

Reinventing Political Advertising



Advertising is a difficult way to change someone's mind.

- Unwanted
- Untrusted
- Conveys small amounts of information

The Crisis in Political Advertising.

Josh Kalla and David Broockman combined the results of 49 control group experiments measuring the effect in seven different mediums. Their conclusions?

The advertising moved voters in primaries and ballot referendums.

But the effect size in general elections was zero.



If political advertising is performing poorly, how can we improve the results?

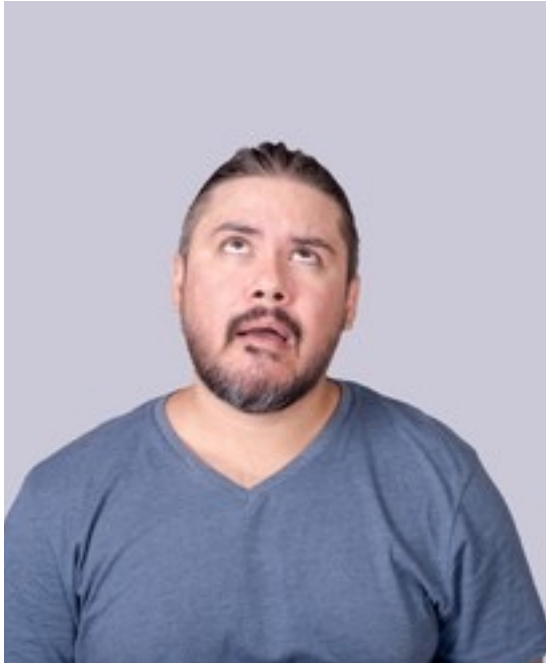
Step One: Completely Change Our Targeting

For decades we have been asking the wrong question.

Who is undecided?

But if we ask a more relevant question, which voters are moved by advertising, we get a different answer.

If you ask who is moved by advertising the answer is not the undecided voter, the answer is voters who know little about politics.



Low Information Voters

- What changes votes is new information
- The less information a voter has, the more likely that what a voter sees in an ad is new
- The evidence on the importance of low information voters is astounding

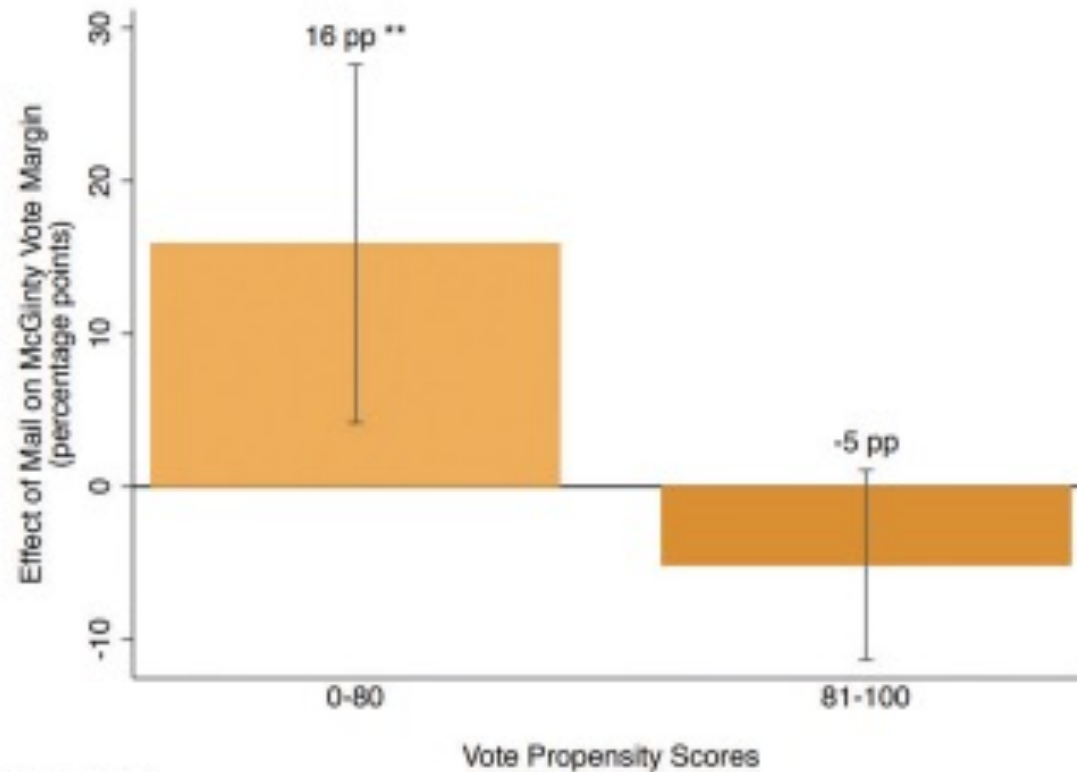
The Sides, Vavreck & Warshaw Study

Impact of 100 ad advantage in campaigns for various offices

| Office | TV effect per 100 ad advantage |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| President | .02% |
| Senate | .04% |
| Governor | .06% |
| Congress | .08% |
| Attorney General | .19% |
| State Treasurer | .34% |

