sands

A political computer firm that specializes in targeting and direct mail. The firm provides clients with online database management that allows for instant counts from a database of any size. Specialities include voter files, targeted voter contact, and political campaigns at all levels. Clients include senators Evan Bayh (Indiana), Joseph Biden (Delaware), and Bob Kerrey (Nebraska), President Clinton in 1992 and 1996, AARP, AFL-CIO, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, Democratic National Committee, Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, Nature Conservancy, and many labor and trade associations.

Nancy Bocskor, Arlington, Virginia

Republican, founded in 1990

Principal: Nancy L. Bocskor

This firm specializes in fund-raising for members of Congress, grassroots organization for associations, and political training for candidates, volunteers, and campaign staff. Clients include Bill McCollum's Senate campaign (Florida), and representatives Sherwood Boehlert (New York), Jack Quinn (New York), Bob Franks (New Jersey), John Peterson (Pennsylvania), David Hobson (Ohio), Kevin Brady (Texas), Scott McInnis (Colorado), Ron Packard (California), and Lee Terry (Nebraska).

Campaign Performance Group, Washington, D.C.

Democratic, founded in the 1980s

Principals: Richard Schlackman, Andre Pineda, and Regina Marcelle

The firm specializes in direct mail voter contact and list acquisition for congressional, statewide, legislative, municipal, and initiative campaigns.

Campaign Services Group, Inc. (CSG), San Antonio, Texas

Republican, founded in the 1980s

Principals: John Weaver and Kelton Morgan

The firm specializes in overall campaign strategy and direct marketing. CSG also provides its clients with a full range of public relations and marketing services. Clients have included candidates for federal, state, and municipal campaigns.

Cunningham Harris & Assoc., Inc., Ripley, West Virginia

Democratic, founded in 1993

Principals: James W. Cunningham and L. A. Harris

The firm has represented more than a hundred sixty clients in the past five years, including representatives Elijah Cummings (Maryland), Tim Johnson (South

Dakota), and Bob Weygand (Rhode Island), Senator Max Cleland (Georgia), and governors Jim Hodges (South Carolina) and Don Siegelman (Alabama).

The Delta Group, Inc., Annandale, Virginia

Republican, founded in 1993

Principal: Scott E. Huch

Voter contact mail for Republican candidates in local, state, and national races. Services include creative, production, message development, and market strategy. It has also worked on grassroots lobbying mailings. More than one hundred clients since 1993.

Direct Mail Systems, Inc., Clearwater, Florida

Republican, founded in the 1980s

Principals: Jack Latvala and Mike Pachik

A full-service direct voter contact and mail firm that provides consulting, direct mail fund-raising, and voter contact direct mail services. Clients include Republican state parties, Senator Spencer Abraham (Michigan), governors Tom Ridge (Pennsylvania) and Don Sundquist (Tennessee), and numerous members of Congress.

Bruce W. Eberle & Assoc., Inc., McLean, Virginia

Republican, founded in 1974

Principals: M. Declan Bransfield III and Bruce W. Eberle

The firm specializes in direct mail fund-raising for political and nonprofit groups. Clients have included associations, foundations, and Senate and presidential candidates.

Fraioli, Inc., Washington, D.C.

Democratic, founded in 1987

Principals: Michael Fraioli and Robert Siggins

The firm provides a range of political and fund-raising services, from the management of a single event to general campaign oversight and direction. Clients for the 1998 campaign cycle included over two dozen members of the House of Representatives from across the country.

Fundraising Management Group (FMG), Washington, D.C.

Democratic, founded in 1989

Principal: Scott Gale

Raises money for gubernatorial, Senate, and House challengers. The firm has helped 123 clients raise over \$145 million. Past clients include senators Jeff Bingaman (New Mexico), Howell Heflin (Alabama), Harris Wofford (Pennsylvania), and Ron Wyden (Oregon), Governor Frank O'Bannon, and representatives Martin Frost (Texas), Rosa DeLauro (Connecticut), Baron Hill (Indiana), and Jim Maloney (Connecticut).

Machado and Company, Washington, D.C.

Republican, founded in 1994

Principal: Carolyn Machado

The firm has raised over \$12 million from political action committees for congressional races. Clients include top-targeted campaigns, trade associations, corporations, and international clients.

Malchow Adams & Hussey, Washington D.C.

Democratic, founded in the 1990s

Principals: Hal Malchow, Greg Adams Sr., and James Hussey

The firm provides small-donor fund-raising services that include direct mail and telemarketing for Democratic candidates and progressive nonprofit organizations. Political persuasion mail is also done for Democratic campaigns and referenda.

Morgan, Meredith and Associates, Chantilly, Virginia

Republican, founded in 1987

Principals: Dan Morgan and Todd Meredith

The firm provides full-service fund-raising, including finance plans, mail, major donor programs, and training. Clients include House majority leader Richard Armye (Texas), Representative J. C. Watts (Oklahoma), and more than fifty other Republican members of the House.

Odell, Simms & Assoc., Inc., Falls Church, Virginia

Republican, founded in 1974

Principals: Robert P. Odell Jr. and John Simms

The firm specializes in direct mail fund-raising and voter persuasion. It also solicits PACs, manages events, and produces graphics and brochures. Clients include national and state Republican committees and candidates.

PM Consulting Corporation, Washington, D.C.

Republican, founded in the 1990s

Principal: Bradley O'Leary

A creative direct-response agency that specializes in presidential events fund-raising, grassroots lobbying, voter mail targeting, and major-donor fund-raising. The firm has raised over \$200 million in the last five years for nonprofit associations, Senate candidates, and PACs. Clients include the National Rifle Association, National Federation of Republican Women, National Smokers Alliance, NRSC, and numerous Republican members of Congress.

RMM Consulting, Inc., Washington, D.C.

Democratic, founded in 1990

Principals: Bob McDevitt and Kenneth S. Christiansen

The firm has represented more than sixty clients in the past eight years, concentrating on House and Senate campaigns, and specializing in fund-raising and general consulting. Prior clients include the Clinton-Gore campaigns in 1992 and 1996, the Democratic National Committee, and the DCCC.

SCM Associates, Boston, Massachusetts

Republican, founded in 1991

Principal: Steven C. Meyers

A direct-response firm that offers direct mail and telemarketing services for fundraising and political and grassroots lobbying that have been utilized by senators, representatives, and Republican Party organizations. The firm was commissioned by the National Republican Congressional Committee to write, design, and produce the finance manual for Republican congressional candidates.

Sheingold Assoc., Sacramento, California

Democratic, founded in the 1980s

Principal: Larry Sheingold

The firm provides full campaign services as well as media and direct mail consulting. It has a 90 percent winning record over the past twenty years. Since the firm's creation, it has provided direct mail for state House committees in California, Washington, and Pennsylvania, in addition to state, congressional, and state legislative candidates, and statewide and local ballot measures.

Targeted Creative Communications, Alexandria, Virginia

Republican, founded in 1992

Principal: Dan Hazelwood

A direct marketing company that has worked for more than 185 campaigns in forty-three states. Past clients include Bob Dole for President, Oliver North, several senators and governors, and over four dozen members of the House of Representatives, including former speaker Newt Gingrich (Georgia).

Voter Contact Firms**Cherry Communications Company, Tallahassee, Florida**

Republican, founded in 1990

Principals: Linda Cherry and Jim Cherry

Hundreds of federal, state, and local candidates have been served with voter contact, polling, and fund-raising services from this firm. Clients have included Governor Christine Todd Whitman (New Jersey), Senator Phil Gramm (Texas), and former speaker of the house Newt Gingrich (Georgia). Clients also include the RNC, NRCC, NRSC, and numerous state and local Republican committees. Grassroots mobilization is provided to political action committees and business groups such as the NFIB, AMA, Associated Industries of Florida, and the Florida Retail Association.

Ballot Issue Firms

Goddard Claussen/First Tuesday, Sacramento, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C.

Founded in 1990

Principals: Ben Goddard, Richard Claussen, Frank Schubert, and Carolyn Tieger

The firm specializes in issues advocacy, public affairs, and ballot initiative campaigns for a host of clients, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Business Roundtable, National Federation of Independent Business, American Council of Life Insurance, Global Climate Information Project, Chlorine Chemistry Council, Coalition for Affordable Quality Healthcare, and many others.

Kimball Petition Management, Inc., Westlake Village, California

Founded in 1987

Principals: Fred G. Kimball Jr. and Kelly Kimball

The firm specializes in issue and petition management, direct mail, general consultancy, and consumer marketing (including letter-writing campaigns, subscription drives, and other targeted efforts). The principals have collected over 50 million signatures that qualified more than two hundred state and local initiatives across the country.

National Voter Outreach, Carson City, Nevada

Founded in the 1980s

Principals: Richard L. Arnold, Geneva M. L. Arnold, and Susan E. Johnson

The firm specializes in initiative and referenda campaigns, campaign management, field operations, and list brokerage and management. It collected over 4 million signatures for the 1996 ballot through street polls, precinct walks, canvass operations, and volunteer organizations.

Winner/Wagner & Mandabach Campaigns, Santa Monica, California

Founded in 1975

Principals: Paul Mandabach, Chuck Winner, and Ethan Wagner

A national political consulting firm that specializes in ballot measure elections. The firm has managed or consulted on more than one hundred ballot measures in twenty-two states and thirty different localities in the United States, and consulted on issues in Europe and the Far East. The most current successes of the firm came in the November 1998 general election, which included measures on Indian gaming in California, electricity deregulation in California and Massachusetts, riverboat gaming in Missouri, and gun show regulation in Florida.

Political Telemarketing Firms

Bonner & Assoc., Washington, D.C.

Founded in 1984

Principal: Jack Bonner

A general consulting, campaign, issue management, and grassroots firm. Its scope is national, and it specializes in grassroots organization for legislative and regulatory efforts, and federal, state, and local letters, calls, and meetings.

The Clinton Group, Washington, D.C.

Democratic, founded in 1971

Principal: Walter D. Clinton, Jr.

Firm specializes in grassroots voter contact, motivation, persuasion, GOTV, activist recruitment, and implementation. It has participated in a wide variety of races for presidential, congressional, gubernatorial, senatorial, and state legislative offices.

InfoCision Management Corporation, Akron, Ohio

Republican, founded in 1982

Principals: Vicki Ellinger and Tim Twardowski

The firm focuses on outbound telemarketing for fund-raising and donor activation. It has raised more money for nonprofit organizations than any other outbound telemarketing organization worldwide. Clients include many nonprofit organizations and Fortune 100 companies. The firm has been recognized by *Telemarketing and Call Center* magazine, Case Western Reserve University, and the Direct Marketing Association.

Landmark Strategies, Inc., Alexandria, Virginia

Democratic, founded in 1989

Principals: Robert Corn and Jeff Ely

The firm provides full campaign services, research, analysis, targeting, and telephone voter contact to Democratic clients.

National Telecommunications Services, Inc., Washington, D.C.

Democratic, founded in 1979

Principal: Mac Hansbrough

Provides voter contact and legislative grassroots phoning to more than two hundred fifty nationwide clients. Specializes in voter ID, persuasion, GOTV, issues advocacy, ballot initiatives, and legislative public policy. Clients are Democratic Party organizations, organized labor, advocacy groups, and political campaigns.

Notes

Introduction

1. Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 43.
2. U.S. Bureau of the Census figures cited in “Over Half Million Elected Officials in U.S.,” *Campaigns and Elections*, May 1996, 54. This figure includes primaries and runoff elections; many of the elected contests are for one- or two-year terms. Not included in these figures are the many initiatives and referenda, bond issues, constitutional amendments, and other ballot issues found at the state and local level.
3. Ron Faucheux, “Consultants on Trial,” *Campaigns and Elections*, October/November 1996, 5. Walter DeVries estimated that twelve thousand individuals made all or most of their incomes as professional consultants. “American Campaign Consulting: Trends and Concerns,” *PS: Political Science and Politics*, March 1989, 21.
4. See James Q. Wilson, *The Amateur Democrat: Club Politics in Three Cities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962). Wilson’s focus was on the amateur office-seeker, but has relevance here for looking at those who assist candidates running for office. The typology of professionals and amateurs is explored in Frank J. Sorauf and Paul Allen Beck, *Party Politics in America*, 6th ed. (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Company), 120.

Chapter 1: Celebrity Consultants and Professionally Driven Campaigns

Epigraph from Richard Stengel and Eric Pooley, “Masters of the Message,” *Time*, November 18, 1996, 18.

1. *Time*, September 2, 1996.
2. George Stephanopoulos, *All Too Human: A Political Education* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1999), 338.
3. Morris’s version of the Clinton reelection drive is found in Dick Morris, *Behind the Oval Office: Winning the Presidency in the Nineties* (New York: Random House, 1997).
4. Hollywood has long had an interest in politics and campaigns. In Frank Capra’s *Meet John Doe* (1941), vagrant Gary Cooper played the American everyman in the tale of a crooked politician’s presidential bid. In another Capra film, *State of the Union* (1948), Spencer Tracy portrayed a well-meaning businessman who wanted to run for the presidency. Paul Newman was a young lawyer running for office faced with a blackmail scandal in *The Young Philadelphians* (1959). Henry Fonda and Cliff Robertson were

presidential candidates who faced off at a national party convention in *The Best Man* (1964). Idealistic Robert Redford followed his consultant's script in a run for the Senate in *The Candidate* (1972). Richard Gere was a hot-shot American consultant plying his trade in Latin American politics in *Power* (1986), and Tim Robbins campaigned as a phony populist in *Bob Roberts* (1992). *Wag the Dog* was based on Larry Beinhart's 1993 novel, *American Hero*. Presidential sexual exploits have become something of a cottage industry for writers of fiction: Charles McCarry's sexually hyperactive president in *Lucky Bastard* (1998) married a leftist ideologue and became a pawn of the KGB; Marilyn Quayle and Nancy Northcott conjured up a philandering president and a left-wing conspiracy in *The Campaign* (1996), and Erik Tarloff told of an extramarital affair between the president and his chief speech writer's girlfriend in *Face Time* (1998).

5. Joe Klein, *Primary Colors* (New York: Random House, 1995). Much of the hype associated with this book centered around the anonymity of the author. A year after its publication, Klein, a *Newsweek* reporter, was uncovered as its author. Edward Rollins with Tom DeFrank, *Bare Knuckles and Back Rooms* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996); and Mary Matalin and James Carville with Peter Knobler, *All's Fair: Love, War, and Running for President* (New York: Random House, Simon and Schuster, 1994). Carville also wrote *We're Right, They're Wrong: A Handbook for Spirited Progressives* (New York: Random House, Simon and Schuster, 1996).
6. James Carville, . . . *And the Horse He Rode in On: The People v. Kenneth Starr* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998).
7. Stephanopoulos, *All Too Human*.
8. Dick Morris, *The New Prince: Machiavelli Updated for the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Renaissance Books, 1999).
9. Larry Sabato, *The Rise of Political Consultants: New Ways of Winning Elections* (New York: Basic Books, 1981). See also Frank I. Luntz, *Candidates, Consultants, and Elections* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988); Karen S. Johnson-Cartee and Gary A. Copeland, *Inside Political Campaigns* (New York: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1997); and Robert V. Friedenberg, *Communication Consultants in Political Campaigns: Ballot Box Warriors* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997).
10. Ron Faucheux and Paul S. Herrnson, "See How They Run: State Legislative Candidates," *Campaigns and Elections*, August 1999, 25.
11. Michael Clark, "Selling Issues: Political Consultants Are Shifting Their Business to Include Campaigns without Candidates," *Campaigns and Elections*, April/May 1993. See also David L. Rosenbloom, *The Election Men: Professional Campaign Managers and American Democracy* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1973), 50.
12. For example, Clinton reelection campaign and second-term pollsters Mark Penn and Doug Schoen also have worked for AT&T, Texaco, Chemical Bank, Citibank, Control Data, Eastman Kodak, Honeywell, Major League Baseball, Nynex, Procter and Gamble, Sony, and the Trump Organization. They have also worked for candidates in Latin America, Israel, Greece, Turkey, and the Philippines. Peter Baker, "White House Isn't Asking Image Advisers to Reveal Assets or Disclose Other Clients," *Washington Post*, May 19, 1997, A8.
13. The partnership of Dick Morris and Richard Dresner, for example, ended in bankruptcy in 1982, even though they had an extraordinary number of clients.

