

## NEGATIVE ADVERTISEMENTS AND CAMPAIGNS



Every time an election comes around, there are always some negative campaign advertisements featured and most of the time, people complain about these negative campaigns. However, what most people do not realize is that these types of advertisements are actually quite useful when it comes down to making the final decision. The chairman for the Department of Political Science at Vanderbilt University, John Geer, has said, "All informed decisions demand knowing the good and the bad." Geer said this during a discussion of the good and bad advertisements that take place during a presidential election. Geer happens to be an expert when it comes to negative political advertisements and has made it clear that some negativity in an advertisement may be good. He even said, "Negative ads are more likely to be specific about the issues of the campaign." A freshman from the Knoxville area, Erika Chidester, attended the presentation and says that Geer made quite a few good points during his speech. Chidester says, "He talked about a balance between positive and negative (appeals to voters). You need to have both." The lecture was held at the MTSU Student Union Building. After the lecture by Geer, there was a panel discussion with the Senator Jim Tracy. Tracy has said, "I like solid truth of an ad; using the candidate's own words against him." It was also discussed that by mandating voting, more people would become engaged in politics and the entire election process. However, a number of panelists believe that it would be far too hard to change such a process at this point in time. Geer says that some people feel that negative advertisements actually cause voters not to vote at all in the election but say that is entirely untrue. Instead, Geer says, "The turnout (for the presidential election) has been going up." A senior from the Jackson area, Hewitt Spain, learned more about the small percentage of voters who are undecided when it comes to elections, realizing that these voters are the specific individuals that the advertisers are typically looking to target because they want those voters to choose one side or another. From September 9<sup>th</sup> up until September 30<sup>th</sup>, in the span of just one month, a total of around \$85 million had been spent on advertisements from both sides of the current presidential election campaign. Even with all of the spending, the vast majority of voters have already made up their mind so these advertisements being displayed so late in the game are typically to help engage undecided voters.