

Ouachita Baptist University

## Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita

---

Honors Theses

Carl Goodson Honors Program

---

2001

### An Assessment of the 2000 Fourth Congressional District Race

Amber E. Wilson

*Ouachita Baptist University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors\\_theses](https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors_theses)



Part of the [American Politics Commons](#), [Election Law Commons](#), and the [Politics and Social Change Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Wilson, Amber E., "An Assessment of the 2000 Fourth Congressional District Race" (2001). *Honors Theses*. 150.

[https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors\\_theses/150](https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors_theses/150)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Carl Goodson Honors Program at Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. For more information, please contact [mortensona@obu.edu](mailto:mortensona@obu.edu).

# SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

**“An Assessment of the 2000 Fourth Congressional District Race”**

written by

**Amber E. Wilson**

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for completion of the  
Carl Goodson Honors Program  
meets the criteria for acceptance  
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

thesis director

second reader

third reader

honors program director

April 26, 2001

1  
60

2000 Fourth Congressional District Race

# **An Assessment of the 2000 Fourth Congressional District Race**

**Amber Wilson**

**Ouachita Baptist University**

**Carl Goodson Honors Program**

**Senior Thesis**

**April 26, 2001**

**RILEY-HICKINGBOTHAM LIBRARY  
OUACHITA BAPTIST UNIVERSITY**

## **An Assessment of the 2000 Fourth Congressional District Election<sup>1</sup>**

Prior to the November 7 election, incumbent Republican Jay Dickey aspired to maintain his eight-year hold on the fourth congressional district seat, while challenger, Mike Ross, a Democratic State Senator, had high hopes for a partisan restoration. In the end, Ross upset the incumbent carrying 51 percent of the 212,160 votes cast, a narrow 4,126-vote margin.<sup>2</sup> This paper assesses the strategic, tactical, and fiscal factors contributing to Ross's success in overriding incumbency advantages and reclaiming the seat for the Democrats. More specifically, it compares and contrasts candidate and non-candidate communications. Indeed, communication was the key component to these coordinated campaigns. In the end, it was the candidate whose message was communicated the most effectively that won the campaign.

First I will outline the background of this project and explain the method and procedures in which the data was collected and organized. Second, in order to make sense of the data that was collected, I will consider the make-up and background of the fourth district. Next, I will overview the background of the congressional candidates that shaped their campaigns. Then, I will assess an overview of the 2000 campaign: efforts made by Dickey and Ross. This enquiry entails a focus on campaign finance and the media through which communication was made. Finally, I will break down the hard and soft money figures and explain the impacts that each had on this competitive congressional election.

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper relies heavily on complementary research concerning soft money campaign contributions and expenditures. See Harold F. Bass, Kathryn A. Kirkpatrick, and Amber E. Wilson, "The 2000 Arkansas Fourth Congressional District Race," in *Election Advocacy: Soft Money and Issue Advocacy in the 2000 Congressional Election*, David B. Magleby. (Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah): 121-131.

<sup>2</sup> Arkansas Secretary of State Web Site; [www.sosweb.state.ar.us](http://www.sosweb.state.ar.us), 18 February 2001.

## **Method and Procedures**

During the summer of 2000, I had the opportunity to intern for Congressman Jay Dickey, my local representative, in Washington, D.C. While answering the phone at work, I encountered a man who was researching colleges with strong Political Science Departments within Arkansas' Fourth Congressional District. I offered the man names of many different colleges within the fourth district, but told him about my affiliation with the Political Science department at Ouachita. The man went on to explain that his name was David Magleby from Brigham Young University. He had been awarded a Pew Grant to conduct research on soft money within competitive congressional races in the 2000 elections. Since Arkansas' Fourth District had been spotted early on to be a highly competitive race, he wanted more information on who would be interested in helping with such a study. I immediately told Dr. Magleby about Dr. Hal Bass at Ouachita and his expertise with elections. Finally, I gave him the information on how to contact Dr. Bass in Arkadelphia.

After I returned home from Washington, Dr. Bass contacted me about working with Dr. Magleby on the project. He asked Katie Kirkpatrick and me to be research assistants. We agreed to help with the project and began collecting and organizing the data at the beginning of September.

We began by sending out information to target groups in the district: OBU alumni, Common Cause advocates, and the League of Women voters. We asked these to send any information they received concerning the race. Through this method we were able to receive data targeted to specific voters: single parents, the elderly, minimum wage families, and women. Direct mail-outs and information about television commercials

were also collected. We documented and evaluated television commercials from five o'clock to six-thirty every evening on all three major networks: ABC, NBC, and CBS. We made contact with party and campaign workers as well. Furthermore, information was sent to us from the state Republican and Democratic headquarters concerning the race. Ross's campaign was also helpful in disseminating information about the campaign. We received little help from the Dickey campaign, prior or post the election.

