



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Overall Spending on Legislative General Election was Lowest in Decade** *Independent Spending Lightest Since 2011*

Spending on the 2019 state legislative election was the skimpiest in a decade despite a price tag of nearly \$25 million to fill a state senate seat and 80 state assembly seats, according to reports filed with the NJ Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

Candidates spent \$19 million on the general election while independent special interest groups sank another \$5.9 million into the elections, which took place November 5, 2019.

While some candidates and independent groups won't be submitting their final reports until early next year, the final total is unlikely to surpass any previous legislative election since 2009, said Jeff Brindle, ELEC's Executive Director.

"This year's election was the most low-key legislative race in a decade," said Brindle. "It followed one of the most controversial, expensive legislative races in history in 2017. Maybe campaign donors needed a break."

**Table 1**  
**Total Spending on State Legislative  
Elections by Year 2009-2019**

YEAR	LEGISLATORS	INDEPENDENT GROUPS	TOTALS	INFLATION-ADJUSTED TOTALS	HOUSES RUNNING
2009	\$18,584,098	\$ 15,999	\$18,600,097	\$22,244,394	A
2011	\$44,024,272	\$ 1,835,500	\$45,859,772	\$52,308,793	S, A
2013	\$43,446,977	\$15,442,717	\$58,889,694	\$64,859,127	S, A
2015	\$22,632,814	\$10,908,983	\$33,541,797	\$36,309,009	A
2017	\$44,164,473	\$23,052,344	\$67,216,817	\$70,569,431	S, A
2019*	<b><i>\$19,015,562</i></b>	\$ 5,856,004	<b><i>\$24,871,566</i></b>	<b><i>\$24,871,566</i></b>	A**

\*Numbers are preliminary \*\*Also special Senate election in 1<sup>st</sup> district A=Assembly S=Senate

"I also think parties and independent groups may be looking ahead and saving their money for next year, when there will be a presidential election and campaigns to fill 12 New Jersey congressional seats," he said.

The result of \$25 million in spending in 2019 was that Republicans took the state Senate seat, which was the focus of a special election, and two Assembly seats in the First Legislative District, which spans parts of Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland Counties.

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The Democratic Senate majority shifted from 26 to 25 seats, while the Democratic Assembly majority fell from 54 to 52 seats. It was the first time Republicans have gained legislative seats in New Jersey since 2009.

Republicans also were successful in defending candidates in districts they historically have controlled, including the eighth, 21<sup>st</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. On the other hand, Democrats fended off Republican challenges in the second, 11<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> districts.

Spending was heaviest in those so-called “swing” or “battleground” districts, which the parties view as most competitive.

Candidates and independent groups combined spent 64 percent of their money in the top ten districts.

**Table 2**  
**Top Ten Legislative Districts by Spending**

<b>DISTRICT</b>	<b>CANDIDATES</b>	<b>INDEPENDENT GROUPS</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>\$ 1,880,084</b>	<b>\$1,078,774</b>	<b>\$ 2,958,858</b>
21	\$ 1,976,050	\$ 777,597	\$ 2,753,647
8	\$ 1,274,584	\$ 835,415	\$ 2,109,998
11	\$ 1,498,520	\$ 429,359	\$ 1,927,879
16	\$ 1,307,797		\$ 1,307,797
25	\$ 1,176,653	\$ 104,092	\$ 1,280,745
2	\$ 903,547	\$ 315,574	\$ 1,219,121
3	\$ 1,053,381		\$ 1,053,381
36	\$ 732,223		\$ 732,223
<b>19</b>	<b>\$627,308</b>		<b>\$627,308</b>
<b>Top Five \$</b>	<b>\$ 7,937,035</b>	<b>\$3,121,144</b>	<b>\$11,058,179</b>
<b>Top Five %</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>44%</b>
<b>Top Ten \$</b>	<b>\$12,430,147</b>	<b>\$3,540,810</b>	<b>\$15,970,957</b>
<b>Top Ten %</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>64%</b>
All Districts	<b>\$19,015,562</b>	\$5,856,004	<b>\$24,871,566</b>

Republicans made gains despite the fact that Democratic candidates spent three times more statewide on the general election- \$14.2 million versus \$4.8 million.

Democrats finished the race with \$3.5 million that it can carry into future elections. Republicans reported **\$849,743** still in their tills.

