

Negative presidential race has Americans hitting mute button

By Lesley Clark and David Lightman, McClatchy Newspapers

DUBUQUE, Iowa –Americans already hate politics, and the latest ugly spat between the presidential candidates is likely to sour them further.



“We’re sick of it,” said Donna Stehn, 57, a retired speech pathologist from Peosta, Iowa, who mutes her television when political ads come on. “All this stuff that they’re saying, it sounds like a junior high school campaign.”

With incendiary rhetoric – from the charge that Mitt Romney’s plans for Wall Street would put “y’all back in chains” to the assertion that President Barack Obama’s campaign “has disgraced the presidency” – the campaign is knocking on the door of being the ugliest in a generation, and the party conventions haven’t even been held yet.

It’s unfolding as both sides say the race will be about substance and big issues. Given the stakes, that’s unlikely to happen.

The latest round of fighting “reinforces the view of a lot of people” that politicians too often are squabbling and not doing what they were elected to do, said Dennis Goldford, a politics professor at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa.

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