14. Stuart Rothenberg, "Change Is Good: The Consultant Soap Opera," *Roll Call*, March 13, 1995.
15. Hal Malchow, "The Targeting Revolution in Political Direct Contact," *Campaigns and Elections*, June 1997, 36–39. See chapter 6 for discussion of these new technologies.
16. Joseph R. Cerrell, "Do Political Consultants Harm the Electoral Process?" *CQ Researcher* 6, no. 37 (October 4, 1996): 881.

Chapter 2: Running for Office

Rollins epigraph from Ed Rollins with Tom DeFrank, *Bare Knuckles and Back Rooms* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 339–40; Frank epigraph from the film documentary *Vote for Me* (1996).

1. *Washington Post*, Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard University, *General Social Survey and American National Election Studies*, 1996. For analysis and background, see Richard Morin and Dan Balz, "Americans Losing Trust in Each Other and Institutions," *Washington Post*, January 28, 1996, A1, and other articles in the series. Data from National Election Study, from 1964 through 1992, have been widely used to demonstrate the declines in levels of trust. See also Joseph S. Nye Jr., Philip D. Zelikow, and David C. King, eds., *Why People Don't Trust Government* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); *Deconstructing Distrust: How Americans View Government*, ed. Andrew Kohut (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 1997); and Peter D. Hart and Robert M. Teeter, "Findings from a Research Project about Attitudes toward Government," conducted for the Council for Excellence in Government (1995).
2. Morin and Balz, "Americans Losing Trust." In writing about the changing norms and values of American society, Eric M. Uslaner observed that "people trust each other less in a multiplicity of ways. Americans are unhappy with themselves," they are increasingly dissatisfied with the nation's lack of honesty and standards of behavior, and their voices are becoming increasingly shrill. Uslaner, *The Decline of Comity in Congress* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 84–85. See also "Civility in the House of Representatives," Report No. 10 (Annenberg Public Policy Center, University of Pennsylvania, 1997).
3. Morin and Balz, "Americans Losing Trust," A6. Ruy A. Teixeira argues that feelings of political cynicism have "no significant independent effect" on an individual's likelihood of voting. See Teixeira, *The Disappearing American Voter* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1992), 32.
4. *Washington Post*/Kaiser/Harvard survey. The specific wording of the questions is as follows: "Would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?" and "How much of the time do you trust the government in Washington to do the right thing?" See also Robert Samuelson, *The Good Life and Its Discontents: The American Dream in the Age of Entitlement 1945–1995* (New York: Times Books, 1996).
5. Samuelson, *The Good Life and Its Discontents*, 4.
6. Susan J. Tolchin, *The Angry American* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1996), 19.
7. John R. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, *Congress as Public Enemy: Public Attitudes toward American Political Institutions* (New York: Cambridge University Press,

- 1995), 148; and Tolchin, *The Angry American*, 3. But see Jack Citrin, "The Angry White Male Is a Straw Man," *Public Affairs Report* 37 (January 1996): 1.
8. Richard Morin in an article accompanying David S. Broder, "Cure for Nation's Cynicism Eludes Its Leaders," *Washington Post*, February 4, 1996, A1.
 9. Richard Morin and Claudia Deane, "Poll Shows More Citizens Satisfied with Government," *Washington Post*, January 21, 1998, A6. John J. DiIulio Jr. observed that the angry white male interpretation of the 1994 elections "took off like a media rocket, slowed down hardly at all by the gravitational pull of highly contradictory and easy-to-locate data," and that by 1996 the angry white male had disappeared, only to be replaced by "soccer moms" as the dominant media cliché. DiIulio, "Valence Voters, Valence Victors," in *The Elections of 1996*, Michael Nelson ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1997), 168–69.
 10. Teixeira, *The Disappearing American Voter*, 57.
 11. David Cay Johnston, "Voting, America's Not Keen On. Coffee Is Another Matter," *New York Times*, November 10, 1996, E2. Johnston wryly notes that more people (an estimated 95 million) watched O. J. Simpson take his freeway ride in the white Bronco than cast ballots in the 1996 general elections (92.8 million). In modern elections, voter participation was the highest in 1960, with 62.8 percent of voting-age Americans going to the polls.
 12. Mark Strama, "Overcoming Cynicism: Youth Participation and Electoral Politics," *National Civic Review*, Spring 1998, and "'98 Voter Turnout Rate Was Lowest in 56 Years," *Washington Post*, February 10, 1999, A14, citing election analysis by Curtis Gans.
 13. Quoted in Frank I. Luntz, *Candidates, Consultants, and Campaigns* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 32.
 14. Richard Harwood, "All-Pro Politics," *Washington Post*, March 23, 1996, A15.
 15. See Daniel M. Shea, *Campaign Craft: The Strategies, Tactics, and Art of Political Campaign Management* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1996), 239–40; and David T. Cannon, "The Wisconsin 2nd Congressional District: History in the Making," paper prepared for "Money, Media and Madness: Inside the 1998 Elections," a conference sponsored by the Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies, American University, Washington, D.C., December 4, 1998.
 16. Dennis J. McGrath and Dane Smith, *Professor Wellstone Goes to Washington: The Inside Story of a Grassroots U.S. Senate Campaign* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).
 17. Eric Pianin, "In Wellstone-Boschwitz Rematch, Attacks Seem to Have Backfired," *Washington Post*, October 22, 1996, A14.
 18. "The Diminishing Divide . . . American Churches, American Politics" (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, June 25, 1996), 1.
 19. Dan Balz and Ronald Brownstein, *Storming the Gates: Protest Politics and the Republican Revival* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966), 302. In a survey of state Republican parties, consultants, and Republican political leaders, *Campaigns and Elections* found in 1994 that the Christian Right strength was "dominant"—that is, constituting a working majority on major issues, in eighteen of the fifty state

- Republican parties; in thirteen other state Republican parties, Christian Right strength was “substantial,” and in twenty state Republican parties, Christian Right strength was considered “minor.” “Who’s Got the Power? Levels of Christian Right Strength in State Republican Party Organizations,” *Campaigns and Elections*, September 1994, 22.
20. Marc Fisher, “The GOP, Facing a Dobson’s Choice,” *Washington Post*, July 2, 1996, D1.
 21. Robin Toner, “The 1994 Campaign: Image of Capitol Maligned by Outsiders and Insiders,” *New York Times*, October 16, 1994, 1.
 22. Campaign commercials cited in Toner, “The 1994 Campaign.”
 23. Frank J. Sorauf and Paul Allen Beck, *Party Politics in America*, 6th ed. (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1988), 98.
 24. Paul S. Herrnson, *Party Campaigning in the 1980s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); and Paul Allen Beck, *Party Politics in America*, 8th ed. (New York: Longman, 1997).
 25. James A. Reichley, *The Life of the Parties: A History of American Political Parties* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 8. See, in particular, Thomas E. Patterson, *Out of Order* (New York: Knopf, 1993), on the role of the media in presidential campaigns.
 26. See Herrnson, *Party Campaigning in the 1980s*, 5; and Beck, *Party Politics in America*, 167, on signs of the national party’s comeback.
 27. Terry Neal, “Off-Year Elections Get Huge GOP Infusion,” *Washington Post*, November 2, 1997, A1.
 28. David B. Magleby and Marianne Holt, “Outside Money: Soft Money and Issue Ads in Competitive 1998 Congressional Elections,” Report of a Grant Funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, February 1, 1999, 20.
 29. See Doris Graber, *Mass Media and American Politics* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1996); Stephen Ansolabehere, Roy Behr, and Shanto Iyengar, *The Media Game. American Politics in the Television Age* (New York: MacMillan, 1993); Richard Joslyn, *Mass Media and Elections* (New York: Random House, 1984); Montague Kern, *30-Second Politics: Political Advertising in the Eighties* (New York: Praeger, 1989); Dean Alger, *The Media and Politics* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1989); and F. Christopher Arterton, *Media Politics: The News Strategies of Presidential Campaigns* (Toronto: Lexington Books, 1984).
 30. As Ansolabehere et al. put it: “The troubles in the world of network television can be summarized in two words: cable television.” *The Media Game*, 26.
 31. Paul Starobin, “Unplugged,” *National Journal*, November 4, 1995, 2733.
 32. Howard Kurtz, *Hot Air: All Talk, All the Time* (New York: Times Books, 1996), 19.
 33. Study conducted by Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press, reported in Timothy Egan, “Triumph Leaves No Targets for Conservative Talk Shows,” *New York Times*, January 1, 1995, A1.
 34. Howard Kurtz, “Imus-Be-an-Idiot,” *Washington Post*, March 31, 1996, C5. Yet Maureen Dowd, of the *New York Times*, observes that Imus “is the best political inter-

- viewer. He's read everything, and he gets to the heart of everything." Quoted in "Time's 25 Most Influential Americans," *Time*, April 21, 1997, 21.
35. Kurtz, "Imus-Be-an-Idiot."
 36. James Fallows, *Breaking the News: How the Media Undermine American Democracy* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1996), 53.
 37. Kurt Andersen, "Entertainer-in-Chief," *New Yorker*, February 16, 1998, 34.
 38. Ron Faucheux, "How Campaigns Are Using the Internet," *Campaigns and Elections*, September 1998, 22–24.
 39. Georgia Institute of Technology, Graphics, Visualization, and Usability Center (GVU), "World Wide Web Survey, Sixth Semi-Annual Survey," December 1996 (www.cc.gatech.edu/gvu/user_surveys); and Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, "The Internet News Audience Goes Ordinary," Andrew Kohut, director, January 14, 1999.
 40. Pew Research Center, "The Internet News Audience Goes Ordinary," 18–20.
 41. Cornfield and Arterton, "Is This for Real? Democratic Politics and the Internet," in Institute for Information Studies, *The Internet as Paradigm* (Washington, D.C.: Aspen Institute, 1997), 90.
 42. Neil Munro, "Webward Ho! Candidates in Cyberspace," *National Journal*, October 17, 1998, 2456; and Rebecca Fairley Raney, "Politicians Woo Voters on the Web," *New York Times*, July 30, 1998, G1.
 43. Howard Kurtz, "Volleys Fired before Target Was Fielded," *Washington Post*, August 7, 1996, A15.
 44. Howard Kurtz, "Bush Team Relying on Quick Impact of 'Crash Ads,'" *Washington Post*, January 22, 2000, A9.
 45. Deborah Beck, Paul Taylor, Jeffrey Stanger, and Douglas Rivlin, "Issue Advocacy Advertising during the 1996 Campaign," University of Pennsylvania, Annenberg Public Policy Center, Report No. 17, September 16, 1997, 3.
 46. Arthur T. Hadley, *The Invisible Primary* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976); and Emmett H. Buell Jr., "The Invisible Primary," in *In Pursuit of the White House: How We Choose our Presidential Nominees* ed. William G. Mayer (Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House, 1996). See also David Himes, "Strategy and Tactics for Campaign Fund-Raising," in *Campaigns and Elections: American Style*, ed. James A. Thurber and Candice J. Nelson (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1995), 62ff.
 47. Larry Makinson, *The Big Picture: Money Follows Power Shift on Capitol Hill* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Responsive Politics, November 25, 1997).
 48. See Michael C. Pfau and Henry C. Kenski, *Attack Politics: Strategy and Defense* (New York: Praeger, 1990); Stephen Ansolabehere and Shanto Iyengar, *Going Negative: How Political Advertisements Shrink and Polarize the Electorate* (New York: Free Press, 1995); Karen S. Johnson-Cartee and Gary A. Copeland, *Negative Political Advertising: Coming of Age* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1991); and Victor Kamber, *Poison Politics: Are Negative Campaigns Destroying Democracy?* (New York: Plenum, 1997). See also Kim Fridkin Kahn and Patrick J. Kenney, "Negative Advertising and an

Informed Electorate: How Negative Campaigning Enhances Knowledge of Senate Elections,” and Richard A. Lau and Lee Sigelman, “The Effectiveness of Negative Political Advertising: A Literature Review,” both from Conference on Political Advertising in Election Campaigns, American University, Washington, D.C., April 17, 1997.

49. On this point, see William G. Mayer, “In Defense of Negative Campaigning,” *Political Science Quarterly* (1996) 111: 440.

Chapter 3: Challenging an Incumbent U.S. Senator

1. Alan I. Abramowitz and Jeffrey A. Segal, *Senate Elections* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), ix. See also Gary C. Jacobson and Raymond Wolfinger, “Information and Voting in California Senate Elections,” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* (1989) 14: 509–29, on the Alan Cranston–Ed Zschau 1986 California Senate race. For a description of a quirky, refreshing campaign that relied on both a grassroots effort and modern advertising, see Dennis J. McGrath and Dane Smith, *Professor Wellstone Goes to Washington: The Inside Story of a Grassroots U.S. Senate Campaign* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1995).
2. See Dorothy Davidson Nesbitt, *Videostyle in Senate Campaigns* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), for an examination of three hypothetical Senate races, with the focus on message development; and Richard F. Fenno Jr., *Senators on the Campaign Trail: The Politics of Representation* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998). See also James A. Thurber and Candice J. Nelson, eds., *Campaigns and Elections: American Style* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1995); and Daniel M. Shea, *Campaign Craft: The Strategies, Tactics, and Art of Political Management* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1996).
3. Shea, *Campaign Craft*, 27. See also William R. Sweeney, “The Principles of Planning,” in *Campaigns and Elections: American Style*; Barbara G. Salmore and Stephen A. Salmore, *Candidates, Parties, and Campaigns* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1989); and Linda L. Fowler, *Candidates, Congress, and the American Democracy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), especially the summary of research on House races, 100–2.
4. See John A. Ferejohn, “On the Decline in Competition in Congressional Elections,” 71 *American Political Science Review* 71 (1977): 166–76; Fowler, *Candidates, Congress, and the American Democracy*; and Paul S. Herrnson, *Congressional Elections: Campaigning at Home and in Washington*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1998).
5. Abramowitz and Segal, *Senate Elections*, 115.
6. See Denise Baer, “Contemporary Strategy and Agenda Setting,” in *Campaigns and Elections: American Style*; and Shea, *Campaign Craft*, ch. 2.
7. Wellstone defeated incumbent Senator Rudy Boschwitz in the 1990 Minnesota Senate race; Boschwitz spent \$6.2 million to Wellstone’s \$1.3 million. Feingold beat incumbent Senator Bob Kasten in the 1992 Wisconsin Senate race; Kasten spent \$5.4 million, while Feingold spent \$1.9 million. *Congressional Quarterly’s Politics in America*, 1994: 103rd Congress (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1995), 811 and 1660. On the Wellstone victory, see McGrath and Smith, *Professor Wellstone Goes to Washington*.

Chapter 4: Political Research

Epigraph from Douglas Frantz, “Plenty of Dirty Jobs in Politics and a New Breed of Diggers,” *New York Times*, July 6, 1999, A1.

