

# *An Informed Vote?*

Local News Coverage  
Primary Election 2002

A Report by the Grand Rapids  
Institute for Information Democracy

The logo for the Grand Rapids Institute for Information Democracy (GRID). The word "GRID" is written in a bold, sans-serif font. The letters "G", "R", and "I" are green, while the letters "I" and "D" are black.

## Methodology

GRIID conducted a 30-day study of local TV and newspaper coverage of what appeared on the August 6, 2002 ballot for the West Michigan Community. From July 8 through August 5, 2002 GRIID monitored the *Grand Rapids Press*, the 5:30, 6 & 11pm newscasts of channel's 8 & 13, and the 10pm newscast of Channel 17.

Each time a story about elections appeared, we noted the order of the story, length, who was interviewed and for how long. We also noted if candidates were quoted or given airtime, and how often paid ads ran during the newscasts or appeared in the newspaper during the 30-day period.

This study was conducted by GRIID staff - Erica Freshour, Rob Dodde and Jeff Smith.

GRIID is an affiliate of the Community Media Center. GRIID conducts media research, media trainings and teaches media literacy.

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To contact GRIID  
call 459-4788 x122  
e-mail [jsmith@grcmc.org](mailto:jsmith@grcmc.org)

## Summary of Findings

- \* of the four news outlets studied, the *Grand Rapids Press* provided more election information - of the 3 TV stations, WOODTV 8 provided the most information.
- \* for each of the 3 TV stations roughly half of all election stories were about the governor's race, with limited coverage of all other races.
- \* there was limited information on where candidates stood on the issues and almost no information on the voting records of candidates who held elected positions.
- \* each of the 3 news stations ran more paid ads during the newcasts than election stories, with the bulk of the ads for Posthumus and Granholm.
- \* the *Grand Rapids Press* was the only news agency studied that provided substantial information about candidate forums - both announcements and analysis.
- \* all 3 TV stations ran more crime stories than election stories during the 30-day study period.

## *Introduction*

We are beginning our 5th year of local election news coverage, which means this is the first time we can make comparisons about coverage of primary races at the State and County level. There appears to be some increase in the amount and length of stories for both channel's 8 & 13. The Fox affiliate, WXMI 17, did not show an improvement from the primary election study of 2000. To make a comparison with the last primary election for State and County races go to [http://www.griid.org/r\\_pelection\\_2000.shtml](http://www.griid.org/r_pelection_2000.shtml)).

Other areas of improvement included coverage of State Senate & State House races, particularly with channel 8. Channel 13 also began a series of political ad critiques and both channel's 8 & 13 rebroadcast gubernatorial debates. Channel 17 also produced a 30-minute special on the governors race, but ran no stories on races for county commissioner, nor State Senate/State House.

The *Grand Rapids Press* had the most coverage comparatively during the 30-day study period and gave potential voters the most substantive information for making an informed vote. Even if the *Press* had only

printed their voter guide from July 31st it would have been more substantive information than all election stories covered by the three stations combined.

While there was improvement in the amount and length of stories there was still limited information on where the candidates stood on issues, voting records of incumbents/elected officials running for a different position, and campaign finance information. These are the aspects of the election coverage that this report will look at, as well as paid ads and comparative non-election story coverage.

## Knowing the Candidates

### *Governor's race*

The only race to garner substantial coverage was the gubernatorial race. Both the GOP and Democrats had multiple candidates, but it was the Democratic race that was considered a “contested race.”

Both the *Grand Rapids Press* and WOOD TV8 ran candidate profiles on all 5 candidates for governor. The *Press* articles all appeared on the front page and the channel 8 pieces ran between 2 1/2 to 3 minutes in length.

The *Press* articles spent most of the time giving a summary of the candidate's life in a profile box with details like: educational background, favorite TV show, hobbies, type of car they drive, favorite room in the house, favorite meal and what song they would request on the radio. It is clear that the journalists are trying to humanize the candidates, but how does this help voters make an informed decision about who is best qualified to serve? The WOOD TV8 profiles are not much better in that they focus on backgrounds of candidates, with little substance on previous voting records.