Throughout the election, Bass, Kirkpatrick, and I were able to conduct several interviews with high-level staff at the Democratic and Republican State Parties. We also conducted interviews with Ross's campaign the Thursday after the election. There we spoke with Mr. Ross, the campaign manager, and the communication coordinator. All were helpful in completing the pieces left out of the puzzle. Phone interviews, with groups like the NAACP and the Christian Coalition, were also advantageous to the project.

After the data was collected, we submitted a chapter on our district contest in an editorial overview. After this, I was able to begin writing a more specific study concerning this race. My thesis not only encompasses a small section related to the soft money study, but a more broader picture about how campaign contributions and expenditures influenced voters in this election.

### **The Background of Arkansas' Fourth Congressional District**

The Fourth Congressional District spans the southern half of Arkansas. In 1990, its twenty-six counties had a population of 585,202. The population is 52 percent rural, 72 percent Caucasian, less-well educated, relatively older, less white collar, and less affluent with the median household making an average of \$19,621. Pine Bluff is the only

city with more than 50,000 residents, populated at 54,165. Other sizable cities in the district are Hot Springs at 36,255, Texarkana at 22,918, and El Dorado at 22,419. Within the district, there are no major media markets. Most district residents look to Little Rock for television network affiliates, while some residents have access to out-of-state stations in Texarkana, TX and Shreveport, LA; Monroe, LA in the south; and Greenville, MS to the southeast. The Little Rock-based *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* is widely circulated in the fourth district. The most noteworthy indigenous papers are the *Pine Bluff Commercial* and the *Hot Springs Sentinel-Record*. So while there is ample access to news media, it is somewhat difficult for congressional candidates in the district to disperse funds and information in an efficient and effective manner due to the lack of major media markets within the district.

The fourth district was conventionally Democratic for the century following Reconstruction. In the 1960s, this district and the encompassing region experienced a partisan transformation at the level of presidential politics. While African Americans began to emerge as a significant faction in the Democratic Party, many traditional white Southern Dixiecrats began to shift away from the Democratic Party.

At the presidential level, the district and the state supported George Wallace's third party challenge in 1968. In 1972, the district shifted its support to the Republican nominee, Richard Nixon. However, since the district has returned to its traditional Democratic roots when it has been given the chance to vote for candidates with regional connections: Jimmy Carter (1976, 1980); Bill Clinton, a district native (1992, 1996); and Al Gore (2000).<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> For an explanation of partisan change in the South, see Alexander Heard, *A Two-Party South?* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1952). Significant contributions from the ensuing decades

It was not until 1992 that the Fourth District provided support for a Republican Congressional nominee. In 1992, district voters abandoned the seven-term Democratic incumbent, Beryl Anthony, Jr., from El Dorado, who had lost touch with his district and became heavily involved in Washington politics as head of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and a member of the Ways and Means Committee. Anthony lost the primary run-off to scandal-plagued Bill McCuen who, in turn, lost the general election to little-known Republican nominee, Jay Dickey, a Pine Bluff lawyer and businessman.

Although a newcomer to electoral politics when he bid for the congressional seat in 1992, Dickey carried deep political ties to the district. Dickey's grandfather and uncle both served as state senators and his father held a ten-year term on the University of Arkansas Board. In his youth Dickey contracted polio, but he eventually achieved a full recovery. He later participated in collegiate athletics, unhindered from the disease. Dickey received his undergraduate education from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, and went on to law school there. After graduation, Dickey returned to his hometown of Pine Bluff to practice law. Eventually, Dickey became an active small businessman as well, holding franchises for both Taco Bell and Baskin Robins, and

---

include Phillip E. Converse, "A Major Political Realignment in the South?," in *Change in the Contemporary South*, Ed. Allen P. Sindler (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1963): \*195-222; Raymond P. Wolfinger and Robert B. Arsenau, "Partisan Change in the South, 1952-1972," in *Political Parties: Development and Decay*, Eds. Louis Maisel and Joseph Cooper (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Productions, 1978): 179-210; John R. Petrocik, "Realignment: New Party Coalitions and the Nationalization of the South," *Journal of Politics* 49 (May 1987): 347-75; and Stephen D. Shaffer, Stacey Berry Pierce, and Steven A. Kohnke, "Party Realignment in the South: A Multi-Level Analysis," *American Review of Politics* 21 (Summer 2000): 229-53.

forming his own advertising sign company and travel agency. His legal and business involvement gave him wide visibility in the region.<sup>4</sup>

Dickey formulated a campaign in 1992 (also seen in 2000) based on his past medical record, supporting the idea that he “fought for what he received.” District voters found him more appealing and acceptable than McCuen in the general election campaign, but most observers viewed his victory as a fluke, and anticipated a short term.

