

As Midterm Elections Heat Up, Ad Spending Rises

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eMarketer Editors

With the 2018 midterm elections tightening up, political advertising dollars are flowing to publishers at higher rates than had been expected earlier this year.

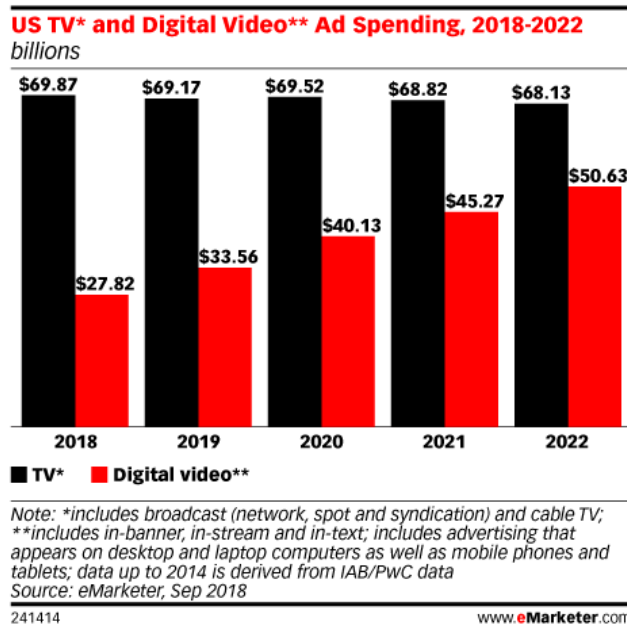
On Monday, broadcaster [E.W. Scripps](#) said its political advertising revenues this year will likely grow more than 50% over the last midterm election in 2014. At that rate, political ad spend will top \$112 million in 2018, surpassing not only the previous midterm year but the 2016 presidential election as well, when its political ad spend reached \$101 million.

Also on Monday, media research company [PQ Media](#) said it had revised its political media spending estimate for 2018 to \$6.755 billion, up from the \$6.575 billion it estimated in July. (PQ Media's spending estimates include not only ad spending but activities such as direct mail, telemarketing and market research.)

In a [post](#) on the [Radio Advertising Bureau's](#) "Radio Matters" blog, PQ Media said that 46.4% of political media spending will go to broadcast TV this year. Direct mail will be the second highest category, at 21.4%, followed by radio (7.4%) and cable TV (7.0%)

eMarketer, too, sees active political ad spending helping broadcasters. According to our latest estimates, total TV ad spending in the US will

reach \$69.87 billion this year. While that is off 0.5% from 2017, it's a milder decline than the 1.5% decrease registered last year.



"This midterm cycle seems to be more comparable to a presidential election than most midterm cycles," said Eric Haggstrom, eMarketer's junior forecasting analyst. But he noted that political spend can crowd out other TV advertisers, "driving up prices during the election season and causing other advertisers to hold back spend. So a big increase in political ad spend won't necessarily yield a big increase in all ad spend."