1. John Brady, *Bad Boy: The Life and Politics of Lee Atwater* (Reading, Mass.: Addison Wesley, 1997), 171.
2. Frantz, “Plenty of Dirty Jobs in Politics,” A16.
3. Janet Buttolph Johnson and Richard A. Joslyn, *Political Science Research Methods*, 3rd ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1995), 41ff.
4. Cooler heads prevailed, and I was hired to be research director for a 1982 Senate campaign under the general direction of James Carville, his first major job as a campaign manager. Our candidate, Lieutenant Governor Richard J. Davis of Virginia, lost by just over one percentage point to three-term congressman Paul Trible. Over the course of the next ten years, I periodically worked as research specialist for (and against) Carville in several statewide campaigns.
5. Alphonse D’Amato for U.S. Senate campaign, produced by Horizon Communications. Cited in “The Campaign’s Dirty Dozen,” *National Journal*, November 14, 1998, 2738.
6. Barbara Boxer for U.S. Senate campaign, produced by Greer, Margolis, Mitchell, Burns. Cited in “The Campaign’s Dirty Dozen,” 2738–39.
7. For examples of the use of staff for campaign purposes, see Larry J. Sabato and Glenn R. Simpson, *Dirty Little Secrets* (New York: Times Books, 1996), ch. 8.
8. Samuel L. Popkin, *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 12. Popkin notes that the basic question for candidates and campaigns is: “What have you done for us lately?”
9. Conrad appeared to waver on his pledge not to run again, joking in early 1992 that he had written the pledge under the influence of a 104-degree fever. He finally kept his word, announcing his retirement in April 1992 with this explanation: “There is a tremendous air of cynicism in the country, and I do not want to contribute to it.” Phil Duncan, ed., *Congressional Quarterly’s Politics in America, 1994: The 103rd Congress* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1993), 1158–59.
10. Reprinted in Karen S. Johnson-Cartree and Gary A. Copeland, *Negative Political Advertising* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1991), 87.
11. See, for example, the responses of focus group participants in the analysis of the National Focus Groups Report, April 25–29, 1992, prepared by Market Strategies Inc., for the Bush-Quayle reelection campaign. Peter Goldman et al., *The Quest for the Presidency: 1992* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1994), Appendix: “The Campaign Papers,” 666–75.
12. It is ironic that the biggest policy promise (and failure) Bill Clinton made during his first administration—to create comprehensive national health care reform—never came back as an issue against him in the 1996 reelection.
13. Popkin notes that a campaign is effective only if voters see three connections: “(1) between the issue and the office; (2) between the issue and the candidate; and (3) between the issue and the benefits they care about.” Popkin, *The Reasoning Voter*, 100.

14. Guy Millner for Governor campaign spot produced by Gannon McCarthy Mason. Cited in “The Campaign’s Dirty Dozen,” 2739–40.
15. Reprinted in Johnson-Cartree and Copeland, *Negative Political Advertising*, 240. The Breaux campaign came back with its own ad, featuring the number 1,083: “Voice-over: One thousand eighty-three is the number of jobs lost in Louisiana every few working days because of Republican policy that Henson Moore promises to continue” (240–41).
16. Members of Congress until the late 1980s were able to collect honoraria up to the amount of 30 percent of their salary for speaking engagements and appearances.
17. Being very meticulous, one congressional staffer listed all magazine subscriptions received by a member’s office in the quarterly report required by the clerk of the House of Representatives. Listed for all to see, and for the opponent’s campaign to pounce upon, was a subscription to *Playboy* magazine.
18. Terry Cooper, “Negative Image,” *Campaigns and Elections*, September 1991, 18.
19. Brady, *Bad Boy*, 171–72.
20. Mark Shields, “GOP Chastity Belt,” *Washington Post*, January 13, 1999, A23.
21. Insights Corporate Selection Systems, Inc., a company that specializes in background checks, preemployment surveys, and substance abuse issues, offers several online services: lists of bankruptcies, federal, state, and county tax liens, and judgments; bankruptcy filings; real estate transfers and ownership; business and professional licenses; municipal court rulings, felony or misdemeanor cases; business ownership; and other state and federal databases (www.iah.com/insights). CBD Infotech provides financial information on individuals; Auto Track finds current and previous addresses, connecting people to cars and property, bankruptcy records, and professional licenses. See David Samuels, “The White House Shamus,” *New York Times Magazine*, August 2, 1998, 38ff.
22. See Sabato and Simpson, *Dirty Little Secrets*, 174–77, for examples of unwarranted and illegal uses of credit records against candidates and their families.
23. Rebecca Fairley Raney, “For Speculators, a Potential Gold Mine,” *New York Times*, January 2, 1999, A7.
24. Hershman states that he does not accept this kind of work, primarily because of ethical concerns, but also for financial reasons—campaigns just don’t have enough money to pay for investigatory research. “Semi-Private Dicks,” *Capital Style*, September 1998, 13.
25. Even before presidential campaigns, the fight to ratify the Constitution in 1787–88 showed that negative attacks were prevalent. See William Riker, “Why Negative Campaigning Is Rational: The Rhetoric of the Ratification Campaign of 1787–1788” (paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta, August 1989), cited in Darrell M. West, *Air Wars: Television Advertising in Election Campaigns, 1952–1992* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1993), 47 n. 39. See also Johnson-Cartree and Copeland, *Negative Political Advertising*, 4–7; Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Dirty Politics: Deception, Distraction, Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); and Victor Kamber, *Poison Politics: Are Negative Campaigns Destroying Democracy?* (New York: Insight Books, 1997).

26. Edwin Diamond and Stephen Bates, *The Spot: The Rise of Political Advertising on Television*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 379.
27. West, *Air Wars*, 45–51.
28. I owe this observation to my colleague Michael B. Cornfield; see also Larry J. Sabato, *Feeding Frenzy* (New York: Free Press, 1991).
29. Martin Schram, *Running for President 1976: The Carter Campaign* (New York: Stein and Day, 1977), 326–27. On the history of campaign ads in presidential elections, see Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Diamond and Bates, *The Spot*; Darrell M. West, *Air Wars*; and Myron A. Levine, *Presidential Campaigns and Elections: Issues, Images, and Partisanship*, 2d. ed. (Itasca, Ill.: F. E. Peacock Publishers, 1992).
30. The effort was led by James Pinkerton and Don Todd, Director of Opposition Research at the Republican National Committee.
31. John F. Persinos, “Gotcha! Why Opposition Research Is Becoming More Important and How It Is Changing Campaigns,” *Campaigns and Elections*, August 1994, 20. The Perot campaign in 1992 reportedly spent more than \$1 million in opposition research. According to research consultant Kevin Spillane, “that amount doesn’t include the top-secret money he spent on private investigators to look into his own people. We’ll never know the true extent of his oppo research expenditures.”
32. Goldman et al., *The Quest for the Presidency*, 525. The RNC research unit was run by David Tell through 1991. Tell then moved on to the Bush-Quayle campaign in a similar role of opposition research director.
33. *Ibid.*
34. See Lorraine Adams, “The Script of Scandal,” *Washington Post Magazine*, August 9, 1998, 12; and Michael Isikoff, *Uncovering Clinton: A Reporter’s Story* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1999), 32–33.
35. Goldman et al., *The Quest for the Presidency* 526.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*, 528ff.
40. Goldman et al. note that the Bush campaign, desperate to find anything on Clinton, continued searching nearly to the end of the campaign. Whitewater looked like a “dry hole,” and the focus was on sex and the draft. The sleuthing is illustrated in the “Case of the Preacher’s Daughter” (an elusive young black woman who claimed to have had sex with Clinton) and the “Case of the Gun-Shy Marine” (the Marine colonel who allegedly heard Bill Clinton say, while at Oxford, that he had decided to renounce his U.S. citizenship and move to Sweden). When this quest for a “doomsday weapon” ended in failure, the Bush campaign had to return to their more conventional charges against Clinton’s character. *The Quest for the Presidency*, 588–91.
41. I owe this observation to my colleague Don Walter.

42. Samuels, "The White House Shamus," 38.
43. Evan Thomas et al., *Back from the Dead: How Clinton Survived the Republican Revolution* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1997), 110.
44. *Ibid.*, 88.
45. Benjamin Sheffner, "Introducing the Willie Horton of '96: California Murderer of Polly Klaas," *Roll Call*, October 14, 1996.
46. Phil Gale, "Campaigning Turns Downright Dirty with Innuendo and Rumors," *St. Petersburg Times*, November 2, 1989. Not to be outdone, Courter, within days of the Florio attack, aired an ad of "dubious veracity" implying that Florio was linked to organized crime through union contributions. See David Broder, "Deep in Mud in New Jersey," *Washington Post*, October 18, 1989, A31.
47. Michael Oreskes, "'Attack' Politics, Rife in '88 Election, Comes into Its Own for Lesser Stakes," *New York Times*, October 2, 1989, A24.
48. Howard Kurtz, "Dole and Clinton Use Each Other's Words in New Ads," *Washington Post*, October 9, 1996, A20.
49. Thomas Ferraro, "Bush Files FEC Complaint against 'Willie Horton' Creator," United Press International, July 15, 1992.
50. *Ibid.*
51. Paul Freedman, William Wood, and Dale Lawton, "Do's and Don'ts of Negative Ads: What Voters Say," *Campaigns and Elections*, October/November 1999, 25.
52. *Ibid.* "Fair" charges were seen as "very fair" or "somewhat fair" by 70 percent or more of those sampled; "unfair charges" were those seen as "very fair" or "somewhat fair" by less than 37 percent of the respondents.
53. Sabato, *Feeding Frenzy*, 218ff, develops guidelines for press reporting of candidates and politicians that are useful for any political researcher. Sabato argues that certain areas of private life should be shielded from publication and broadcast: nonlegal matters involving a candidate's underage children; current extramarital sexual activity "as long as it is discreet, noncompulsive, and the official's partner(s) are not connected to his or her public responsibilities and are not minors," and all past sexual activities and personal relationships occurring years ago; sexual orientation per se, "unless compulsive behavior or minors are involved"; drug or alcohol abuse when young; and internal family matters and nonfinancial relationships with relatives and nonpolitical friends.
54. Blaine Harden, "A Seething Dole Intensifies Attack," *Washington Post*, October 26, 1996, A1.

Chapter 5: Testing Public Opinion

Epigraphs from Daniel S. Greenberg, "Why Voters Should Just Say No to the Plague of Political Polling," *Chicago Tribune*, October 24, 1990, 19; and Joe Klein, "Where the Anger Went," *Newsweek*, November 4, 1996, 33.

1. Comments of focus-group participants are as recalled by the author, who was sitting in the observation room behind the participants. Maslin recalled, "People were climbing the walls. They were hooting him down, saying things like, 'I mean, I like New Jersey,

- too, but who the hell does he think he's kidding?" Lloyd Grove, "How Experts Fueled a Race with Vitriol," *Washington Post*, January 18, 1989, A1.
2. A second set of focus groups was scheduled because Carville thought the first groups' reaction was anomalous. Correspondence with Harrison Hickman, senior partner of the Democratic polling firm that conducted the Lautenberg campaign's research, May 1, 1998.
 3. Grove, "How Experts Fueled a Race with Vitriol." Zukin was polling director for Rutgers University's Eagleton Institute of Politics.
 4. Paul Bedard, "Living, Dying by the Polls; Numbers Do Lie, Clinton Finds Out," *Washington Times*, April 30, 1993, A1. For a description of poll usage in the early Clinton administration, see Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge: The Clinton Presidency* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), and Bob Woodward, *The Agenda: Inside the Clinton White House* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994).
 5. Transcript, *60 Minutes*, CBS Television, December 13, 1998.
 6. William R. Hamilton, "Political Polling: From the Beginning to the Center," in *Campaigns and Elections: American Style*, ed. James A. Thurber and Candice J. Nelson (Boulder: Westview, 1995), 178.
 7. Mark Mellman et al., "Benchmark Basics and Beyond," *Campaigns and Elections*, May 1991, 22 and 24.
 8. Herbert Asher, *Polling and the Public*, 2d ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1992), 96–97; and correspondence with Kirk Brown, partner, Hickman-Brown Public Opinion Research, Washington, D.C., May 1, 1998.
 9. Asher, *Polling and the Public*, 23.
 10. William R. Hamilton noted that several pollsters, including himself, have developed programs using the content analysis technique on voters' responses to open-ended questions. This procedure is a substitute for early focus groups. While the pollster cannot actually view the interaction among voters, this technique has the advantage of spreading out responses across a larger constituency and is less expensive than conducting separate focus groups. Hamilton, "Political Polling," 173.
 11. Hamilton, "Political Polling," 172–73.
 12. Telephone interview with John Anzalone, president, Anzalone Research, Montgomery, Alabama, March 23, 1998.
 13. Hamilton, "Political Polling," 174.
 14. *Ibid.*; see also Asher, *Polling and the Public*, 98–99. On the application and interpretation of tracking polls, see Bruce W. Blakeman, "Tracking Polls: How to Do Them," and Glen Bolger and Bill McInturff, "Tracking Polls: Avoiding Mistakes," both in *Campaigns and Elections*, August 1995, 25ff; and Donald P. Green and Alan Gerber, "How to Interpret Tracking Polls," *Campaigns and Elections*, August 1998, 23ff.
 15. Interview with Edward A. Goetas III, president, the Tarrance Group, Alexandria, Virginia, July 19, 1995.
 16. Interview with Gary Ferguson, vice president, American Viewpoint, conducted by Marco Althaus, Alexandria, Virginia, December 6, 1994.

17. See Asher, *Polling and the Public*, 96–104, for a useful synopsis of election polls.
18. See Warren Mitofsky, “A Short History of Exit Polls,” in *Polling and Presidential Election Coverage*, ed., Paul J. Lavrakas and Jack H. Holley (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1991), 88ff; and Kathleen A. Frankovic, “Technology and Media Polls,” in *Media Polls in American Politics*, ed., Thomas E. Mann and Gary R. Orren (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1992), 32–54.
19. On CATI technology, see Gary W. Selnow, *High-Tech Campaigns: Computer Technology in Political Communications* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1994), 54–64.
20. Interview with Kirk Brown, partner, Hickman-Brown Public Opinion Research, Washington, D.C., June 13, 1995.
21. Anzalone interview.
22. Hamilton, “Political Polling,” 171–77. See also Brian C. Tringali, “Three Trends to Watch in Political Polling,” *Campaigns and Elections*, August 1995, 20–21.
23. Mellman et al., “Benchmark Basics and Beyond,” 32.
24. Henry A. Brady and Gary R. Orren, “Polling Pitfalls: Sources of Error in Public Opinion Surveys,” in Mann and Orren, *Media Polls*, 58ff.
25. Albert H. Cantril, *The Opinion Connection: Polling, Politics, and the Press* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1991), 91.
26. W. Russell Neuman, *The Paradox of Mass Politics: Knowledge and Opinion in the American Electorate* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986).
27. *Ibid.*, 184. See also Samuel L. Popkin, *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); and John R. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
28. Greenberg, “Why Voters Should Just Say No.”
29. Goetas interview. Goetas noted that recently the refusal rate is actually down.
30. Brown interview.
31. Brady and Orren, “Polling Pitfalls,” 71.
32. Greenberg, “Why Voters Should Just Say No.”
33. Adam Clymer, “Election Day Shows What the Opinion Polls Can’t Do,” *New York Times*, November 12, 1989, sec. 4, 4. See also Michael Traugott and Vincent Price, “Exit Polls in the 1989 Virginia Gubernatorial Race: Where Did They Go Wrong?” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 56 (summer 1992): 245–53; and Asher, *Polling and the Public*, 116. The tendency of polls to overestimate a black candidate’s share of the vote is called the “Bradley effect”: Los Angeles mayor Tom Bradley was predicted by all published polls in California to defeat George Deukmejian for governor of California in 1982 but lost in a very close race. Cited in Brady and Orren, “Polling Pitfalls,” 83.
34. Richard Morin, “On Election-Eve ‘Pollercoaster,’ Voter Is the Switch,” *Washington Post*, October 30, 1992, A16.