Channel's 13 & 17 gave summaries of the Democratic debates, poll data and where candidates were campaigning. The FOX affiliate

17 ran no real stories during their 10pm newscast about the candidates for governor, but they did run a story about Bonier's office being vandalized on July 26.

### How much viewers heard Candidates for Governor speak during the 30-day newscast study.

WOODTV8 - **8 minutes & 2 seconds** —  
*an average of 2 seconds per newscast*

WZZM 13 - **1 minute & 6 seconds**  
*an average of less than a half a second per newscast*

WXMI 17 - **no candidate voices**

The most substantive information on the candidates for governor was in the *Grand Rapids Press*. A July 28th piece had responses to 7 questions posed by the paper covering issues from taxes and living wage ordinances, to post 9-11 security and tobacco settlement money. In their July 31st voter guide they also ran responses to questions on the economy, health care, education and the environment, although these responses were not as specific as the July 28 question & answer piece.

*State Senate/State House races*

There were numerous races at the state level in the August Primary. Again, only the *Grand Rapids Press* and WOOD TV8 provided quantitative coverage. The *Press* ran mostly articles summarizing forums for various State House & Senate races, and included profiles on candidates in all 13 area State races in the Voter Guide. There were also responses from candidates to numerous questions that ranged from abortion to taxes, and school vouchers to budget deficits.

With the TV stations, only channel 8 bothered to really cover the state races. They did candidate profiles for 13 races at the state level. The length of these stories varied between 2 minutes and 4 minutes. In comparison channel 13 ran only 3 stories on state level races and WXMI ran none. (see data pgs. 9-13)

Unlike the *Press*, the TV stations did little to let people know about candi-

-date forums - announcing them or providing post-forum analysis - besides a July 22 announcement of forums on WZZM 13.

As for content, even though WOOD TV8 covered many state races, there was minimal substantive information. Candidates positions on issues and voting records of incumbents were almost non-existent.

*(see example below)*

*County & Judicial races*

There were numerous Kent County Commission races on the primary ballot in August. Only the *Press* reported on those races during the 30-day study period - 3 articles and all districts were covered in the Voter Guide. Again the guide provided answers to questions like urban sprawl, the convention center and the John Ball Zoo controversy.

An example of a State Senate incumbent candidate profile on WOODTV8 July 15, 5:30 newscast

**Channel 8 reporter:** *Jim Koetje already knows his way around Lansing. Voters sent the Calvin College grad and the father of 4 to the House in 1998. Before that the attorney served on the Grandville City Council. But Koetje lives in Walker now. He moved there when the Legislature redrew the electoral map. In his first 2 terms Koetje says he fought to reduce taxes and provided more money for schools, but creating and keeping jobs are his top priority. He's working out a bill to bring Homeland Security-based jobs to the state. He says experience will help him make that pitch, something he also thinks makes him the best candidate.*

**Candidate Koetje:** *I'm a known candidate, not an unknown what are you gonna get - are you rollin the dice with this person - I'm not a gamble. My bio from a voting standpoint is out there for anybody to take a look at and I think I've done a very good job.*

On Judicial races the *Press* also provided the most coverage. There were 9 articles in all for both the Ottawa and Kent County Judicial races. The Voter Guide also had profiles of the candidates and a Q & A that covered a range of issues.

With the TV stations only channel 8 provided any coverage. One story covered a forum held in Grand Rapids (27 seconds long) and the other covered a false endorsement.

### ***Ballot Proposals***

There were 2 statewide proposals on the ballot in August. All 3 TV stations reported on these ballot proposals.

#### **TV Coverage of Proposals 1 & 2**

| <b>WOODTV8</b> |           |         |
|----------------|-----------|---------|
| July 30        | Prop. 1   | 3 min.  |
| July 31        | Prop. 1&2 | 2:20    |
| <b>WZZM 13</b> |           |         |
| July 29        | Prop. 1&2 | 30 sec. |
| <b>WXMI 17</b> |           |         |
| July 24        | Prop. 1   | 2:10    |
| July 27        | Prop.2    | 2:22    |

It is evident from the data that only channel’s 8 & 17 gave coverage of adequate length. Both station’s stories on Proposals 1 & 2 also gave viewers a good overview of the pros & cons, thus providing substantive information. Only channel’s 8 & 13 provided any coverage of local ballot proposals, those in Zeeland and Kalamazoo.

