

# US Political Ad Spending Hits Record High as TV Continues to Dominate

**ARTICLE** | **FEBRUARY 19, 2020**

**eMarketer Editors**

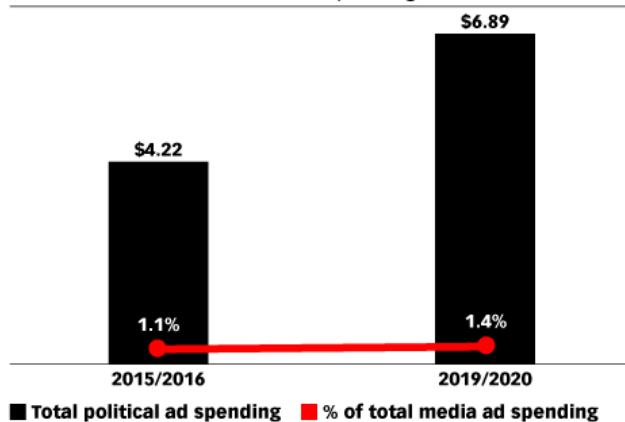
**A**s campaigning for the 2020 presidential election heads into its final months, political ad spending will hit an all-time high. The highly partisan political environment is driving more Americans to donate money to their preferred candidates than in past election seasons, which in turn is funneling more money into advertising.

In our first forecast on political ad spending, we include spending on federal, state and local ads, including political action committee (PAC) ads for candidates and lobbying activities. It also includes ads for legislative or regulatory issues in which there is a specific call to action like voting or calling a congressional representative. Spending is counted in the year the ad runs. It does not include self-promoting ads from brands loosely tied to political causes or ideas.

## **Total Political Spending**

Total political ad spending in the 2019/2020 election cycle will reach \$6.89 billion. Political ad spending fluctuates dramatically from year to year, spiking in even years and dipping in odd years.

**US Total Political Ad Spending, 2015/2016 & 2019/2020**  
billions and % of total media ad spending



*Note: includes advertising related to federal, state or local politics, including elections and lobbying activities; includes advertising directly related to legislative and regulatory issues; growth from the 2015/2016 cycle to the 2019/2020 cycle is 63.3%*  
Source: eMarketer, Feb 2020

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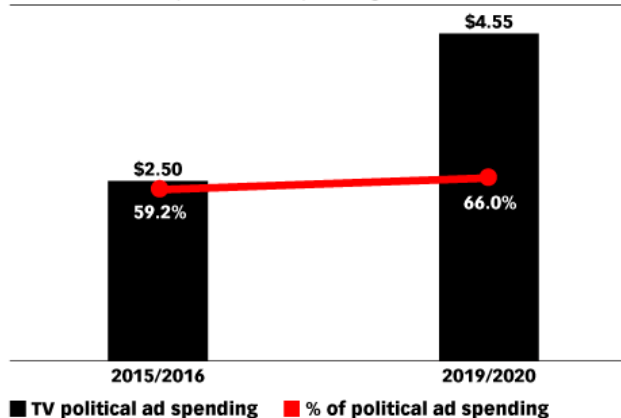
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This cycle's spending is 63.3% higher than spending in the 2015/2016 season, underscoring the intensity of not only the presidential race, but races for congressional seats as well.

## Television

TV still dominates political advertising. This cycle, it will reach \$4.55 billion. That means in the 2019/2020 cycle, spending on political TV ads will account for 3.2% of all TV advertising and 66.0% of all political ad spending. TV's share of political advertising is up a bit from the prior election year, as it takes share from radio and print.

**US TV Political Ad Spending, 2015/2016 & 2019/2020**  
billions and % of political ad spending



■ TV political ad spending ■ % of political ad spending

*Note: includes advertising related to federal, state or local politics, including elections and lobbying activities; includes advertising directly related to legislative and regulatory issues; growth from the 2015/2016 cycle to the 2019/2020 cycle is 82.0%*  
Source: eMarketer, Feb 2020

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“Political spending floods the TV airwaves during the last weeks before the election, raising prices and crowding out other advertisers,” eMarketer forecasting analyst Eric Haggstrom said. “Despite cord-cutting and declining viewership, TV still offers strong reach, particularly among older Americans who are likely to vote. The vast majority of this spending goes to local broadcast or cable/satellite providers, as political advertisers focus on states, or even ZIP codes, that can swing an election.”