

I'll have a venti and some politics please

It was not until I saw a full page ad in today's Washington Post that I realized Starbucks has waded directly into the government shutdown debate. The full page ad (right hand page, far forward, four-color, in media buying lingo) has the headline:

Sign the Come Together Petition

You can see the text on the Starbucks home page and apparently, at all Starbucks stores starting today.



019/365 by Joseph
Nicolia on Flickr

Also today, in the Post's business section, Allen Adamson, a branding firm director, is quoted about this Starbucks' move:

It's always risky when brands mix politics and business.

It's quite clear that Starbucks is taking a strong political stand against the shutdown, but I am not sure it will be risky. In fact, it may be a huge win for Starbucks (and maybe for the government, if it helps end the shutdown). To my knowledge, Starbucks is the first and only national brand that is saying something publicly about the shutdown— and it's always good to be the first and only in marketing. Plus, it is using the petition to have people sign up to get updates, either by email or text. You know what that means: database expansion!

Finally, this is a political ad, but it is not overtly

partisan, and that's the key. It assumes that most people are against the government shutdown, and the ad does not point fingers at specific parties or politicians. In this way, Starbucks does not alienate its conservative or liberal java addicts. It may not be your cup of tea, but perhaps it is your venti of coffee!

Did you see this petition in Starbucks or the ad in the paper? What do you think? Wise move or not? Let me know in the comments.