The *Grand Rapids Press* ran two stories on Prop. 1 & 2. The July 14 article gave readers substantive information, but the August 1 article was just a summary. There was also a short review of each proposal in the Voters Guide. There were no articles on local ballot proposals, but an overview of those appearing on the Kent and Ottawa County ballots were in the Voters Guide.

### ***Campaign finances***

Providing voters with information on how much money candidates have raised, from whom and how they spent it is valuable in an era when

money significantly influences electoral politics. Only channel 8

For details go to the Center for Public Integrity [www.publicintegrity.org](http://www.publicintegrity.org)

and the *Grand Rapids Press* reported on campaign finances. WOODTV8 provided both stories on July 25 that looked at money raised by gubernatorial candidates and “how” candidates running for the State Senate 29th district have spent their money.

The *Press* ran 4 articles, all on July 27, that looked at campaign finances in the governor, 29th State Senate, Kent Commission and Judicial races. What was apparent in both the *Press’s* and channel 8’s coverage with campaign money was that it only gave amounts raised. There was no real breakdown of who the money was from and the WOODTV8 piece had candidates talk about brochures and yard signs, but with no specifics. Reporting on PAC money was non-existent, nor was there any reporting on the amount

of money spent on paid ads by candidates or their supporters. Just as important was the fact that none of the news agencies studies reported on who paid to run ads with them and how much money they made from ads.

**Political Ads**

The Alliance for Better Campaigns has documented the ever increasing amount of money that political campaigns spend on ads. We counted 21 paid ads in the *Press* during the 30-day study period and 22 additional ads in the Voter Guide. From the chart you can see how many ads and by whom ran during newscast from the local TV stations. The questions that voters need to ask themselves are: 1) do ads present an accurate reflection of candidates/ issues? and 2) do paid ads in any way influence the way news agencies report on candidates? Both channel's




<http://bettercampaigns.org/>

8 & 13 ran stories critiquing ads from gubernatorial candidates. WOODTV8 has done this for years and WZZM13 initiated their 'Truth Test' with this most recent August Primary. Helping viewers take a critical look at paid political ads is a very important service that both these stations provided.

**Conclusion**

As was mentioned in the introduction there has been some improvements with election coverage in recent years with some of the news agencies, both in quantity and quality. Channel 8 gave viewers plenty of information on

**Paid Ads During Newscasts**  
*for 30-day period*

|                              |  |  |  |
|------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Posthumus                    | 68  | 37  | 25  |
| Granholm                     | 37  | 38  | 13  |
| Bonier                       | 14  | 12  | 4   |
| Upton                        | 7   |   |   |
| Anti- Blanchard/Bonier       | 8   | 9   | 3   |
| Trusock                      |   | 7   | 7   |
| Creelman                     | 2   |   |   |
| Noble                        | 5   | 1   |   |
| Pumford                      |   | 6   |   |
| <b>Totals</b>                | <b>141</b>  | <b>110</b>  | <b>52</b>   |
| Paid ads to Election stories | 3 - 1   | 2.5 - 1   | 7 - 1   |

\* note that for channel's 8 & 13 this included three 30-minute newscasts per day on weekdays and two per day on weekends. WXMI only has one newscast per day all week.

on the Primary ballot for the general viewing area. Both 8 & 13 provided numerous stories on the governor's race and channel's 8 and 17 covered in length the statewide ballot proposals. The *Grand Rapids Press* provided the most information overall, especially with the Voter Guide.

Where the news agencies fell way short was in the areas of 1) direct information on where candidates stood on the issues - only the *Press* really provided some of that information; and 2) checking voting records of incumbents against what they were saying they stood for - none of the news agencies really provided this information. This kind of reporting takes time and resources, but is essential for voters to make informed decisions.

