



NEWS RELEASE

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

FOR RELEASE:
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For the first time, people can now perform instant lookups of donations to local school board elections through the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission website, Executive Director Jeff Brindle announced today.

“One of my main goals is to make it easier for the public to track contributions to local candidates,” said Brindle. “Adding more than \$1 million in school board contribution data to our searchable database helps make that a reality.”

More than \$1 million raised for 2009 school board elections can now be quickly retrieved on the website (www.elec.state.nj.us/publicinformation/searchdatabase.htm). This represents nearly 70 percent of the donations provided for those elections.

Not included are checks smaller than \$300, which candidates do not have to disclose individually to ELEC. School board fundraising committees actually raised a total of \$1.476 million for last year’s races.

“ELEC’s central mission is to maximize disclosure of money that flows into New Jersey campaigns. With this new step, our agency has moved closer to fulfilling that mission,” Brindle said.

An analysis of the 611 school election donations reveals that the New Jersey Education Association invested the most funds last year. It raised and spent \$744,512 primarily on “ads/mailings” on behalf of local affiliates.

In addition, spending topped \$25,000 on school elections in the following locations:

Location	Amount Raised	Amount Spent
Elizabeth	\$ 193,454	\$ 117,450
Hoboken	\$ 74,382	\$ 69,310
Toms River	\$ 46,122	\$ 43,099
Garfield City	\$ 44,446	\$ 48,186
Hackensack City	\$ 29,124	\$ 28,430
Nutley	\$ 28,220	\$ 26,453

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In “School Board Campaign Financing,” a white paper report published by ELEC in April 2002, it was found that spending by school board candidates rose 230 percent between 1990 and 2000.

Brindle, who authored the report, found that the increase dwarfed the rate of spending growth for other local candidates (12 percent for the decade) though the total dollars were much smaller. School board candidates expended a total of \$722,412 in 2000—half the outlays for last year’s elections.

The 2002 report found that school board candidates spent 72 percent of their spending on mass communications (cable TV, radio, direct mail, newspapers and outdoor advertising). The white paper, which is in the process of being updated, is available at: www.elec.state.nj.us/pdf/whitepapers/white15.pdf.

Candidates recently submitted their first reports for school elections slated in April. Donations from those reports will be added to ELEC’s database as soon as possible.

For the first time since its creation in 1973, ELEC in November began including donations to local candidates within its searchable database.

Before November, people could call up electronic copies of reports filed by candidates and review them on their computers or make printouts. But they could not search, sort and analyze individual donations to local elections.

The initial batch included donations to committees that raised funds for the 2009 primaries. Since then, contributions to general election fundraising committees became retrievable.

Nearly \$36 million was raised for local elections last year, including the funding for school elections. Except for checks under \$300, most of those donations are now available to inspection through ELEC’s website.

All 2009 local donations except those to municipal party committees and fire commissioners are now searchable. ELEC hopes to include donations from these fundraising committees in the future. Until then, facsimiles of reports filed by these groups can be obtained through ELEC’s website.

ELEC staff can help with searches or answer other questions. To reach them, call the toll-free hotline at 1-888-313-3532 (within New Jersey only) or by dialing 609-292-8700.

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