LCV Experiment Mail and Canvassing

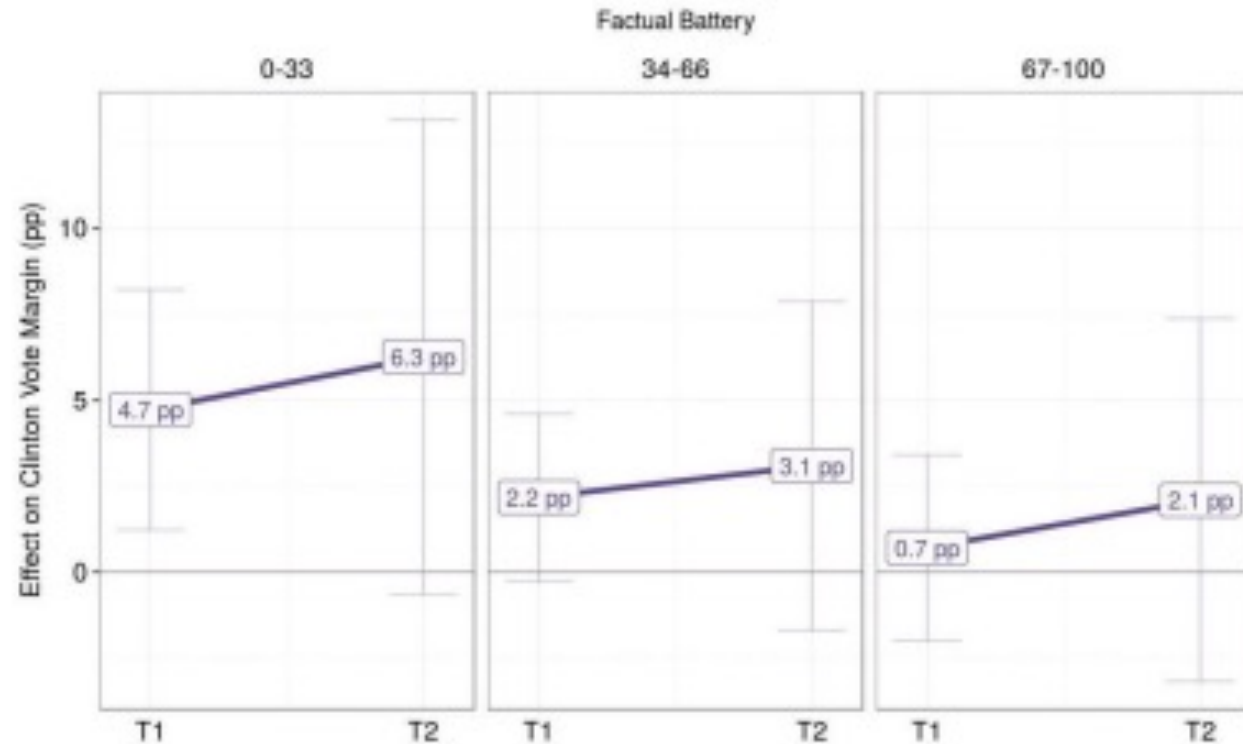
Voter Movement by Turnout Probabilities



Note: *** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .10$

Low Info Voters 7 Times the Movement

