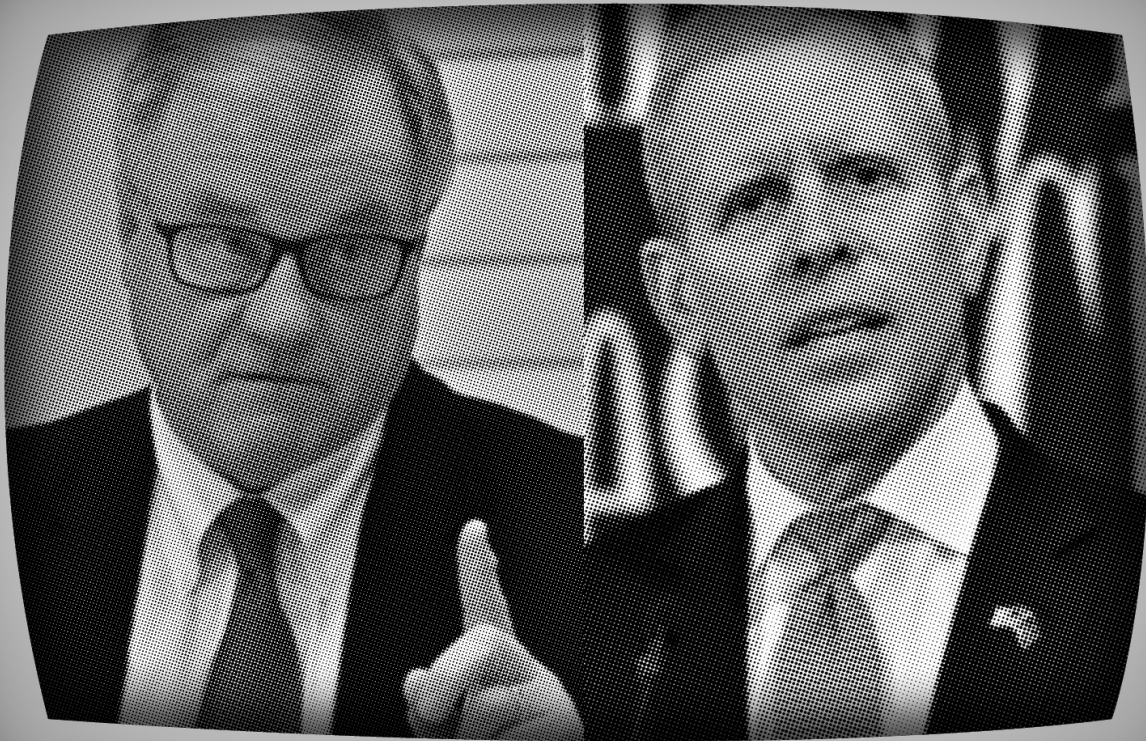




THE CAUCUS

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AD NAUSEUM



ARE YOU SICK OF THIS TV WAR YET?

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OVERHEARD ON 3RD



The First Troop Philadelphia City Cavalry has been described as the “only unit in the U.S. Army that elects members after a series of rush-week-style fancy dinners and boozy parties.” **PAGE 4**

THE INTERVIEW



Sen. Don White wants to give schools the option of arming teachers and faculty, saying it would prevent violence planned by “cowards who want their 15 minutes of fame.” **PAGE 10**

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AIRING DIRTY LAUNDRY

Inside the nasty and expensive television ad war between Scott Wagner and Paul Mango

» SAM JANESCH

Tom Wolf ushered in a new era in Pennsylvania politics when he honked the horn of his 8-year-old Jeep Wrangler. The three friendly beeps reverberated in living rooms across the state for

months as the only gubernatorial campaign ads on television.

By the time Wolf's opponents put their own commercials on the air, it was too late. The cabinet-making businessman appearing in those folksy ads had built a lead he would never relinquish.

"There isn't any argument. Tom Wolf's introductory commercial ... took a race where he was about five or six in the polls and put him into the front of the pack, and he never trailed in the primary or in the general election," said G. Terry Madonna, director of the Center for Politics and Public Affairs at Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster.

Four years later, Wolf has revived his old campaign playbook; he spent \$350,000 on media in the last few weeks without a primary opponent in sight.

And his potential Republican challengers have, for months, been copying his methods — spending huge sums of their own personal fortunes to televise ads early and in massive quantities.

Scott Wagner and Paul Mango are hammering each other and spending millions on advertising in the hopes of keeping competitive in what every political scientist says will be a huge year for Democrats.

Meantime, Laura Ellsworth is waiting in the wings, criticizing their increasingly negative attacks and trying to discredit a strategy that political observers say is officially the new normal in Keystone State politics.

THE AD WAR

Four years after Wolf showed off his worn Jeep — and the mechanic who helped keep it in running — his opponents are trying to outdo one another in the Republican primary campaign by painting starkly contrasting images of themselves.

