



NEWS RELEASE

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WITH PRIMARIES LOOMING JUNE 4, INCUMBENTS HOLD HUGE MONEY EDGE

With the June 4 primary just a few days off, incumbent candidates for state legislative offices own an overwhelming fund-raising advantage, according to reports filed with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

Incumbents have outraised challengers \$11.5 million to \$898,888- a 12-1 advantage- and outspent them \$5.7 million to \$376,849- a 15-1 edge. Legislators seeking reelection have more than 11 times the cash reserves of challengers- \$5.8 million versus \$522,039.

Table 1
Campaign Finance Activity Incumbents
Versus Challengers Through May 21, 2019

STATUS	RAISED	SPENT	CASH-ON-HAND
Incumbents	\$11,504,066	\$5,687,673	\$5,816,393
Challengers	\$ 898,888	\$ 376,849	\$ 522,039
All Candidates	\$12,402,954	\$6,064,522	\$6,338,432

“On average, 97 percent of Assembly incumbents have won reelection since 2001,” said Jeff Brindle, ELEC’s Executive Director. “One of the main reasons is their massive funding advantage.”

“For instance, special interest political action committees tend to send far more checks to incumbents instead of challengers because incumbents already hold office and are in a position to advocate their interests,” he said.

Brindle said incumbents usually are better known, possess more experience, have more party support, and can point to one or more wins in past elections.

Fundraising numbers listed above refer only to direct fundraising by candidates.

The figures don’t include independent spending by special interest groups, which in recent years has favored Democrats, who control both legislative houses.

Independent groups are likely to spend millions in the general election in the handful of legislative districts that are viewed as most competitive. They also were active in legislative primaries in 2015 and 2017.

Compared to those years, independent spending in the 2019 legislative primary has been scarce.

Reports filed with ELEC show only that Stronger Foundations Inc., a group run by Operating Engineers Local 825, has expended \$15,000 in the 17th legislative district.

“While total independent spending still could go up in the primary, spending to date is miniscule compared to the \$900,000 spent in the 2015 legislative primary, and \$2.2 million in the 2017 primary,” said Brindle.

He said the lack of truly competitive primary races as evidenced by the meager spending by challengers contributed to the lack of interest by independent groups.

Eighty Assembly seats and the first district state Senate seat are up for election this fall. Democrats control the lower house by a 54-to-26 margin.

Given this majority, it is probably unsurprising that of the 15 districts with party contests for nominations, 13 involve Democratic slots while three involve Republican nominations.

The eighth legislative district has the most candidates -seven- vying for four Assembly nominations, and is the only district with contests for both Republican and Democratic nominations. In that district, four Republicans and three Democrats are seeking to be their respective party’s fall contenders.

At least two Democrats are running in all 40 districts. But there are three districts- the 7th, 15th and 22nd- where only one Republican is seeking an Assembly slot.

Having controlled both legislative houses for the past 18 years, Democrats dominated fund-raising, spending and cash in the bank.

Table 2
Party Breakdown of Legislative Campaign
Finance Activity Through May 21, 2019

PARTY	RAISED	SPENT	CASH-ON-HAND
Democrats	\$ 9,227,239	\$4,292,586	\$4,934,653
Republicans	\$ 3,175,715	\$1,771,936	\$1,403,779
Both Parties	\$12,402,954	\$6,064,522	\$6,338,432

The numbers in this report should be considered preliminary. The analysis is based on legislative fundraising reports received by 5 pm May 28, 2019.

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

ELEC also can be accessed on Facebook (www.facebook.com/NJElectionLaw) and Twitter (www.twitter.com/elecnj).

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