35. Tarrance Group promotional literature.
36. Battleground '92 Tracking Poll in Peter Goldman et al., *The Quest for the Presidency: 1992* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1994), 733–35.
37. Raymond E. Wolfinger, “The Promising Adolescence of Surveys,” in *Campaigns and Elections: American Style*, 186–90, quotation from 190.
38. Charles E. Cook, “Political Silly Season Arrives, Bringing Wild New Polling Numbers,” *Roll Call*, September 19, 1996, 8.
39. Barry Orton, “Phoney Polls: The Pollster’s Nemesis,” *Public Opinion* 5 (June/July 1982): 56–60.
40. See David L. Paletz et al., “Polls in the Media: Content, Credibility, and Consequences,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (winter 1980): 495–513; and Brady and Orren, “Polling Pitfalls,” 55–94.
41. Amitai Etzioni, “Teledemocracy: Ross Perot Left the Residue of a Good Idea behind Him: The Electronic Town Meeting,” *The Atlantic* 270, no. 4 (October 1992), 34, citing the reporting of Richard Morin, polling director of the *Washington Post*.
42. Wei Wu and David Weaver, “On-line Democracy or On-line Demagoguery? Public Opinion ‘Polls’ on the Internet,” *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 2, no. 4 (fall 1997): 71–86.
43. Alan J. Rosenblatt, “On-line Polling: Methodological Limitations and Implications for Electronic Democracy,” *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 4 (spring 1999): 30–44, at 39.
44. Remarks by Gordon Black at the “New” Public Opinion, a conference cosponsored by the Democracy On-Line Project of George Washington University, the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania, and the *National Journal*, Washington, D.C., October 18, 1999.
45. Elizabeth Wasserman, “Taking the Voters’ Pulse Online,” *Slate: Net Election*, October 14, 1999 (www.slate.com/netelection/entries/99-10-14_36671.asp).
46. See David L. Morgan, *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1988), 11–14, for a historical perspective. See also Robert K. Merton and Patricia L. Kendall, “The Focused Interview,” *American Journal of Sociology* 51 (1946): 541–57; Robert K. Merton, Marjorie Fiske, and Patricia L. Kendall, *The Focused Interview*, 2d ed. (New York: Free Press, 1990); and Paul Lazarsfeld, *Qualitative Research: Historical and Critical Essays* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1972).
47. Republicans were the first to see the possibilities of focus groups. Republican pollster Fred Steeper remembered hooking focus-group participants to dial meters during the 1976 presidential debates between Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford. President Ford made his infamous gaffe, asserting that Poland and Eastern Europe were not under Soviet domination. This clear misstatement did not even register with the dial group participants monitored by Steeper. President Ford was not hurt in public opinion polls until the media picked up on his error and reported it widely. Dial groups, or electronic focus groups, are variants of the standard focus group and are described below. Elizabeth Kolbert, “Test-Marketing a President,” *New York Times Magazine*, August 30, 1992.

48. Ibid.
49. Richard A. Krueger, *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, 2d ed. (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1994), 117ff.
50. Telephone interview with Brian Tringali, senior vice president, the Tarrance Group, Arlington, Virginia, June 12, 1995.
51. Brown interview.
52. Tringali interview.
53. Brown interview.
54. Paul Taylor and David S. Broder, "Evolution of the TV Era's Nastiest Presidential Race: Bush Team Test-Marketed Negative Themes," *Washington Post*, October 28, 1988, A1. See also Jack W. Germond and Jules Witcover, *Whose Broad Stripes and Bright Stars?* (New York: Warner Books, 1989), 154–65.
55. Kolbert, "Test-Marketing a President."
56. Christine M. Black and Thomas Oliphant, *All by Myself: The Unmaking of a Presidential Campaign* (Chester, Conn.: Globe Pequot Press, 1989), 140.
57. Taylor and Broder, "Evolution of the TV Era's Nastiest Presidential Race."
58. Ibid. The Paramus focus group has been widely noted, in Roger Simon, *Road Show: In America Anyone Can Become President, It's One of the Risks We Take* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1990), 214–17; Peter Goldman et al., *The Quest for the Presidency: 1988* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 299–303; and Myron Levine, *Presidential Campaigns and Elections: Issues, Images, and Partisanship* (Itasca, Ill.: Peacock Publishers, 1995), 200–3.
59. Dan Balz, "GOP 'Contract' Pledges 10 Tough Acts to Follow," *Washington Post*, November 20, 1994, A1.
60. Ibid.
61. Goetz interview. Jacob Weisberg, "The Conformist: Republican Pollster Frank Luntz," *New York Magazine*, January 9, 1995, 16. Luntz was formally reprimanded by the American Association for Public Opinion Research in 1997 for refusing to disclose the wording of poll questions and other details of his surveys conducted for the 1994 "Contract with America." Luntz stated that his surveys showed that at least 60 percent of the public favored each of the elements in the Republican contract, but he refused to provide basic information about the survey results. The AAPOR, the nation's leading professional polling association, holds that researchers must disclose, or make available for public disclosure, the wording of questions and other methodological details. Luntz, not a member of the AAPOR, held that he was only protecting the confidentiality of his client. *Campaign Insider*, April 30, 1997, 1.
62. Cantril, *The Opinion Connection*, 141.
63. Quoted in Howard Kurtz, "Campaign '96—When Candidate Turns Negative, Voters May Too," *Washington Post*, October 16, 1996, A13. Kirk Brown observes that focus groups can make negative ads even more effective by pointing out their objections to ominous music, unflattering pictures of opponents, or undocumented claims.

- Correspondence with Kirk Brown, May 1, 1998.
64. Telephone interview with Q. Whitfield Ayres, president, Ayres and Associates, Roswell, Georgia, March 23, 1998.
 65. Michael X. Delli Carpini and Bruce Williams, "The Method Is the Message," *Research in Micropolitics* 4 (1994): 57–85.
 66. Cantril, *The Opinion Connection*, 140.
 67. Roger Simon, "The Killer and the Candidate: How Willie Horton and George Bush Rewrote the Rules on Political Advertising," *Regards Magazine*, October 1990, 80ff.
 68. Mike Murphy, "How to Win," *Weekly Standard*, October 21, 1998, 18.
 69. Richard Maullin and Christine Quirk, "Audience Response Systems," *Campaigns and Elections*, August 1995, 27.
 70. Kolbert, "Test-Marketing a President."
 71. Ibid.
 72. Bob Woodward, *The Choice* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 158–59.
 73. David Maraniss, "Image-Makers Produced Virtual Reality Convention," *Washington Post*, August 17, 1996, A1.
 74. Cantril, *The Opinion Connection*, 141–42.
 75. Richard Stengel and Eric Poley, "Masters of the Message: Inside the High-Tech Machine That Set Clinton and Dole Polls Apart," *Time*, November 18, 1996, 76ff.
 76. Ibid.
 77. Peggy Noonan, *What I Saw at the Reagan Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1990), 249, cited in John F. Geer, *From Tea Leaves to Opinion Polls: A Theory of Democratic Leadership* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 130.
 78. Ayres interview.
 79. Cantril, *The Opinion Connection*, 183.

Chapter 6: The Media, Old and New

Carrick epigraph from David S. Broder, "Forecast for Clinton Shows GOP Hill in His Future," *Washington Post*, November 3, 1996, A1; Butler epigraph from Howard Kurtz, "The Right, Casting Its Net," *Washington Post*, June 3, 1995, H1.

1. See Doris Graber, *Mass Media and American Politics* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1996); Stephen Ansolabehere, Roy Behr, and Shanto Iyengar, *The Media Game: American Politics in the Television Age* (New York: MacMillan, 1993); Judith S. Trent and Robert V. Friedenberg, *Political Campaign Communications: Principles and Practices* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1995); Richard Joslyn, *Mass Media and Elections* (New York: Random House, 1984); Montague Kern, *30-Second Politics: Political Advertising in the Eighties* (New York: Praeger, 1989); Dean Alger, *The Media and Politics* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1989); F. Christopher Arterton, *Media Politics: The News Strategies of Presidential Campaigns* (Toronto: Lexington Books,

- 1984); and Jeffrey Abramson, F. Christopher Arterton, and Gary Orren, *The Electronic Commonwealth* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).
2. Altogether, Steve Forbes spent \$24 million on early primary television buys, and Bob Dole spent \$6 million. Darrell M. West, *Air Wars: Television Advertising in Election Campaigns, 1952–1996*, 2d ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1997), 29. West points out that Forbes spent two-thirds (\$24 million) of his \$36 million primary budget on television advertising, while Dole spent just twenty percent (\$6 million) of his \$33 million primary budget on television.
 3. Broder, “Forecast for Clinton Shows GOP Hill in His Future.” On the purchase of television commercials during the 1996 primary season and general election, see West, *Air Wars*, 28–36. On presidential contests and television commercials in general, see Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Edwin Diamond and Stephen Bates, *The Spot: The Rise of Political Advertising on Television*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996); and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Dirty Politics: Deception, Distraction, and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
 4. Darrell M. West observes that 1996 “may have been the first presidential election in this century to serve as a referendum on a sitting Speaker of the House of Representatives.” West, *Air Wars*, 36.
 5. Howard Kurtz, “Early Offensive by Democrats Blunted Effect of Dole Ad Blitz,” *Washington Post*, October 25, 1996, A19. Allyson-Anne Smyth, Campaign Media Analysis Group, notes that CMAG, which tracks political commercials, certainly knew the extent and range of the Clinton campaign’s outside-the-beltway advertising. Personal communication, April 15, 1998.
 6. James Bennet, “Liberal Use of ‘Extremist’ Is the Winning Strategy,” *New York Times*, November 7, 1996, B1.
 7. *Ibid.* On the 1996 presidential campaign and the advertising war, see Evan Thomas et al., *Back from the Dead: How Clinton Survived the Republican Revolution* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1997); Roger Simon, *Showtime: The American Political Circus and the Race for the White House* (New York: Times Books, 1998); Dick Morris, *Behind the Oval Office: Winning the Presidency in the Nineties* (New York: Random House, 1997); Bob Woodward, *The Choice* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996); Stephen J. Wayne, *The Road to the White House, 1996*, postelection edition (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 241–83; and West, *Air Wars*.
 8. James Bennet, “Another Tally in ’96 Race: Two Months of TV Ads,” *New York Times*, November 13, 1996, D20. This survey covered approximately 80 percent of the television market in the United States but did not include smaller but still important markets such as Macon, Georgia, and Lafayette, Louisiana. Altogether, there are 216 media markets in the United States.
 9. *Ibid.*
 10. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, “Campaign ’96 Gets Lower Grades from Voters,” Andrew Kohut, dir., 1998, 2–3.
 11. Darrell M. West, “How Issue Ads Have Reshaped American Politics,” Conference on Political Advertising in Election Campaigns, American University, Washington, D.C.,

- April 17, 1998, 5; Darrell M. West and Burdett Loomis, *The Sound of Money: How Political Interests Get What They Want* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998).
12. Deborah Beck et al., "Issue Advocacy Advertising during the 1996 Campaign," University of Pennsylvania, Annenberg Public Policy Center, Report No. 16, September 16, 1997. This study looked at the content of television advertising in the 1996 campaigns.
 13. Broder, "Forecast for Clinton Shows GOP Hill in His Future," A1.
 14. Beck et al., "Issue Advocacy Advertising during the 1996 Campaign," 10–12. The Democratic consultants working for the AFL-CIO were David Axelrod; Greer, Margolis, Mitchell, and Burns; Shorr and Associates; and Media Strategies and Research.
 15. *Ibid.*, 4.
 16. Lou Cannon, "Democrats Keep House Seat in California Special Election," *Washington Post*, March 11, 1998, A2. On outsider money in the 1998 elections, see David B. Magleby and Marianne Holt, eds., "Outside Money: Soft Money and Issue Ads in Competitive 1998 Congressional Elections," A report of a grant funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, 1999.
 17. Martin Hamburger, "Political Advertising, Issue Advocacy, and Our Grim Future," Conference on Political Advertising in Election Campaigns, American University, Washington, D.C., April 17, 1998. Hamburger noted that the Santa Barbara television market was one of the cheapest in California, making television buying all the more tempting.
 18. The term limit organizations have been characterized as "political rogue elephants," spending approximately \$10 million in 1998 to defeat anti-term limit candidates. They went after twelve-term Republican veteran William F. Goodling (Pennsylvania) with this ad:

[Music: "Spirit of '76"]

Voice-over: Right here a new nation was forged, a monarchy was overthrown. But today, twenty-four-year incumbent Bill Goodling acts like the kings of old. He is removed from the people as was the royalty of Europe. Goodling's career politician record is a living billboard for the need for congressional term limits.

Thomas B. Edsall, "Coming to Term Limits," *Washington Post*, May 12, 1998, A4.
 19. Hamburger, "Political Advertising, Issue Advocacy, and Our Grim Future," citing Capps campaign manager Cathy Duvall.
 20. Guy Gugliotta, "Special Interest Going Whole Hog In an Illinois Race," *Washington Post*, April 22, 1998, A1.
 21. Guy Gugliotta, "Interest Groups Spend Freely in District Races," *Washington Post*, February 27, 1998, A1.
 22. Two years earlier, Mark Baker, in his first race against Evans, did not know that issue ads were being prepared to help him. For Baker, the outside television ads in the last days of the election were "like manna from heaven." Evans estimated that \$160,000 worth of pro-Baker ads flooded the airwaves during the last few days of the 1996 cam-

- paign. Allen Wiese, general sales manager of KWQC-TV, the leading television station in the district, confirmed that he was bombarded by outside groups thrusting checks at him to get on the air. "It was beyond our wildest dreams," said Wiese. Cited in Gugliotta, "Interest Groups Spend Freely in District Races."
23. Research by Campaign Media Analysis Group, "Iowa CD-4, 1996: Congressman Greg Ganske vs. Connie McBurney," unpublished report.
 24. Ganske won reelection, gaining 133,419 votes (52 percent) to McBurney's 119,790 votes (47 percent). Ganske's campaign outspent McBurney's by \$2,334,251 to \$853,104.
 25. Allison Mitchell, "1998 Candidates Advertise Early and Expensively," *New York Times*, April 4, 1998, A1.
 26. Spending data from "D'Amato for Senate Ads," in *National Journal's* website Cloakroom (www.cloakroom.com/members/adspotlight).
 27. James Bennet, "Another Tally in '96 Race: Two Months of TV Ads," *New York Times*, November 13, 1996, D20.
 28. Interview with Cathie Herrick, media director, Squier, Knapp, Dunn Communications, Washington, D.C., April 15, 1998.
 29. *National Journal* website, Cloakroom (www.cloakroom.com/members/spotlight/stats).
 30. For an earlier example, see Randall Rothenberg, "The Anatomy of a Political Ad: Negative Message with Common Themes," *New York Times*, November 1, 1990, an analysis of a thirty-second television commercial prepared by Democratic media firm Fenn and King for Rhode Island congressional candidate John F. Reed during the 1990 campaign.
 31. On two of the best political voice-over artists, Lary Lewman and Mike Pengra, see John Harwood, "Lines Down Cold, These Men of Timbre Will Sell Anybody," *Wall Street Journal*, May 20, 1998, A1. Lewman, who has done hundreds of voice-overs for candidates in a two-decade career, admits, "I've never met a politician in my life."
 32. Howard Kurtz "Campaign '96: When Candidates Turn Negative, Voters May Too," *Washington Post*, October 16, 1996, A13.
 33. Richard A. Lau and Lee Sigelman, "The Effectiveness of Negative Political Advertising: A Literature Review," Conference on Political Advertising in Election Campaigns, American University, Washington, D.C., April 17, 1998.
 34. In the 1997 rerelease of *Star Wars*, several characters were added through digital tricks. The movie *Wag the Dog* featured a fake war in Albania that was shot in Hollywood studios. Forrest Gump met President Kennedy, and in recent television commercials, Fred Astaire danced with a vacuum cleaner and John Wayne barked orders to recruits. As a part of its fiftieth anniversary celebration in May 1998, CBS showed off its digital graphics capability in six television shows. Fran Fine, the "Nanny," visits Lucy Ricardo (*I Love Lucy*, vintage 1960) in a dream sequence; a digital Jack Benny shows up on *Cosby*; Dick Van Dyke makes a guest appearance on his own show, *Diagnosis Murder*, as the character Rob Petrie, whom Van Dyke had made famous thirty-five years ago. All this was done using Inferno digital compositing software, the SGI platform, and green-screen techniques. Patricia Brennan, "CBS Puts the Old in with the New," *Washington Post TV Week*, (May 10–16, 1998), 9.