The only race that received ongoing coverage was the gubernatorial race. Granted this race effects voters throughout the viewing/readership areas of all four news agencies, but

crime stories do. We documented several crime stories that received multiple-story coverage during the 30-day period. (see below) If local crime stories merit ongoing coverage why not local races? Even the trapped miners in Pennsylvania, certainly not a local story, received multiple-story coverage with all four news agencies studied.

The need to improve election coverage is paramount if citizens/voters are to make informed decisions. While some news agencies did well to inform people about who was running, they all fell short of providing voters with information to discern what

*"At 24 Hour News 8 we are committed to bringing you an in-depth look at the statewide elections - taking a close look at the ballot issues - questioning the candidates - to getting the answers you need - giving you all the election information on air and online - Watch Decision 2002 on 24 Hour News 8."*

This promotional piece ran throughout the 30-day study period. Based upon the data and analysis we provide, is the promotional statement from channel 8 accurate?

## Election vs Crime Coverage



|                               |     |     |      |
|-------------------------------|-----|-----|------|
| Rape of elderly woman         | 7   | 10  | 3    |
| Ada murder/kidnapping         | 10  | 10  | 4    |
| Total # of crime stories      | 106 | 117 | 64   |
| Lead Election stories         | 3   | 6   | 0    |
| Lead crime stories            | 17  | 22  | 6    |
| Crime to Election story ratio | 2-1 | 3-1 | 10-1 |

# Primary Election Coverage Data

## July 8 - Aug 6, 2002

### WOODTV 8

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Story</i>                         | <i>time/length</i> | <i>Date</i> | <i>Story</i>                              | <i>time/length</i> |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|---|--------------------|
| 7/11        | Dem. Debates/gov. announcement       | 5:30pm/:25         | 7/26        | Gov. candidate \$                         | 6pm/:34            |
| 7/11        | 72 <sup>nd</sup> House race          | 5:30pm/3:48        | 7/26        | Gov & local race \$                       | 11pm/3:10          |
| 7/11        | false endorsement for Brinkman       | 6pm/:25            | 7/29        | Upton race                                | 5:30pm/4:18        |
| 7/12        | 89 <sup>th</sup> House race          | 5:30pm/2:44        | 7/29        | Dems for Gov poll                         | 6pm/1:35           |
| 7/15        | 86 <sup>th</sup> House Rep. race     | 5:30pm/3:51        | 7/29        | Bonier Profile                            | 6pm/3:08           |
| 7/16        | 86 <sup>th</sup> House Dem race      | 5:30pm/2:30        | 7/29        | Gov candidates on education               | 11pm/2:58          |
| 7/17        | 90 <sup>th</sup> House Rep. Race     | 5:30pm/2:34        | 7/29        | Dems Gov poll                             | 11pm/:25           |
| 7/17        | political ad critique                | 6pm/3:00           | 7/29        | Bonier in GR/economy                      | 11pm/1:20          |
| 7/18        | 20 <sup>th</sup> Senate race         | 5:30pm/2:38        | 7/30        | Proposal 1                                | 5:30pm/3:00        |
| 7/18        | Dem. Gov. debate                     | 6pm/2:03           | 7/30        | Granholt Profile                          | 6pm/2:35           |
| 7/18        | Dem. Gov. debate                     | 11pm/:54           | 7/30        | 88 <sup>th</sup> House race/casino issue  | 11pm/2:20          |
| 7/19        | 21 <sup>st</sup> Senate race         | 5:30pm/3:18        |             |   |                    |
| 7/19        | Dem. Gov. debate                     | 6pm/3:08           | 7/31        | Proposal 1 & 2                            | 5:30pm/2:55        |
| 7/19        | Kazoo millage vote                   | 11pm/2:10          | 7/31        | Blanchard Profile                         | 6pm/2:30           |
| 7/22        | 24 <sup>th</sup> Senate race         | 5:30pm/3:39        | 8/1         | Zeeland Ballot proposal                   | 5:30pm/2:00        |
| 7/22        | Dem. Gov. debate announcement        | 5:30pm/:20         | 8/1         | Posthumus Profile                         | 6pm/2:57           |
| 7/22        | Dem. Gov. debate announcement        | 6pm/:20            | 8/2         | Ad strategies/Gov. races                  | 5:30pm/2:12        |
| 7/22        | Dem. Gov. debate                     | 11pm/3:15          | 8/2         | Dem. Gov. race poll                       | 6pm/:25            |
| 7/22        | 17 <sup>th</sup> Circuit Court forum | 11pm/:27           | 8/2         | Schwarz Profile                           | 6pm/2:52           |
| 7/23        | 29 <sup>th</sup> Senate race         | 5:30pm/3:32        |             |   |                    |
| 7/23        | Kazoo jail expansion vote            | 6pm/:56            | 8/4         | Primary Reminder                          | 6pm/:31            |
| 7/23        | critique of Posthumus ad             | 11pm/2:57          | 8/4         | Primary Elections-last minute campaigning | 11pm/2:41          |
| 7/24        | 29 <sup>th</sup> Senate Dem. race    | 5:30pm/2:43        | 8/5         | Primary overview                          | 5:30pm/3:38        |
| 7/25        | Teamsters endorse Granholt           | 5:30pm/:40         | 8/5         | Gov. race                                 | 6pm/2:16           |
| 7/25        | 30 <sup>th</sup> Senate Rep. Race    | 5:30pm/4:06        | 8/5         | Primary voting                            | 6pm/2:02           |
| 7/25        | Granholt ad critique                 | 6pm/1:55           | 8/5         | Gov. race                                 | 11pm/3:15          |
| 7/26        | 33 <sup>rd</sup> Senate Rep. Race    | 5:30pm/3:34        | 8/5         | expected voter turnout                    | 11pm/:50           |
|             |                                      |                    | 8/5         | Primary voting                            | 11pm/:38           |