Dickey barely withstood his Democratic challenger in 1994. Jay Bradford, also a Pine Bluff native, campaigned to take the seat back for Democrats. As the closely contested campaign came to a close, the National Rifle Association entered into the game on Dickey’s behalf. Bradford’s supportive stance on gun control alienated him from many conservative Democratic voters and cost him the election. Building on his initial successful re-election effort, Dickey then easily defeated challengers in 1996 and 1998.

However, after the 1998 election Democrats renewed their effort to unseat Dickey in the wake of his impeachment vote for President Bill Clinton in December of 1998. Clinton, a native of Arkansas’ Fourth Congressional District, was personally offended by Dickey’s vote. Prior to the vote, Clinton and White House officials lobbied Dickey not to cast his vote with Republican counterparts. Although Dickey said that he fought with the idea, he was not swayed in the end. Furthermore, Dickey spoke from the House floor giving specific details about why he was persuaded to vote for impeachment in the end.

Thus, national attention focused on the identity of his Democratic challenger in 2000. The desirable candidate would need to fit the conservative nature of the district. Mike Ross of Prescott, a somewhat conservative state senator, ran a local pharmaceutical

---

<sup>4</sup> Michael Barone and Grant Ujifusa, *The Almanac of American Politics 2000* (Washington, D.C.: National Journal Group Inc. 1999): 151-153.

business when he was not serving in the state legislature. Ross already had constituent support and had district connections that positioned him to carry the battle against Dickey. As a result, national and state party leaders picked Ross out early on as the “promised one” to reclaim the seat. In addition, Ross picked up considerable early support from Washington-based political action committees (PACs).

Ross was well prepared to undertake his challenge. Born in Southwest Arkansas, Ross graduated from Hope High School. He attended Henderson State University, but later transferred to the University of Arkansas at Little Rock where he graduated in 1983. During college, he worked his way through school as a radio announcer, and devoted a great deal of time to working on Bill Clinton’s effort to reclaim the Governor’s office in 1982. In 1983, at the age of 21, Ross was elected to the Nevada County Quorum Court for one term. Prior to his state senate terms, Ross served as the chief-of-staff to former Lieutenant Governor Winston Bryant. In 1990, he became the youngest member of the Arkansas State Senate at age 29. Ross represented Senate District 3, which includes all of Nevada County and parts of Clark, Columbia and Ouachita Counties in Southwest Arkansas. Ross was re-elected in 1992 and 1996. His experience serving on the State Senate benefited the Ross congressional campaign. Not only did Ross have constituent support, but also he understood the nature of the district. Furthermore, Ross’s experience on Senate committees, such as his chairmanship on The Children and Youth Committee and his membership on the Public Health, Welfare and Labor Committee, gave him expertise that he demonstrated effectively during the primary and general election.<sup>5</sup>

Despite Ross’s qualifications and head start on fundraising, three other candidates vied for the Democratic nomination. Judy Smith, an African American former State

Senator and a Camden native, ran again for the Democratic nomination she had received two years before, in 1998, when she lost convincingly to Dickey. Bruce Harris, a young Pine Bluff native from a prominent political family who served on the staffs of the First Congressional Representatives Blanche Lambert Lincoln and Marion Berry, also sought the nomination. Although he was able to make an impressive impression on people at debates, his lack of funds hindered his efforts to communicate effectively. Finally, DeWayne Graham, a Little Rock broadcaster, vied for the seat. Although he was not heretofore a player in state Democratic politics, he was able to run a decent campaign because of his name recognition around the state. Furthermore, his career in news, as a reporter for Seven-On-Your-Side, that channel's consumer protection segment, generated a state-wide reputation for "working for the people."