35. Lynda Lee Kaid, director of the Political Communications Center, quoted in Aaron Epstein, "Technology Increasingly Mixes up Political Candidates' Images, Reality," *Austin (Texas) American-Statesman*, October 27, 1996, A17.
36. Simon, *Showtime*, 201. Emphasis in the original.
37. Barbara G. Salmore and Stephen A. Salmore, *Candidates, Parties, and Campaigns: Electoral Politics in America*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Books, 1989).
38. David Maraniss, "Image-Makers Produced Virtual Reality Convention," *Washington Post*, August 17, 1996, A1.
39. Howard Kurtz, "Television with a Partisan View," *Washington Post*, August 14, 1996, A26.
40. Maraniss, "Image-Makers Produced Virtual Reality Convention," A16.
41. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, "Campaign '96 Gets Lower Grades from Voters," 3.
42. Todd S. Purdum, "Race for California Governor Is not Necessarily the News," *New York Times*, May 6, 1998, A1.
43. Carla Marinucci, "Old-Fashioned TV Debate Interrupts Political Ad War," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 11, 1998.
44. To counter criticism of disinterest in the gubernatorial primary, several Bay Area media outlets have defended their coverage and have complained about the candidates' inaccessibility. Marinucci, "Old-Fashioned TV Debate Interrupts Political Ad War."
45. Larry Sabato, *Feeding Frenzy* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 1.
46. Robert M. Entman, *Democracy without Citizens* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 3. Another advocate of public journalism is Jay Rosen, *Getting the Connections Right* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1996).
47. James Fallows, *Breaking the News: How the Media Undermine American Democracy* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1996), 7.
48. Spencer S. Hsu, "TV Stations Curtail Discount Ads for Virginia Campaign," *Washington Post*, October 14, 1997, A1.
49. Media Studies Center, "Survey Profiles Voters' Use of Media," December 2, 1996 (www.mediastudies.org/new.html).
50. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, "Campaign '96 Gets Lower Grades from Voters," 21, and "One-in-Ten Voters Online for Campaign '96," December 16, 1996 (www.people-press.org).
51. *National Journal* Hotline website (www.cloakroom.com). Several useful websites that serve as clearinghouses for parties and elections include: Political Resources Directory (www.politicalresources.com); Stardot Consulting's Jefferson Project (www.voxpop.org); *New York Times* (www.nytimes.com/politics); *Los Angeles Times* (www.latimes.com); Harvard University, Kennedy School of Government, On-Line Political Information Network (ksgwww.harvard.edu). Despite its reputation as a source for political gossip and unsubstantiated leaks, the Drudge Report is also a useful clearinghouse for scores of political columnists and other sources (www.drudgereport.com). Also useful is GSPM Tech

- News, "On-Line Guide for Political Managers," ed. Richard E. Behn, Graduate School of Political Management, George Washington University, occasional publication.
52. Policy.com (www.policy.com); the site is owned by A2S2 Digital Projects. Also useful is Congressional Quarterly's *Governing* magazine website, in its "Wonk Heaven Index" (www.governing.com/politics.htm), and the Center for Governmental Studies site, The Democracy Network (www.democracynet.org).
 53. Website addresses: TownHall (www.townhall.com); ConservativeNet (www.conservativenet.com); Electronic Policy Network (epn.org); and TurnLeft (www.turnleft.com).
 54. Website address: www.gop.gov. J. C. Watts, GOP Conference chairman, plans to have cameras installed in each committee room and webcast all of the panel's proceedings live. Juliet Eilpern, "GOP's New Entry in the Internet Wars," *Washington Post*, March 20, 2000, A15.
 55. Website addresses: Green Party (www.greens.org); Reform Party (www.reformparty.org); Democratic Socialists of America (www.dsusa.org); U.S. Taxpayers Party (www.ustaxpayers.org); the John Birch Society (www.jbs.org); the Feminist Majority (www.feminist.org); and Men's Issues Page (www.vix.com/pub/men).
 56. Website addresses: Project Vote Smart (www.vote-smart.org); VoteNet (www.votenet.com); Christian Coalition (www.cc.org); National Rifle Association (www.nra.com); and the League of Conservation Voters (www.lcv.org).
 57. The Skeleton Closet (www.realchange.org). This website was developed by a self-described independent, nonpartisan political group, Real People for Real Change. The organization, begun in Portland, Oregon, in 1992, calls itself a group of friends "who were fed up with politics—especially media coverage of politics—and decided to do something besides bitch and drink, like everybody else does."
 58. National Mail Voter Registration Form is found at the Federal Election Commission website (www.fec.gov/votregis/vr.htm); the Al Checchi for Governor of California, 1998 website is found at www.alchecchi.com.
 59. On early political use of Internet, see Michael Cornfield and F. Christopher Arterton, "Is This for Real? Democratic Politics and the Internet," in *The Internet as Paradigm* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Information Studies, 1997).
 60. On the use of the Internet in the Kerry campaign, see Wayne Rash Jr., *Politics on the Nets: Wiring the Political Process* (New York: W. H. Freeman, 1997). The Jim Gilmore for Governor website address is www.gilmorennet.com.
 61. The Forbes presidential website is www.forbes2000.com. See Richard L. Berke, "Forbes Declares Candidacy on Internet and the Stump," *New York Times*, March 17, 1999, A19.
 62. A listing of local campaign websites, updated monthly, is found on the Political Resources Directory website (www.politicalresources.com/online/local-links.htm).
 63. Mike Abrams, "Web Attacks over Beach Councilwoman Strayhorn's Travel Raises Issues of Digital Debate in Election," *Virginia-Pilot*, April 16, 1998 (www.pilotonline.com/news/nw0416web.html).

64. Terry M. Neal, "Satirical Web Site Poses Political Test," *Washington Post*, November 29, 1999, A2.
65. Joel Deane, "Study: Negative Political Banners Work," *ZDNet News*, February 4, 1999 ([wsiwig://96http://www.zdnet.com/stories/news/0,4586,2200974,00.html](http://www.zdnet.com/stories/news/0,4586,2200974,00.html)).
66. Looking ahead to the 2000 presidential campaign, Steve Forbes created a Spanish-language version of his political action committee webpage, Americans for Hope, Growth, and Opportunity. The site is *Americanos por la Esperanza, el Crecimiento, y la Oportunidad*, located at www.spanish.ahgo.org/home.html.
67. A lawsuit was filed by the Voting Integrity Project contending that the Arizona election violated the 1965 Voting Rights Act. One of the principal points of the lawsuit was that Internet voting increased the electoral access of wealthy computer owners, thus diluting the voting power of minorities and the poor. In Arizona, while non-Hispanics made up 68 percent of the state's population in 1998, they make up 83 percent of all home adult Internet users. Ben White, "Online Balloting: A Question of Fairness," *Washington Post*, March 19, 2000, A9.
68. See, for example, Tracy Westen, "2004: A Digital Election Scenario," and J. Abramson, "Campaign 2000: A Scenario," in *Elections in Cyberspace*, ed. Anthony Corrado and Charles M. Firestone (New York: W. H. Freeman, 1997).
69. Rebecca Fairley Raney, "In On-Line Debate, Candidates Focus on Issues without Spin," *New York Times*, March 2, 1998. Minnesota E-Democracy is found at www.e-democracy.org. The Democratic primary in 1998 was loaded with famous Minnesota political names. Hubert H. Humphrey III, Ted Mondale, and Mike Freeman, dubbed "the Three Sons," had plenty of advance name recognition.

Chapter 7: Targeting Voters

Coe epigraph from R. H. Melton, "Record \$54 Million in Giving Declared in Early Presidential Race," *Washington Post*, July 24, 1995, A7; Hansbrough epigraph from "Dial N for Negative: Using Phones to Make Your Attacks Heard but Not Seen," *Campaigns and Elections*, April 1992, 51.

1. On campaign targeting, see Daniel M. Shea, *Campaign Craft: The Strategies, Tactics, and Art of Political Campaign Management* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1996), chs. 4 and 5.
2. Richard Schlackman and Jamie "Buster" Douglas, "Attack Mail: The Silent Killer," *Campaigns and Elections*, July 1995, 25.
3. David Himes, "Strategy and Tactics for Campaign Fund-Raising," in *Campaigns and Elections: American Style*, ed., James A. Thurber and Candice J. Nelson (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1995), 74.
4. Robert Odell, "Raising Big Bucks," *Campaigns and Elections*, May 1996, 23. Odell is president of Odell, Simms, & Associates, a Republican fund-raising firm.
5. Scott Huch, principal of the Delta Group, a Republican fund-raising and direct mail firm, notes that in 1996 house file response was 8 to 14 percent since 1994 for his clients. Odell, "Raising Big Bucks," *Campaigns and Elections*, May 1996, 24.
6. Richard Norman, president of Richard Norman Company, was the principal fundraiser for the Oliver North campaign, Odell, "Raising Big Bucks," 26.

7. American List Counsel promotional material.
8. Richard Harwood, "All-Pro Politics," *Washington Post*, March 23, 1996, A15.
9. American List Counsel catalogue, "The Only Mailing List Catalog You Need," 1996.
10. Ad placed by Response Unlimited and the Rich List Company of Leslie Mandel Enterprises, *Campaigns and Elections*, January 1992, 30–31.
11. Jonathan Robbin, "Geodemographics: The New Magic," *Campaigns and Elections*, spring 1980, 25–45.
12. For an analysis of the forty-neighborhood target system, see Michael J. Weiss, *The Clustering of America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989).
13. Shea, *Campaign Craft*, 62. See also Mark Atlas, "Gambling with Elections," in *Campaigns and Elections: A Reader in Modern American Politics*, ed. Larry J. Sabato (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1989); and Weiss, *The Clustering of America*, 217–22.
14. Aristotle Publishing can provide clients with a dead voter file, used to purge voter files and records.
15. John A. Phillips, "Politics and the Internet," remarks at the 31st World Congress, International Association of Political Consultants, Milan, Italy, November 11, 1999.
16. Aristotle Publishing promotional materials (products.aristotle.org.voterlst.htm). Aristotle notes that it has voter information on all voters except those in North Dakota. On use of political databases, see Gary W. Selnow, *High-Tech Campaigns: Computer Technology in Political Communication* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1994), ch. 5.
17. Aristotle Publishing promotional materials.
18. Bill Daly, "Accessing Voter Files with the Web," *Campaigns and Elections*, December/January, 1997/1998, 48–49.
19. Odell, "Raising Big Bucks," 26.
20. Hal Malchow, "The Targeting Revolution in Political Direct Contact," *Campaigns and Elections*, June 1997, 36.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Frank J. Sorauf, *Money in American Elections* (Itasca, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1988), 26, citing the research of Herbert Alexander, *Money in Politics* (Washington: Public Affairs, 1972), 32–33.
23. Schlackman and Douglas, "Attack Mail," 25.
24. Robert V. Friedenberg, *Communication Consultants in Political Campaigns* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998), 104, citing Richard Viguerie, *The New Right: We're Ready to Lead* (Falls Church, Va.: The Viguerie Company, 1980), 26.
25. Herbert E. Alexander, *Financing Politics: Money, Elections, and Political Reform*, 4th ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1992), 67–68.
26. On the mechanisms of direct mail, see Larry J. Sabato, "How Direct Mail Works," in *Campaigns and Elections: A Reader in Modern American Politics*, ed. Larry J. Sabato (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1989).

27. "Direct Mail," *Campaigns and Elections*, May 1997, 22.
28. All underlining in these examples is in the originals. The postscript reinforces the message: "Yes, the enclosed dollar bill is very real. My colleagues here at the NRCC doubted the wisdom of sending cash in the mail to prove to you the extremely critical points I've outlined above. But I have every faith you won't 'take the money and run'—but will prove me right, that I can indeed count on you to do your part when we need you most, by sending this dollar back with the most generous donation you can today."
29. Republican Presidential Legion of Merit (National Republican Senatorial Committee) promotional literature.
30. Republican Presidential Task Force (National Republican Senatorial Committee) promotional literature.
31. Republican Presidential Roundtable (National Republican Senatorial Committee) promotional literature.
32. National Republican Senatorial Committee, "United States Senate Performance Review," solicitation sent out by former vice president Dan Quayle.
33. R. Kenneth Godwin, *One Billion Dollars of Influence* (Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House Publishers, 1988), 116.
34. Schlackman and Douglas, "Attack Mail," 25.
35. Peter Applebome, "Carolina Race Is Winning the Wallets of America," *New York Times*, October 13, 1990, 8.
36. Dwight Morris, "Staving off Gantt," *PoliticsNow*, September 23, 1996 (pn3.politics-now/money96/092396.htm).
37. The Robb reelection campaign was one of my clients in 1993 and 1994.
38. John F. Persinos, "Ollie, Inc.: How Oliver North Raised over \$20 Million in a Losing U.S. Senate Race," *Campaigns and Elections*, June 1995, 30. The direct mail vendors were Eberle Associates, Right Concepts, American Target Advertising, Direct Mail Communications, Squire and Hartfield, and Richard Norman Co., all located in the northern Virginia suburbs of Washington.
39. Persinos, "Ollie, Inc.," 31–32. Emphasis in the original.
40. Odell, "Raising Big Bucks," 27.
41. Persinos, "Ollie, Inc.," 32. On the costs associated with fund-raising and why it is a particularly expensive means of gathering money, see Sabato, *The Rise of Political Consultants*; Sabato, "How Direct Mail Works"; and Richard Armstrong, *The Next Hurray: The Communications Revolution in American Politics* (New York: William Morrow, 1988).
42. Peter Baker, "North Magnetic When It Comes to Fund-Raising," *Washington Post*, August 2, 1995, D1.
43. Richard Schlackman and Jamie "Buster" Douglas, "Caught in the Gingrich Glue," *Campaigns and Elections*, May 1997, 24–25. Pascrell defeated Martini in the 1996 general election, and the "Strings Attached" direct mail piece won a 1997 Pollie award, given by the American Association of Political Consultants.