**WZZM 13**

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Story</i>                                     | <i>time/length</i> |
|-------------|--|--------------------|
| 7/8         | Schwarz gets McCain endorsement                  | 5:30pm/:21         |
| 7/8         | Schwarz gets McCain endorsement                  | 11pm/:18           |
| 7/9         | Ann. of Democratic Debate/Gov                    | 6pm/:21            |
| 7/11        | Posthumus ad critique                            | 6pm/3:07           |
| 7/11        | Detroit Mayor-no endorsement of Dem.             | 11pm/:18           |
| 7/14        | Rep. Governor poll                               | 5:30pm/:35         |
| 7/14        | Political signs                                  | 6pm/1:44           |
| 7/14        | Dem. Governor poll                               | 6pm/:36            |
| 7/14        | Dem. Governor poll                               | 11pm/:28           |
| 7/14        | Political signs                                  | 11pm/:39           |
| 7/18        | Dem. Gov. debate                                 | 5:30pm/:24         |
| 7/18        | Granholm ad critique                             | 6pm/3:15           |
| 7/18        | Dem. Gov. debate                                 | 6pm/:20            |
| 7/21        | Dem. Gov. debate announcement                    | 11pm/:23           |
| 7/22        | Dem. Gov. debate announcement                    | 5:30pm/:35         |
| 7/22        | Minority voting                                  | 5:30pm/1:29        |
| 7/22        | info/bios of Dem candidates on web               | 5:30/:30           |
| 7/22        | Gov. race  | 6pm/2:57           |
| 7/22        | Economy & 2002 vote                              | 6pm/1:52           |
| 7/22        | Analysis/response to Dem. Debate                 | 11pm/7:42          |
| 7/22        | House 72 <sup>nd</sup> & 86 <sup>th</sup> forums | 11pm/:36           |
| 7/23        | Dem. Gov debate                                  | 5:30pm/:48         |
| 7/23        | Dem. Gov debate                                  | 6pm/2:15           |
| 7/25        | Granholm ad critique                             | 6pm/3:10           |
| 7/29        | Poll for Gov. race                               | 5:30pm/:45         |
| 7/29        | Plainfield Twsp. Absentee ballots                | 5:30pm/:47         |
| 7/29        | Gov. poll/public input on Dems.                  | 6pm/2:25           |
| 7/29        | Proposals 1 & 2                                  | 6pm/:30            |