Ross easily surpassed these primary challengers in terms of fund raising. He also used his grassroots campaign to mobilize supporters to get-out-and-vote for the primary. At the end of Election Day, Ross had the lead with 44.75 percent; Graham came in second with 22.09 percent; Smith placed third with 21.84 percent; and Harris came in fourth with 11.32 percent. Three weeks later, Ross easily prevailed in the run-off against Graham, by 58 to 42 percent.<sup>6</sup>

Interestingly, two of the three Democratic challengers (Smith and Graham) endorsed Dickey during the fall campaign. One motivation was apparently financial. Dickey allegedly agreed to pay off somewhat large campaign debts for Smith and Graham in return for their public support. In addition, Smith reportedly resented the minimal backing that she received from the Democratic Party in her 1998 congressional

---

<sup>5</sup> Mike Ross Web Site; [www.house.gov/ross](http://www.house.gov/ross), 3 April 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Arkansas Secretary of State Web Site; [www.sosweb.state.ar.us](http://www.sosweb.state.ar.us), 18 February 2001.

campaign. Graham was closer ideologically aligned with Dickey than Ross. In fact, Graham had run for office as a Republican in a different state prior to the 2000 congressional election.

Thus, it appeared early on that the Democrats were split into factions. Graham took his endorsement a step further by formulating and organizing “Democrats for Dickey.” However, the faction split proved to be ineffective in the long run. Republicans also became disgusted with Dickey’s initiative to pay-off Democratic campaign debts for exchange for endorsements.

After Ross received the official nomination, Democrats at the national and state levels were prepared to attack. In a sense, the primary election was a benefit to Democrats. The primary helped stir momentum and support through out the Fourth District without Republican criticism. Republicans laid low throughout the primary election, and arguably did not start campaigning until late summer. Dickey’s coordinated campaign did not officially begin until he was able to transfer Washington staffers back home to coordinate the campaign. Looking back, this was a mistake for Dickey. While the Republicans were slow in gearing up, Ross’s campaign had been effectively coordinated with the Democratic Party effort since the May primary. While Dickey was relying on name recognition and incumbency to carry him through, Ross positioned himself as Dickey’s strongest challenger ever.

### **An Overview of the Significance of Money in this Campaign**

I mentioned earlier that communication was the most important aspect of these coordinated campaigns. Indeed it takes a great deal of money to communicate effectively. However, never has there been so much money circulated inside and out of

the Fourth Congressional district. Our research revealed that an unprecedented total amount of \$8 million was spent collectively on this one campaign. Both candidates took in campaign contributions inside and outside of the district. Candidate and non-candidate campaign contributions and expenditures played a significant role in determining the outcome of the election.

### **Campaign Finance Background<sup>7</sup>**

At this point, I will review the pertinent legal framework regulation concerning campaign finance. In 1971 and 1974, Congress vaguely wrote federal elections laws to address the amount of money that was spent “in connection with” or “for the purpose of influencing” federal campaigns and elections. The purpose of the legislative action was to regulate all funds that influenced federal elections. However, Congressional intent was undermined when the Supreme Court stepped into the picture with the court ruling in *Buckley v. Valeo* in 1976. In the opinion of the court, the phrases that were worded in the congressional legislation must have a much more limited scope. The Court wanted the scope to be clearly and narrowly defined so that free speech, protected by the First Amendment, would not be violated.

The Federal Elections Commission - commonly known as the FEC - set federal regulations with which candidates must abide. The Federal Election Campaign Act mandates that “anything of value” given to a candidate in a federal campaign classify the gift as a “contribution.” Furthermore, the act places restrictions on the amount of money

---

<sup>7</sup> For background in Campaign Finance see pioneering studies by Louise Overacker, *Money in Elections* (New York: Macmillan, 1932), Alexander Heard, *The Costs of Democracy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), Herbert E. Alexander, *Financing Politics*, 3d Ed. (Washington: CQ Press, 1984), and Frank J. Sorauf, *Money in American Elections* (Glenview: Scott, Foresman, 1988). This section relies heavily on *Campaign Finance Reform, A Sourcebook* edited by Anthony Corrado, Thomas E. Mann, Daniel R. Ortiz, Trevor Potter, and Frank J. Sorauf (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1997).

that individuals and other entities may contribute to federal candidates and committees. Individuals are allowed to contribute the maximum amount of \$1,000 to any political candidate and are allowed to contribute no more than \$20,000 per year to any party organization, such as the DCCC or the NRCC. In addition, individuals may make a contribution up to \$5,000 to any political action committee. In turn, PACs may donate up to \$10,000 to any candidate. These numbers collectively define the term “hard money,” that being money regulated and limited under the FEC guidelines.

However, hard money is not the only source with which congressional elections are financed. The term “soft money” refers to campaign contributions without regulations or limits. Political parties are able to raise and spend unlimited amounts of funds under this definition. Since 1980, political parties have been spending money in the name of “party building.” However, more recently, parties have broadened their scope to include raising funds to embrace “issue advocacy” and candidate promotion.

“Independent expenditures” were also a product of the *Buckley v. Valeo* case. Independent organizations and individuals may raise and spend unlimited amounts of money on any election or in favor of any candidate as long as there is not a coordinated relationship between the organization and the campaign.

