



NEWS RELEASE

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Primary Spending by Gubernatorial Candidates Already Tops \$12 million

A campaign finance snapshot taken a month before the June 8 primary election shows gubernatorial candidates have raised \$14.8 million and spent \$12.2 million, according to reports filed with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

Reports due 29 days before the election show Democratic incumbent Governor Phil Murphy, who has no challengers, has raised the most funds (\$7.8 million) and has done the most spending (\$6.9 million).

On the Republican side, former Assemblyman Jack Ciattarelli leads three other GOP contenders by raising \$5.7 million and spending \$4.4 million. Ciattarelli reported the largest cash reserves of any candidate-\$1.3 million.

**TABLE 1
PRE-PRIMARY AND PRIMARY CAMPAIGN FINANCE ACTIVITY
OF GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATES THROUGH MAY 7, 2021
(RANKED BY SPENDING)**

CANDIDATE	PARTY	RAISED	SPENT	CASH ON HAND
Murphy, Phil	D	\$ 7,833,472	\$ 6,882,099	\$ 951,373
Ciattarelli, Jack	R	\$ 5,682,736	\$ 4,381,209	\$1,301,527
Singh, Hirsh	R	\$ 527,353	\$ 457,497	\$ 69,856
Rizzo, Phil	R	\$ 563,263	\$ 244,052	\$ 319,211
Steinhardt, Douglas**	R	\$ 248,345	\$ 221,819	\$ 26,527
Levine, Brian*	R	NA	NA	NA
TOTAL- PRIMARY CANDIDATES		\$14,855,169	\$12,186,676	\$2,668,494
TOTAL- INDEPENDENT COMMITTEES		\$13,681,075	\$13,164,735	
TOTAL- CANDIDATES AND INDEPENDENT COMMITTEES		\$28,536,244	\$25,351,411	

*Does not expect to spend more than \$5,800 on primary election. **Withdrawn from race.

Jeff Brindle, ELEC's Executive Director, said candidate fund-raising is down from \$28 million four years ago, when 11 candidates were running for a seat previously held for eight years by former Governor Chris Christie.

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“More candidates usually run during years without incumbents seeking reelection,” Brindle said.

“The large amount of money spent on the primary by candidates themselves also made 2017 more expensive,” he added.

Murphy, a former Goldman Sachs executive, sank \$16.3 million of his personal wealth into the 2017 primary election. Seven other candidates in 2017 raised \$1.5 million by tapping either their own wealth or money from family members.

By contrast, candidates and their family members so far in 2021 have given just \$561,085.

Republican businessman Hirsh Singh has drawn the most funds from personal assets. He has loaned \$418,000 to his campaign and his parents each made \$4,900 maximum contributions. He is not accepting public funds.

Ciattarelli gave \$25,000 to his campaign, the most he can give and still receive public funds. Other family members donated \$28,800.

Steinhardt lent his short-lived campaign \$32,885 while family members gave \$22,100.

Governor Murphy and four family members gave a total of \$24,500 to his primary campaign fund.

There is a tradition in New Jersey dating back to the 1990s for candidates for governor to promote themselves and their policies by raising and spending money in advance of their formal candidacies. They normally do this using 527 political organizations or 501c4 social welfare groups.

Supporters of Governor Murphy and former Governor Christie also used social welfare groups to maintain and expand public support for the candidates as well as to promote their policies mainly by running issue-oriented advertisements between elections.

Under a 2000 state law, candidates with close affiliations to these pre-primary groups must file reports listing the names of contributors to those groups along with expenses. Normally, 501c4 social welfare groups are not required to publicly disclose their donor names.

Murphy filed an Issue Advocacy Organization Participation report on February 23, 2021 that details spending by New Direction for New Jersey, a 501c4 social welfare group formed shortly after his election in 2017 and run by his former campaign manager.

TABLE 2
SPENDING BY INDEPENDENT COMMITTEES
TO SUPPORT GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATES

FORMED BY OR AFFILIATED WITH	INDEPENDENT COMMITTEES	RAISED	SPENT
Primary			
Murphy, Phil	Our New Jersey (Democratic Governors Association)	\$ 0	\$ 0
Pre-Primary			
Murphy, Phil	New Direction for New Jersey	\$ 13,681,075	\$ 13,164,735
	TOTAL- INDEPENDENT COMMITTEES	\$ 13,681,075	\$ 13,164,735

New Direction raised \$13.7 million and spent \$13.2 million since its formation, according to Murphy's report. The committee's spending is more than the \$8.2 million spent by eight independent committees that tried to build support for seven potential or actual candidates before the 2017 primary election.

None of the current Republican candidates reported affiliations with pre-primary independent spenders.

Murphy also is expected to get a boost this year from the Democratic Governors Association (DGA). DGA spent \$2.4 million promoting his candidacy in 2017. The Republican Governors Association spent \$2.3 million on behalf of his Republican opponent, former Lieutenant Governor Kimberly Guadagno.

Murphy was chairman of the DGA during 2020. He now serves as its treasurer. DGA has registered with ELEC under the name of Our New Jersey but so far has not raised or spent any funds. He did receive a \$4,900 check from the Democratic Lieutenant Governors Association.

Another independent group, Committee to Build the Economy, spent \$6.5 million supporting Murphy's candidacy in 2017. In its last report filed January 13, 2021, it listed a balance of \$14,299. Four years ago, it was mostly active after the primary election.

Murphy and Ciattarelli are the only two candidates to qualify for public matching funds.

Under the nationally recognized program, which began in New Jersey in 1974 and provides two public dollars for every one raised by candidates, those who qualify can receive up to \$4.6 million in public funds for

the primary. They must limit their primary spending to \$7.3 million and can donate no more than \$25,000 to their campaigns.

“The public financing program has served the public well, costing an average of \$4.18 per taxpayer in 2017. In exchange, voters benefited by having a gubernatorial campaign focused mainly on issues and less subject to special interest influence,” said Brindle.

Reports filed by gubernatorial candidates are available online 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/elecny).

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