**Table 3**  
**Legislative Campaign Finance Activity**  
**by Party through November 22, 2019**

<b>PARTY</b>	<b>RAISED</b>	<b>SPENT</b>	<b>CASH-ON-HAND</b>
Democratic Candidates	<i>\$17,724,400</i>	<i>\$14,223,350</i>	<i>\$3,501,050</i>
Independent Candidates	\$ 29,221	\$ 27,375	\$ 1,846
Republican Candidates	<i>\$ 5,614,580</i>	<i>\$ 4,764,837</i>	<i>\$ 849,743</i>
<b>All Parties</b>	<b><i>\$23,368,201</i></b>	<b><i>\$19,015,562</i></b>	<b><i>\$4,352,639</i></b>

Among independent groups involved in the election, those affiliated with Democrats also were the biggest spenders.

**Table 4**  
**Independent Spending**  
**by Party Affiliation**

<b>PARTY AFFILIATION</b>	<b>TOTAL SPENDING</b>
Democrat	\$4,051,254
Republican	\$ 981,203
Uncertain	\$ 823,547
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$5,856,004</b>

General Majority PAC, a 527 political organization affiliated with Democrats, was the top spender. It was also one of the top three in 2017, and led all legislative spenders in 2015 and 2013 (then under the name Fund for Jobs Growth and Security).

**Table 5**  
**Spending by Independent**  
**Special Interest Groups**

<b>INDEPENDENT GROUP</b>	<b>SPENDING</b>
General Majority PAC	\$2,782,224
NJ Coalition of Real Estate	\$ 756,573
Garden State Forward (New Jersey Education Association) *	\$ 574,538
Working for Working Americans (Carpenters)	\$ 500,000
Stronger Foundations (Operating Engineers Local 825)	\$ 340,142
Monday Morning New Jersey	\$ 301,472
Growing Economic Opportunities (Laborers)	\$ 230,313
Just the Facts NJ	\$ 172,228
NJ League of Conservation Voters	\$ 104,022
NJ United	\$ 90,000
NJ Right to Life	\$ 4,492
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,856,004</b>

\*May include spending in local races as well as legislative races.

Winners, most of whom were incumbents, had a big edge over losers in the election.

**Table 6**  
**Campaign Finance Activity Winners Versus Losers**

	<b>RAISED</b>	<b>SPENT</b>	<b>CASH-ON-HAND</b>
Winners	<i>\$18,242,311</i>	<i>\$14,165,935</i>	<i>\$4,076,376</i>
Losers	<i>\$ 5,125,890</i>	<i>\$4,849,627</i>	<i>\$ 276,264</i>
<b>Totals</b>	<b><i>\$23,368,201</i></b>	<b><i>\$19,015,562</i></b>	<b><i>\$4,352,639</i></b>

None of this year’s legislative races cracked the top ten most expensive legislative races of all time because those all focused on Senate races.

Spending in the 21<sup>st</sup> and eighth legislative districts cost enough, respectively, to become the fifth and 10<sup>th</sup> most expensive Assembly-only elections based on inflation-adjusted numbers.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 7**  
**Top Ten Most Expensive Assembly-Only Elections**  
**Based on Inflation-Adjusted Numbers**

<b>RANK</b>	<b>YEAR</b>	<b>DISTRICT</b>	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>INFLATION-ADJUSTED TOTALS</b>
1	2005	2	\$4,458,631	\$5,875,120
2	2015	2	\$5,193,557	\$5,639,010
3	2015	1	\$3,607,734	\$3,917,170
4	2009	1	\$2,410,257	\$2,891,203
<b>5</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>\$2,753,647</b>	<b>\$2,753,647</b>
6	2015	38	\$2,237,460	\$2,429,367
7	2005	12	\$1,834,857	\$2,417,783
8	2005	14	\$1,827,804	\$2,408,490
9	2005	11	\$1,742,488	\$2,296,069
<b>10</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>\$2,109,998</b>	<b>\$2,109,998</b>

The analysis is based on candidate 20-day pre-election day reports due November 25 received by November 29, 2019. Independent spending totals were based on available post-election filings.

Reports filed by legislative candidates and independent spenders are available online on ELEC’s website at [www.elec.state.nj.us](http://www.elec.state.nj.us). A downloadable summary of data from candidate reports is available in both spreadsheet and PDF formats at [www.elec.state.nj.us/publicinformation/statistics.htm](http://www.elec.state.nj.us/publicinformation/statistics.htm).

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<sup>1</sup> Spending in the 1<sup>st</sup> legislative district was omitted because it included a state Senate election.