

STAT OF THE DAY

The Actor Who Created Big Bird Makes About \$314,000 a Year



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Esther Zuckerman 8,691 Views Oct 9, 2012

Even Big Bird has to make some money. The Sesame Workshop's 990 form for the 2010 tax year reveals that Caroll Spinney, the man behind the newsworthy yellow guy and Oscar the Grouch, made \$314,072. That's the most recent form available at Guidestar, which covers the tax year ended June 30, 2011. At MSN Jonathan Berr writes that Spinney's salary shows that "like for-profit media companies, Sesame needs to pay top dollar to attract talent." Spinney has played the bird since the show began in 1969, though others have stepped into the role at times.

For a comparison in the world of children's television, the girl who voiced Dora the Explorer (and became embroiled in a legal tangle with Nickelodeon) made about \$300,000 over three years, TMZ reported in 2010. Spinney, however, is a long-term resident on Sesame Street.

Big Bird made national headlines last week when presidential candidate Mitt Romney invoked the character's during the debate. Now, to Sesame's chagrin, the Obama campaign is trying to make votes out of Romney's pledge to cut PBS funding. But Big Bird has a greater villain than Mitt Romney, Berr says—for instance, his for-profit competitors like Dora. Berr writes that "competition for the preschool market is tough and getting harder," and Sesame has had losses and layoffs.

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