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Allentown Morning Call

Presidential candidates Bernie Sanders and Ted Cruz spent more money on local television commercials than their primary election opponents, but lost the counties where most Northeastern Pennsylvania voters live anyway, a Times-Shamrock newspapers review of TV commercial records shows.



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Donald J. Trump, now the presumptive Republican nominee, spent only \$55,210 on 216 commercials. He walloped Cruz in both counties.

The campaign of Ohio Gov. John Kasich, who gave up his bid for the Republican nomination Wednesday, spent nothing on local television, but a super PAC supporting him spent a small amount. The New Day Independent Media Committee spent \$7,316 on 74 commercials, all on Xfinity cable-carried channels.

The presidential candidates' spending was part of almost \$2.1 million spent on 11,705 campaign commercials shown locally, the vast majority of them 30 seconds long. The spending is still less than half what an advertiser had to spend on average on a 30-

Sanders, a U.S. senator from Vermont seeking the Democratic nomination, spent \$269,913 on 1,989 commercials. His opponent, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, spent \$213,291 on 1,151, but still won Lackawanna and Luzerne counties rather handily in the April 26 Pennsylvania primary. Cruz, a U.S. senator from Texas who abandoned his bid for the Republican nomination Tuesday, spent \$60,551 on 286 TV ads. Billionaire businessman

**Pa. GOP
congressmen
weigh in on
Trump as their
nominee**

second Super Bowl commercial, which cost about \$5 million. To have seen every local campaign commercial, someone would have had to watch for more than four days.

The review focused on spending at WNEP, WNEP-2, WYOU, WBRE, WOLF, WSWB, WQMY, WYLN and advertising sold by Comcast Spotlight, Xfinity's advertising arm. The difference in spending between the winners and losers of the presidential race isn't necessarily a surprise. Trailing badly in state polls entering the Pennsylvania primaries, Sanders and Cruz almost had to spend more. That they spent more and still lost demonstrates that money doesn't always buy victory in politics. More often, it still does.

Once well ahead in polling, former U.S. Rep. Joe Sestak outspent his challenger for the Democratic U.S. Senate nomination, former environmental secretary Katie McGinty, on local TV — \$230,855 on 632 commercials for Sestak to \$192,567 on 848 commercials for McGinty. Despite that, McGinty, who won the nomination, also won Lackawanna and Luzerne counties, benefiting here and statewide from a wave of TV spending by two outside groups on her behalf.

In a rare move for a primary election, the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, which helps the party's Senate candidates, got behind McGinty, adding \$101,928 for 301 local commercials. Women Vote!, a super PAC (political action committee) affiliated with Emily's List, a nonprofit supporting abortion rights, spent another \$122,391 on 497 local commercials. Sestak also had one, Accountable Leadership, which spent \$129,377 on 401 local commercials. That wasn't enough.

Combined, McGinty and the two groups backing her spent \$416,886 on 1,646 commercials compared to \$360,232 on 1,033 commercials spent by Sestak and his super PAC. The other major spending happened in the Democratic state attorney general race.

Again, the biggest spender, Montgomery County Commissioner Josh Shapiro, who won statewide, also won here. Shapiro's campaign spent \$192,981 on 1,161 commercials. Allegheny County District Attorney Stephen Zappala Jr. was next at \$173,728 on 807 commercials, then Northampton County District Attorney John Morganelli, \$87,309 on 256 commercials. They finished in the same order in Lackawanna County. Shapiro won Luzerne, but Morganelli finished second there, with Zappala third.

The Republican candidates, state Sen. John Rafferty Jr., who won the nomination, and former prosecutor and Scranton police officer Joe Peters of Wyoming County, did not air any television commercials locally. Democratic political consultant Ed Mitchell, who was not involved in any of the races, said factors other than television matter more in the presidential race now with citizens paying more attention than before to a variety of information sources. "TV isn't as important as it once was," Mitchell said, pointing out Trump routinely spent less than his opponents. "You still have to have it, especially in down-ballot races (such as the Senate and attorney general races), but people are paying more attention to the quality of the ads and messages than just sheer volume."

Good commercials help more in down-ballot races whose candidates are less well-known to voters than the presidential candidates, but Mitchell said Sestak's "Joe's Got Your Six" commercial actually hurt him. Based on a military phrase, the expression means "I've got your back," but Mitchell said few voters understood that. — ***Hazleton Standard-Speaker***

Atlantic Broadband, a TV, internet and phone service provider for residents and businesses in and around the Aiken area, has announced a local leadership change. "While the company does not comment on management changes, its co-founder (and former member of BCAP's Board of Directors) — Dave Keefe — is the interim senior vice president and general manager of Aiken and the entire Southern division," according to an email from a spokesperson with Matter Communications for

Atlantic Broadband. Keefe has more than 30 years of experience in the industry. He has built and managed broadband and cable systems in the United States, South America, Europe and Asia. – **Aiken (SC) Standard**

Charter Communications Inc.'s purchase of Time Warner Cable Inc. has won approval from a majority at the Federal Communications Commission, a person familiar with the vote said. The development leaves assent from California as the final regulatory hurdle for the \$55.1 billion deal.

FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler last week publicly supported the deal, and it has since gained approval from two more members of the five-person FCC in voting conducted in private, said the person who spoke on condition of anonymity because the result hasn't been made public.

The FCC can publish results after remaining members vote. Late Thursday one made his decision: Ajit Pai, a Republican, cast his vote against the merger, said the person. Pai has criticized the FCC for imposing conditions upon other companies in return for permission to merge. Shannon Gilson, a spokeswoman for the FCC, and Tamara Smith, a Washington-based spokeswoman for Charter, declined to comment.

Justice Department antitrust officials on April 25 cleared the deal, and Wheeler said he supported it. Together the agencies **set restrictions** designed to prevent Charter from interfering with online video that competes with cable channel entertainment packages.

The enlarged Charter would supplant Time Warner Cable as the second-largest U.S. cable operator, gaining 13 million customers in cities including New York, Los Angeles and Dallas. Charter would have about 24 million total customers in 41 states. Charter last year agreed to acquire New York-based Time Warner Cable and Bright House Networks LLC, a cable company based in Syracuse, New York, for \$55.1 billion and \$10.4 billion, respectively, according to prices at the time. The deal came together after top U.S. cable provider Comcast Corp.'s plan to buy Time Warner Cable collapsed amid opposition from regulators concerned over Comcast's control of broadband.

California regulators are to vote on Charter's merger May 12, and the deal could close within days of approval there, Charter Chief Executive Officer Tom Rutledge told investors April 28. – **Bloomberg**

Although the candidacies of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders have exposed active faults in the two parties, a deeper seismic shift in the political landscape is underway, driven by the preference for tailored content that has disrupted the music and cable industries in recent years.

Consumers crave customized content. The album – a bundle of songs of varying quality – was undone by the ability of consumers to download individual songs they actually liked. Similarly, cable consumers tired of paying for "57 Channels (And Nothin' On)" have driven cable companies to experiment with "skinny bundles" – fewer channels that better align with viewer preferences. But with the advent of Netflix, Hulu and Amazon, many subscribers (especially millennials who do not suffer fools, inefficiency or stodgy institutions) have cut the cord and begun to curate their own tailored content. Unbundling is in. Bundles are out.

Political parties are in the business of bundling and disseminating policy positions to their members. Just as some cable subscribers have paid for the Disney Channel in order to get ESPN, some Republican voters have accepted social conservatism in order to get economic growth, and some Democratic voters have tolerated public sector employee unions in order to get social liberalism.

To retain voters who, like cable subscribers, have grown weary of taking their version of the good with the bad, the parties have tolerated the rise of skinny political bundles –

groups that align with a particular party but do not embrace its entire platform. On the Democratic side, Bernie Sanders' democratic socialism represents one such skinny bundle, while on the Republican side, Donald Trump's anti-globalization nationalism represents a parallel skinny bundle. But unlike a cable company, which can offer unlimited skinny bundles and stay in business, a political party cannot divide itself into smaller and inconsistent platforms and remain a party.

Despite the increase in skinny political bundles, there has been more cord cutting in two-party politics than in home entertainment. Over the past decade, the favorability ratings of the two parties have plummeted. As a result, independents now comprise a far larger share of the electorate than either Republicans or Democrats, and more than 50 percent of millennials now characterize themselves as politically "independent."

This is a classic market failure – the two parties and their skinny bundles do not meet the policy preferences of many voters. Rather than accept this failure, independent voters (especially millennials) will push for disruptive innovation. These voters will look for the political equivalent of Netflix – political parties or movements that provide them with the policies they want when they want them.

At the national level, this means a centrist third-party is inevitable. Such a party will likely be socially liberal, fiscally conservative and environmentally attuned – filling the gaping hole in the center of national politics. Although such a platform will not appeal to every independent or centrist, it could conceivably attract enough voters to compete effectively in national elections, particularly if it also competes for Senate and House seats in purple states and districts.

The states offer even more opportunities for political cord cutters. Non-partisan local elections, open primaries, experimentation with voting procedures and elections that can be won with a plurality of votes create conditions where multiple parties or political movements could operate with reasonable chances of success, especially with the Internet enabling new parties to raise money and reach voters the way digital content producers now interact with their customers. Political parties and their platforms may never be customizable to the same extent as home entertainment, but there is plenty of room for tailored political content, particularly on issues that are unique to a particular community, county, district or state.

With the rise of the Internet, unprecedented voter dissatisfaction with both parties, and the insatiable appetite for tailored content, we are entering a transformational era in politics. Indeed, the millennial mindset – tearing down stodgy institutions and rejecting the status quo – is uniquely designed to challenge the two-party system and seek disruptive innovation. The same forces that have disrupted cable will soon cause voters to demand parties and candidates that reflect their tailored policy preferences and hold few, if any, unwanted policy positions. Make sure your "skinny bundle" includes your favorite news channel. This transformation is going to be worth watching. – **Orange County (CA) Register op-ed**

Broadband Cable Association of Pennsylvania

127 State Street · Harrisburg, PA 17101 · 717-214-2000

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