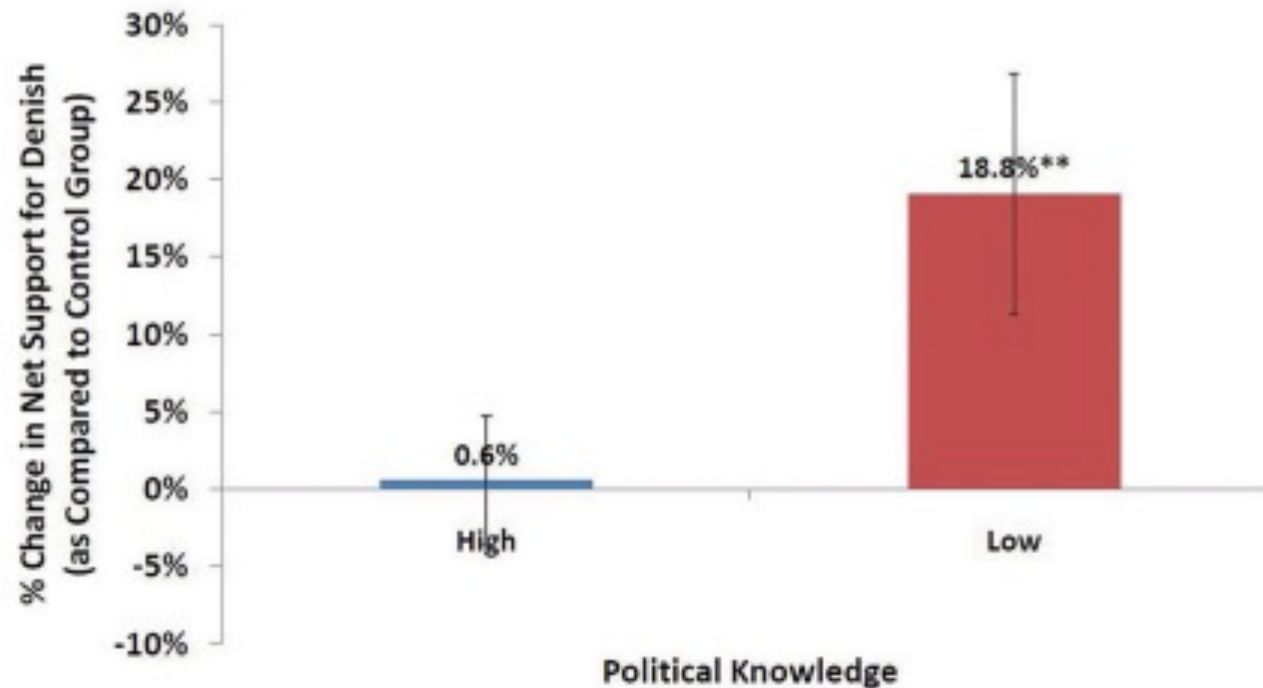
Clinton Vote Margin by Knowledge
Pooled Treatment vs Control



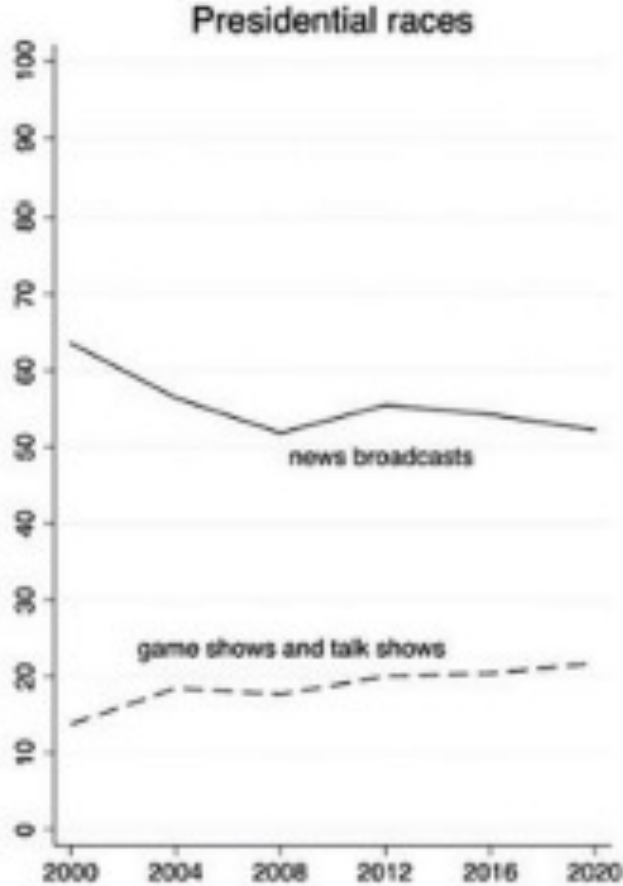
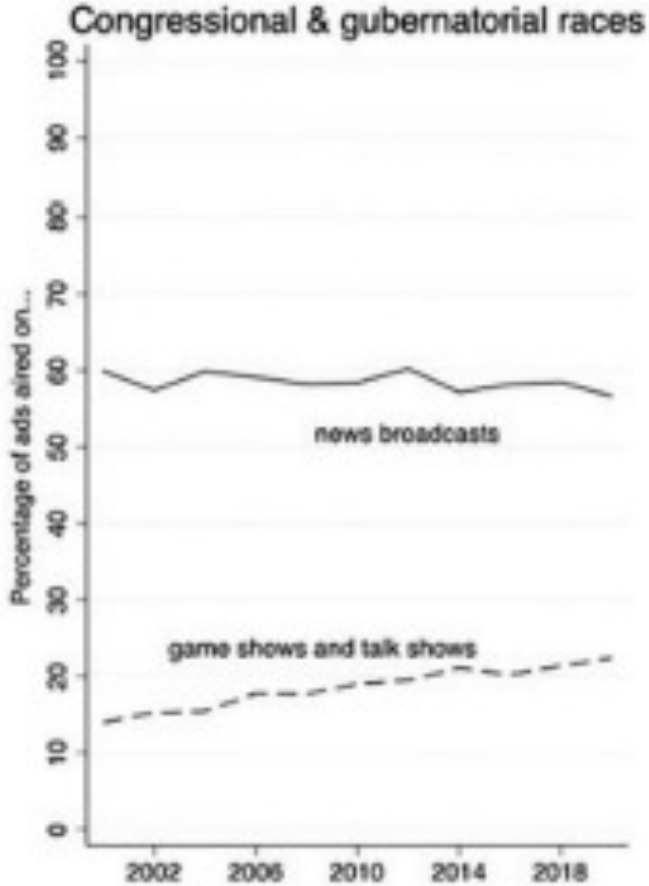
NEA: Low Info Voters 31 Times More Likely to Move

