


# Political Advertising Transparency Project

Online political advertising is a major medium of democracy. It helps candidates reach their audiences across a wide variety of platforms and aims to persuade and mobilize voters. But users often want to know why they are seeing certain political ads and how they are being paid for.

In an effort to empower users and address the unfolding challenge of transparency around political advertising, the Digital Advertising Alliance (DAA) released a set of industry-standard principles that require up-front disclosures about paid-for political speech. BBB National Programs, Inc.'s Digital Advertising Accountability Program (Accountability Program), which has been enforcing the DAA's data privacy principles since 2011, will now monitor the world of online political ads to ensure advertisers meet these new standards. As an independent, politically neutral arbiter, the Accountability Program can be trusted to fairly apply these new principles in the tumultuous realm of political speech.

## Ensuring Transparency

The [Political Advertising Principles](#) are built around the goal of providing consumers with “**enhanced notice**” and “**notice**.” Political ads that call for the election or defeat of a federal or statewide candidate should

- (i) provide a badge, icon, or wording that states the ad is political, such as the DAA's PoliticalAds Icon  (**enhanced notice**) and
- (ii) ensure that when this badge, icon, or wording is clicked, it takes users to important information about who paid for the ad (**notice**).

The Accountability Program enforces these Principles by monitoring political advertising, working with advertisers to bring political ads into compliance, and reporting non-compliant advertisers to the appropriate government agencies.

The Accountability Program achieves this by:

- **Technical Monitoring** – Scanning the web for relevant political advertising to ensure ads are compliant with the Principles.
- **Complaint Resolution** – Reviewing complaints about political advertising and taking appropriate action, including opening a formal inquiry or referring the issue to the appropriate government authority.

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- **Enforcement** – Responding to inquiries about compliance issues, warning advertisers about non-compliant practices, and taking action against non-compliant advertisers.
- **Education and Outreach** – Engaging with advertisers, ad tech companies, and users to educate them about online political advertising and the impact of the Accountability Program.

The Accountability Program advances innovation in the digital marketplace by promoting best practices in cutting-edge content delivery technologies. As the technical space evolves, the Accountability Program continues to have a significant impact on the digital advertising industry because of:

- **Substantive Standards** – The DAA Principles meaningfully address transparency in online ads by providing consumers with real-time notice about interest-based advertising and political advertising.
- **Independent Enforcement** – Independent operation ensures advertisers, publishers, and industry associations have no advance knowledge, input, or influence over monitoring or compliance processes.
- **Public Accountability** – The outcomes of all formal inquiries are made public, giving policy-makers and the public confidence that industry is being held accountable for compliance with the DAA Principles.
- **Industry Support** – The standards and principles the Accountability Program enforces were developed by advertising industry leaders, giving the program and its work broad support.
- **Government Backing** – Like other industry self-regulation programs, the Accountability Program has the discretion to refer non-compliant advertisers to the appropriate federal or state regulatory agency.

## Help Advance Trust in Political Advertising

If you have questions about your organization’s political advertising practices or would like confidential compliance advice from the Accountability Program, contact **Jon M. Brescia, Vice President, Digital Advertising Accountability Program, BBB National Programs, Inc.** at [jbrescia@bbbnp.org](mailto:jbrescia@bbbnp.org).



## PoliticalAds – Providing Consumers with Transparency About Political Ads

The Digital Advertising Alliance established the PoliticalAds program to provide consumers with information about many of the political ads they encounter as they browse the web. Campaigns and their ad tech vendors can use the PoliticalAds Icon to let consumers know the origins of a political advertisement.