Legislative campaign reform prospects have been brought to the forefront of public policy because of the national focus on the issue in the 2000 Presidential Election. Senator John McCain (R-AZ) based his unsuccessful presidential nominating campaign on the need for campaign reform. The legislative centerpiece of the campaign was the McCain-Feingold Bill that successfully passed the House but failed in the Senate. More recently, his bill has been reintroduced and successfully passed the Senate. It is now

advancing to the House Floor for deliberation. However, many representatives have reservations regarding the bill. In a sense, this would be like “cutting off the hand that feeds the mouth.” For many challengers, like Mike Ross, soft money is the leveling factor that allows them to compete with incumbents who have the upper hand in raising hard money. It is certain that in the House, the bill will have much more difficult time getting a majority vote. Furthermore, early on, President Bush agreed to sign such a bill if it passes, however, his press secretary is now saying that the President is unsure about his position on this issue. What does the bill entail?

The bill would initially amend the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971. It will “prohibit: (1) a national committee of a political party from soliciting or receiving contributions or making expenditures not subject by the FECA; (2) a national, State, district, or local committee of a political party from soliciting or donating funds to a tax-exempt organization; and (3) a candidate or an incumbent for a Federal office from soliciting, receiving, directing, transferring, or spending funds in connection with any other than an Election for Federal office, or distributing funds in connection with such an election unless funds meet specific requirements.”<sup>8</sup> The bill would also establish a new annual limit of funds that individuals could contribute to any federal candidate: \$30,000. State committee contributions would also be limited to \$10,000. More significantly, national and state parties would have to report all receipts and disbursements. There is also a clause in the bill that would requires all interest groups to record the amount of money spent on behalf of a coordinated campaign.

The next section of my paper documents the data concerning one specific race under the contemporary rules. The data may help readers qualify why there is a vested

interest in campaign finance reform. Although, this study will not advocate for campaign finance reform, it will disclose the unprecedented amounts of money, both hard and soft raised and spent, in a highly competitive congressional election.

### **The Hard Money Aspect of the Campaign<sup>9</sup>**

According to the Federal Election Commission, Jay Dickey raised \$1,658,939 in hard money. Comparatively, Ross raised \$1,635,421 from individual contributors and political action committees.

Dickey's top contributor was the Stephens Group, with employees from this corporation donating an estimated \$17,000, followed by the employees of the Alltel Corporation donating \$14,380 to his campaign. An analysis of contributions by sector yields the following information: Finance/Insurance/Real Estate was the largest contributor for Dickey donating \$125,596, followed by Agribusiness donating \$115,688. Significantly, the legal profession donated the largest amount of money to Ross, giving Ross \$117,800 compared to Dickey's \$35,891.

Data collected evaluating contributions by the top metro areas indicate that Dickey collected most of his contributions from outside the Fourth District. The Little Rock/North Little Rock area, where Dickey received an estimated \$175,232, donated the largest sum. Dickey also received financial support from his native home of Pine Bluff in the amount of \$93,695. However, Jefferson County, where Pine Bluff is located, cast the majority of its votes for Ross on Election Day. Dickey received \$40,430 from the Washington, D.C., area, followed by a large contribution of \$37,575 from the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers area. Texarkanans also donated a sum of \$33,578 to

---

<sup>8</sup> United States Senate 2001 Legislative Web Page; [www.thomas.loc.gov](http://www.thomas.loc.gov), 3 April 2001.

Dickey. Notably, there were only two top metro donors from within the fourth district: Pine Bluff and Texarkana. On the zip code break down of the FEC figures, three of the seven top contributors were from outside of the district. However, from within the district, Dickey received the majority of his support from the southwest part of the district.

Significant indicators in these numbers assess how Dickey did not rely on PAC contributions. Indeed, his anti-PAC stance was a key feature of his candidacy. Television ads paid for by the Dickey campaign infiltrated through the fourth district promoting his denunciation of this money. In past years, he has totally rejected these funds. Rightfully so, PACs were perceived in a negative light in his previous campaigns. However, Dickey did accept \$6,000 from PACs. Although he did not greatly rely on PACs, he did accept some money, which was unique for the Dickey campaign. Nevertheless, the negative perception of PACs in years past did not seem to be generated in 2000. Significantly, Dickey took in over 90% of his budget from individual contributions.