44. Eva Pusateri, "Shock Mailers That Jolt Your Audience," *Campaigns and Elections*, May 1995, 41.
45. Paul S. Herrnson, *Congressional Elections: Campaigning at Home and in Washington*, 2d ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1998), 190.
46. Katherine B. Cook, "Mr. Smith Stays in Washington," *Campaigns and Elections*, May 1997, 23–24.
47. The Federal Trade Commission adopted the Telemarketing Sales Rule, which went into effect at the beginning of 1996, setting restrictions on when telemarketing can take place—9:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M.—and requiring companies to stop calling customers who indicate they want to be left alone. The rule also details what telemarketers must disclose during a call, such as their identity and the nature of goods or services being offered.
48. Walter Clinton, "Telephone Campaigning: The Interactive Medium," *Campaigns and Elections*, October/November 1995, 33.
49. Vicki Ellinger, "Telephone Fund-Raising as Political Activism," *Campaigns and Elections*, July 1994.
50. On push-polling, see Larry J. Sabato and Glenn R. Simpson, *Dirty Little Secrets* (New York: Times Books, 1996), ch. 9, entitled "Reach Out and Slime Someone: The Age of Telephone Sleaze."
51. Gary Nordlinger in "Political Consultants," *CQ Researcher* 6, no. 37 (October 4, 1996): 883.
52. Sabato and Simpson, in *Dirty Little Secrets*, write that of the forty-five candidates running for Congress in 1994 they interviewed, thirty-four claimed that push-polling was used against them (258).
53. John Harwood and Daniel Pearl, "In Waning Campaign Hours, Candidates Turn to Phone 'Push-Polling' to Step up the Attack," *Wall Street Journal*, November 9, 1994, A24.
54. *Ibid.*
55. Ann Devroy, "Push Becomes Shove in Political Polling with Negative Phone-Bank Tactics," *Washington Post*, February 13, 1996, A9.
56. *Ibid.*
57. Glenn R. Simpson, "Dole Campaign Has Paid Over \$1 Million to Firm That Uses Telemarketing to Criticize Opponents," *Wall Street Journal*, March 12, 1996, A20.
58. *Ibid.*
59. Thomas B. Edsall, "Calls from Phone Banks Echo Dole's Negative Television Ads," *Washington Post*, February 20, 1996, A4. The Utah telemarketing firm Western Wats Center, hired by the Dole campaign, declared that "no phone calls" had been made "that advocate or disparage a particular presidential candidate." The next day, according to Edsall, the managing partner of Western Wats Center, Ed Ledek, released a statement saying: "a very small, representative sample of roughly 300–400 voters [was] asked a variety of questions. . . . These questions sometimes present new information that voters may not have heard before in order to gauge their reaction."

60. Ibid.
61. However, some polling firms had been accused of conducting push-polling operations, including the Democratic polling firms of Lauer, Lalley and Associates and Cooper and Secrest. Sabato and Simpson, *Dirty Little Secrets*, 262 and 265–66.
62. Glen Bolger and Bill McInturff, “‘Push Polling’ Stinks,” *Campaigns and Elections*, August 1996, 70.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
65. Letter from Political Consultants to the American Association of Political Consultants, summarized in Bolger and McInturff.
66. Frank J. Murray, “Group to Condemn ‘Push Poll’ Methods: Settlement Targets Unethical Moves,” *Washington Times*, June 24, 1996, A7.
67. J. Friedly, “Fund-Raisers Predict Surge in Internet Spending,” *The Hill*, March 18, 1998, 1.
68. Of ten various uses of a website by a campaign, fund-raising came in ninth in importance in a poll of 1998 state, local, and federal campaigns. Ron Faucheux, “How Campaigns Are Using the Internet,” *Campaigns and Elections*, September, 1998.
69. Don Van Natta Jr., “McCain Gets Big Payoff on Web Site,” *New York Times*, February 4, 2000, A24.
70. John A. Phillips, “Politics and the Internet,” remarks at the 31st World Congress of the International Association of Political Consultants, Milan, Italy, November 11, 1999.

Chapter 8: The Money Chase

Bradley epigraph from Leslie Wayne, “Campaign Finance: Loopholes Allow Presidential Race to Set a Record,” *New York Times*, September 8, 1996, 1; Fowler epigraph from Ruth Marcus and Charles R. Babcock, “The System Cracks under the Weight of Case,” *Washington Post*, February 9, 1997, A1, and 20.

1. Sara Fritz and Dwight Morris, *Handbook of Campaign Spending: Money in the 1990 Congressional Races* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1990).
2. Larry Makinson, *The Big Picture: Money Follows Power Shift on Capitol Hill* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Responsive Politics, November 25, 1997), 6 (www.crp.org/crpdocs/bigpicture/bpoverview.htm). This provides an exceptionally detailed analysis of 1996 campaign finances at the federal level.
3. Deborah Beck et al., *Issue Advocacy Advertising during the 1996 Campaign: A Catalog* (Philadelphia: Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania, Report No. 16, 1997), 3.
4. Center for Responsive Politics, *The Big Picture: The Money behind the 1998 Elections* (www.opensecrets.org/pubs/bigpicture2000/overview/index.ihtml).
5. Makinson, *The Big Picture*, for the \$2.2 billion estimate; for the \$2.7 billion estimate, Dan Froomkin, “Campaign Finance,” *Washington Post* website, September 15, 1997 (www.washingtonpost.com/camfin/intro.htm).

6. Ruth Marcus, "Common Cause Seeks Independent Counsel Probe of Parties' Spending," *Washington Post*, October 10, 1996, A23.
7. Jeanne Cummings, "McCain Has Raised Almost \$20 Million," *Wall Street Journal*, December 30, 1999, A14.
8. Susan B. Glasser, "Loopholes Lift Candidates' Spending Caps," *Washington Post*, December 2, 1999, A1.
9. Gary E. Moncrief, "Candidate Spending in State Legislative Races," in *Campaign Finance in State Legislative Elections*, ed., Joel A. Thompson and Gary E. Moncrief (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1998), 56.
10. Makinson, *The Big Picture*.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Rachel Van Dongen and Norah M. O'Connell, "New Crop of Millionaires Seeks Senate," *Roll Call*, April 13, 1998, 7. The wealthiest candidates running for the U.S. Senate were John Edwards (\$39 million estimated net worth), Democrat, North Carolina; Darrell Issa (\$158 to \$250 million), Republican, who lost a primary bid in California, spending at least \$10 million of personal money; Charlie Owen (\$97 million), Democrat, Kentucky; Michael Coles (\$51 million), Democrat, Georgia; and Peter Fitzgerald (\$51 million), Republican, Illinois.
15. The 1994 Kohl reelection campaign was one of my clients. On Corzine, Mike Allen, "Multimillionaire Beats Ex-Governor for Senate Nod," *Washington Post*, June 7, 2000, A6.
16. *Congressional Quarterly's Politics in America*, Phil Duncan, ed. (Washington: CQ Press, 1993), 618.
17. On this point, see Bradley A. Smith, "Faulty Assumptions and Undemocratic Consequences of Campaign Finance Reform," *Yale Law Journal* 105 (January 1996): 1049–91.
18. Makinson, *The Big Picture*, 6. Political scientists Alan I. Abramowitz and Jeffrey A. Segal concluded that the main reason incumbent senators lose is because they attract strong challengers "who are able to spend large sums of money on their campaigns." Abramowitz and Segal, *Senate Elections* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 115. See also Alan I. Abramowitz, "Incumbency, Campaign Spending, and the Decline of Competition in U.S. House Elections," *Journal of Politics* 53 (1991): 48–49; and Jonathan S. Krasno, *Challengers, Competition, and Reelection: Comparing Senate and House Elections* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).
19. Center for Responsive Politics, *The Big Picture*.
20. Center for Responsive Politics, "One Week to Go: No Contest in Nearly Two-Thirds of 1998 House Races," news release, October 26, 1998 (www.crp.org/press-releases/oct26_98.htm).
21. Analysis of all 1994 races, House and Senate incumbents and challengers, in selected states: Alabama, California, Florida, Illinois, New York, Oregon, and Pennsylvania.

22. Dwight Morris, "Financial Iceberg Not Sinking Moseley-Braun's Campaign," *Washington Post* website, June 8, 1998 (www.washingtonpost.com/campaigns/money/money.htm).
23. Moseley-Braun's 1992 campaign was under full audit by the FEC (racking up \$558,174 in bills for three accountants); further, there have been several lawsuits and complaints by both the campaign and its consultants, vendors, and landlords. Cited in Morris, "Financial Iceberg Not Sinking Moseley-Braun's Campaign."
24. Cathleen Decker, "Checchi Says Voter Optimism Doomed His Bid for Governor," *Los Angeles Times*, June 11, 1998.
25. Brooks Jackson, *Honest Graft: Big Money and the American Political Process* (New York: Knopf, 1988), 58.
26. Herbert E. Alexander, *Financing Politics: Money, Elections, and Political Reform*, 4th ed. (Washington: CQ Press, 1992), 20. For early history of campaign finance reform, see Frank J. Sorauf, *Money in American Elections* (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1988); Alexander Heard, *The Cost of Democracy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960); Frank J. Sorauf, *Inside Campaign Finance: Myths and Realities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Robert E. Mutch, *Campaigns, Congress, and the Courts: The Making of Federal Campaign Finance Laws* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1988); and Anthony Corrado, "Money and Politics: A History of Federal Campaign Finance Law," in *Campaign Finance Reform: A Sourcebook*, ed. Anthony Corrado et al. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1997), ch. 2.
27. Presidential reporting laws did not become mandatory until April 1972, and Stone was able to give \$2 million of his \$2.14 million to the Nixon campaign before the deadline. Sorauf, *Money in American Elections*, 33.
28. On the effects of 1974 reforms, see F. Christopher Arterton, "Political Money and Party Strength," in *The Future of American Political Parties*, ed. Joel Fleishman (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1982); and William J. Keefe, *Parties, Politics, and Public Policy in America*, 8th ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1998), 161–68.
29. Unless the individual under eighteen years of age controlled the money and the decision to donate.
30. None of the dollar contribution levels has changed since 1972, and because of the effect of inflation, those contribution ceilings are worth approximately one-third their original value.
31. Makinson, *The Big Picture*, 2.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Frank J. Sorauf reminds us that the term *political action committee* appears nowhere in federal statutes. PACs are "simply a residual category: political committees other than those of political parties." To qualify to give \$5,000 per candidate per election, the PACs must be "multicandidate committees": they must be composed of at least fifty people and give to at least five candidates for federal office. Frank J. Sorauf, "Political Action Committees," in *Campaign Finance Reform*, 124.
34. Trevor Potter, "Where Are We Now? The Current State of Campaign Finance Law," in *Campaign Finance Reform*, 7; and Ross Baker, *The New Fat Cats* (New York: Priority

Press Publications, 1989), 76–77. Many of these PACs went by innocuous, upbeat names like BigTent PAC (Senator Arlen Specter, R-Pennsylvania), American Renewal PAC (Representative J. C. Watts, R-Oklahoma), Committee for a Democratic Majority (Senator Edward M. Kennedy, D-Massachusetts), Victory USA (Representative Vic Fazio, D-California), or Faith, Family and Freedom PAC (Representative David McIntosh, R-Indiana). Many of the leadership PACs were created by congressional powerhouses (such as Trent Lott, Richard Gephardt, Robert Byrd, and Newt Gingrich); for others the term *leader* has yet to materialize (such as Jerry Weller, and Peter Deutsch). Several of the forty-seven leadership PACs belong to former members.

35. Potter, “Where Are We Now?”
36. Jackson, *Honest Craft*, 78.
37. Dan Clawson, Alan Neustadt, and Denise Scott, *Money Talks: Corporate PACs and Political Influence* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), found that in PAC decision making, political party played a “small, virtually nonexistent, influence.” “Virtually all corporate PACs ignore political party” (92).
38. Eliza Newlin Carney, “Donor Fatigue,” *National Journal*, February 22, 1997, 365. In their examination of PAC behavior, Biersack, Herrnson, and Wilcox found that PACs were more interested in maintaining their relationship with sympathetic incumbents “than in the far riskier strategy of trying to change the composition of Congress.” Robert Biersack, Paul Herrnson, and Clyde Wilcox, eds., *Risky Business: PAC Decisionmaking in Congressional Elections* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1994), 249.
39. Richard L. Berke, “Republicans Rule Lobbyists’ World with Strong Arm,” *New York Times*, March 20, 1995, A1.
40. *Ibid.*
41. Brad O’Leary’s “O’Leary Report,” appearing as an advertising supplement in *Campaigns and Elections*, July 1995. O’Leary, who by his own estimates had raised more than a billion dollars for conservative political causes, characterized corporate giving to Democrat thus: “Corporate PAC money flowed into Democratic pockets like bootleg booze into speakeasy flappers before the Crash of 1929.”
42. Makinson, *The Big Picture*, website section called “The Great PAC Flip-Flop of 1996.”
43. *Ibid.*, 3.
44. 424 U.S. 1 (1976).
45. An independent expenditure is defined as “an expenditure by a person expressly advocating the election or defeat of a clearly identified candidate which is made without cooperation or consultation with any candidate, or any authorized committee or agent of such candidate, and which is not made in concert with, or at the request or suggestion of, any candidate, or any authorized committee or agent of such candidate.” 2 U.S.C. Section 431 (17).
46. 116 S.Ct. 2309 (1996).
47. Ruth Marcus, “Reinterpreting the Rules,” *Washington Post*, October 26, 1996, A1; and Corrado, “Party Soft Money,” 176.

48. An excellent summary of the law and practice concerning hard and soft money is found in Joseph E. Cantor, "Soft and Hard Money in Contemporary Elections: What Federal Law Does and Does Not Regulate" (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, 1997). See also Corrado, "Party Soft Money."
49. Corrado, "Party Soft Money." The FEC opinion was Advisory Opinion 1978-10.
50. Makinson, *The Big Picture*.
51. Charles R. Babcock and Ruth Marcus, "A Hard-Charging Flood of 'Soft Money,'" *Washington Post*, October 24, 1996, A1.
52. Don Van Natta Jr., "The Few, the Rich, the Rewarded Donate the Bulk of G.O.P. Gifts," *New York Times*, August 1, 2000, A1.
53. "Top 1995-96 'Soft Money' Contributors to the National Party Committees," *Washington Post*, February 17, 1997, A17.
54. *Ibid.*
55. Peter H. Stone, "Money-Meisters," *National Journal*, March 21, 1998, 624-28.
56. *Ibid.*, 625.
57. Carney, "Donor Fatigue," 363.
58. Federal Election Commission press release, "Major Parties Report Record Amounts in 'Soft Money' Contributions," March 19, 1998 (www.fec.gov/press/pty97.htm).
59. Scott Wilson, "DNC Swaps Funds with Its State Affiliates," *Washington Post*, April 24, 1998, A1.
60. *Ibid.*
61. FEC regulations, 2 U.S.C. §§ 441d.
62. Ruth Marcus, "The Secret of a Senator's Success?" *Washington Post*, December 12, 1997, A1.
63. Rebecca Carr, "Ex-IRS Head Gave Early Warning," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, February 22, 1997, 474.
64. Larry J. Sabato and Glenn R. Simpson, *Dirty Little Secrets: The Persistence of Corruption in American Politics* (New York: Times Books, 1996), 309.
65. Quoting professor Frances R. Hill, University of Miami, specialist in tax-exempt organizations, in Rebecca Carr, "Tax-Exempt Groups Scrutinized as Fund-Raising Clout Grows," *National Journal*, February 22, 1997, 472.
66. Carr, "Tax-Exempt Groups Scrutinized as Fund-Raising Clout Grows," 473.
67. Carr, "Ex-IRS Head Gave Early Warning," 474.
68. Carr, "Tax-Exempt Groups Scrutinized as Fund-Raising Clout Grows." The \$300,000 figure cited was spent by the Coalition for Our Children's Future and one other issue advocacy organization during the last three weeks of the contest.
69. *Ibid.*, 474.

