

## Irate viewers want the politicians to knock off the mud-slinging TV blitz filling the airwaves

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Nick Rissmeyer is a proud Republican who likes Mayor Bloomberg, but he's sick of seeing the man on TV, not to mention those trash-talking candidates for governor in New Jersey.

All have saturated New York's airwaves in recent weeks with increasingly negative ads. It's a perfect storm of politicking that is grating on many voters, and Election Day is still a month away.

"It's just too many ads, and too many negative ads," said Rissmeyer, 48, an auto mechanic from Cypress Hills, Brooklyn. "Tell me something positive about what they will do, not the bad things they've already done."

Call it preelection stress syndrome, brought on by more contested races than usual in the tristate region this year and exacerbated by a few very big spenders tapping their own fortunes.

Bloomberg has shelled out \$22 million on TV ads alone - many aimed at shredding the educational record of Democratic mayoral hopeful Bill Thompson while touting his own.

Meanwhile, Democratic Gov. Jon Corzine of New Jersey, a former Wall Street mogul, is spending millions to rip into his stronger-than-expected GOP challenger, former U.S. Attorney Chris Christie, who is returning fire as best he can.

Just how low will Corzine go? In one ad, Corzine all but calls Christie fat: the voiceover claims Christie "threw his weight around" as U.S. attorney to fix some traffic tickets as images show the heavyset Christie stepping ungracefully from an SUV.

Adding to the barrage, GOP U.S. Senate hopeful Linda McMahon of Connecticut is trying to get an early jump to challenge Democratic Sen. Chris Dodd's reelection bid in 2010 with ads that are popping up on city screens, thanks to the region's wide-ranging media market.

Toss in last month's tightly contested primary races for Manhattan district attorney, city controller and public advocate, and the hot air tops out at about \$60 million in total TV spending to date, experts say. That's not counting millions more spent on glossy mailers.

Experts say that if political TV spots seem more pervasive this year, that's because they are. Cable has greatly expanded viewing - and advertising - options in recent years, giving candidates new ways to reach into living rooms beyond the evening news.

"As a viewer, there's no place to hide anymore," said Evan Tracey of the Campaign Media Analysis Group. "You can't just flip to Bravo and expect to get a respite from politics."

The nasty tone of many ads, experts add, can be traced back to an enduring truth of American politics: Negative ads work. In New Jersey, for instance, Corzine's relentless attacks have narrowed Christie's once double-digit lead to just a few points.