Ross's campaign drew in over 15 different top contributors who donated \$15,000 each in hard money. At the top were a variety of labor-based contributors: the employees of the AFL-CIO, a labor based interest group; the National Education Association; Teamsters Union; and the United Transportation Union. According to the analysis of contributions by sector, labor was by far the largest supporter of Ross donating \$356,200 to the campaign. In comparison, labor only donated \$2,000 to the Dickey campaign. The health sector also contributed a large amount of money to the

---

<sup>9</sup> For FEC Results from the Arkansas District 4 Race, see the Center for Responsive Politics Web Site; [www.opensecrets.org/2000elect/dist\\_contrib/AR04.htm](http://www.opensecrets.org/2000elect/dist_contrib/AR04.htm) 18 February 2001.

Ross campaign: \$119,200. Comparatively, the health sector contributed less than half of that total to the Dickey camp: citing a contribution of \$73,216. The business/labor/ideological split in PAC contributions significantly benefited Ross over Dickey. The Business PACs contributed \$107,250 to the Ross campaign. The Labor PACs contributed \$356,000 to Ross and the Ideological PACs donated \$155,353. Naturally, these contributions were dramatically smaller for Dickey since he was loathe to accept PAC money.

In terms of the top metro area that donated the most significant amount of money, the Little Rock area contributed the largest amount to Ross: \$126,565. Although Texarkana contributed a significant amount to the Dickey campaign, it also contributed more to the Ross campaign: \$67,102. The Washington DC area also contributed more to the Ross campaign than to Dickey, giving a total \$44,700. Forth Smith provided contributions in the amount of \$14,350 and the Fayetteville area, a Democratic enclave within a traditionally conservative geographical location, contributed \$12,650. Out of these top metro area contributors only one is located in the fourth district: Texarkana. Like Dickey, the finding is that the majority of funds that were donated by individuals came from outside of the district. On the zip code break down of the FEC figures, Prescott, Ross's hometown, contributed the most amount of money: \$29,150. Southwest Arkansas generated a great deal of support for Ross from inside the district.

Unlike Dickey, Ross relied a great deal on PAC contributions. At the end of the campaign, the Ross campaign had accepted \$659,588 from PACs: that is over 40% of his total contributions. This money helped neutralize Dickey's significant lead in individual contributions. It is suspected that PAC money was donated so generously to Ross in the

name of the national Democratic Party. For a PAC to endorse Ross meant they were helping the Democrats regain a seat in the House. Comparatively, Ross only brought in a little over 50% of his funds in individual contributions compared to Dickey's 90 percent.

### **The Soft Money Aspect**

Never before have non-candidate campaign contributions and expenditures made such a difference in Arkansas' Fourth District. The two major political parties played a significant role in the organized effort. The Republican Party of Arkansas supplied Dickey with \$104,246 in hard money. The Democratic Party of Arkansas was able to produce about half the funds that the Republican Party contributed donating about \$49,594 in hard money contributions to the Ross campaign. However, the campaign organizations reported collected allocated soft money funds in the amount of \$3,383,817: \$1,754,085 for Dickey and \$1,628,812 for Ross.

Both Republican and Democratic Parties were able to play outside of the FEC framework, by utilizing soft money contributions from the national level.<sup>10</sup> The idea is to use the national funds to build the state party organization. As such, both parties are allowed to funnel funds through the state party and use them to benefit their candidates. The Democratic Campaign Congressional Committee (DCCC) donated more than \$1,500,000 to the state party on Ross's behalf. In turn, the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) donated around \$1,600,000 to energize support for Dickey. Both parties were able to coordinate campaigns on their candidates' behalf. The Democratic Party was able to issue six direct mail-outs for Ross, in turn; the Republican Party issued 12 mail-outs in favor of Dickey. Thus the Republican Party doubled the

efforts on the ground war—a term used to discuss the amount of mail, billboards, push cards, and pamphlets that voters received during the campaign. Each mail out from both state parties was produced at an estimated cost of \$25,000 a piece. The air war -- a term used to describe the television and radio advertisements -- was also an important factor in the campaign.<sup>11</sup> The majority of the funds appropriated from the national to the state party were allocated specifically for television advertisements. Both parties collectively spent \$2,547,382 in television advertisement: \$1,347,382 from the Democratic Party in favor of Ross, \$1,200,000 from the Republican Party in favor of Dickey.

Another piece of the pie is the participation, contributions, and expenditures on behalf of interest groups in the form of issue advocacy. These interest groups were able to fund media buys either promoting or attacking a candidate of its choice. However, they were not allowed to ask voters to “support,” “vote,” or “endorse” any candidate. Many of these ads served as voter guides, comparing candidates’ past voting records and political agendas.

