

## Odd Times

There normally isn't much political advertising going on in odd-numbered calendar years since there are no presidential or congressional elections. They are held, of course, in even-numbered calendar years. But this odd year is turning out to be appreciably odder than most.

There are only three gubernatorial races (Louisiana, Kentucky and Mississippi) this year, and just four state legislative elections (Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey and Virginia). Mayoral races in a few big cities and a variety of local offices and initiatives will, as always, highlight this off year-election.

For many voters, that's not much of a highlight.

Unless you live in those states, cities or general locales, chances are you're not taking much notice. Odd year elections, traditionally, are greeted with little interest and even less enthusiasm. Broadcasters, in turn, historically spend these odd-numbered-years by eagerly counting down the days to the even-years, when the Presidency and/or the control of congress will be contested.

These longstanding attitudes, however, do not seem to apply this odd-numbered year. Broadcasters are too busy to simply sit back and count down to 2008. The huge flow of money from the Republicans and Democrats, the candidates (especially the wealthy ones), the special interests groups and countless corporations this year has been staggering.

According to the Campaign Media Analysis Group, the nation's television viewers have been bombarded with 153,984 paid political advertisements, at a cost to of more than \$155 million, during the first half of 2007. The Arlington, Va.-based subsidiary of the advertising research firm TNS Media Intelligence is actually predicting that there could be as much as \$600 million in broadcast ad spending this year.

While that amount pales in comparison to last year's even-year election record 2.3 billion in political commercials, it is still extremely impressive for a so-called off-year election. The 2006 total was heavily fueled by bitter mid-term congressional and gubernatorial elections. Political ad spending for 2007 should easily finish as the highest odd-numbered year ever.

