



NEWS RELEASE

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Heavy spending by independent special interest groups is driving up the cost of this year's Assembly campaigns, according to an analysis of the first wave of reports filed for the fall general election.

Table 1
Spending by Independent Committees and
Legislative Candidates Through October 2, 2015

GROUP	PRIMARY	GENERAL	COMBINED
Garden State Forward*	None	\$2,750,000	\$2,750,000
General Majority PAC	None	\$2,018,929	\$2,018,929
Carpenters Fund for Growth and Progress**	\$ 768,796	\$ 349,410	\$1,118,206
National Association of Realtors Fund	\$ 116,765	\$ 250,400	\$ 367,165
NJ Coalition of Real Estate	\$ 39,958	None	\$ 39,958
New Jerseyans for a Better Tomorrow*	None	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000
TOTALS			
Independent Committees	\$ 925,519	\$5,393,739	\$6,319,258
Legislative Candidates	\$12,527,364	\$6,589,670	\$19,117,034
TOTAL-ALL	\$13,452,883	\$11,983,409	\$25,436,292

*Contribution to General Majority PAC.

**Includes \$300,000 contribution to General Majority PAC.

Reports filed with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC) show that special interest groups already have spent \$5.4 million on the general election for a total of \$6.3 million, including the primary. That is triple the \$1.8 million spent independently during the entire legislative election in 2011.

In the 2013 legislative elections, an estimated \$14.8 million was spent by independent committees. The net spending was \$10.5 million after adjusting for transfers between committees.

Jeff Brindle, ELEC's Executive Director, said the burst of activity by so-called "outside" groups is further proof that independent committees have become a fixture in New Jersey elections. For instance, Newark's election last year drew \$5.5 million in independent spending- a record for a local race.

"The last time Assembly candidates ran alone on the ticket in 1999, there was no independent spending," he said. "Interestingly, independent group spending in this year's Assembly general election so far represents 45 percent of total spending," Brindle said.

"Usually, an election with just Assembly candidates on the ballot is a low-key affair. But the involvement of the independent committees is definitely adding some drama this year," he said.

Legislative candidates so far have spent \$6.6 million for the November 3 general election for a combined total of nearly \$12 million so far.

No direct comparison is possible with the 2013 election because it included gubernatorial and state senate candidates, and some independent groups also spent money on the race for governor and a minimum wage ballot question.

Much of this year's spending- independent and legislative- is focused on the 1st, 2nd and 38th legislative districts. All three districts are among so-called battleground districts where control of one or both Assembly seats has swung between the two major parties during the past decade.

Reports filed by General Majority PAC, a federal Super PAC that supports Democrats, show that it has directly spent a combined \$854,069 in the 1st District (Cape May County and parts of Atlantic and Cumberland Counties) and 2nd District (Atlantic County). So far, it also has spent about \$198,262 in the 38th District (parts of Bergen and Passaic).

Along with mailing brochures to South Jersey voters, the committee is running network television commercials that are being broadcast throughout the region. So far, there is no evidence of any Republican independent committee taking part in those races, though the Republican and Democratic state parties are active.

Largely financed by union funds, General Majority PAC already has raised more than \$3 million and spent more than \$2 million for the general election, according to its latest report.

While the PAC's independent expenditure reports break out direct spending for the three districts mentioned above, some of the PAC's spending is not tied to any one district, including legal services, compliance, polling, consultants, and administrative salaries.

Under the name of Fund for Jobs Growth and Security, it spent more than \$8 million on New Jersey legislative races in 2013.

Legislative candidates already have sent 76 percent of their funds to target districts. So far, the 38th District (parts of Bergen and Passaic Counties) is leading the pack, followed by Districts 2 and 1.

Table 2
Legislative Candidate Spending- Top Ten
Districts Through October 2, 2015

DISTRICT	SPENT
38	\$1,084,580
2	\$1,030,271
1	\$ 676,063
11	\$ 463,585
7	\$ 368,425
14	\$ 362,629
6	\$ 299,091
16	\$ 261,997
21	\$ 223,145
27	\$ 216,124
TOTAL- TOP TEN	\$4,985,910
Total Legislative Spending (General)	\$6,589,670
TOP TEN AS % OF TOTAL LEGISLATIVE SPENDING	76%

The \$6.6 million spent so far by candidates vying for 80 Assembly seats is about \$1.2 million less than estimated spending by Assembly candidates in 2013, and \$184,032 less than in 2011.

Table 3
Spending By State Assembly Candidates
Through October 2, 2015 Versus Two Previous Elections

YEAR	AMOUNT	DIFFERENCE-\$	DIFFERENCE-%
2015	\$6,589,670		
2013*	\$7,842,197	(-\$1,252,527)	-19%
2011*	\$6,773,702	(-\$184,032)	-3%

*Includes estimates for Assembly members who jointly filed disclosure reports with Senate candidates

Democrats hold a 47-to-32 margin in the Assembly with one vacancy in the heavily Democratic 5th District (parts of Camden and Gloucester) that they are expected to keep. They have maintained a majority since 2001, and they are raising and spending more money than Republicans or independents.

Table 4
Breakdown of Legislative Spending
by Party through October 2, 2015

Party	Raised	Spent	Cash-on-Hand
Democrats	\$ 8,526,622	\$4,957,248	\$3,569,185
Independents	\$ 1,290	\$ 655	\$ 635
Republicans	\$ 3,809,203	\$1,631,767	\$2,193,244
All Parties	\$12,337,115	\$6,589,670	\$5,763,064

Incumbents enjoyed a major advantage over challengers in terms of fundraising, raising almost five times more money than newcomers.

Table 5
Breakdown of Spending by Incumbents
and Challengers through October 2, 2015

Party	Raised	Spent	Cash-on-Hand
Incumbents	\$10,093,808	\$4,826,827	\$5,266,982
Challengers	\$ 2,243,307	\$1,762,843	\$ 496,082
All Candidates	\$12,337,115	\$6,589,670	\$5,763,064

The numbers in this report should be considered preliminary. The analysis is based on legislative fundraising reports received by 5 pm on October 8, 2015.

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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