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Story</i>                           | <i>time/length</i> |
|-------------|--|--------------------|
| 8/1         | Dem. Gov. race                         | 11pm/:34           |
| 8/1         | Expected voter turnout                 | 11pm/:18           |
| 8/2         | Granholm in GR                         | 5:30pm/:45         |
| 8/2         | Zeeland Alcohol Ballot Proposal        | 11pm/:30           |
| 8/3         | State Senate race/last push            | 6pm/1:57           |
| 8/3         | Dem Gov race poll/local Dem gathering  | 11pm/2:12          |
| 8/3         | State Senate race/last push            | 11pm/1:57          |
| 8/4         | Primary Election Announcement          | 6pm/1:25           |
| 8/4         | Primary Announcement/ "poll talkbacks" | 11pm/2:23          |
| 8/5         | Overview/polls                         | 5:30pm/1:25        |
| 8/5         | Zeeland Alcohol ballot proposal        | 5:30pm/:37         |
| 8/5         | Gov. race                              | 6pm/2:48           |
| 8/5         | if it were Posthumus/Granholm          | 6pm/:32            |
| 8/5         | Primary overview                       | 6pm/2:51           |

**WXMI 17**

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Story</i>                           | <i>time/length</i> |
|-------------|--|--------------------|
| 7/24        | Proposal 1                             | 10pm/2:10          |
| 7/26        | Bonier's office vandalized/show ann.   | 10pm/:40           |
| 7/27        | Proposal 2                             | 10pm/2:22          |
| 7/28        | look at Gov. race                      | 10pm/4:02          |
| 7/29        | Dems for Gov. poll/ann. 30 minute show | 10pm/:30           |
| 8/4         | Primary Reminder                       | 10pm/:23           |
| 8/5         | Primary Election                       | 10pm/2:14          |

\* note on July 22 we were unable to tape the WXMI newscast, which may effect some of the data and conclusions.

*Candidate Voices*



← WXMI gave us no candidate voices during their newscast

|  |      |     |
|--|------|-----|
| Steil - 72 <sup>nd</sup> House         | :12  |     |
| Gillam - 72 <sup>nd</sup> House        | :14  |     |
| Stapleton - 72 <sup>nd</sup> House     | :13  |     |
| Parrish - 72 <sup>nd</sup> House       | :12  |     |
| Stille - 89 <sup>th</sup> House        | :16  |     |
| Vanderveen - 89 <sup>th</sup> House    | :09  |     |
| Creelman - 86 <sup>th</sup> House      | :12  |     |
| Koetje - 86 <sup>th</sup> House        | :14  |     |
| Leisman - 86 <sup>th</sup> House       | :13  |     |
| Eleveld - 86 <sup>th</sup> House       | :16  |     |
| Tumer - 86 <sup>th</sup> House         | :14  |     |
| McDonald - 86 <sup>th</sup> House      | :12  |     |
| Van Kempen - 90 <sup>th</sup> House    | :15  |     |
| Huizenga - 90 <sup>th</sup> House      | :17  |     |
| George - 20 <sup>th</sup> Senate       | :14  |     |
| Vander Roest - 20 <sup>th</sup> Senate | :13  |     |
| Granholm - Governor                    | 2:01 | :53 |
| Blanchard - Governor                   | 2:03 | :40 |
| Bonier - Governor                      | 1:21 |     |
| Wicks - 24 <sup>th</sup> Senate        | :14  |     |
| Birkholtz - 24 <sup>th</sup> Senate    | :13  |     |
| Geiger - 24 <sup>th</sup> Senate       | :13  |     |
| Doyle - 29 <sup>th</sup> Senate        | :14  | :08 |
| Graig - 29 <sup>th</sup> Senate        | :13  | :18 |
| Hardiman - 29 <sup>th</sup> Senate     | :18  | :14 |
| Daniels - 29 <sup>th</sup> Senate      | :17  |     |
| Pestka - 29 <sup>th</sup> Senate       | :20  | :04 |
| Tanis - 30 <sup>th</sup> Senate        | :12  |     |
| Vanderkolk - 30 <sup>th</sup> Senate   | :11  |     |