In favor of Dickey, Citizens for Better Medicare, an interest group underwritten by Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, by far contributed the most amount of money. They distributed two costly direct mailings, citing how Dickey had helped develop a good plan for prescription drugs. The preponderance of their support \$739,708 went for television buys as of mid-October.<sup>12</sup> Other groups that openly supported Dickey and/or attacked Ross were the Business Roundtable, which provided

---

<sup>10</sup> For a recent study on the role of state parties in campaign finance, see Sarah M. Morehouse, “State Parties: Independent Partners,” paper presented at the 2000 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., Aug. 31-Sept. 3, 2000.

<sup>11</sup> See Darrell M. West, *Air War: Television Advertising in Election Campaigns, 1952-2000*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> Michael Rowett, “Parties Group Sink Big Bucks into Issue Ads,” *Arkansas-Democrat Gazette*, 22 October 2000, 1,5A.

about \$49,000 in TV buys; the Christian Coalition, which issued 100,000 voter guides in local churches; and the Committee for Good Common Sense, who also spent about \$10,200 in TV buys for Dickey.

The National Rifle Association played a significant role in the fourth district because many constituents are NRA members. They sought to support Dickey through one widely distributed direct mail-out and a highly publicized rally in Hot Springs, featuring Charlton Heston. However, they were unable to do much damage to Ross. Ross neutralized the NRA by insisting that he too was a card-carrying member and had been supported by the NRA in past state senate campaigns. Other groups that distributed mail on Dickey's behalf were the National Right to Life Committee, National Tax Payers Union, Seniors Coalition, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Ross most notably received support from the AFL-CIO, a labor-based group that advocated an increase of minimum wage throughout the campaign. They spent \$400,275 attempting to play on voters who were interested in this issue. The National Education Association and the Arkansas Educational Association spent money on direct mail-outs that supported Ross's position on education. The NEA also spent \$121,020 in TV buys concerning the same topic. All together, the NEA spent at least \$220,085 trying to unseat the incumbent. Other groups promoting Ross and/or attacking Dickey through paid advertisements were the Women's Health Advocates, who sent mail-outs criticizing Dickey's lack of support for a patient's Bill of Rights; and Mothers for Fair Government, who denounced Dickey for his apathy concerning low-income families. The NAACP also helped Ross with get-out-the-vote, or GOTV, drives. This helped generate enthusiasm among African American voters, who traditionally have low voter turnout.

## **Analysis of Communication Techniques**

The most highly funded medium during the race was television. Commercials from both candidates' coordinated campaign, national parties via state parties, and political action committees generated for two full months prior to the election. From the data collected prior to the election, I can conclude that interest groups produced the most amount of money for television urging voter to "call" Ross/Dickey and tell them what a good/poor job they are doing. Next, both the Republican and Democratic Parties generated funds from the national party headquarters that was specifically earmarked for television. Finally, although both coordinated campaigns spent a large amount of his money on television, it did not total the amount spent by the other two groups. However, out of the two candidates Dickey spent more money on television than Ross.

Neither candidate spent much money on radio or print advertisements. With the exception of the few small town newspapers that ran ads about the race, print ads were insignificant compared to the prices spent on television. Dickey ran several spots on radio closer to Election Day, but, overall, used this medium very little.

While both candidates maintained very high-quality web pages, neither really used the Internet to his benefit. I assume that the Internet will be more beneficial to elections in the south when more residents within the Fourth District use the Internet more.