70. The U.S. Department of Justice is also probing Barbour's role in arranging for a Hong Kong businessman to make a \$2.1 million loan guarantee to the National Policy Forum. Stone, "Money-Meisters," 627. The Senate Government Affairs Committee determined that it was "neither illegal nor improper for nonprofit organizations to receive money from foreign sources, provided that no such funds enter federal campaigns." U.S. Senate, Committee on Governmental Affairs, "Investigation on Illegal or Improper Activities in Connection with the 1996 Federal Election Campaign," March 5, 1998, Executive Summary, 21.
71. Potter, "Where Are We Now?" 19.
72. *Global Connections* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Responsive Politics, 1997).
73. Richard Cooper, James Gerstenzang, and David Willman, "Shield between Politics, Foreign Funds Is Flimsy," *Los Angeles Times*, October 20, 1996, A1.
74. Ed Rollins with Tom DeFrank, *Bare Knuckles and Back Rooms: My Life in American Politics* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 214–15. See Glenn R. Simpson and Jill Abramson, "Foreign Exchange: Legal Loopholes Let Overseas Contributors Fill Democrat's Coffers," *Wall Street Journal*, October 8, 1996, 1, concerning the Justice Department.
75. Keith B. Richburg, "Just Business as Usual: Asians Surprised by Fuss over Donations by Indonesians to the Clinton Campaign," *International Herald Tribune*, October 21, 1996.
76. Alison Mitchell, "Clinton Camp Accuses Dole of Hypocrisy on Donations," *New York Times*, October 22, 1996, A23. See also Peter Baker, "Dole Camp Also Got 'Foreign Aid,'" *Washington Post*, October 22, 1996, A1.
77. U.S. Senate, Committee on Governmental Affairs, "Investigation on Illegal or Improper Activities in Connection with the 1996 Federal Election Campaigns," Majority Report: Executive Summary, 2. In exasperation, the committee report noted that more than forty-five witnesses either fled the country or refused to cooperate, citing the Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination. According to the committee, "Despite the Committee's request for help, President Clinton took no action whatsoever to persuade such individuals to cooperate" (3).
78. National Republican Senatorial Committee promotional literature.
79. Cooper, Gerstenzang, and Willman, "Shield between Politics, Foreign Funds Is Flimsy," A1.
80. *Ibid.*
81. *Ibid.*
82. Ruth Marcus, "Contributors 'Tally' up, around Limits," *Washington Post*, October 9, 1996, A1.
83. *Ibid.*
84. Chuck Alston, "Senate GOP Has a Big Problem: How to Spend All That Cash," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly*, September 29, 1990, 3088–89.
85. *Ibid.*, 3087–88.

86. See Jackie Koszczuk, "All Eyes on the IRS as Agency Looks into Gingrich Case," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly*, February 22, 1997, 476–78.
87. Terry M. Neal, "Fired-up and Financially Flush, Forbes Prepares to Run Ads in Key States," *Washington Post*, April 11, 1999, A16.
88. For earlier suggested reforms, see David B. Magleby and Candice J. Nelson, *The Money Chase: Congressional Campaign, Finance Reform* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1990); Fred Wertheimer and Susan Weiss Manes, "Campaign Finance Reform: A Key to Restoring the Health of Our Democracy," *Columbia Law Review* 94, no. 4 (May 1994): 1126–59. On public financing, see David W. Adamany and George E. Agree, *Political Money: A Strategy for Campaign Financing in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975). On the failed attempts of campaign reform from 1985 to 1990 in the U.S. Senate, see Greg D. Kubiak, *The Gilded Dome: The U.S. Senate and Campaign Finance* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994).
89. Paul S. Herrnsron, *Congressional Elections: Campaigning at Home and in Washington*, 2d ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1998), 250. Two bills, one authored by Representative Bill Thomas (R-California) and another from senators John McCain (R-Arizona) and Russell Feingold (D-Wisconsin), did receive serious consideration, but nothing more.
90. Bill Bradley, "Congress Won't Act. Will You?" *New York Times*, November 11, 1996, A15.
91. Joseph E. Cantor and Lindsay Paige Whitaker, "Foreign Money and American Elections," U.S. Congress: Congressional Research Service, January 21, 1997, 4.
92. Herbert E. Alexander et al., "New Realities, New Thinking: Report of the Task Force on Campaign Finance Reform" (Los Angeles: Citizens' Research Foundation, University of Southern California, March 1997). Other academics have also weighed in with campaign finance reform measures. See, for example, Norman J. Ornstein et al., "Reforming Campaign Finance," December 1996, rev. May 1997, Brookings Institution Campaign Finance Reform website (www.brookings.edu/campaignfinance).
93. Public Campaign website (www.publiccampaign.org). In July 2000, President Clinton did sign a campaign finance reform measure requiring political action committees under Section 527 of the IRS code to report a variety of data, including contributions, expenditures, and the group's purpose.

Chapter 9: Ballot Issues, Local Elections, and Consultants

Nelson epigraph from "Media and the Initiative Campaign," *Campaigns and Elections*, January 1992, 35; Stern epigraph from Dan Morain, "Making of a Ballot Initiative," *Los Angeles Times*, April 16, 1998, A1.

1. On ballot initiatives as a Western phenomenon, see Charles M. Price, "The Initiative: A Comparative State Analysis and Reassessment of a Western Phenomenon," *Western Political Quarterly* 28 (June 1975): 243–62.
2. Thomas E. Cronin, *Direct Democracy: The Politics of Initiative, Referendum, and Recall* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 53.

3. In most states, sponsors of popular referenda are given a shorter period of time to collect signatures than permitted sponsors of initiatives. Because of this, relatively few popular referenda become law.
4. Kenneth Mulligan, "Statewide Measures on the 1996 General Election Ballot," unpublished report (Washington: Free Congress Foundation, 1996). Voters in fifteen states and the District of Columbia can also *recall* elected officials; thirty-six states permit the recall of various local officials. Cronin, *Direct Democracy*, 3.
5. See David S. Broder, "The Ballot Battle: Collecting Signatures for a Price," *Washington Post*, April 12, 1998, A1.
6. On California ballot initiatives, see Peter Schrag, *Paradise Lost: California's Experience, America's Future* (New York: The New Press, 1998); Charlene Simmons, *California's Statewide Initiative Process* (Sacramento: California Research Bureau, 1997); Charles M. Price and Charles Bell, *California Government Today: Politics of Reform* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1996); Ken DeBow and John Syer, *Power and Politics in California*, 5th ed. (Needham, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, 1997); California Commission on Campaign Financing, *Democracy by Initiative: Shaping California's Fourth Branch of Government* (Los Angeles: Center for Responsive Government, 1992); and E. Morgan Young, "Government by the People: The Evolving Impact of Citizen Initiatives on Public Policy and Government Advocacy in California," unpublished master's thesis, Graduate School of Political Management, George Washington University, 1997.
7. John E. Mueller, "Voting on the Propositions: Ballot Patterns and Historical Trends in California," *American Political Science Review* 63 (December 1969): 1197–1212; Cronin, *Direct Democracy*, 3. See also David O. Sears and Jack Citrin, *Tax Revolt: Something for Nothing in California*, enlarged ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 261; and David Lowery and Lee Sigelman, "Understanding the Tax Revolt: Eight Explanations," *American Political Science Review* 75 (1981): 963–74.
8. On Proposition 13, see Schrag, *Paradise Lost*, 142ff.
9. Peter Schrag, "Initiative Madness," *The New Republic*, August 22, 1988, 18.
10. Larry L. Berg and C. B. Holman, "The Initiative Process and Its Declining Agenda Setting Value," paper presented at the American Political Science Association annual meeting, New Orleans, August 1985, 31–32, cited in Cronin, *Direct Democracy*, 223. On ballot issues, generally, see David B. Magleby, *Direct Legislation: Voting on Ballot Propositions in the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984). On the use of consultants in ballot initiatives, see David B. Magleby and Kelly D. Patterson, "Consultants and Direct Democracy," and Dave McCuan, Todd Donovan, and Shaun Bowler, "Grassroots Democracy and California's Political Warriors: Campaign Professionals and the Initiative Process," both papers delivered at the American Political Science Association annual meeting, Washington, D.C., August 1997; and David B. Magleby and Kelly D. Patterson, "Campaign Consultants and Direct Democracy: The Politics of Citizen Control," paper delivered at conference, The Role of Political Consultants in Elections, American University, Washington, D.C., June 19, 1998.
11. Schrag, "Initiative Madness," 18. See also Peter Schrag, "California's Elected Anarchy: A Government Destroyed by Popular Referendum," *Harper's*, November 1994.

12. Michael Reese, "Profiles of a Promised Land: Is This Any Way to Run a State." *Newsweek*, July 31, 1989, 27.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Ronald Grover, "In California, They're Voting on Nearly Everything," *Business Week*, October 31, 1988, 30.
15. Peter Marks, "Fierce Ad Wars on Ballot Measures in California," *New York Times*, March 5, 2000, 23. Oregon voters must have also felt the frustration of ballot initiative mania. During the 1994 and 1996 elections, Oregon citizens were asked to vote on thirty-two constitutional amendments and laws, and in 1998 ten more had been certified for the ballot, ranging from marijuana regulation, mandatory jail terms, union political dues checkoff, and adoptees' birth records. In 1996 there were sixteen voter initiatives, and the voters' pamphlet, containing paid advertisements from backers and opponents of the measures, was 248 pages long. Observed Oregon secretary of state Phil Keisling, "It was almost as long as 'War and Peace,' but with less of a discernible plot." David S. Broder, "In Oregon, Critics See a Good Idea Gone Bad," *Washington Post*, August 1, 1998, A1.
16. David B. Magleby, "Direct Legislation in the American States," in *Referendums around the World*, ed. David Butler and Austin Ranney, (Washington: The AEI Press, 1994), 243. See also David B. Magleby, "Ballot Access for Initiative and Popular Referendums: The Importance of Petition Circulation and Signature Validation Procedures," *Journal of Law and Politics* 2 (1985): 287–311.
17. Magleby, "Direct Legislation in the American States," 242–43. There have been expensive ballot issues in other states as well. For example, in 1988 the National Rifle Association spent \$8 million in Maryland in a losing effort to oppose a handgun registration measure; in Maine, the paper industry spent more than \$5 million, an unprecedented sum for Maine campaigns, to defeat successfully a proposed ban on clear-cutting 10 million acres of northern Maine forest land. Occidental Petroleum Corporation reportedly spent as much as \$5 million to promote a citywide ballot measure to drill for oil near Pacific Palisades, an expensive beachfront community near Los Angeles. See Ronald Pear, "In California, Foes of Affirmative Action See a New Day," *New York Times*, November 7, 1996, B7; and Grover, "In California, They're Voting on Nearly Everything," 30.
18. Schrag, *Paradise Lost*, ch. 1.
19. Morain, "Making of a Ballot Issue." John Berthoud, president of the National Taxpayers Union, stated that his organization spent "over \$1 million" on issue ads favoring Proposition 226.
20. California Secretary of State, "Financing California's Statewide Ballot Measures: 1996 Primary and General Elections" (www.ss.ca.gov). However, because of the loopholes of the California law and reporting system, \$96 million of the total \$141 million could not be linked with specific ballot measures. See also Robert B. Gunnison, "Fading Trail of Ballot Funding: \$141 Million Spent, but State Can't Track Most of It," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 4, 1997.
21. Dan Morain, "Consultants Win in Fights over State Initiatives," *Los Angeles Times*, November 3, 1996, A3.

22. Schrag, *Paradise Lost*, 198.
23. Graeme Browning, "Silicon Valley's No Chip Shot for Bill," *National Journal*, October 19, 1996, 2232.
24. Dollar figures for consultants compiled by Morain, "Consultants Win in Fights over State Initiatives," and reflect late-October 1996 reporting.
25. Morain, "Consultants Win in Fights over State Initiatives." Final spending figures come from Schrag, *Paradise Lost*, 199. Note, however, that adjusting for inflation, Proposition 211 was not the most expensive ballot initiative. The 1988 insurance companies had spent \$70 million to carry Proposition 104, No-Fault Insurance, and to oppose competing consumer-backed propositions. Schrag, *Paradise Lost*, 197. See also Mitchell S. Tobin, "Campaign Spending and California Ballot Measures, 1924–1994," unpublished master's thesis, University of California, Berkeley, Department of Political Science, 1997.
26. California Commission on Campaign Financing, *Democracy by Initiative*, 275; and Dan Bernstein, "Initiatives Are at Top of Politicians' Lists of Favorite Things," *Sacramento Bee*, August 5, 1996. See Schrag, *Paradise Lost*, 229–34; and Young, "Government by the People," ch. 4.
27. Morain, "Making of a Ballot Issue."
28. Magleby and Patterson, "Campaign Consultants and Direct Democracy," 21.
29. Morain, "Making of a Ballot Initiative."
30. Quoted in Magleby and Patterson, "Campaign Consultants and Direct Democracy."
31. Greg Anrig Jr., "The Flamboyant Force behind California's Auto Insurance Revolt," *Money*, July 1989, 145. Altogether there were five separate, sometimes overlapping, propositions on auto insurance in 1988. Some \$80 million was spent by special interests promoting or opposing these five measures. Schrag, *Paradise Lost*, 197. Schrag also notes that the changes brought about through Proposition 103 were blocked by auto insurance company litigation for four years, then Charles Quackenbush, a friend of the industry, was elected as insurance commissioner, further blunting the intent of the reform (197).
32. "Politics '94: A Behind-the-Scenes Look at Orange County's Political Life," *Los Angeles Times*, November 13, 1994, B3; and Paul Feldman, "Figures behind Prop. 187 Look at Its Creation," *Los Angeles Times*, December 14, 1994, A3. Peter Schrag observes that Alan C. Nelson, former head of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (under Reagan) and California lobbyist for FAIR, the Federation for American Immigration Reform, was the principal writer of Proposition 104. Schrag, *Paradise Lost*, 229.
33. Dave Leshner and Bettina Boxall, "Proposition 209: Hot-Button Issue Fails to Attract Big Money on Either Side," *Los Angeles Times*, September 19, 1996, A3.
34. This advertisement and the whole issue of curbs on illegal immigrants outraged many. "From a moral and ethical perspective, it was heinous," said Antonio Gonzalez, president of the Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project in Los Angeles. "I think it did long-term damage to the social fabric of California society." Sipple has stated that his work is an accurate, if vivid, portrayal of a legitimate issue. Dave Leshner,

- "Meet a Very Laid-Back Maniac," *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, August 11, 1996, 18.
35. Gutzloe specializes in opposing tax referenda in Florida through his Ax the Tax Committee, of which he is the chairman. According to his promotional literature, the Ax the Tax Committee has not lost any of the nine campaigns it has waged in two states and has saved taxpayers over \$4.1 billion in tax proposals since its founding in 1982. Ax the Tax advertisement in *Campaigns and Elections*, June 1998, 59.
 36. Reena Shah Stamets, "Seeds Planted to Pass Florida 'Proposition 187,'" *Tampa Today*, January 11, 1995, 8B.
 37. Patrick J. McDonnell, "Anti-Illegal Immigration Proposition Fails to Qualify for Arizona Ballot," *Los Angeles Times*, July 15, 1996, A3.
 38. Richard Lacayo, "Propositions: Green Ballots vs. Greenbacks," *Time*, November 19, 1990, 44.
 39. Magleby and Patterson, "Consultants and Direct Democracy," 20.
 40. Morain, "Making of a Ballot Initiative."
 41. David Hill, "Wording Ballot Issues," *Campaigns and Elections*, August 1995, 28.
 42. Ibid.
 43. Magleby and Patterson, "Consultants and Direct Democracy," 8.
 44. Ibid.
 45. Schrag, *Paradise Lost*, 147–48 and 210–11; and Magleby and Patterson, "Consultants and Direct Democracy."
 46. Broder, "The Ballot Battle," A6.
 47. Council of State Governments, *Book of States* (Lexington: Council of State Governments, 1996).
 48. Arnold, "Taking the Initiative: Step-by-Step Tips on How to Put an Issue on the Ballot," *Campaigns and Elections*, June/July 1993, 23.
 49. Richard Arnold and Susan Johnson, "Validating Signatures," *Campaigns and Elections*, June 1997, 41.
 50. Ibid.
 51. Broder, "The Ballot Battle," A6.
 52. The five major firms are Kimball Petition Management (Fred and Kelly Kimball), National Voter Outreach (Richard Arnold), American Petition Consultants (Michael Arno), Progressive Campaigns (Angelo Paparella), and Masterton and Wright. Broder, "The Ballot Battle," A6.
 53. Morain, "Making of a Ballot Initiative."
 54. Ibid.
 55. The 1988 decision was *Meyer v. Grant*, 486 U.S. 514, and the 1999 decision was *Buckley v. American Constitutional Law Foundation*, 525 U.S. 182.