|                                     |       |      |
|-------------------------------------|-------|------|
| Kuipers - 30 <sup>th</sup> Senate   | :11   |      |
| Dykstra - 30 <sup>th</sup> Senate   | :14   |      |
| Posthumus - Gov.                    | 1:14  | :14  |
| McBryde - 33 <sup>rd</sup> Senate   |       | :15  |
| Stewart - 33 <sup>rd</sup> - Senate | :17   |      |
| Cropsey - 33 <sup>rd</sup> Senate   | :16   |      |
| Shugars - Congress                  | :14   |      |
| Upton - Congress                    | :09   |      |
| Hamm - Congress                     | :12   |      |
| Schwarz - Gov.                      | 1:23  |      |
| Totals                              | 15:51 | 2:20 |
| Gov. candidates                     | 8:02  | 1:06 |
| State Senate candidates             | 4:05  | :44  |
| State House candidates              | 2:52  |      |
| Congressional candidates            | :35   |      |
| Circuit Court candidates            | 0     |      |
| Kent Co. Comm. Candidates           | 0     |      |

## Grand Rapids Press

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Story</i>                                     | <i>location/col. Inches</i> |
|-------------|--|-----------------------------|
| 7/8         | Allegan Co. Republican Treasurer race            | D-1/21                      |
| 7/9         | McCain endorses Schwarz                          | A-5/10                      |
| 7/10        | Right to Life endorsement                        | D-3/7                       |
| 7/11        | 12 <sup>th</sup> District Kent Co. Comm. Race    | A-17-18/15                  |
| 7/12        | Detroit Mayor won't endorse                      | D-5/8                       |
| 7/12        | Gubernatorial debates announced                  | D-5/6                       |
| 7/14        | Right to Life endorsement                        | A-23/4                      |
| 7/14        | Dem/Gov primary forum ann.                       | A-23/5                      |
| 7/14        | GOP/Gov candidates respond to corporate scandals | A25/14                      |
| 7/14        | Proposal 1, 2                                    | C-1,6/30                    |
| 7/16        | Kent Co. Commission candidate drops out          | A15/5                       |
| 7//18       | GOP candidates back pro-choice candidate         | A21/10                      |
| 7/19        | Holland District court race                      | D3/15                       |
| 7/19        | Kent County Circuit Court race/NAACP forum       | D4/14                       |
| 7/19        | Dem. Gov. Debate/broadcast announcement          | D5/18                       |
| 7/21        | Gov. race  | A1, 22/22                   |
| 7/22        | Blanchard profile (forum ann.)                   | A1, 4/34                    |
| 7/23        | Bonier profile                                   | A1, 4/30                    |
| 7/23        | Dem. Gov debate                                  | A8/12                       |
| 7/23        | 86 <sup>th</sup> House race forum                | A9-10/11                    |
| 7/24        | Granholt Profile                                 | A1, 4/34                    |
| 7/24        | 29 <sup>th</sup> dist. Senate race forum         | D1,3/7                      |
| 7/24        | 24 <sup>th</sup> dist. Senate race forum         | D2/11                       |
| 7/25        | Posthumus Profile                                | A1, 4/34                    |
| 7/25        | 88 <sup>th</sup> House race                      | A25/9                       |
| 7/25        | 90 <sup>th</sup> House race                      | A25/12                      |
| 7/26        | Schwarz Profile                                  | A1,4/34                     |
| 7/26        | PAC \$   | A12/13                      |

## Paid Ads

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Candidate/org</i> | <i>Location</i> | <i>Size</i> |
|-------------|----------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| 7/22        | Trusock              | A7              | 1/8pg       |
| 7/25        | Flores               | BB3             | 1/16pg      |
| 7/26        | Trusock              | B3              | 1/8pg       |
| 7/27        | Baxter               | A5              | 1/2pg       |
| 7/29        | Trusock              | A5              | 1/8pg       |
| 8/1         | Baxter               | A15             | 1/2pg       |
| 8/1         | Flores               | BB4             | 1/16pg      |
| 8/1         | Creelman             | BB4             | 1/4pg       |
| 8/2         | Dykstra              | A11             | 1/16pg      |
| 8/3         | Dykstra              | A4              | 1/16pg      |
| 8/3         | Trusock              | D2              | 1/8pg       |
| 8/4         | Eleveld              | A9              | 1/4pg       |
| 8/4         | Trusock              | A12             | 1/4pg       |
| 8/4         | Baxter               | A20             | 1/2pg       |
| 8/4         | Courtade             | A24             | 1/4pg       |
| 8/4         | Hardiman             | A26             | 1/4pg       |
| 8/4         | Pumford              | A27             | 1/4pg       |
| 8/5         | West MI Leadership   | A7              | 1/4pg       |
| 8/5         | Trusock              | A9              | 1/4pg       |
| 8/5         | Dykstra              | A11             | 1/16pg      |
| 8/5         | Baxter               | A12             | 1/4pg       |

