



NEWS RELEASE

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After Big Start in 2020, Fund-Raising by Special Interest PACs Appeared to Hit a Wall Due to Virus Crisis

At the end of the first three months of 2020, special interest political action committees¹ (PACs) registered with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC) had raised what appears to be a record first-quarter haul- \$13.3 million.

But late in the period in mid-March, the COVID-19 virus pandemic arrived with a fury.

Now, new reports show PAC fundraising for the three months ending June 30, 2020 fell \$4.2 million, or 32 percent.

“It appears the virus crisis plagued PAC treasurers in the second quarter just as it seemed to bedevil party and legislative leaders,” said Jeff Brindle, ELEC’s Executive Director.

“This is another sign that the virus crisis is having a noticeable impact on political fund-raising,” said Brindle. “Whether this trend continues remains to be seen. ELEC will be monitoring disclosure reports to track any lingering effects.”

**First and Second Quarter Fund-Raising by
Special Interest Political Action Committees - 2009-2020**

Year	1st Quarter	2 nd Quarter	Difference-\$	Difference-%
2020	\$13,275,856	\$ 9,046,818	\$(4,229,038)	-32%
2019	\$ 9,589,976	\$10,812,530	\$ 1,222,554	13%
2018	\$10,184,082	\$11,768,799	\$ 1,584,717	16%
2017	\$ 9,490,599	\$10,004,801	\$ 514,202	5%
2016	\$ 9,671,583	\$ 8,830,398	\$ (841,185)	-9%
2015	\$ 9,157,344	\$ 9,012,964	\$ (144,380)	-2%
2014	\$ 8,660,510	\$ 9,436,316	\$ 775,806	9%
2013	\$ 8,154,354	\$10,571,899	\$ 2,417,545	30%
2012	\$ 7,082,976	\$ 8,968,890	\$ 1,885,914	27%
2011	\$ 6,316,554	\$ 8,125,744	\$ 1,809,190	29%
2010	\$ 5,436,265	\$ 6,789,976	\$ 1,353,711	25%
2009	\$ 5,728,737	\$ 7,134,164	\$ 1,405,427	25%

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¹ Technically, continuing political committees.

ELEC examined fund-raising by 235 special interest PACs that raised or spent funds during the first six months of 2020 and compared their fund-raising to comparable totals dating back to 2009.

Special interest PACs include those run by unions, businesses, regulated industries, ideological, trade associations and professional associations. They do not include party organizations that also report on a quarterly basis.

Going back to 2009, special interest PACs have not suffered a mid-year slump of more than 9 percent, and then only in two (2015 and 2016) of the last 12 years.

On average, first-to-second quarter fundraising by PACs has jumped 15 percent during the decade. This includes average increases of 17 percent during state election years and 13 percent during federal election years.

ELEC had previously disclosed that second quarter fund-raising by county committees fell 50 percent while fund-raising during the same period by the two state parties and four legislative leadership PACs sank 36 percent.

“The latest PAC numbers, combined with previous reports that showed fund-raising slumps by party and legislative committees, suggest fund-raising challenges may lie ahead in the COVID-19 era,” said Brindle.

PACs filing with ELEC are required to detail their fund-raising or spending if they spend more than \$6,300 annually.

Unlike federal Super PACs, which can accept unlimited contributions, most contributions to New Jersey registered PACs are limited to \$7,200 per year. PACs file quarterly reports with ELEC.

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