56. Richard Arnold, "Taking the Initiative," *Campaigns and Elections*, June/July 1993, p. 23.
57. Jennifer Mears, "Proponents Turn to Paid Circulators to Get Initiatives on Ballot," Associated Press Political Service, July 14, 1995.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. For example, Richard Arnold estimated that in the 1992 Colorado petition drive to pass the Colorado Education Voucher Initiative, it cost an average of eighty-two cents for each signature obtained by a professional petition gathering firm, and ninety cents per signature obtained by volunteers. Morain, "Making of a Ballot Initiative."
61. MoveOn website (www.moveon.org/faq.htm).
62. E-thepeople website (www.e-thepeople.com/affiliates/national), accessed December 6, 1999. Background on Sheshunoff from the Dnetizen website (www.dnet.org.dnetizen/index.shtml), accessed March 18, 1999.
63. Jonah Goldberg, "Vote.con: The Perils of 'Cyber-Democracy,'" *National Review*, December 20, 1999, 28.
64. Quoted in Chris Meyer, "Ten Years in the Making," *Campaigns and Elections*, April/May 1990, 41.
65. Ibid., 40.
66. California Secretary of State, "1996 General Election: Campaign Financing for California Candidates and Office Holders" (www.ss.ca.gov/prd/finance96/finance96.htm).
67. Ibid. In the California 1996 state assembly elections, twenty-seven of the 154 total candidates spent at least a half-million dollars; of that number, sixteen won and eleven lost. The greatest amount spent, by far, was \$4.3 million by assembly speaker (and winner) Republican Curt Pringle; his opponent, Democrat Audrey L. Gibson, spent just \$14,449. Pringle even beat Al Checchi in vote-getting inefficiency, but at least Pringle had the satisfaction of winning. For every vote (56,493) that Pringle received, it cost him an astounding \$77.10; Gibson spent only 36 cents for every vote (39,754) she received.
68. California Secretary of State, "1996 General Election."
69. "Election '96," *California Journal*, December 1996, 27.
70. Gary F. Moncrief, "Candidate Spending in State Legislative Races," in *Campaign Finance in State Legislative Elections*, ed. Joel A. Thompson and Gary F. Moncrief (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1998), 56. See also Gary F. Moncrief, "The Increase in Campaign Expenditures in State Legislative Elections," *Western Political Quarterly* 45 (1992): 549–58.
71. Survey of Party Professionals on Political Consulting, April 1996, available from author.
72. Joel A. Thompson and Gary F. Moncrief, "Exploring the 'Lost World' of Campaign Finance," in *Campaign Finance in State Legislative Elections*, 11.

73. Anthony Gierzynski, "A Framework for the Study of Campaign Finance," in *Campaign Finance in State Legislative Elections*, 19.
74. Survey of Party Professionals.
75. Ibid.
76. Mark Mellman et al., "Benchmark Basics and Beyond," *Campaigns and Elections*, May 1991, 22ff.
77. *CQ Campaign Insider*, August 6, 1998, 1.
78. Daniel M. Shea, *Transforming Democracy: Legislative Campaign Committees and Political Parties* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 26. See also Anthony Gierzynski, *Legislative Party Campaign Committees in the American States* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992).
79. North Carolina Senate Committee, "Request for Proposal," October 8, 1997.
80. Data come from Virginia Public Access Project in affiliation with the Center for Responsible Politics. See www.crp.org/cgi-win/vpaorg for 1997 general and special elections.
81. Mike Allen, "Small Town, Va., to Determine Control of the State Senate," *Washington Post*, December 16, 1996, B1.
82. Dale Russakoff, "Legal War Conquers State's Politics," *Washington Post*, December 1, 1996, A1. Much of what follows comes from Russakoff's article on politics, money, and Alabama judgeships.
83. Ibid.
84. Russakoff, "Legal War Conquers State's Politics," A1; and William Glaberson, "Fierce Campaigns Signal a New Era for State Courts," *New York Times*, June 5, 2000, A1.
85. Survey of Party Professionals.
86. Jerry Hagstrom, "Where the Action Is," *National Journal*, October 31, 1992, 2483.
87. Mellman et al., "Benchmark Basics and Beyond," 30.
88. Mike Allen, "In GOP Primary, Earley's Focus on 'Friends' Prevailed," *Washington Post*, June 15, 1997, B8.
89. Ibid.
90. Guy Gugliotta, "In Illinois Race, Organized Labor Hits the Ground Running," *Washington Post*, August 23, 1998, A3.
91. Darrell M. West, *Air Wars: Television Advertising in Election Campaigns, 1952–1996*, 2d ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1997), 84–85.
92. Darrell M. West, "How Issue Ads Have Reshaped American Politics," Conference on Political Advertising in Election Campaigns, American University, Washington, D.C., April 17, 1998.
93. West, *Air Wars*, 86–87.
94. Benton Foundation, "National Overview of Campaign Finance Reforms," Richard M.

- Neustadt Center for Communications in the Public Interest, updated May 1, 1998 (www.benton.org/neustadt/reporters/us.html).
95. Ibid.
 96. Hawaii, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, North Carolina, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin.
 97. Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Rhode Island.
 98. Benton Foundation, “National Overview of Campaign Finance Reforms.”
 99. Ibid.
 100. Dana Milbank, “Maine Takes Hard Look at Campaign-Finance Reform,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 22, 1996, A24. Professor Christian Potholm of Bowdoin College stated that “a lot of folks in Maine are being hoodwinked” because while two-thirds of the voters support campaign overhaul, another 75 percent oppose public financing and do not realize the full meaning of this ballot question.
 101. Milbank, “Maine Takes Hard Look at Campaign-Finance Reform.”
 102. Benton Foundation, “State Reports on Campaign Finance Reform: Maine,” Richard M. Neustadt Center for Communications in the Public Interest, updated May 1, 1998 (www.benton.org/neustadt/reporters/me.html).
 103. Public Campaign, “Clean Money Campaign Reform: The States Take the Lead.” December 1997 (www.publiccampaign.org/statereform.html).
 104. National Civic League, “New Politics Program, Local Campaign Finance Reform,” 1998, n.d.
 105. Joan Biskupic, “High Court Refuses Campaign Spending Case,” *Washington Post*, November 17, 1998, A2. The decision was *Cincinnati v. Kruse*, 525 U.S. 1001 (1998).
 106. *Nixon et al. v. Shrink Missouri Government PAC et al.*, January 24, 2000, No. 98–963.
 107. National Civic League, “New Politics Program, Local Campaign Finance Reform.” Examples of local reform all taken from National Civic League data.
 108. Telephone interview with Ric Bainter, director, New Politics Program, National Civic League, Denver, Colorado, July 7, 1998.
 109. California Voter Foundation, Digital Sunlight website (www.digitalsunlight.org).
 110. Daniel B. Wood, “Pruning California’s Political Money Tree,” *Christian Science Monitor*, April 6, 1999, 3. An earlier Unz-backed Proposition 208 was passed in 1998 but ruled unconstitutional by a federal judge because the individual campaign contribution limits were set too low, at \$500 for statewide candidates and \$250 for legislative candidates.

Chapter 10: Citizens, Voters, and Democratic Choice

Schlackman and Douglas epigraph from “Attack Mail: The Silent Killer,” *Campaigns and Elections*, July 1995, 25.

1. Lloyd Grove, “Taken under Advisement,” *Washington Post*, August 31, 1996, D1.

2. *Ibid.*, D3.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Charles S. Clark, "Political Consultants," *CQ Researcher*, October 4, 1996. Francis X. Clines characterized Rollins as a "cantankerous" Republican strategist who had been "twice read out of politics but manages to survive as a wisecracking talking head on the celebrity rim" of the 1996 election season. Francis X. Clines, "In Dick Morris Specter, a Vision of Marley's Ghost," *New York Times*, October 20, 1996, A20. Second quote from Ed Rollins with Tom DeFrank, *Bare Knuckles and Back Rooms* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 339.
5. Roger Simon, *Showtime: The American Political Circus and the Race for the White House* (New York: Times Books, 1998), 310. Emphasis in original.
6. Mike Murphy, "How to Win," *Weekly Standard*, October 21, 1996, 18.
7. Scot Lehigh, "Fired! When Famous People Get Canned, Our Interest Is More Than Casual," *Boston Globe*, October 6, 1996, D1.
8. During the Republican convention, on the eve of Dole's acceptance speech, "feuding among staff members was so fierce" that the campaign manager was forced to step in, fearing that the press would catch wind of the bitter fighting. Elizabeth Kolbert and Adam Nagourney, "Staff Turmoil Seems a Staple of Dole's Management Style," *New York Times*, September 15, 1996, 1. As Scot Lehigh observed, "if Dole wanted to banish the man truly responsible for his problems, the GOP might suddenly find itself without a standard bearer." Lehigh, "Fired!" D1.
9. Evan Thomas et al., *Back from the Dead: How Clinton Survived the Republican Revolution* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1997), xiii.
10. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, "Don't Blame Us: The View of Political Consultants," Andrew Kohut, director, June 17, 1998. Two hundred political consultants were surveyed in late 1997 and early 1998. Additional commentary in James A. Thurber, Candice J. Nelson and David A. Dulio, "The Consultants Speak: An Analysis of Campaign Professionals' Attitudes," unpublished paper for conference, The Role of Political Consultants in Elections, American University, Washington, D.C., June 19, 1998.
11. Reilly campaign website: (www.clintreilly.com/Your_Mayor). See Noble advertising in *Campaigns and Elections*, September 1994, 32. It is unusual for a political consultant to shed the role and actually run for elected office. Gary Hart, who managed George McGovern's 1972 presidential campaign but who wasn't really a professional campaign consultant, was elected as U.S. senator from Colorado and then became a presidential candidate. One successful consultant turned elected official was Ron Faucheux, who was elected to statewide office in Louisiana and later became editor of *Campaigns and Elections* magazine.
12. Gary Nordlinger, "Ethical Responsibilities," *Campaigns and Elections*, April 1998, 63.
13. Dick Morris has been the notable exception, working for both Democrats and Republicans. He has worked for Democrat Bill Clinton but also for Republicans Trent Lott, William Weld, and Jesse Helms. In a bit of premature political repentance, Dick Morris is reported to have said to an aide of Republican Senator Dan Coats of Indiana:

- “Look, I’ve gone both ways. I realize that was my mistake. I will never, never work for a Democrat again.” Richard L. Berke, “Adviser Who Has President’s Ear Thrived as Anti-Clinton Strategist,” *New York Times*, October 23, 1995, A20.
14. On ethics and professional responsibility, see F. Christopher Arterton, “Professional Responsibility in Campaign Politics,” unpublished paper for Conference on Professional Responsibility and Ethics in the Political Process, sponsored by the American Association of Political Consultants, Williamsburg, Va., March 24, 1991.
 15. Richard L. Berke, “The Voters: Majority Give Clinton Credit on the Economy, Poll Finds,” *New York Times*, September 6, 1996, A1; and Ernie Freda, “The Road to Washington: Campaign Notes,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, November 8, 1996, 12A.
 16. James Bennet, “The New Campaign Story,” *New York Times*, September 9, 1966, A14.
 17. Ron Faucheux and Paul S. Herrnson, “See How They Run: State Legislative Candidates,” *Campaigns and Elections*, August 1999, 25.
 18. Liza DePaulo, “The Scandal Sheet,” *George*, December 1996, 102.
 19. Eliza Newlin Carney, “Gold-Plated Guns for Hire,” *National Journal*, June 6, 1998, 1296.
 20. Cited in Peter Levine, “Consultants and American Political Culture,” *Report from the Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy* 14, no. 3/4 (summer/fall 1994): 5 (University of Maryland, School of Public Affairs).
 21. Pew Research Center, “Don’t Blame Us.”
 22. Pew Research Center, “Don’t Blame Us.” Forty-six percent of consultants considered suppressing voter turnout “clearly unethical,” while 22 percent found this tactic “acceptable,” and 29 percent found it “questionable.” Fourteen percent found the use of scare tactics about an opponents’ positions “clearly unethical,” while 36 percent found this tactic “acceptable,” and 46 percent found it “questionable.” Twenty-six percent found the tactic of making statements that are factually true but taken out of context “clearly unethical,” while 13 percent found this “acceptable,” and 60 percent found it to be a “questionable” practice.
 23. *Ibid.* Ninety-eight percent felt that making statements that are factually false was “clearly unethical.” Seventy percent considered the use of push-polls “unethical,” while only 7 percent considered them “acceptable.”
 24. Bill McAllister, “Consultants’ Ethics,” *Washington Post*, June 18, 1998, C2.
 25. James Thurber, “Are Campaign Pros Destroying Democracy?” *Campaigns and Elections*, August 1998, 56.
 26. As Linda Fowler has written, “individuals who hide behind their subordinates are unworthy of the public trust.” Linda L. Fowler, “Campaign Ethics and Political Trust,” in *Campaigns and Elections: American Style*, ed. James A. Thurber and Candice Nelson (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1995), 212.
 27. Jack W. Germond and Jules Witcover, “The Curious Case of the Consultant and the Migrating Head,” *Baltimore Sun*, October 16, 1996, 17A.

28. Spencer S. Hsu, "John Warner Fires Consultant Who Altered Challenger's Photo in Ad," *Washington Post*, October 11, 1996, B1. Challenger Mark Warner fired back: "Is doctoring a photograph and taking one person's head and putting it on another person's body the Virginia way? I don't think so . . . and I don't think voters are going to think that your way, John, is the Virginia way." For many elections, the concept of the "Virginia way" has had a resonance with many Virginia voters—a mark of civility and fair play.
29. E. J. Dionne Jr., *Why Americans Hate Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991).
30. *Ibid.*, 332.
31. The Project on Campaign Conduct is led by the Institute for Global Ethics in Camden, Maine, and is funded by a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts. Reported in *Campaign Insider*, July 23, 1998, 10.
32. Howard Kurtz, "Adversaries Join Campaign to Improve Coverage of State, Local Politics," *Washington Post*, May 28, 1998, A4.
33. "Circle the Wagons," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 3, 1997.
34. Joseph N. Cappella and Mark Brewin, "The Minnesota Compact and the Election of 1996," Annenberg Public Policy Center, University of Pennsylvania, April 1998; and Paul Taylor, "Case Study: The Minnesota Compact," Alliance for Better Campaigns, Washington, D.C., June 1998, cited in Task Force on Campaign Reform, "Campaign Reform: Insights and Evidence," Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University, Larry M. Bartels, chair, September 1998, 44.
35. From the website of MoveOn (www.moveon.org/faq.htm).
36. Federal Election Commission website (www.fec.gov); Center for Responsive Politics (www.opensecrets.org); Public Disclosure (www.publicdisclosure.org); National Institute on Money in State Politics (www.followthemoney.org); Campaign Finance Information Center (www.campaignfinance.org).
37. Dick Morris, *Vote.com* (New York: Renaissance Books, 1999).
38. Vote.com website (www.vote.com/about_us.phtml).
39. The one big exception to this generalization is the elderly population. Older citizens tend to vote far more regularly than other groups, yet the elderly as a group use the Internet the least frequently. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, "On-Line Polling Offers Mixed Results," January 27, 1999 (www.people-press.org.onlinertpt.htm).

Appendix B

1. "The Political Pages, 2000–01," *Campaigns and Elections*, March 2000. This listing overstates the actual number of consulting firms. Each firm is permitted to list its services in two categories of its own choosing. Many polling, media, telephone, and direct contact firms also designate themselves as "general" consultants. Further, a number of firms that no longer provide services are also listed.

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