**an additional 22 ads were in Voter guide**

## Grand Rapids Press continued

|      |   |           |
|------|---|-----------|
| 7/26 | 17 <sup>th</sup> Circuit court race         | D1-2/17   |
| 7/26 | 30 <sup>th</sup> Senate race                | D3/14     |
| 7/26 | 89 <sup>th</sup> House race                 | D3/13     |
| 7/27 | Engler decision/GOP                         | A1,8/14   |
| 7/27 | Kent Circuit Judicial race finances         | A1,8/18   |
| 7/27 | 29 <sup>th</sup> Dist. Senate race finances | A3/14     |
| 7/27 | Ottawa judicial race                        | A4/12     |
| 7/27 | Kent Co. Comm. Finances                     | A4/13     |
| 7/27 | Gov. candidate finances                     | A5/16     |
| 7/27 | PAC support                                 | A8/18     |
| 7/28 | 86 <sup>th</sup> House race                 | A29/11    |
| 7/28 | Polpourri/                                  | A25/5     |
| 7/28 | Gov candidate responses                     | C1,4/40   |
| 7/31 | Voter Guide                                 |           |
| 8/1  | Polls on Prop 1 & 2                         | A32/9     |
| 8/2  | Kent Circuit Court                          | A1,4/16   |
| 8/2  | Dem. Gov. race/ads                          | A12/14    |
| 8/2  | State races/ads                             | D1,5/24   |
| 8/2  | Kent Judicial forum                         | D3/8      |
| 8/3  | Bonier & Granholm in GR                     | A3-4/13   |
| 8/4  | Public views on the election                | A1,21/44  |
| 8/4  | Gov. race                                   | A20/15    |
| 8/4  | Senate, House, Kent & Holland court races   | A23,27/38 |
| 8/4  | Baxter false endorsement                    | A23/4     |
| 8/4  | 6 <sup>th</sup> Congressional race          | A25/15    |
| 8/4  | 15 <sup>th</sup> Congressional race         | A26/20    |
| 8/5  | Yard sign placement                         | A1,4/12   |
| 8/5  | Dem. Gov. race                              | A1,4/16   |

## Contacting the Media

### **WOOD TV 8**

120 College SE  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503  
456-8888  
News Director: Patti McGettigan

### **WZZM 13**

645 3 Mile Rd NW  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49544  
785-1313  
News Director: Sheryl Grant

### **WXMI 17**

3117 Plaza Dr. NE  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525  
364-8722  
News Director: Tim Dye

### **Grand Rapids Press**

Local News Desk : 222-5455  
Politics/elections coverage  
Steve Harmon  
155 Michigan St. NW, GR 49503

## Recommendations

- 1) Provide substantive coverage about candidates - where they stand on issues, past voting records when it applies - and ballot proposals.
- 2) Inform voters when public forums will held or broadcast in viewer/reader area. Report on what was said by candidates at forums.
- 3) Provide voters with relevant information about campaign finances/campaign contributions - how much, from whom, how it was spent.
- 4) Cover all candidates and political parties, regardless of where they are in the polls.
- 5) Minimize or eliminate polling data, as it is not reliable and can be misleading.
- 6) When reporting on political races provide follow-up coverage, much in the same way that crime stories are reported.
- 7) Cover local elections as much as possible - don't give Presidential, Gubernatorial or Congressional races more coverage than the local races.
- 8) Provide free and equal airtime to all political candidates. (only applies to broadcast media)