



NEWS RELEASE

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LEGISLATIVE CANDIDATES HAVE \$3.4 MILLION IN BANK AFTER PRIMARY; INCUMBENTS CONTROL MOST OF IT

Legislative candidates are heading toward this fall’s elections with the smallest pile of cash since at least 2011, according to reports filed 20 days after the June 4 primary election with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

Candidates report cash reserves totaling \$3.4 million. That represents 77 percent less than the total for 2017, when elections were held for 80 Assembly and 40 Senate seats, and 49 percent less than the total for 2015, when only the Assembly seats were in contention. This year’s election also features only Assembly contenders except for a special election in the first legislative district for a state Senate seat.

Table 1
Campaign Finance Activity by Legislative Candidates
in 2019 Primary Election Versus Earlier Elections

YEAR	RAISED	SPENT	CASH RESERVES*	2019 RESERVES VERSUS PAST RESERVES	ELECTIONS **
2019	\$14,410,074	\$11,025,486	\$ 3,384,588		A ¹
2017	\$34,875,842	\$27,665,721	\$14,774,600	-77%	G/S/A
2015	\$14,661,031	\$12,527,364	\$ 6,644,378	-49%	A
2013	\$28,111,870	\$22,153,242	\$13,398,825	-75%	G/S/A
2011	\$34,165,804	\$27,258,440	\$13,698,365	-75%	S/A

*Cash-on-Hand or Transferred to General Election

**G=Gubernatorial, S=Senate, A=Assembly

While the post-primary cash stash is relatively meager compared to recent legislative elections, incumbents by far possess the lion’s share of the loot - 90 percent versus 10 percent.

Table 2
Cash Reserves 20 Days After June 4, 2019
Election- Incumbents Versus Challengers

Group	Cash Reserves	Percent
Incumbents	\$3,049,387	90%
Challengers	\$ 335,201	10%
Total	\$3,384,588	100%

¹ Includes special election for state Senate seat in first legislative district.

Jeff Brindle, ELEC’s Executive Director, said the fact that legislative candidates are reporting less cash may be a sign that they are becoming more dependent on spending by independent special interest groups.

“Candidate coffers don’t need to be as large in today’s elections because outside groups often spend hundreds of thousands of dollars or even millions in so-called target districts, where election margins tend to be smallest,” Brindle said.

In 2017, he noted, independent groups spent a record \$25.2 million on legislative elections in New Jersey, including \$2.2 million during the primary.

“While independent spending in the 2019 legislative primary was almost non-existent (\$15,000), some districts like the first legislative district are likely to attract significant independent spending during the general election,” Brindle said.

Democrats control the lower house by a 54-to-26 margin. They have run both legislative houses since 2001.

During the primary election, Democrats raised more than three times as much funds as Republicans, spent more than twice as much, and reported cash reserves of \$2.8 million versus \$574,665 - an 83 percent to 17 percent edge.

**Table 3
Party Breakdown of Legislative Campaign
Finance Activity for 2019 Primary**

PARTY	RAISED	SPENT	CASH
Democrats	\$10,838,560	\$ 8,028,637	\$2,809,923
Republicans	\$ 3,571,514	\$ 2,996,849	\$ 574,665
Both Parties	\$14,410,074	\$11,025,486	\$3,384,588

The numbers in this report should be considered preliminary. The analysis is based on legislative fundraising reports received by noon June 27, 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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