



NEWS RELEASE

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Spending by the so-called “Big Six” committees totaled \$13.3 million in 2017 but the amount was dwarfed by independent special interest spending, according to an analysis by the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

Independent groups spent **\$47.5** million on last year’s election, more than triple the sum spent by the two state parties and four legislative leadership committees. The governor’s seat and all 120 legislative seats were up for reelection.

Table 1
Spending by Big Six Committees Versus
Independent Groups During Election Years

Election Year	Combined Big Six Spending	Independent Spending	Total	Percent Big Six	Offices on Ballot
2007	\$23,367,064	\$ 165,000	\$ 23,532,064	99%	Senate, Assembly
2009	\$12,919,862*	\$ 14,096,167	\$ 27,016,029	48%	Gubernatorial, Assembly
2011	\$15,547,359	\$ 1,835,500	\$ 17,382,859	89%	Senate, Assembly
2013	\$14,727,957	\$ 38,802,531	\$ 53,530,488	28%	Gubernatorial, Senate, Assembly
2015	\$ 8,661,126	\$ 11,649,010	\$ 20,310,136	43%	Assembly
2017	\$13,348,131	\$ 47,530,869	\$ 60,879,000	22%	Gubernatorial, Senate, Assembly
Total- 2007-2017	\$88,571,499	\$114,079,077	\$202,650,576	44%	

*\$14,761,634 if adjusted for inflation

“Party committees are now regularly out-gunned by independent groups during New Jersey’s statewide elections,” said Jeff Brindle, ELEC’s Executive Director.

In 2007, Big Six committees spent 142 times more than independent groups in the election. By 2017, independent committees spent more than three times the Big Six total. Of the total amount spent by the two groups, the **22** percent share by the Big Six was its lowest ever.

If the 2009 Big Six spending total is adjusted for inflation, the \$13.3 million spent by Big Six committees in 2017 also is the lowest sum spent in the last decade except for 2015, when just the state Assembly faced reelection.

“Traditional committees used by the two major parties to raise funds for New Jersey elections seem to be in relentless decline. Legislative reforms are needed to try to reverse this trend and create a more balanced electoral landscape,” he said.

While independent groups usually are aligned with one of the two parties, they legally must operate outside the control of party leaders. Unlike the party committees, they face no contribution limits, and, under current state law, they are less accountable because they can hide where they get their money.

“Party committees are more accountable and transparent. That is why political contributors need to be encouraged to go back to supporting parties directly,” Brindle said.

“Some independent groups should be commended because they have voluntarily disclosed their contributions in recent elections. But the fact is, New Jersey’s law is so antiquated that nearly all **\$114** million spent independently since 2007 could have been done with zero donor disclosure,” Brindle said.

Table 2
Campaign Finance Activity by “Big Six”
January 1 through December 31

Year	Raised	Spent*	Cash-on-Hand	Net Worth**	Statewide Elections
2007	\$19,177,655	\$23,367,064	\$ 377,324	\$ (521,409)	Senate and Assembly
2008	\$ 6,653,676	\$ 5,186,294	\$1,844,704	\$1,669,848	
2009	\$12,368,082	\$12,919,862	\$1,297,457	\$1,107,532	Governor and Assembly
2010	\$ 6,180,605	\$ 5,918,029	\$1,540,032	\$1,305,667	
2011	\$15,035,468	\$15,547,359	\$1,028,142	\$ 705,787	Senate and Assembly
2012	\$ 7,063,133	\$ 6,391,757	\$1,684,525	\$1,516,187	
2013	\$13,885,028	\$14,727,957	\$ 841,599	\$ 755,419	Governor and Both Houses
2014	\$ 4,872,907	\$ 4,048,955	\$1,662,052	\$1,008,612	
2015	\$ 8,027,793	\$ 8,661,126	\$ 979,220	\$ 262,353	Assembly Only
2016	\$ 4,518,172	\$ 3,842,223	\$1,667,465	\$1,511,597	
2017	\$12,243,328	\$13,348,131	\$ 738,454	\$ 629,952	Governor and Both Houses

*Spending may exceed fundraising due to use of reserves. **Cash-on-hand adjusted for debts owed to or by the committee.

Compared to 2013, the last year when the governors seat and both houses faced reelection, Democratic fundraising, spending and cash reserves showed improvement. Republican numbers have declined since the 2013 election.

Table 3
Campaign Finance Activity by “Big Six”
Committees 2013 Versus 2017

Republicans	Raised	Spent	Cash-on-Hand	Net Worth
New Jersey Republican State Committee	\$ 2,272,417	\$ 2,286,855	\$ 96,686	\$ 96,686
Senate Republican Majority	\$ 878,275	\$ 1,416,976	\$ 67,185	\$ 67,185
Assembly Republican Victory	\$ 569,565	\$ 834,950	\$ 90,319	\$ 90,319
Sub Total- Republicans-2017	\$ 3,720,257	\$ 4,538,781	\$ 254,190	\$ 254,190
Versus 2013 (Dollars)	\$(3,352,995)	\$(2,982,658)	\$(255,121)	\$(242,621)
Versus 2013 (%)	-47%	-40%	-50%	-49%
Democrats				
New Jersey Democratic State Committee	\$ 6,224,034	\$ 5,952,250	\$ 386,196	\$ 352,132
Senate Democratic Majority	\$ 1,148,723	\$ 1,580,603	\$ 71,207	\$ 51,207
Democratic Assembly Campaign Committee	\$ 1,150,314	\$ 1,276,497	\$ 26,861	\$ (27,577)
Sub Total- Democrats- 2017	\$ 8,523,071	\$ 8,809,350	\$ 484,264	\$ 375,762
Versus 2013 (Dollars)	\$ 1,711,295	\$ 1,602,832	\$ 151,976	\$ 117,154
Versus 2013 (%)	25%	22%	46%	45%
Both Parties				
Total- 2017	\$ 12,243,328	\$13,348,131	\$ 738,454	\$ 629,952
Versus 2013 (Dollars)	\$(1,641,700)	\$(1,379,826)	\$(103,145)	\$(125,467)
Versus 2013 (%)	-12%	-9%	-12%	-17%

Brindle said members of both parties have expressed support for ELEC-recommended legislation that could strengthen party committees.

Among the changes: raising the size of contributions that party committees can accept, exempting parties from pay-to-play restrictions, and requiring independent committees to fully disclose their campaign finance activities in New Jersey.

“We are hoping the new administration will seriously consider these changes and we will continue to work with both parties to bring about these needed reforms,” said Brindle.

State parties and legislative leadership committees are required to report their financial activity to the Commission on a quarterly basis. The reports are available on ELEC’s website at www.elec.state.nj.us. ELEC also can be accessed on Facebook (www.facebook.com/NJElectionLaw) and Twitter (www.twitter.com/elecnj).

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