Wagner is selling himself as a farm-raised businessman who owns a trash-hauling company and isn't afraid to get on the back of a garbage truck or clean the company toilets.

Mango is playing up his status as a West Point graduate, and being handed his degree from Grand Old Party icon Ronald Reagan, going on to Harvard, then learning how to reinvigorate businesses.

Wagner had been running for governor for a year before his campaign went on the air in December, five months before the Republican primary. "He wanted his message out there," said Wagner campaign spokesman Andrew Romeo. "And he had the ability to do so financially."

The multimillionaire invested \$4 million of his own money in his bid right away. Campaign-finance reports show Wagner first began making media-related purchases early in 2017; he spent nearly \$750,000 at the end of the year to begin the television ads in force.

In an ad called "Tough," the words "conservative," "reformer" and "tough" are prominently featured in big bold type as a voiceover announces them to reinforce the point.

The one-term senator from York wants voters to view him as the outsider candidate rather than the "Harrisburg insider" he talks negatively about in the ads.

Mango, the first-time candidate from Pittsburgh, has a similar outsider message telling voters that politicians are the real cause of all Pennsylvania's woes.

Voters view politicians in a dim light, so both candidates will likely continue to emphasize their business experience, said Chris Borick, professor of political science and director of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion.

"You're not going to get much from Sen. Scott Wagner," Borick said, emphasizing the word "senator."

Madonna said, "They're both fighting to be the classic outsider." They're also tearing into each other.

A new ad from Mango's campaign last week features cartoon drawings of Wagner while slinging several dark monikers at him — from

"slumlord Wagner" to "sleazy bail bondsman Wagner," "deadbeat dad Wagner" and "violent Wagner."

A Wagner ad from last month calls Mango a "phony" and a "real liberal."

Ellsworth, for her part, denounced the vicious ads and said while she hasn't been on TV yet, it's only a matter of time before she is.

"(Voters) don't want 30-second attack ads that they're bombarded for at home when politicians talk about the other politician," Ellsworth said at a recent Pennsylvania Press Club luncheon in Harrisburg. "They're tired of it. They're sick of it. That's why you haven't seen me doing it — because I don't believe in it."

Her ads will hit the air, she said with a smile, "when I think people are really attending to the issues, which they're not at the moment."

SPENDING SO FAR

Wagner's and Mango's campaigns each spent \$1.9 million on media-related purchases in the first three months of 2018, according to a Caucus review of their campaign finance reports filed last week.

That's on top of the \$1.1 million Wagner spent and \$725,000 Mango spent in 2017, according to their reports from last year.

All of Mango's media money went right to BrabenderCox, the Harrisburg-based firm run by former Rick Santorum strategist John Brabender. The descriptions for all of that spending was "media/consulting/advertising."

"Our agency is his comprehensive media firm ... from television to digital to radio," said BrabenderCox's Mat Beynon, who serves as Mango's primary campaign spokesman.

Most of Wagner's spending — about \$2,340,000 — went to Jamestown Associates for "placed media" going back to November.

The Philadelphia-based company was the group behind President Donald Trump's television campaign in 2016.

Wagner also notably paid \$508,214 to an Alexandria,

Virginia-based group, Imge Inc., for online advertising, an increasingly popular method of reaching voters. He also spent \$124,014 directly on Facebook ads in 2017 and dabbled in Snapchat ads — just \$115 — campaign records show.

Campaign spokespeople for both Wagner and Mango declined to comment on how much Facebook or other social media ads are part of their digital strategies.

Ellsworth, meantime, reported no distinct media-related purchases in 2017, and in recent months reported just \$24,000 to a Columbus, Ohio-based firm to produce videos for her.

Her campaign spent \$351,239 in the last three months total — almost the exact amount of money that her would-be opponent in November has already spent to revive his television campaign.

Wolf, who doesn't face any Democratic challengers in the May primary, reported sending \$353,590 to his media buyer, the Philadelphia-based Shorr Johnson Magnus, in two payments starting Feb. 23.

That's the same firm that he used in 2014 and that produced ads for President Barack Obama's 2008 campaign.

And it's already put the governor's money to use.

While Wagner and Mango began spending big to get their ads on TV in late December and early January, Wolf's re-election ads began in late February, according to television contracts filed with the Federal Communications Commission.

Wolf's campaign manager Jeff Sheridan declined to talk about the media buys.

It's unclear how much each candidate is specifically spending in every market, but what is clear from the FCC reports is that Wolf, Wagner and Mango are all on the air already in the Pittsburgh and Scranton markets.

The pair of Republicans are also spending heavily in Philadelphia, where buying air time can take an unnerving chunk out of candidates' piggy banks.

