



NEWS RELEASE

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²Updated March 23, 2012
³Updated July 7, 2013

Candidates spent nearly \$14 million during the final days of this year's legislative elections, almost 36 percent of the funds spent during the entire campaign, according to an analysis by the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

On a percentage basis, the amount of last-minute spending is only slightly smaller than during a comparable election four years ago, said Jeff Brindle, ELEC's Executive Director.

"Particularly in competitive districts, it is not uncommon for candidates to delay their spending as late as possible to try to keep their opponents guessing. So the heaviest spending often takes place during the last several days," said Brindle.

Table 1
Amount Spent by Legislative Candidates
October 26 through November 25

Election Year	Spent	% of Total Spending
2007	\$ 15,845,197	37%
2011	\$ 13,655,367	36%

Overall fundraising dropped 10 percent from 2007, the last year in which all 120 legislative seats were up for reelection. Overall spending was down even more- about 12 percent.

Table 2
Amount Spent by Legislative Candidates on
General Election through November 25, 2011

Election Year	Raised	% Change	Spent	% Change
2007	\$ 50,250,498		\$ 43,403,633	
2011	\$ 45,238,341	-10%	\$ 38,366,364	-12%

"While all legislative fundraising activity for 2011 has not yet been reported, it appears that this year's totals will be lower than those of even 2003, when spending totaled about \$45 million," Brindle said. "You would have to go back to 2001 to find less spending in a year with all 120 legislative seats in contention."

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“It is clear the economy, restrictions on contributions by state contractors, competition from independent fundraising groups and other factors are taking a toll on legislative fundraising,” he added.

In this year’s election, incumbents enjoyed an even bigger advantage over challengers than most in recent legislative elections. Incumbents raised 74 percent of the funds compared to 26 percent for challengers.

**Table 3
Incumbents Raised and Spent More Money than Challengers**

	Raised	% of Total	Spent	% of Total
Incumbents	\$ 33,574,600	74%	\$ 27,369,065	71%
Challengers	\$ 11,663,741	26%	\$ 10,997,299	29%

“In the six previous elections, incumbents held an average fundraising advantage of about 63 percent. In just the 2007 election, the edge was just 55 percent,” Brindle said.

Democrats, who control a majority of seats in both houses, dominated in fundraising throughout the election. The latest reports show they outraised Republicans by more than a two-to-one margin, and outspent them by a similar amount.

**Table 4
Campaign Finance Trends among Legislative Candidates
by Political Party through November 25, 2011**

Party	Raised	% of Total	Spent	% of Total
Democrats	\$ 31,815,463	70.3%	\$ 27,808,174	72.5%
Republicans	\$ 13,346,280	29.5%	\$ 10,506,486	27.4%
Independents	\$ 76,598	0.2%	\$ 51,704	0.1%

Unlike most past recent elections, the 80 Assembly members outraised and outspent the 40 Senate members.

**Table 5
Estimated Amount Raised by Legislative Candidates
In the Two Legislative Houses* through November 25, 2011**

House	Raised	% of Total	Spent	% of Total
Senate	\$ 22,163,070	49%	\$ 17,939,769	47%
Assembly	\$ 23,075,271	51%	\$ 20,426,596	53%

*Joint committee figures were allocated 1/3 to Senate candidates and 2/3 to Assembly candidates.

However, Senate candidates, on average, spent more for their seats than Assembly candidates- an estimated \$255,332 for Assembly members versus \$448,494 for Senate members.

The overall average for all 120 seats was \$319,720. Like the overall totals, that average is the lowest since 2001.

Table 6
Average Spent in Years with Senate and Assembly Elections

Election Year	Average	% Change
2001	\$ 271,253	
2003	\$ 374,919	38%
2007	\$ 393,599	5%
2011	\$ 319,720	-19%

While overall spending is down, reports available so far show that fundraising topped \$1 million in 13 legislative districts- a new record for legislative elections. Previously, 11 districts topped the \$1 million threshold in both the 2003 and 2007 elections.

