



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: JEFFREY M. BRINDLE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

FOR RELEASE:

September 20, 2006

PRESS RELEASE

Legislative leadership committees and candidate committees were the top donors in the 2005 Assembly general election, according to a report released today by the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission.

In its latest White Paper, The 2005 Assembly Election: New Trends on the Horizon?, the Commission notes that 32 percent and 18 percent of total contributions to Assembly candidates were derived from legislative leadership committees and candidate committees respectively.

Jeffrey M. Brindle, Deputy Director of the Commission and author of the report, said that the 2005 Assembly election “witnessed a noteworthy drop in contributions by political party committees and an increase in activity by special interest PACs.”

He said that political party committee giving decreased from 25 percent of total legislative contributions in 2003 to eight percent in 2005. Conversely, contribution activity by special interest PACs rose from 13 percent in 2003 to 19 percent in 2005.

Brindle said that “contribution activity by PACs was the highest since 1987, when the special interests made 20 percent of all contributions to legislative candidates.

“It is only speculative but a new pattern in contributor activity may be emerging due to the enactment of pay-to-play laws,” added Brindle.

-- more --

Several Commission reports following the enactment of the 1993 campaign finance reform laws traced the re-emergence of county and State political party committees as a dominant force in New Jersey electoral politics.

Brindle said that “the report is not suggesting that these entities are no longer major players but that perhaps the equation is changing slightly.”

“While it is premature to say definitively that pay-to-play is altering the electoral landscape, the data does suggest the possibility that it is bringing about a reduction of contributor activity in some areas and redirecting this activity toward other entities, namely legislative leadership committees, candidates, and PACs” Brindle added.

He mentioned that a recent study of the effect on Federal elections of the McCain/Feingold reforms, showed a redirection of contributor activity toward candidate committees and independent expenditures. This study, The Election After Reform was edited by Michael J. Malbin.

The White Paper disclosed that in the general election of 2005 Assembly candidates raised \$24.7 million and spent \$22 million. While Assembly candidates raised five percent more in 2005 than in 2003 and spent eight percent more, these increases are more modest than those recorded between previous election years.

Among the reasons mentioned for the slower rate of increase were: low expectations for a truly competitive race in 2005, the siphoning off of money due to the gubernatorial race and the previous year’s presidential contest, the significant amount of money raised in the fourth legislative district in 2003 not matched in 2005, the Clean Elections Pilot Project, and the potential impact of pay-to-play.

Copies of this 19th in a series of white papers, which also includes an historical overview and an in-depth review of expenditure activity, can be obtained by contacting the Election Law Enforcement Commission or accessing its website at <http://www.elec.state.nj.us/>