



# NEWS RELEASE

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Legislative candidates have raised and spent slightly less than they did at the same time four years ago while incumbents appear to be gaining an increased advantage over challengers, according to an analysis by the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

With the November 8 election looming in about three weeks, 29-day pre-election reports show candidates have raised \$26 million and spent \$12.7 million since the June primary. Those reports also show that they have \$13.3 million in reserve- also down slightly from comparable figures reported in 2007. That was the last election when all 120 seats were at stake.

**Table 1**  
**Amounts Reported by Legislative**  
**Candidates 29 days Before the Election**

Year	Raised	% Change	Spent	% Change	Cash-on-Hand	% Change
2011	\$ 26,027,610	-7%	\$ 12,727,451	-10%	\$ 13,304,075	-4%
2007	\$ 27,881,940	38%	\$ 14,079,744	35%	\$ 13,812,894	21%
2003	\$ 20,159,973	32%	\$ 10,438,782	59%	\$ 11,417,955	10%
2001	\$ 15,296,863		\$ 6,548,479		\$ 10,400,934	

Jeff Brindle, ELEC’s Executive Director, said the decline in fundraising and spending follows a downward trend seen since the 2007 election. “A combination of tight contribution limits for public contractors along with the sluggish economy has made fundraising harder for most candidates,” he said.

One trend that stands out is what appears to be a growing advantage in fundraising by incumbents.

**Table 2**  
**Incumbents Have A Major Edge Over Challengers**

	Raised	Spent	Cash-on-Hand as of October 7, 2011
<b>Incumbents</b>	\$ 21,353,752	\$ 9,900,413	\$ 11,453,262
<b>Challengers</b>	\$ 4,673,857	\$ 2,827,038	\$ 1,850,813

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“As of the 29-day report, incumbents have raised 84 percent of the money. This follows a pattern that began two years ago when incumbents raised 81 percent of funds. In prior elections, the differential was closer to 60 percent to 40 percent,” Brindle said.

“Incumbents always have an advantage in fundraising but this is very unusual,” Brindle said.

Brindle said that, “an unintended consequence of the existing pay-to-play law may be that it is impacting challengers more than incumbents.”

“As a result, pay-to-play may be unintentionally contributing to less competitive elections,” he said.

The bi-partisan Commission has offered proposals for pay-to-play reform that include establishing one state law, ending the fair and open loophole, requiring reporting of all public contracts over \$17,500, and raising the contribution limits subject to pay-to-play law.

Aside from pay-to-play laws and the economy, another factor that could be constraining legislative fundraising is the recent emergence of independent non-profit groups organized through the IRS, which could be siphoning away dollars from more traditional fundraising committees.

“It is impossible to determine the impact of these so-called 501 (c) groups because they are not required to disclose their contributors,” said Brindle. “ELEC, as a bi-partisan Commission, has called on the Legislature to mandate disclosure by these groups if they participate in New Jersey elections.”

Democrats, who control majorities in both legislative houses, continued to show fundraising dominance over Republicans by roughly a two-to-one margin. A similar trend was seen during the primary. Unaffiliated candidates also raised and spent a small amount.

**Table 3**  
**Campaign Finance Trends Among**  
**Legislative Candidates by Political Party**

	<b>Raised</b>	<b>Spent</b>	<b>Cash-on-Hand as of October 7, 2011</b>
<b>Democrats</b>	\$ 18,543,038	\$ 9,926,356	\$ 8,622,004
<b>Republicans</b>	\$ 7,459,878	\$ 2,788,112	\$ 4,671,266
<b>Independents</b>	\$ 24,693	\$ 12,983	\$ 10,806

Following a historical trend, Senate candidates reported raising more money than Assembly candidates even though there are half as many Senate members (40 versus 80).

**Table 4**  
**Estimated Amount Raised by Legislative**  
**Candidates in the Two Legislative Houses\***

<b>House</b>	<b>Raised</b>	<b>Spent</b>	<b>Cash-on-Hand as of October 7, 2011</b>
<b>Assembly</b>	\$ 11,689,622	\$ 6,773,702	\$ 4,919,791
<b>Senate</b>	\$ 14,337,988	\$ 5,953,748	\$ 8,384,284

\*Joint committee figures were allocated 1/3 to Senate candidates and 2/3 to Assembly candidates.

“The most expensive legislative campaigns tend to involve Senate candidates because the margin is tighter in the upper house. If just a handful of seats change, the balance of power can shift,” said Brindle.

Because legislative redistricting tends to favor incumbents, few districts statewide generally are competitive. Usually, a handful of so-called “battleground” districts where voting margins tend to be tightest attracts the bulk of legislative fundraising. This year is no exception.

“Once again, several districts that traditionally have been battlegrounds, including the 38<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 2<sup>nd</sup>, are among those drawing the most funds from the parties,” said Brindle. “More than \$15 million, or nearly 60 percent of all funds raised by both parties, have been funneled into the top ten districts (by fundraising).”

**Table 5**  
**Top Ten Legislative Districts by**  
**Fundraising Through October 7, 2011**

<b>District</b>	<b>Raised</b>
38	\$ 2,245,281
27	\$ 2,013,852
3	\$ 1,922,454
2	\$ 1,890,359
14	\$ 1,600,609
36	\$ 1,485,379
7	\$ 1,330,066
17	\$ 1,114,096
18	\$ 856,272
21	\$ 813,721

“An even larger share of funds spent- \$9.4 million, or 74 percent- has gone to the top ten districts (by spending),” Brindle added.

**Table 6  
Top Ten Legislative Districts by  
Spending Through October 7, 2011**

<b>District</b>	<b>Spent</b>
38	\$ 1,864,545
14	\$ 1,417,972
2	\$ 1,269,299
36	\$ 948,935
27	\$ 931,341
3	\$ 802,140
7	\$ 741,850
4	\$ 580,489
20	\$ 405,763
1	\$ 395,341

Among the top ten candidates with the largest cash-on-hand reserves, all are State Senators. All are incumbents.

**Table 7  
Top Ten Legislative Candidates  
Ranked by Cash-on-Hand**

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Cash-on-Hand as of October 7, 2011</b>
Senator Richard J. Codey	\$ 902,159
Senator Stephen M. Sweeney	\$ 840,410
Senator Shirley K. Turner	\$ 580,987
Senator Donald W. Norcross	\$ 538,035
Senator Thomas H. Kean Jr.	\$ 512,971
Senator Joe Kyrillos Jr.	\$ 422,666
Senator Paul A. Sarlo	\$ 413,171
Senator Bob Smith	\$ 404,053
Senator Nicholas P. Scutari	\$ 316,981
Senator Barbara Buono	\$ 286,004

The numbers contained in this report should be considered preliminary. The report is based only on legislative fundraising reports received by October 13, 2011. Those reports reflect fundraising activity between June 25 and October 7, 2011. Amounts received may include carryover funds from the primary election.

Reports filed by legislative candidates 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 those 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).