



NEWS RELEASE

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Independent special interest groups spent \$5.5 million† on recent municipal elections in Newark, far exceeding the previous record for “outside group” activity in a local campaign, according to an analysis by the Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

The outlay dwarfs the \$261,629 expenditure in Jersey City 2013 mayoral race by Better Education for New Jersey’s Kids Inc., which appears to have been the largest previous expenditure by an independent special interest group in a local election in New Jersey.

“The \$5.5 million† spent by the outside groups nearly matched the \$7.1 million† in combined spending by 35 local candidates and three local party organizations in Newark,” said Jeff Brindle, ELEC’s Executive Director. Brindle noted that independent groups spent nearly \$41 million in state elections last year, also setting a record.

“These groups are becoming a major force in national and state campaigns, and now they are becoming big players in local elections. Based on current trends, independent spending is likely to be even bigger in the future,” he said.

Table 1
Independent Special Interest
Spending in Local Elections 2014

GROUP	MUNICIPALITY	AMOUNT
Newark First	Newark	\$ 4,465,486†
Working Families Organization	Newark	\$ 410,001
Newark Families For Progress	Newark	\$ 285,591
NJ Workers Voices	Newark	\$ 163,361†
American Federation Of Teachers	Newark	\$ 109,996†
Committee For Growth And Social Justice	Newark	\$ 73,130
	TOTAL-NEWARK	\$ 5,507,565†
Better Education For NJ Kids	Trenton	\$ 49,873
Mobilization Project	Trenton	\$ 54,300
	TOTAL-TRENTON	\$ 104,173
National Association Of Realtors	Bayonne	\$ 82,637
Better Education For NJ Kids	Jersey City	\$ 19,046†
	TOTAL- ALL CITIES	\$ 5,713,421†

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The heavy spending in Newark was led by \$4.5 million† in spending by Newark First, which was primarily financed by Education Reform Now (ERN), a New York City-based group. “ERN builds coalitions at the state and national level to give a left-leaning voice to reform in the public education debate,” says a mission statement on the group’s website.

The group supports privately run charter schools, which have become a major issue in Newark. Newark First supported Shavar Jeffries and opposed Ras Baraka, who won the election.

Education Reform Now also bankrolled Newark Families for Progress (\$285,591).

Independent groups that supported Baraka included Working Families Organization (\$410,001) and Workers Voices (\$163,361†), which were largely funded by unions.

While Newark was the main focus of independent groups in 2014, smaller amounts were spent on local races in Trenton and Bayonne.

The reports of the groups mentioned in this report are available on ELEC’s website- <http://www.elec.state.nj.us/ELECREport/IndependentExpenditureSearch.aspx>.

For more background on the influence of independent groups in New Jersey, please see “White Paper 24- Independents’ Day: Seeking Disclosure in a New Era of Unlimited Special Interest Spending”- <http://www.elec.state.nj.us/pdf/whitepapers/white24.pdf>

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