



SHOPPING SAVINGS INSIDE

Eradicate Hate Summit

Forum returns to Pittsburgh this week with a focus on combating political violence and hate speech. Local, C-1



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RACE TO GET OUT THE VOTE SHIFTING INTO HIGH GEAR



Lucy Schaly/Post-Gazette

Daybreaker, a group traveling the U.S. to get people to register to vote, is part of a movement playing an integral role in boosting participation in the Nov. 5 election.

With Harris, Trump locked in a statistical tie, Pa. volunteers aim to pin down deciding votes

By Hallie Lauer Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

What does record-breaking campaign spending, near-constant crisscrossing the state by both presidential candidates, and battling for the biggest prize among the battleground states get you?

A toss-up. With 19 electoral votes, Pennsylvania is a must-win state for both Vice President Kamala Harris and former

President Donald Trump. Despite the gusher of ads, money and the candidates' time, the race in the Keystone State is a statistical dead heat. With early voting in process and only 16 days left before Election Day, the campaigns are in an all-out sprint to win.

The time for convincing — for debates and interviews and advertising and rallies — is now largely past: The key now is to make sure ballots get cast.

And in the final days before the election, those efforts have shifted into high

gear, particularly in Western Pennsylvania.

The big money is now focused on motivating people to vote. Tech billionaire Elon Musk, who's backing Trump, just donated \$75 million to his SuperPAC for voter outreach in the final weeks of the campaign.

Dubbed "get out the vote" efforts, or GOTV, getting people to the polls is a strategy that might seem simple — almost obvious — but both campaigns view it as essential.

"Get off your couch and vote," former President Barack Obama said at a rally in Pittsburgh to mobilize voters

SEE GOTV, PAGE A-9

TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE VOTE

ELECTION 2024

SEE VOTER'S GUIDE AT POST-GAZETTE.COM

Local merchants sandwiched between sales boost, politics

Candidate store visits create buzz, headaches

By Jacob Geanous Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Bill Penzey says his spice business for years has hinged on understanding nuances of global trade — from issues of U.S. relations with China to impacts of rising temperatures in the Atlantic Ocean. Or how tropical cyclones can wipe out the delicate vine of Madagascar vanilla beans.

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candidate coupled with a public attack by another. Calls for boycotts followed — as did a sales spike of more than 30% in the weeks after, according to the owner.

Pennsylvania's role as a key swing state

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Alex Brandon/Associated Press

Republican presidential nominee and former President Donald Trump makes a point during a visit to Sprankle's Neighborhood Market in Kittanning on Sept. 23.



Mattie Neretin/For the Post-Gazette

Political action committees, including a dark money group pushing Democratic candidates, use a mailbox in The UPS Store in Washington.

Wealthy donors pouring record sums into Pa. races with little transparency

By Mike Wereschagin and Jimmy Cloutier Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

On a tree-lined street in Washington, D.C., tucked between a whiskey bar and a Tarot card reader's shop, is a UPS Store with a bank of small mailboxes set into the wall.

Along the bottom row in the far left corner is box 143. On paper, this inconspicuous mail drop just a few blocks from the U.S. Capitol is the conduit for tens of millions of dollars in untraceable money that has flooded into elections across the country this year.

The dollars have poured into Pennsylvania, where wealthy donors to both parties have

\$85M Dark spending

\$329M Partially dark spending

\$1 billion Total spent by the top advertisers on TV, radio and digital ads in Pa.

\$414M Total dark and partially dark spending in Pennsylvania

DARK/PARTIALLY DARK SPENDING BY PARTY

\$134M REPUBLICAN

\$276M DEMOCRAT

\$5M INDEPENDENT

Sources: AdImpact, FEC, Pennsylvania Department of State, IRS

shielded themselves from the public with the help of a small group of campaign law experts — middlemen enabling a surge of dark money into American politics.

Virtually unknown outside the world of campaign operatives and politicians, these firms have for years played a critical role in moving money

that can't be traced back to their donors but help shape the most important races in the nation.

An analysis by the Post-Gazette found that more than \$85 million in dark money has flooded directly into the state through groups that are formed for the sole purpose of preventing the public from knowing who is behind the

contributions.

At a time when most Americans consider transparency a fundamental safeguard of elections, the amount of anonymous money moving into the state exposes a loophole in campaign finance rules that makes it more difficult for voters to

SEE DARK, PAGE A-6

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