



NEWS RELEASE

Respond to:
P.O. Box 185
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0185

(609) 292-8700 or Toll Free Within NJ 1-888-313-ELEC (3532)

CONTACT: JEFF BRINDLE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Big Six Fund-raising Hits Decade High Yet Overall Financial Clout Lags

The so-called “Big Six” fund-raising committees raised \$16.9 million during the 2021 gubernatorial election year, the highest amount since 2011 when the inflation-adjusted total was \$18.6 million, according to the year-end reports filed with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

Jeff Brindle, ELEC’s Executive Director, said while the total is encouraging, it masks a decade-long trend that suggests the two state parties and four legislative leadership committees still are having more difficulty raising campaign funds than in the past.

“This is a classic good news, bad news situation,” Brindle said. “It is great to see the Big Six raise nearly \$17 million last year. But its average annual fund-raising from 2011 through 2021 was just \$9.1 million,” he said. “That is just 56 percent of the \$16.3 million average for the previous decade.”

Table 1
Annual Fund-Raising by
Big Six Committees

YEAR	RAISED	YEAR	RAISED
2000	\$11,182,825	2011	\$15,035,468*
2001	\$41,736,031	2012	\$ 7,063,133
2002	\$14,796,069	2013	\$13,885,028
2003	\$30,091,484	2014	\$ 4,872,907
2004	\$10,641,399	2015	\$ 8,027,793
2005	\$19,277,696	2016	\$ 4,518,172
2006	\$ 7,211,937	2017	\$12,243,328
2007	\$19,177,655	2018	\$ 6,194,632
2008	\$ 6,653,676	2019	\$ 7,155,435
2009	\$12,368,082	2020	\$ 4,260,928
2010	\$ 6,180,605	2021	\$16,892,473
Average-2000-2010	\$16,301,587	Average-2011-2021	\$ 9,104,482

*\$18,635,801 in 2021 dollars

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Brindle said the fund-raising gap between the two decades is even starker if the earlier numbers were adjusted for inflation. “The buying power of money raised in the last decade was greater than it was during the more recent decade,” he said.

While state contribution limits for gubernatorial candidates are automatically adjusted for inflation every four years, those for other candidates, parties and traditional political action committees have remain unchanged since 2005. During that time, inflation has risen nearly 43 percent, Brindle said.

“ELEC, along bipartisan lines, has long recommended an increase in contribution limits for non-gubernatorial fund-raising committees. Hopefully the legislature will move a bill that will increase contribution limits to account for 17 years of inflation, which unfortunately is presently on the rise,” he said.

Brindle said the commission hopes that this change, along with others such as requiring independent spending committees to fully disclose their campaign finance activity, will help strengthen party organizations in the Garden State.

“As political parties have weakened, independent spending by special interests has come to dominate New Jersey elections. If parties can raise more funds, they may be able to slow or reverse this trend,” he said.

“Parties are more accountable and transparent than these so-called “outside” groups. Plus, they represent a broad coalition of people, help get voters to the polls, help organize government, and, in this social media age of information overload, they can guide individual voters who look to the party label for understanding where candidates stand on the issues,” Brindle said.

Table 2
Campaign Finance Activity by “Big Six”
Committees for 2021 Versus 2017

REPUBLICANS	RAISED	SPENT	CASH-ON-HAND	NET WORTH*
New Jersey Republican State Committee	\$ 2,011,453	\$ 2,115,721	\$ 54,416	\$ 54,416
Senate Republican Majority	\$ 812,259	\$ 645,825	\$ 9,075	\$ 9,075
Assembly Republican Victory	\$ 696,964	\$ 819,258	\$ 58,262	\$ 58,262
Total – Republicans – 2021	\$ 3,520,676	\$ 3,580,804	\$ 121,753	\$121,753
2017 Totals	\$ 3,720,257	\$ 4,538,781	\$ 254,190	\$254,190
Versus 2017 (Percent)	-6%	-27%	-109%	-109%
DEMOCRATS				
New Jersey Democratic State Committee	\$ 9,906,153	\$ 9,604,526	\$ 489,254	\$475,285
Senate Democratic Majority	\$ 1,115,332	\$ 1,309,712	\$ 247,562	\$227,562
Democratic Assembly Campaign Committee	\$ 2,350,312	\$ 2,551,554	\$ 158,525	\$128,086
Total – Democrats – 2021	\$13,371,797	\$13,465,792	\$ 895,341	\$830,933
2017 Totals	\$ 8,523,071	\$ 8,809,350	\$ 484,264	\$375,762
Versus 2017 (Percent)	36%	35%	46%	55%
BOTH PARTIES				
Total Both Parties– 2021	\$16,892,473	\$17,046,596	\$1,017,094	\$952,686
Versus 2017 (Dollars)	\$12,243,328	\$13,348,131	\$ 738,454	\$629,952
Versus 2017 (Percent)	28%	22%	27%	34%

*Net worth is cash-on-hand adjusted for debts owed to or by the committee.

Compared to the previous gubernatorial election year in 2017, Republican committees raised and spent less funds in 2021 and had less cash-on-hand. Democratic totals were up in all categories.

“While Democrats have been doing better raising funds lately, their “Big Three” committees raised \$31.8 million in their best year in 2001. That compares to \$13.4 million last year,” Brindle said.

“In today’s dollars, the 2001 total had the purchasing power of \$50 million- nearly four times more than their 2021 total,” he added. “Lifting contribution limits could help both parties become more competitive.”

State parties and legislative leadership committees are required to report their financial activity to the Commission on a quarterly basis. The reports are available 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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