



# Midterm election tab: \$2.6 billion

**JIM KUHNHEIN**  
*The Press Writer*

WASHINGTON — Wealthy Americans and legions of small donors are helping finance an onslaught of last-minute political advertising and a fierce voter turnout drive over the next three days, closing out a midterm election that is projected to cost more than \$2.6 billion.

Candidates, the national parties and advocacy groups are pumping millions of dollars into a few dozen House and Senate contests that

could rearrange the nation's political power structure.

All this money has contributed to one of the greatest saturations of political and issue ads on television. Combined with money spent on ads for governor races and scores of ballot initiatives in the states, the spending on congressional advertising will exceed \$2 billion this year, more than was spent in the 2004 presidential election.

The influx of money has had its share of surprises.

The parties, particularly the Democrats, have adapted remarkably well to a 2002 campaign finance law that many thought would render them irrelevant. Democrats and Republicans have tapped a new vein of small donors, and have taken advantage of higher contribution limits to squeeze more money out of the ultra-rich.

Strikingly, the Democrats have used a late burst of fundraising to close a Republican cash advantage and to expand their hunt for competitive

paces. The rush of cash has also quieted an internal squabble over money between Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean and the heads of the party's two campaign committees.

At the same time, challengers have raised more money, putting Republican incumbents at risk. And political action committees set up by labor, business and ideological groups have made a resurgence, raising hundreds of millions of dollars to target specific congressional races.

One thing is for sure. While the 2002 campaign finance law, known as McCain-Feingold, banned unrestricted donations from labor, corporations and the wealthy to the political parties, it did not reduce the amount of money in the political arena.

"The money would have increased no matter what," said Steve Weissman, associate director at the Campaign Finance Institute, which tracks money in politics.

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## Running a county jail not cheap

MEDICAL, TRANSPORTATION COSTS FOR INMATES RISING

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Criminals are becoming more expensive to house as medical costs and fuel prices increase.

"There is no question the county board has been concerned with the cost of housing criminals," said Elmer Murman, budget chairman of the Adams County Board of Supervisors. "A real concern of the county board yearly is increased cost of law enforcement and the court system. It all relates to the ills of our society."



Magee



Murman

More than \$1 million is spent every year to run the Adams County Jail alone, according to the county budget figures.

Much of the budget is spent on deputy salaries and benefits, but the less predictable expenses are medical and travel costs for jail inmates. Those costs are dependent on the number of inmates in the custody of the jail.

For the 2006-07 budget, \$64,000



BRENT McCOWN/Tribune

Above: Corrections Officer Jon Bornemeier locks a cell door Oct. 27 on cellblock D at the Adams County Jail. Top left: One of the cells on cellblock D is shown. Costs are rising to house inmates because of transportation and medical needs.

was set aside for medical costs for inmates. Actual expenses have hovered around \$64,000 for the last two years, but in 2003-04, \$113,990 was spent for medical treatment.

Adams County Sheriff Gregg Magee said the cost of medical treatment for prisoners fluctuates depending on the amount of prisoners being held and their medical problems.

He said one major factor is the rising cost for prisoner dentistry, with the rise in methamphetamine abuse. Over time, meth use can decay the nerve endings and rot teeth.

"Dental care has become part of our daily routine because of the meth effect on dental issues," Magee said. "It is more frequent that the inmate is referred to an

oral surgeon because of the number of teeth that need to be removed."

Other medical issues like heart problems, blood disease and other major ailments can create a burden on the jail budget.

"We've been fortunate in the last year not to have any serious problems," he said. "There's very few who have medical coverage."

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## Election setting records

VOTER REGISTRATION IS UP; SO IS EARLY, ABSENTEE VOTING

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Despite a hotly contested U.S. Senate race and several controversial ballot initiatives, only 53 percent of Nebraska voters are expected to turn out for Tuesday's general election.

While the percentage is low, Nebraska has more registered voters than ever before, Secretary of State John Gale said.

"There are 1,138,069 registered voters this year, which is about 90 percent of all eligible voters," Gale said.

Of those 1,138,069 registered to vote, about 603,000 are expected to go to the polls.

"I would be extremely pleased if my estimate is low," Gale said.

Gale also said that early and absentee voting for this election was looking to set a Nebraska record.

"Those numbers are at a record high," he said.

Gale explained that the estimated voter turnout is based on several different sources including county election officials, trends in early and absentee voting and historic numbers.

When asked why some voters don't actually go and vote, Gale said that is a complex question he's trying to tackle. Gale gave several common reasons why citizens don't vote: they're too busy, they're away from home, they don't feel informed or they don't like the advertising.

"I know there are a lot of people that are disillusioned by the ads; they say 'I'm sick of the ads and therefore I'm not going to vote,' which is exactly the wrong action to take," Gale said. "They're surrendering their right to shape the government."

