



NEWS RELEASE

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Legislative candidates raised \$194 million and spent \$179 million on campaigns since 1999, according to a new analysis by the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission.

The spending figure is nearly twice the \$93 million outlay during the previous decade. However, the latest decade began a lot better than it ended for most candidates.

Most of the spending surge took place between 1999 and 2005. By decade's end, tough state pay-to-play restrictions combined with the recession put the brakes on fundraising.

"The 2009 legislative election was the first all-Assembly campaign in at least 25 years where spending was lower than the previous election," said Joe Donohue, ELEC's Deputy Director and author of the study.

"Fundraising definitely is in a funk. It will be interesting to see if the trend continues in this year's legislative election," he said. All 120 legislative seats are up for reelection this November.

Other findings of the analysis, entitled "Trends in Legislative Campaign Financing: Fundraising in the Era of Pay-to-Play Reform, Self-Funders and Recession- 1999-2009, 3rd Volume":

The 14th Legislative District (Mercer, Middlesex) has earned its reputation as the State's biggest battleground district. It has attracted more than \$14 million since 1999, the most of any district, and was the only district statewide where more than \$1 million was spent in all six elections. The other districts that ranked in the top five for spending during the past decade were the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 12th.

The most expensive single legislative campaign ever took place in the 4th District (Gloucester, Camden) in 2003, when both parties shelled out \$6.1 million.

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Located at: 28 W. State Street, 13th Floor, Trenton, New Jersey

Two wealthy gubernatorial candidates, Democrat Jon Corzine and Republican Doug Forrester, were major contributors to legislative races during the past decade. They provided as much as \$1.1 million directly, and possibly another \$2.3 million through county parties. The combined total is about 1.8 percent of the total funds raised by legislative candidates during the past decade.

An increasing number of legislators are helping to bankroll their campaigns.

Perhaps due to pay-to-play restrictions, legislators are sharing more of their campaign funds with fellow legislators and depending more heavily on contributions from special interest political action committees.

Since 1999, at least \$84 million was spent on various forms of communications, or at least 52 percent of all spending.

Reports filed by legislative candidates tended to be more precise in detailing their contributions than their expenditures. Candidates are particularly vague in detailing large communications expenses. Steps need to be taken to improve disclosure of expenditure information.

The latest ELEC “White Paper” research report, as well as past studies, are available by contacting ELEC at 609-292-8700, or on its website at www.elec.state.nj.us.

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