



Agency Name: OnMessage, Inc./NMRPP

Ad Campaign Name: NRA - NO on Maine Question 3

Advertiser Name: National Rifle Association

1. **Challenge.** What was your campaign's biggest communications challenge?

Not only did our initial polling show that a majority of voters sided against us in favor of the ballot initiative, but our single biggest communications challenge was that we were being vastly outspent by Michael Bloomberg's gun control groups, who had taken a significant interest in getting this radical expansion of gun control passed. Our total budget was around \$1 million, but Bloomberg's groups were spending over \$5 million. With other key races taking place nationwide, we knew that we'd never be able to allocate the resources to match them dollar for dollar, so we had to make our media buys as efficient as possible in order to win.

2. **Objective.** Aside from winning, what was the objective of your media campaign?

In addition to our overall primary objective of defeating Maine Question 3, our objective in placing the media buy was to use our budget efficiently by targeting Republican and Independent voters using a layered, research-based approach to choose the programming that would be most effective in reaching our key voters.

3. **Plan.** Which stations did you buy, and why did you plan local Broadcast TV?

Bangor: WABI, WFVX, WLBZ, WVII

Portland: WCSH, WGME, WMTW, WPFO

Presque Isle: EAGM, WAGM

With millions of dollars flowing into gun control initiatives across four states, the NRA knew they were going to face heavy opposition in all of them. At the onset of the campaign, the majority of our resources were allocated to defeating a critical ballot measure in another state, so from the start we had a very strategic and targeted budget in Maine. We started our campaign in early September with a 3-week statewide radio buy and subsequently added a 2-week cable, rural print, and targeted digital buy one week later. During that time, the opposition was outspending us on broadcast \$800K to \$0.

After polling the first week of October showed that we were losing, with 58% of voters supporting the initiative and 35% opposing, we knew we needed to switch our strategy and compete with our opponents where they had already been beating us up for over a month - on broadcast. We had a compelling message, delivered by sheriffs from all across the state, and decided that a statewide 2-week flight on broadcast, complemented with a targeted digital buy, would be the most efficient and effective way for us to gain any movement in numbers.

After being dark for the last week in October, we went back up again for the final week on radio, digital and broadcast in Bangor only, where we knew we needed an extra boost to get across the finish line.

4. **Platforms.** Which TV station ad platforms did you buy?

- On-air: Local broadcast was purchased in all three DMAs (Portland, Bangor and Presque Isle), as well as local cable (ESPN, DISC, TNT, FOX) and statewide radio.

- Online: We spent 17% of our total budget on digital advertising. Pre-roll consumed 68% of this budget, primarily focusing on connected TV (Samba, YuMe, Pluto, Xbox), optimized media, sports targeting, and YouTube - with DMA targeting in Bangor, Portland and Presque Isle.
- Mobile: Mobile video pre-roll and display ads targeted a proprietary list of 2nd Amendment supporters - this was 16% of our digital buy.
- Social Media: We bought Facebook video ads targeting conservatives, NRA interest, hunters and the NRA member list. This made up 16% of our overall digital budget.

5. **Mix.** Did your media plan include a mix of local media? In general, how was your spending allocated by medium?

Our media plan had a mix of local radio (10%), digital (17%), print (11%), cable (10%) and broadcast (52%).

6. **Results.** Please share results. How did your campaign deliver vs. your opponents' campaigns? Were there significant shifts in poll numbers and in ultimate results that you attribute to your broadcast TV advertising?

Our polling at the beginning of October showed that we were trailing badly. 58% of Maine voters were in favor of the gun control initiative on our initial survey, and only 35% opposed it. This was the point at which we tweaked our strategy and added broadcast to our media buy.

We knew we had to reach past the natural Republican base and appeal to independent voters in particular, as we were losing our case with independents 53% to 39% at that time. The messages we put on TV were delivered by Sheriffs from across the state - an intentional play at capturing independent and rural Democratic support by using third-party validators to make our case.

On Election Day, despite being outspent five to one overall (and \$2.4M to \$414K on broadcast alone), the NRA's campaign won as the ballot initiative lost, with 52% of Maine voters opposing it and 48% supporting it. Furthermore, our post-elect polling showed that independents flipped on this issue and that 51% of independents said they voted against it, with only 48% saying they voted for it. Our campaign not only came out victorious, but delivered results in an effective manner by optimizing our media buy and making better use of our dollars.

7. **Tell Us More.** What else is there to know?

We truly believe that in this race local TV was the most effective medium for us. We began the campaign on radio and digital but ultimately couldn't compete with our opponents without taking the fight to the television set. When we added in local TV, we saw our numbers turn around and it pushed us over the top.