Net Support Change across Political Knowledge

Q2: If the election for New Mexico Governor was held today, which candidate would you support?



Percentage of TV Buys on News Programming



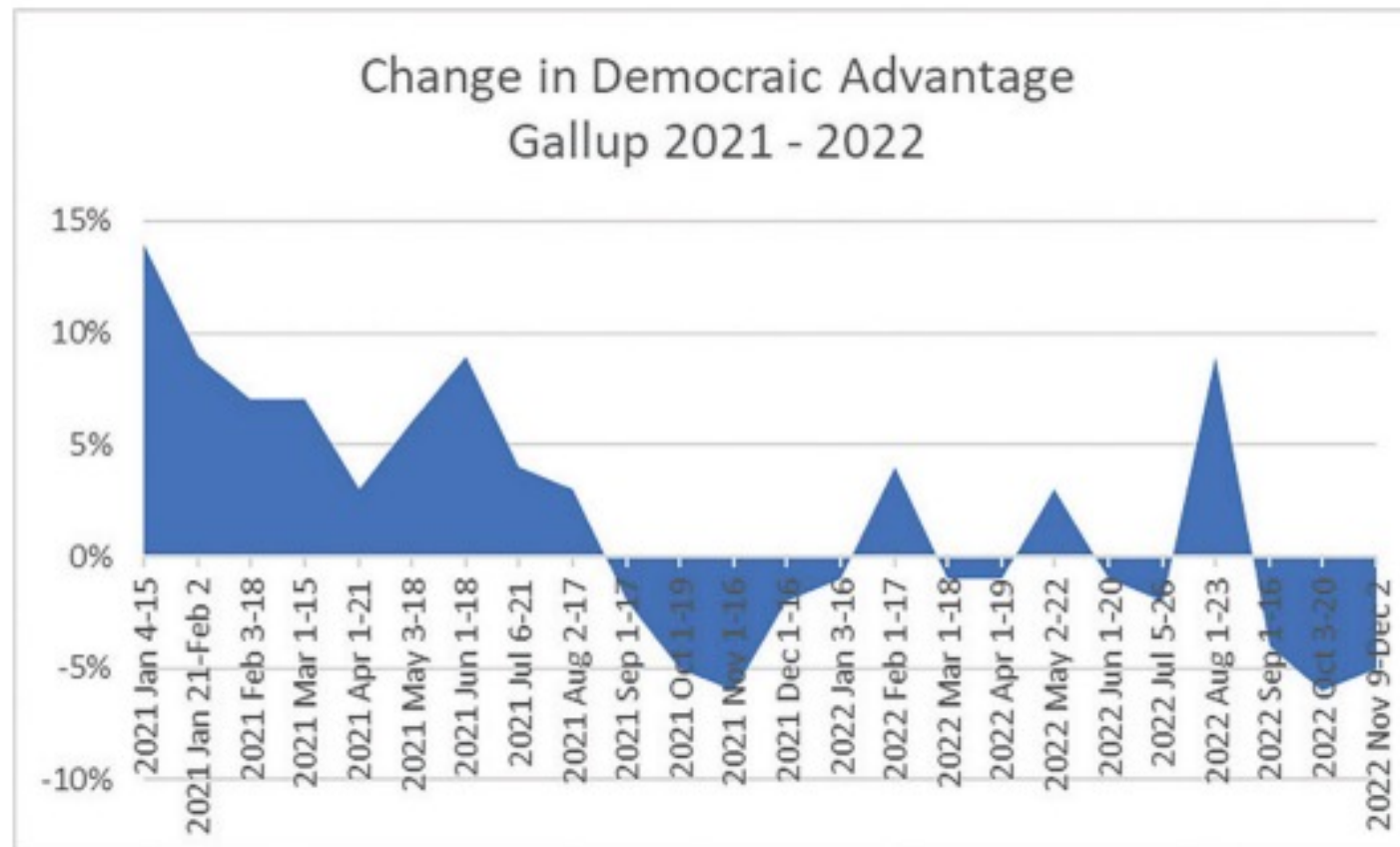
A New Approach to Targeting

1. Calculate **three** persuasion scores – one for TV, one for digital and one more mail.
2. The score is composed of partisan score (middle) , information model score and the media habit score.
3. A campaign manager no longer has to choose broadly for each of the three mediums, he chooses the medium based upon the voter's highest score.
4. Once you have the persuasion score you multiply it times the turnout probability to get the likelihood that the voter will move in response to a particular advertising medium and also cast a ballot.

Step Two: Advertise for Parties

- In the 2000 elections more than a third of voters split their tickets. In 2020 that figure was 11%
- If voters are choosing parties rather than candidates, why do we spend all our money on candidate ads
- If you change someone's vote for a single office you affect one office. If you change someone's party affiliation, you change votes across the ticket
- Some people say partisanship is so ingrained that it cannot be affected by advertising

Gallup Polling Shows that Party Affiliation Changes Significantly Month to Month



What is moving party affiliation?

News.

If news is shaping party affiliation at much higher levels than advertising shapes candidate choice, why not make advertising about the new events when the news happens?

Step Three

Advertise Opportunistically

- Supplement news coverage when coverage happens
- Spreads out advertising throughout the cycle
- Fear of decay is why all our ads run in September and October

Examples of Opportunistic Advertising

- All Republicans in the House and Senate voted against climate change legislation
- Every Senate Republican voted against the \$1400 stimulus check
- Two thirds of Republican congresspersons voted to overturn the 2020 election
- Weather and climate change

Step Four: Make Your Ads Credible

- In 2018, the Center for Voter Information tested an “information only” mailing against two versions of traditional mail. Issues used were identical
- The information only mailing made no endorsement, had no pictures, used plain type without any graphics.
- * The traditional mail had no effect.