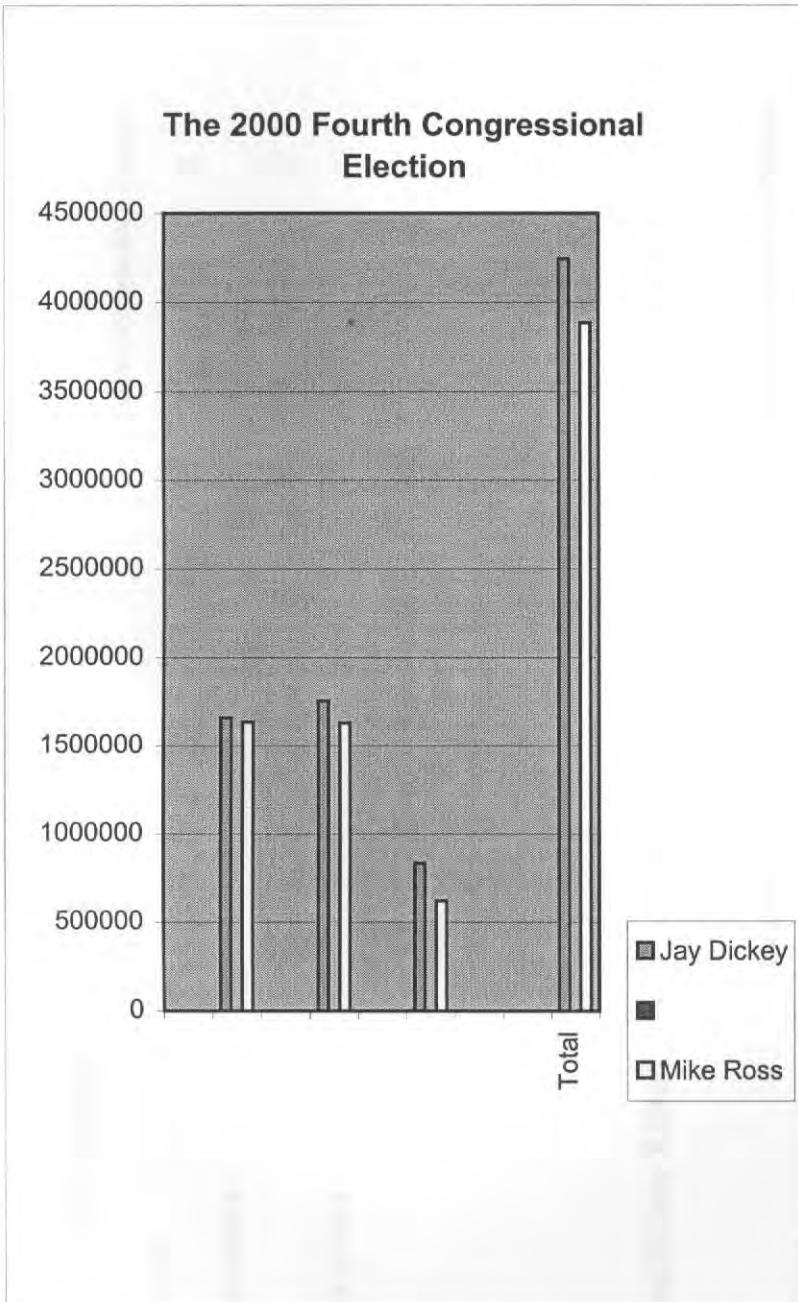
## **Conclusion**

In the day and age of the technological advances, candidates and coordinate campaigns must make an effort to proficiently communicate a message to the electorate. Indeed, it takes a great deal of money to effectively utilize contemporary recourses in the

media market. In the fourth district, it was the funds that flowed in from the state and national Democratic Party and issue advocacy groups that leveled Ross's playing field against Dickey. As a result, non-candidate contributions had a greater impact on this election than did the individual campaign contributions and expenditures. It was the outside groups that were able to promote Ross's message and mobilize support for Ross and against Dickey. Furthermore, Dickey's choice not to meet Ross in formal debate and address certain district concerns left Dickey's message in a critical state to voters. In the end, campaign contributions were able to take a candidate who was less well known and accepted and allowed him to facilitate a vigorous campaign.

While these funds were unprecedented for south Arkansas and arguably will not be seen again throughout the district anytime soon, the impact of campaign contributions and expenditures are a large part of the electoral process. The amount of dollars that national parties and outside advocacy groups can generate through a district is limitless. Whether or not a reform legislation will help the electoral process is uncertain, however, it is certain that we will be reaping the effects of this system for many years to come.

	<u>Jay Dickey</u>	<u>Mike Ross</u>
Campaigns	\$ 1,658,939.00	\$1,635,421
Political Parties	\$ 1,754,085.00	\$1,628,812
Interest Groups	\$ 833,940.00	\$620,360
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 4,246,964.00</b>	<b>\$3,884,593</b>



## Democratic Allies

Type	Organization	Total Unique Mail Pieces
<i>Candidates</i>	Mike Ross For Congress Committee	3
<i>Political parties</i>	Democratic Party of Arkansas	6
	Arkansas State Democratic Committee	1
<i>Interest groups</i>	Mothers for Fair Government	2
	National Education Association	2
	Arkansas Education Association	1
	Arkansas Women's Health Advocatea	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>16</b>

## Republican Allies

Type	Organization	Total Unique Mail Pieces
<i>Candidates</i>	Jay Dickey For Congress Campaign Committee	3
Political Parties	National Republican Congressioanl Committee	12
Interest Groups	National Federation of Independent Business	4
	Citizens for Better Medicare	
	Seniors Coalition	2
	National Rifle Association	1
	National Rifle Association- Political Victory Fund	1
	National Right to Life PAC	1
	National Taxpayers Union	1
	Republican Majority Issues Committee	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>26</b>