



Priorities USA Hits Trump Over Coronavirus

From its pre-Super Tuesday peak to the current coronavirus-induced paralysis gripping the country, spending by political advertising giants last week slowed to only \$23.7M in comparison to its high of \$163M the week of 2/25. While much of this decline is due to Bloomberg dropping out and the Democratic field narrowing, we have seen changes in spending in the last week due to the coronavirus.

Today, the well-financed Democratic SuperPAC Priorities USA Action reemerged with 4 new creatives set to launch from 3/24-4/6, in the four major 2020 swing states of Florida, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. The ads target President Trump's response to the crisis at hand and contrast it to what would be Joe Biden's, the presumptive Democratic nominee, different and stronger response. According to a press release by Priorities USA Action, the initial buy will be \$6 Million across TV and digital. This is part of Priorities USA Action pledge to spend \$150 million in the 2020 cycle in support of the Democratic Party nominee and against President Trump.

One creative, "**Exponential Threat**", features a timeline of President Trump's response to counteracting the virus and the continuously rising level of confirmed cases in the US. "**Better Prepared**" highlights footage of Biden's response to the virus while on the campaign trail. A digital creative "**Map**" again shows a timeline of the spread of Covid-19 through a map of the affected areas in the US. Finally, "**Steady Leadership**" conveys how President Trump's White House is in "chaos" and depicts Biden as an "Honest and Trusted" leader. As of 4:30 pm on 3/23 Priorities USA Action has spent \$776k in FL, \$568k in MI, \$812k in PA \$387k in WI, racking up a total of \$2.5M. Priorities USA Action has continuously focused all its advertising to FL, MI, PA, and WI, but has expressed that these creatives could expand into other states as the situation continues.

It is interesting to highlight the response measures each states' administration is taking to Covid-19 and the polling numbers for both President Trump and Vice President Biden in the targeted states. According to Real Clear Politics average polling as of 3/12, Trump is up 1 point over Biden in FL. Biden is leading Trump by 4 points in PA, and 5 points in MI. Both men are tied in WI.

Florida is in the spotlight this week because of its rapidly increasing number of cases and tepid state response, especially in comparison to NY, CA, IL and now MA and MI. The response timeline by Florida's Republican Governor Ron DeSantis in contrast with Democratic Governor's Tom Wolf of Pennsylvania and Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan is curious. Florida only shut down "non-essential businesses" on March 20th, when the number of cases reached 563 in the state, in comparison to PA, which issued a "non-essential businesses" shut down on March 19th after 185 cases. Michigan ordered a statewide "stay at home" order on March 23rd after 1,200 confirmed cases.

We will closely monitor whether any GOP supporting group, the Trump campaign or the president himself launches a response to the attacks. We will also watch for how formal or direct it may be, whether a counteractive ad campaign, the president's immediate response on twitter, or a combination of both.