To get on during Philadelphia's ABC affiliate Channel 6 during the 6 p.m. hour, they're coughing up



COVER STORY

\$3,250 for 30 seconds, according to contracts filed with the FCC.

For the NBC affiliate in Pittsburgh, where Wagner, Mango and Wolf have all bought time, it can cost \$925 for the same time slot.

At CBS in Scranton, where they are all also on TV, it's \$75 for 30 seconds at 6 p.m.

Wagner is the only candidate on TV in Erie and Altoona-Johnstown, according to the FCC reports.

THE TOM WOLF PLAYBOOK

Wolf came charging out of the gate in 2014, vowing from that first commercial to be "a different kind of governor."

He dropped \$10 million of his own money on the campaign and launched ads in the major media markets from late January through the May 20 primary, building his name recognition and boosting his position in the polls.

Originally, he wasn't even close to being considered the front-runner; there were bigger names including Rob McCord, Allyson Schwartz and Katie McGinty in the race, Borick said.

Wolf not only spent to get his face on TV, but he did it well — with "quirky Jeep ads" that the public could easily identify with, along with hitting hard on issues like education spending and a natural gas severance tax, Borick said.

"The combination of the early timing and the size of his buys were not normal in Pa. politics," Borick said. "He really did take a lot of people by surprise with that strategy."

Madonna, the longtime Pennsylvania politics observer, said Wolf's first ads were the most effective he's seen since 1966, when former Gov. Milton Shapp ran his first unsuccessful, self-funded campaign with a "man against the machine" theme.

"There have been commercials that flooded the markets that have not been very effective," said Madonna.

For the previously unknown businessman and secretary of revenue, the strategy won him a place in not only voters' living rooms, but also on the national stage.

"Why a Tom Wolf Win Is No Surprise: Money," a headline in *The Atlantic* read the day before the May 20, 2014 primary.

The *New York Times*, in its story about Wolf winning that primary, said he had been "virtually anonymous before spending as much as \$10 million of his own money on television ads."

BIG MONEY, ROUND II?

Wolf spent a grand total of \$32.5 million in his 2014 campaign — a bit more than the \$28 million from Corbett's camp.

Pennsylvania was the fourth-highest state in the country in terms of television ad spending in the 2014 midterms, and the third-highest state in which candidates themselves put money into those ads, according to a report from The Center For Public Integrity at the end of that year.

Wolf's campaign spent \$19.3 million on more than 25,000 television spots while Corbett's campaign spent \$15.4 million on 23,225 spots in the two-year period, the center reported. Millions more were spent on thousands of other ads from McCord, McGinty and Schwartz.

Outside groups also spent millions.

PA Families First, a Democratic group backed by the Democratic Governors Association, spent \$1.8 million on 2,302 ads

attacking Corbett for education cuts.

And a Republican-backed group, Key Questions Key Answers, spent \$220,000 on 67 anti-Wolf spots featuring the soon-to-be governor's face superimposed on a sheep and asking viewers to go to NoWolfInSheepsClothing.com.

Stephen Medvic, a Franklin & Marshall College government professor, said it's difficult to predict how much money is going to flow into the race this year because it's early and there hasn't been much polling yet.

And how competitive the race appears

to more than a few races that have drawn attention and cash from all over the country.

McGinty's challenge to Republican U.S. Sen. Pat Toomey in 2016 cost an astounding \$164 million combined, the most for any Senate race in history.

Last month, the special election between Republican Rick Saccone and Democrat Conor Lamb featured a last-ditch, \$10.6 million effort from national Republicans and nearly \$2 million from liberal groups. Still, Saccone came up short.

Who's on the air and where

This chart shows the television stations and markets where the 2018 Pennsylvania gubernatorial hopefuls are spending their money on advertising.

Station listing	Cost of 30-Second Ad at 6 p.m. Weekdays	Who's Advertising
KDKA (CBS, Pittsburgh)	\$1,500	Wagner, Mango
WPXI (NBC, Pittsburgh)	\$925	Wagner, Mango, Wolf
WTAE (ABC, Pittsburgh)	\$800	Wagner, Mango, Wolf
WPGH (Fox, Pittsburgh)	\$600	Wagner, Mango
WPCW (CW, Pittsburgh)	\$350	Wagner, Mango
WPVI (ABC, Philadelphia)	\$3,250	Wagner, Mango
WCAU (NBC, Philadelphia)	\$900	Wagner, Mango
KYW (CBS, Philadelphia)	\$700	Wagner, Mango
WTFX (Fox, Philadelphia)	\$400	Wagner, Mango
WPSG (CW, Philadelphia)	\$225	Mango
WPHL (Philadelphia)	Not Available	Wagner, Mango
WJET (ABC, Erie)	\$1,080	Wagner
WICU (NBC, Erie)	\$215	Wagner
WSEE (CBS, Erie)	\$115	Wagner
WFXP (Fox, Erie)	Not Available	Wagner
WNEP (ABC, Scranton)	\$750	Wagner, Mango, Wolf
WYOU (CBS, Scranton)	\$75	Wagner, Mango, Wolf
WBRE (NBC, Wilkes-Barre)	\$175	Wagner, Mango, Wolf
WOLF (Fox, Hazleton)		Wagner, Mango, Wolf
WHTM (ABC, Harrisburg)	\$500	Wagner, Mango
WHP (CBS, Harrisburg)	\$150	Wagner, Mango
WGAL (NBC, Lancaster)	\$650	Wagner, Mango
WPMT (Fox, York)	\$85	Wagner, Mango
WTAJ (CBS, Altoona)	\$525	Wagner
WATM (ABC, Altoona)	\$40	Wagner
WJAC (NBC, Johnstown)	\$300	Wagner
WWCP (Fox, Johnstown)	Not Available	Wagner