Table 7
Legislative Districts Where Fundraising Topped \$1 million

District	Raised	Spent
2	\$ 5,567,681	\$ 5,182,386
38	\$ 4,760,418	\$ 4,641,006
7	\$ 3,169,432	\$ 2,864,049
27	\$ 2,885,811	\$ 1,993,690
3	\$ 2,866,397	\$ 2,443,994
14	\$ 2,395,063	\$ 2,286,044
36	\$ 1,871,166	\$ 1,866,632
1	\$ 1,591,953	\$ 1,581,309
18	\$ 1,464,649	\$ 1,402,383
17	\$ 1,360,548	\$ 631,848
4	\$ 1,342,478	\$ 1,335,035
21	\$ 1,058,878	\$ 597,219
15	\$ 1,027,075	\$ 320,309

None of this year's races are likely to top the all-time record for a legislative campaign- a \$6.1 million campaign in the fourth district in 2004.

However, the second district campaign, which has cost at least \$5.2 million, currently ranks as the third most expensive legislative campaign in State history. The 38th district campaign, which has cost at least \$4.6 million, ranks as the ¹fifth most expensive. Both districts have been highly competitive over the last decade.

For a list of the previous top ten, see page 26 in "White Paper No. 22- Trends in Legislative Campaign Finances: Fundraising in the Era of Pay-to-Play, Self-funders and Recession 1999-2009 3rd Volume" at ELEC's website (www.elec.state.nj.us/aboutelec/whitepapers.htm).

The top five districts alone out of 40 legislative districts statewide attracted \$19 million- 43 percent of total legislative contributions in the general election. The top ten districts drew nearly \$28 million- 62 percent of all legislative contributions.

A growing trend nationally and in New Jersey is the involvement of groups that spend independently of candidates. Some of those groups are required to disclose their contributors and expenses to ELEC, while others are not. ELEC has called on the Legislature to adopt a bill that would mandate disclosure by all independent groups.

ELEC attempted to compile a list of groups that participated in this year’s legislative campaign based on independent expenditure reports filed with the agency, newspaper reports, or reports published by the groups themselves. ² It shows that independent groups spent nearly \$1.8 million³ on this year’s legislative election, compared to an estimated \$165,000 in independent expenditures in the 2007 legislative election.

Table 8²
Independent Groups that Participated
in the 2011 Legislative General Election

Group	Districts	Spent
Americans for Prosperity**	2,3,14,27,28	\$ 500,000
Better Education for NJ Kids Inc.	4,7,38	\$ 483,138
New Jersey Education Association ³	14,16,38,40	\$ 414,259
Republican State Leadership Committee	2	\$ 300,000
American's Families First	38	\$ 65,000
Local 32BJ SEIU American Dream Fund ³	38	\$40,000
Planned Parenthood Action Fund Inc ³	NA	\$20,209
Environment NJ	15,27,38	\$ 7,940
NJ Family First	Not Available	\$ 4,953
Strong New Jersey	14	Not Available
	TOTAL³	\$1,835,500

**Estimate. Group spent total of \$571,458 in New Jersey in 2011. Spent \$300,000 on Virginia legislative campaigns

“The growing influence of independent groups is a campaign finance trend we intend to closely monitor to the extent possible,” said Brindle. “What is really needed is legislation to be enacted that would require disclosure by ²Super PACs, 527 and 501(c) organizations as proposed by the Commission two years ago.”

The numbers in this report should be considered preliminary. The analysis is based on legislative fundraising reports received by noon November 30, 2011. Those reports reflect fundraising activity between October 26 and November 25, 2011.

Reports filed by legislative candidates are available online on ELEC’s website at www.elec.state.nj.us. A downloadable summary of data from those reports is available in both spreadsheet and PDF formats at www.elec.state.nj.us/publicinformation/statistics.htm.

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