



Media and Politics: Background/ Introduction/ Standards

	<p><i>The Role of Media in Elections: Helping Students Understand Media's Influence</i></p> <p>by Frank Baker, media educator</p> <p>(Workshops available; contact me)</p> <p>©2004</p>	
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Prescription to Lie?

Do your students know that political campaign ads are considered “free speech” and as such cannot be censored? Broadcast and cable TV stations cannot edit these ads nor refuse to air them. So if candidates can (and do) say anything in their ads, how are we to know what’s true?

“The bottom line, then, is that it’s important for citizens **to look carefully at political ads**. Certainly the truth or falsity and, regardless of ‘truth’, the deceptiveness of ad content is important to examine. Many newspapers and television analysis programs provide the citizen a good opportunity to learn more about the quality of the verbal content of political commercials. Although a majority of Americans are not aware of this, government closely controls the truth-value of national product advertising on television. But because of the principle of free speech, a principle protected by the U.S. Constitution, there is no control whatsoever on the content of a political commercial. Basically, a politician can say anything she or he wishes in a political ad. The only ‘control’ over content in a political ad is media and public response to that content.” (Source: PBS By The People)

NCSS Position Statement on Technology (2013)

“ Given social studies educators’ expertise with sourcing historical evidence, **critically analyzing political messages**, and drawing inferences from GIS data, they are well equipped to further students’ **media literacy** and related skills.”

National Standards:

Center for Civic Education

3. Political communication: television, radio, the press, and political persuasion.

Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on the influence of the media on American political life.

e.g. campaign advertisements

Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: II. Thematic Strands
V Individuals, Groups and Institutions
(Example: the media/press as an institution)

Excerpt from NCSS Standards Executive Summary:

Thomas Jefferson, among others, emphasized that the vitality of a democracy depends upon the education and participation of its citizens. While such active civic participation includes becoming informed about issues and voting in elections, it can take many other diverse forms relating to the United States government, its history, its people, and its neighbors around the world.

Mid Continental Research Ed Lab (McRel)

[Influence of media on American political life](#)