"When you get right down to it, those who govern are those who show up."

Gale also addressed the problem of information.

"Voters' guides are extremely helpful and important," Gale said, and inferred that the state is looking at its options to further educate eligible voters.

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**Inside**

Election results to be known later than usual. — Page A5

# Anderson reflects on first season at MPH

PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR ALREADY IN THE WORKS

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As the first season of racing at Motorsport Park Hastings came to a close last weekend, managing partner George Anderson didn't take much time to reflect on the last several months.

By Wednesday, Anderson already was out on the track laying out the Carolina curbs and

dreaming up other plans for the area.

And on Saturday, Anderson will meet with leaders of the Sports Car Club of America's Midwest Division to bid for events over the next several years.

Anderson conducted the first official weekend of racing



Anderson

in August when the Rocky Mountain Vintage Racers took over the track at U.S. Highway 6 and Showboat Boulevard for the weekend.

Since that time, Anderson has been out at the track day and night either

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BRENT McCOWN/Tribune

A RallyCross racer kicks up dirt as fans watch from the stands Oct. 28 at Motorsport Park Hastings.

### Weather

**Hi:** Partly cloudy today, tonight and Sunday.  
**62**

**Lo:** Sunday.  
**38**



Art by Daniel Olinger, 9, Hawthorne School

**STARBUCKS LAPTOPS**

SEATTLE — Starbucks Corp. said Friday it had lost track of four laptop computers, two of which had private information on about 60,000 current and former U.S. employees and fewer than 80

Canadian workers and contractors.

The data, which includes names, addresses and Social Security numbers, is about three years old, dating prior to December 2003, said Valerie O'Neil, a spokeswoman for the Seattle-based coffee retailer.

The company has not received

any reports that anyone's personal information has been compromised.

"We have no reason to believe these laptops are in the hands of someone who wants to misuse them," O'Neil said. "We just want to make every effort to protect our partners."

*The Associated Press*

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## Campaigns: Tab to hit \$2.6 billion

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Evan Tracey, chief operating officer at TNSM/Campaign Media Analysis Group, a company that tracks political advertising, noted that candidates can now solicit twice as much money from individual contributors as they could in 2002.

"Salaries didn't double, rents didn't double, cell phones didn't double, so you have more money to go to the largest campaign item, which is paid media," Tracey said.

The pace of fundraising and spending reflects the closeness of this year's election. Democrats need a net gain of 15 seats to win control of the House and six seats to regain control of the Senate.

As of Oct. 18, the six main committees of the two national parties had raised about \$770 million and House and Senate candidates had raised \$1.14 billion, according to the Federal Election Commission. And they have continued to raise and spend money since.

In 38 House districts deemed competitive, Republican incumbents have raised an average of about \$2.5 million each and their Democratic challengers have raised an average of about \$1.6 million. More surprising is the Democratic advantage in the 14 competitive races for open House seats now held by retiring Republicans. There Republicans have raised an average of \$1.8 million and Democrats have amassed an average of \$1.9 million each.

In all 52 of those races the two national parties have stepped in with contributions and independent spending averaging nearly \$1.4 million for Republicans and more than \$1 million for Democrats. Together the parties have poured more than \$5 million into each of seven of the hottest races.

## Voting: Election setting record for voter registration

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Gale also predicted that within 10 years, voters would have many more options to make voting easier.

"I think 10 years from now, we'll have five or six more options," Gale said, listing telephone voting, Internet voting and mail-in voting as options

that may be offered.

Gale also wants to reach members of the younger generation before they're eligible to vote.

A program already in place invites 16 and 17-year-olds to help with elections, which ultimately raises political awareness and interest. Gale would like to see that program

expand across the state.

"That's the generation we really need to reach because if we engage them now, hopefully they'll continue to be active throughout their lives," Gale said.

Despite the projected low voter turnout throughout the state, Gale pointed out that voter

turnout in the 3rd Congressional District is projected to be higher than in the other districts.

"In the 3rd District, we expect a higher turnout — it's always been that way," Gale said, adding that the 3rd District usually is more politically active and informed, partially because it is made up of an older population.

Gale stressed that people should take advantage of their right to vote. Without voters, a democracy doesn't really exist, he said.

"With low voter turnout, is representative democracy sustainable?" Gale asked, adding that those who vote are taking control of their government.

## Landlords: HU disconnections causing concern

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On Friday, HU Manager Marv Schultes said he was unsure if landlords could be notified due to privacy laws and protection of the renters. HU attorney Steve Scheer said he agreed with Schultes that there might be a question of privacy.

"We're very, very concerned about the privacy point of view," Schultes said.

