

# How Political Advertisers on Deadline Utilize Programmatic

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- The speed and efficiency of programmatic ad buying makes it attractive for political advertisers working under tight deadlines.
- Despite Russian trolls infiltrating social media ad platforms in recent elections, political advertisers continue to rely on self-service digital ad buying platforms.
- About two-thirds of the political ad spend processed by ad buying vendor Centro is transacted programmatically.
- The growth in programmatic political advertising reflects the broader growth of automated buying in digital advertising.

If you're exhausted by the amount of political ads you're seeing, the good news is the midterm elections are almost over. But before that happens, there is money to be made by political advertisers and their vendors.

In an October 2018 study by [New York University](#), researchers estimated that advertisers representing federal candidates spent about \$10 million on Google and Facebook during the middle of September. The study indicates that past instances of [Russian trolls using social ad platforms](#) to try to influence US elections has not deterred political advertisers from utilizing these ad products.

## US Federal Candidate Political Ad Spending Metrics, by Platform, Sep 9-22, 2018

- 1 Total advertisers
- 2 Total ads
- 3 Total impressions (millions)
- 4 Total spending (millions)
- 5 Average impressions per ad (thousands)
- 6 Average spending per ad
- 7 Cost per impressions

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Facebook	281	18.5K	76-220	\$1.1- \$4.8	9-25	\$153- \$685	\$0.006- \$0.0072
Google	172	3.5K	114.5- 1200.0	\$6.3	33-340	\$1.8K	\$0.055- \$0.005
Twitter	24	103	5.8	\$0.086	56	\$265	\$0.015

Source: New York University (NYU), "An Analysis of United States Online Political Advertising," Oct 15, 2018

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A study released this week by Adobe showed that CPMs on national news websites have been **steadily increasing** leading up to Election Day, reflecting the increased competition for inventory. A feature that helps political advertisers on a time crunch get their ads up fast is programmatic buying.

**Centro**, an ad buying platform that has both programmatic and traditional ad sales businesses, has seen an uptick in the amount of inventory it buys programmatically on behalf of political advertisers. In 2018, 66% of Centro's political ad spend has been transacted programmatically, up from 53% in 2016, according to a Centro spokesperson. About two-thirds of Centro's digital political ad spend is comprised of video.

For its business that isn't related to political causes, Centro purchases 45% of inventory programmatically. According to a company spokesperson, Centro's political operation leans more heavily toward programmatic because its political clients are more digitally-focused than its general client base.

In April 2018, Centro surveyed 50 US digital marketers who work on political campaigns and more than three-fourths of respondents said that programmatic advertising will be a **key part of their midterm strategies**. Grace Briscoe, vice president of candidates and causes at Centro, spoke to eMarketer about how political advertisers are approaching digital ad buying.

## **With digital political ad campaigns, is there a lot of constant maintenance?**

I started out buying TV and radio and all kinds of traditional media before I moved into digital. And the traditional media is much more “set it and forget it.” You send out the purchase order, you traffic the spots and there's not much else you have to do. With digital, it's hands on every step of the way.

## **Has programmatic's efficiency made it a natural bedfellow for political advertising?**

I think so. The speed has been crucial for political advertisers. The ability to respond in real time, whether that's responding to opposition messaging or an attack ad or a news story. You can move quicker than with other media. When buying digitally, advertisers can find inventory on short notice, which is crucial in time-sensitive political campaigns.

## **With TV advertising, is there inventory even available on such short notice?**

Some of it is available with TV. There's a difference. There is a finite amount of inventory on TV. So they can hit sellouts in a more real way than digital. Digital is a much broader bucket especially when you get into programmatic; where you're tapping into so many sources, there's a lot more fluidity and the ability to turn things around pretty quickly.

## **Does growth in political programmatic spend just reflect the general **growth we're seeing with programmatic**?**

Absolutely. It's definitely a trend that isn't unique to political, and I think we're seeing it across all industries for advertising: a shift towards more programmatic. And political is following in line with that.

## **I thought political advertisers may be slower to adopt programmatic because they can be quite cautious.**

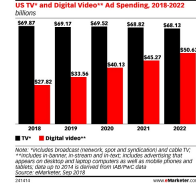
Political campaigns are very risk averse by nature. It is a zero-sum game and feels like career life or death to them, as opposed to other advertising.

They can be slower to adopt these things. But I do think they've come a long way and have confidence in digital's ability to reach the right

voters, be effective in persuading them and fundraising.

**Article** Sep 25, 2018

## As Midterm Elections Heat Up, Ad Spending Rises



**Article** Jun 20, 2018

## Political Advertisers Will Lean on Programmatic During Midterms