- The information only mailing moved support for our candidate a point and a half.
- David Broockman said that Democrats would not have taken back the house without these mailings.

Center for Voter Information

Sally Sample
123 Any Street
Anytown, USA 00000

Dear Ms Sample:

The Center for Voter Information provides information about candidates to voters like you across the country. This year we asked voters in your congressional district what they would like to know about the candidates for congress in the special election being held on March 13th. Terrorism and taxes were important issues.

Gun purchases by suspected terrorists: Do the candidates support the law prohibiting gun purchases by suspected terrorists on the no-fly list? Opponents of the law say that the list contains mistakes and law abiding citizens could be denied the right to buy a gun. Do the candidates support the law banning gun purchases by persons on this list?

Republican Rick Saccone : No

Democrat Connor Lamb: Yes

Background Checks: Legislation was introduced in Pennsylvania ending our states program of background check for gun purchases. Do the candidates support Pennsylvania's background check system?

Republican Rick Saccone : Yes

Democrat Connor Lamb: No

Millionaire Taxes: Do the candidates support legislation recently passed by congress that would roll back the minimum tax that millionaires are required to pay?

Republican Rick Saccone : No

Democrat Connor Lamb: Yes

A candidate's position on issues is sometimes more complicated than "yes" or "no." We have done our best to represent each candidate in a fair and reasonable way. But if you want additional information, you can visit the candidates' websites at ricksaccone.com or connorlamb.com where additional information on these issues is available. We hope this information is helpful.

Sincerely,
Page Gardner
President

PS The Center for Voter Information is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that does not endorse any candidate or party. If you have comments about our information, suggestions or questions you want answered, you can contact us at centerforvoterinformation.org.

An Agenda for Success

- Build a voter low information model
- Build a persuadability model for TV, digital and mail
- Advertise to change party affiliation
- Test opportunistic advertising that supplements news events
- Test congressional accountability mailings
- Test credibility designed TV ads