After consideration, HU board member Chuck Shoemaker, who also is an attorney, said he saw no reason why there would be a breach of privacy — if the landlord was only notified about utilities being shut off at a specific address.

There would be no mention of the renter or the reason for having the utilities disconnected, according to the proposed policy change.

Hastings Mayor Matt Rossen, who also owns several rental properties, said Grand Island Utilities has been notifying landlords of utility disconnection at rental properties since the 1980s.

Don Cox, HU's director of marketing and energy supply, said it would be pointless to notify landlords prior to disconnecting the utilities because renters often pay the bill once HU employees go to disconnect their power.

"We do thousands of postings a month, and of those, only a small percentage are actually disconnected," he said.

One day prior to disconnection, HU attaches a colored postcard to a home's door, Cox said.

In 2005, HU left 5,188 postings but only disconnected utilities 1,039 times, according to billing records.

At that point, Sinner said it might be better for the billing department, which handles the disconnections, to make an attempt to call the landlord on the day that the power has been disconnected.

He suggested landlords leave a phone number with HU, so HU

can contact them.

Currently, a postcard is mailed to the landlord on the day that the power is disconnected.

Sinner said sometimes he doesn't receive the notice until three or four days after the power has been disconnected.

Sinner suggested HU try calling once, and if the landlord is not reached, then sending a postcard.

That way, the landlord would have a possible warning of the utility disconnection, he said.

Cox suggested that landlords sign up for the courtesy call at the bottom of the signed order system agreement. That agreement allows landlords the ability to

automatically revert service to their name when a tenant moves or is disconnected for nonpayment.

The board plans to make a final decision on the changes at its Nov. 17 meeting.

On Friday, the board also:

- ◆ Discussed the water and sanitary sewer fees.
- ◆ Discussed residency requirements for HU employees. Currently, all HU employees are required to live within six miles of the city limits. Anderson said he would like to consider extending that distance to 10 miles to include more possible employees. The board plans to discuss it again at a future meeting.
- ◆ Held a closed session to discuss contract negotiations for energy supply and an individual personnel issue.

## HU: Support of chamber, HEDC likely to continue

Continued from page A5

To cultivate further retail development, Hastings said the chamber wants to develop a packet including an informational DVD and other items to give possible developers and businesses the information they need to decide if the city of Hastings is right for them. Community members also could use the folders to distribute.

Hastings also said he wants to change perceptions that the city is closed to new development through advertisements that promote businesses in Hastings.

The chamber planned to use the funds to develop Let's Grow Hastings when HU allocated it the \$50,000, Hastings said.

However, he said the chamber didn't receive the money until April and wasn't able to form a committee to work on the project until May.

Hastings said the chamber has not spent any of the \$50,000 yet, because it wants to make sure the money is spent wisely.

He said the chamber plans to place about \$12,500 of those funds into its account to cover the cost of several promotional programs — programs that HU's funding has covered for several years.

This year marked the first time HU decided how much the chamber would receive. In the past, HU gave a chunk of money to the HEDC, which

then decided how to divvy up the money.

Before this year, the chamber typically received about \$12,500.

On Friday, Oakeson asked the HU board to allocate another \$50,000 for 2007, saying those funds would help cover the development of the promotional packet. The chamber plans to hire people within the community to design it, which could get costly, Oakeson said.

Because Haussler was unable to attend Friday's meeting, he submitted a letter to the board,

which HU board member Ed Schlacter read at Friday's meeting.

In it, Haussler gave a laundry list of the group's successes over the last year using its \$100,000 allocation from HU.

Several of the successes include assisting Dial Realty of Omaha in its efforts to build and fill the new Cimarron Plaza mall in north Hastings.

Earlier this year, HEDC helped Menard Inc. in completing its review of Hastings and assisting the company in constructing their 165,000-square-foot facility.

HEDC also has been instrumental in the building of numerous speculative buildings and business buildings throughout the city, Haussler said in his letter.

HEDC's goals for next year include: assisting existing companies with expansion plans; recruiting and assisting all businesses considering Hastings/Adams County as a site location; continuing to assist with development of Cimarron Plaza, Menard's, Motorsport Park Hastings and other projects in the Hastings/Adams County area.



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## Hastings Vision Clinic, P.C. Welcomes Dr. Matthew W. Dinslage

After graduating from Seward High School, Dr. Dinslage received an Undergraduate degree in Biological Sciences in 2002 from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. He then graduated cum laude in May 2006 from Southern College of Optometry in Memphis, Tennessee. He was also a member of Beta Sigma Kappa scholastic honor fraternity. Dr. Dinslage completed his externships at the V.A. Medical Center in Columbia, Missouri and also at Gutshall Eyecare in O'Neill, Nebraska. He specialized in contact lens fitting and ocular disease management at both facilities.

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