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Bloomberg Sets a $41 Million Spending Record

By MICHAEL COOPER
and ERIC LIPTON

Michael R. Bloomberg has spent a record-shattering $41 million on his mayoral campaign, according to documents his campaign filed yesterday, allowing him to establish supremacy over the airwaves in television advertising, plaster the subways with campaign posters, take out full-page ads in dozens of small newspapers and even hand out blue "Mike for Mayor" T-shirts at campaign events.

It is nearly four times the $10.7 million spent by his Democratic rival, Mark Green, who, unlike Mr. Bloomberg, is participating in the city's campaign finance program. The Bloomberg campaign spent $12 million from Oct. 2 to Oct. 22 alone, compared with the $3.5 million that the Green campaign spent — and Mr. Green was competing in a close runoff election against Fernando Ferrer, the Bronx borough president, for half of that time.

The $30 million difference has allowed Mr. Bloomberg to run television commercials 5,600 times since his campaign began, compared with Mr. Green's 1,900, according to an analysis by the Wisconsin Advertising Project at the University of Wisconsin. "I am confident that the Bloomberg television advertising buy is the largest on a mayor race in United States history in actual current dollars," said Ken Goldstein, the project's director.

Mr. Bloomberg's deluge of spending is testing the city's 13-year-old campaign finance law, which is considered a model by public interest groups, and is intended to limit the influence of money in city politics and also to help candidates with less money remain competitive. The question now is the extent to which the system can level the field when only one of the two candidates has agreed to participate in it.

Unlike Mr. Bloomberg, who is spending his own money to run for mayor, Mr. Green has agreed to limit the amount of money he can accept in contributions from each donor in order to qualify for public matching funds. Because Mr. Bloomberg is not participating in the program, Mr. Green is no longer constrained by a spending cap and is now receiving $5 in public matching funds for every dollar he raises in small contributions from city residents, instead of the usual $4-to-$1 match. The maximum Mr. Green can get from the city is $7 million; he

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has already received $4.3 million.

But he can still accept a maximum of only $7,750 from each contributor, so the challenge for the Green campaign is to find new people to make campaign contributions in the final weeks of the election, at a time when many people are directing their donations to charitable agencies dealing with the aftermath of the World Trade Center attack. During the most recent filing period he raised an average of $25,000 a day.

Yesterday the Bloomberg campaign began broadcasting a new commercial mocking Mr. Green: after images of the many memorials put up to those who died in the attack on the World Trade Center, it played a recording of Mr. Green saying that he would have handled the crisis "as well, or better, than Rudy Giuliani." Then, in white text against a black background, appeared a question: "Really?"

The Green campaign, by contrast, put on few commercials immediately after the Oct. 11 runoff election, saving its money for the final two weeks of the campaign. Even when Mr. Green was hardly on the air, his campaign was able to use what campaign consultants call "free media" — television news and newspaper articles — to try to undermine some of Mr. Bloomberg's ads.

After Mr. Bloomberg ran an ad in which a woman identified as "Verna Eggleston, child welfare advocate," praised Mr. Bloomberg, the Green campaign pointed out that Ms. Eggleston was paid by the Bloomberg campaign. After Mr. Bloomberg ran a commercial featuring several man- and woman-in-the-street-type interviews, the Green campaign pointed out that a man heard praising Mr. Bloomberg was not actually from New York City but from Chappaqua, N.Y.

All told Mr. Bloomberg spent $7.5 million on television and radio ads in the latest 21-day period, $2.8 million on campaign literature, brochures and print advertising, and $1.3 million on polling. The $12 million he spent in that period almost matches the previous record for an entire mayoral campaign, the $14 million spent in 1989 by Ronald S. Lauder.

Heavy print advertising is unusual in modern mayoral elections, but the Bloomberg campaign has taken out full-page ads in newspapers across the city, from The Weekly Gleaner to The Amsterdam News to The Villager. A full-page color ad in El Diario/La Prensa that ran yesterday said, in Spanish, "He recognizes and respects our community."

And a four-page glossy color insert in the Yiddish paper Der Tzitung praises Mr. Bloomberg's housing plan and his pledge to create 100,000 affordable apartments. It includes a map of New York City showing potential sites for the new housing in Williamsburg and Borough Park, Brooklyn neighborhoods with large Jewish populations, as well as in Canarsie.

Advisers to Mr. Green said that they had been purposefully saving their resources then so that they could be competitive with Mr. Bloomberg during the last two weeks of the campaign, arguing that even if they could not match his spending dollar for dollar, they could still buy enough television time to effectively saturate the market. Their argument is that the public can watch only so many ads in a given time period, before a sort of law of diminishing returns begins to set in.

And they said that they were cheered that a Quinnipiac University poll taken while they still had few commercials running showed Mr. Green leading Mr. Bloomberg among likely voters by 51 percent to 35 percent, with a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Now they are going back on television. Mr. Bloomberg broadcast television commercials 1,143 times from Oct. 12 to Oct. 24, compared with Mr. Green's 223. But on Oct. 24, the Wisconsin project found, the ratio shifted. Mr. Bloomberg ran 100 ads and Mr. Green ran 69, and the Green campaign bought more expensive time on higher-rated television shows. Joseph DePlasco, a spokesman for Mr. Green, said that the campaign would be competitive in its final two weeks.

Mr. Green's contributions come from real estate developers, lawyers and bankers. But there is also a touch of celebrity, with Wendy Wasserstein, the playwright, donating $125, Barbra Streisand donating $500 and the actor William Baldwin donating $2,000.

Mr. Green's brother, Stephen L. Green, who is a real estate executive, appears to continue to be playing a major role in helping his brother raise money, with contributions coming in from his business clients. An executive at LoCicero & Tan, the firm that has lobbied the city on behalf of Stephen Green's company, is among the donors.

Executives from the outdoor advertising industry, which is battling the city over a new law that restricts the size and location of billboards, have contributed more than $10,000 to Mr. Green.

Republicans had long looked forward to this filing to see if it would contain evidence that the Green campaign really had paid for prerecorded calls that Mr. Ferrer's supporters had objected to in the final days of the runoff. The only listed expenditure for calls was $10,842 paid to Sheinkopf Communications. The company's president, Hank Sheinkopf, said that it had not placed the objectionable calls.

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