Source: Federal Communications Commission

is going to determine much about the amounts that the campaigns — and outside groups working on their behalf — are going to put into ads.

"A lot of it's going to be driven by 'How close is the race?'" Medvic said. It will be a "big Democratic year," he said, and the Republican nominee hasn't been decided yet.

The first and only poll in the race so far, released March 29 by Franklin & Marshall College's Center for Opinion Research, found many voters are undecided.

The poll's hypothetical head-to-head matchups found Wolf defeating Ellsworth 50 percent to 22 percent; Wolf beating Mango 49 percent to 22 percent; and Wolf beating Wagner 38 percent to 21 percent.

The Wagner-Wolf matchup question revealed the most undecided voters, 35 percent.

NATIONAL INTEREST?

Since the record-breaking Wolf-Corbett race, Pennsylvania's been home

And, of course, Trump became the first Republican presidential nominee to take the state in nearly 30 years while spending far less than Hillary Clinton.

But in 2018, with a crowded election season made even more competitive by the new congressional district map here, analysts aren't expecting the gubernatorial race to break any records — especially if it doesn't appear to be very close.

Kyle Kopko, a political science professor at Elizabethtown College, said investments from the national parties and independent groups such as the governors associations are likely.

More outside resources coming here, however, will likely be devoted to the U.S. Senate race between Democrat Sen. Bob Casey and Republican U.S. Rep. Lou Barletta. Outside interests will view the gubernatorial horse race as important, but the Senate one has national implications, including the narrow margin over which party has control of the chamber after November.

"They're going to have to do an analysis of what's important," Kopko said of the national interests.

Even looking at other gubernatorial races, there are places such as Ohio, a battleground state where Gov. John Kasich won't be on the ballot again, where the national Republican Party needs to make significant investments, Kopko said.

"Republicans are going to cling to every single incumbent first of all," and as they look at the rest of their large-but-finite pool of money, they're going to be looking at the strength of the other GOP candidates, Medvic said.

If one is underperforming in the polls or unable to raise money individually, they'll say, "Why should we come in and bail him out?" Medvic said

"They're going to be looking for signs that a candidate is viable especially in this environment," Medvic said.

Other factors will be how the primaries shape up, how voters feel about Trump's tax reform efforts, and the performance of his administration and congressional Republicans in general.

Borick said the general-election campaigns could easily spend more than \$20 million. The primary alone could cost \$10 million, he said.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Analysts say Labor Day is the typical point for campaigns and outside interests to kick off their work and television spending in high gear.

But they also say it wouldn't be a shock if a healthy dose of ads continued all through the spring and summer, especially as the Republican nominee builds name recognition and tries to take advantage of state issues in the news, like another potential budget debacle in July.

In 2018, candidates are expanding their efforts into social media, but the "lion's share" of the spending will still be directed toward television, said Borick, who estimated three-quarters of the gubernatorial spending will be in TV.

"They'll be fighting for TV spots," especially with so many competitive races in the Philadelphia area this fall.

As of the end of March, Wagner, the Pennsylvania Republican Party-endorsed candidate, had the most cash on hand heading into a vital stretch of the Republican primary.

He reported having \$6,299,862 cash on hand, while Mango had \$3,295,224 and Ellsworth had \$434,158.

Wolf's campaign had a \$14.7 million war chest and was already on television assuring voters that he has indeed been "a different kind of governor."

"It wasn't just talk to get elected in 2014. It was about actions that he executed as governor," Sheridan said about Wolf's promised salary deferment and gift bans for administration officials.

After voters first heard Wolf say those ideas on repeat, that television strategy became "the new standard," Borick said.

Unknown candidates need to get out early to establish a presence with voters. And perceived frontrunners such as Wagner must continuously reinforce that perception and "make everyone else play catch-up," Borick said.

"Clearly in politics if something works it's going to be replicated and I have no doubt in this cycle you will see, for those who have the resources, a replication," said Borick.