



NEWS RELEASE

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While overall legislative fundraising continues to lag past elections, one trend hasn't changed- battleground districts still are receiving most of the campaign money, according to a new analysis by the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

Reports filed by candidates 11 days before next Tuesday's election show that they have raised \$36.4 million and spent \$24.8 million so far during the general election. Both totals are below comparable amounts from four years ago, which was the last time all 120 legislative seats were in play.

Table 1
General Election Campaign Finance Activity by
Legislative Candidates through October 25, 2011

Year	Raised	% Change	Spent	% Change	Cash-on-Hand	% Change
2011	\$ 36,403,004	-8%	\$ 24,828,692	-8%	\$ 11,783,623	-8%
2007	\$ 39,760,306	15%	\$ 26,955,287	16%	\$ 12,739,776	18%
2003	\$ 34,719,627	27%	\$ 23,153,363	30%	\$ 10,790,701	16%
2001	\$ 27,416,220		\$ 17,794,111		\$ 9,342,318	

"We are seeing the same pattern displayed as in the 29-day pre-election reports- fundraising and spending both are down compared to the last major legislative election," said Jeff Brindle, ELEC's Executive Director. "After years of steady increases in spending on legislative campaigns, contributions definitely are getting scarcer."

Brindle said there is another sign that today's fundraising climate is more challenging. The combined amount raised by both parties during the 18-days between deadlines for reporting campaign finance activity was the lowest since at least 2001, he said.

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**Table 2
Combined Legislative Fundraising
Between October 8 and 25, 2011**

Year	Raised	Change-\$	Change-%
2011	\$ 9,264,372	\$ (1,678,389)	-15%
2007	\$ 10,942,761	\$ (855,230)	-7%
2003	\$ 11,797,991	\$ 2,078,488	21%
2001	\$ 9,719,503		

“Many factors have led to a decline in legislative fundraising in recent years. These include tight restrictions on contributions from state contractors, the recession, an end to the Clean Elections Pilot program funding for legislative races, the exit from the political scene of two wealthy candidates who contributed generously to legislative elections, and the recent growth of independent non-profit political groups organized under IRS rules,” said Brindle.

“There’s another possible reason for the decline. Some contributors may believe that since legislative districts make most incumbents safe, they don’t really need to be as generous,” he said.

“In the last statewide election in 2009, when 80 Assembly seats were open, 100 percent of incumbents won reelection,” he said. “Legislative fundraising in 2009 dropped to its lowest level since 1999.”

While legislative campaigns overall are not attracting as many dollars these days, the most competitive districts still lure the most funding, he said.

“The top 10 districts have attracted \$21.5 million of the total funds raised for this election- nearly 60 percent,” Brindle said. “The top 5 alone have drawn \$14.2 million, or nearly 40 percent.”

**Table 3
Top Ten Legislative Districts by Fundraising
through October 25, 2011**

District	Raised	Spent
2	\$ 3,762,118	\$ 3,161,517
38	\$ 3,394,798	\$ 3,023,924
27	\$ 2,596,811	\$ 1,478,438
3	\$ 2,331,779	\$ 1,753,254
7	\$ 2,139,112	\$ 1,642,013
14	\$ 1,971,949	\$ 1,850,513
36	\$ 1,690,651	\$ 1,205,468
1	\$ 1,302,937	\$ 1,149,273
18	\$ 1,148,826	\$ 809,782
17	\$ 1,147,997	\$ 352,571

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As most observers expected, the two most expensive districts are the 2nd (Atlantic County) and 38th (Bergen County). “Twenty percent of total fundraising dollars statewide have gone into just these two districts,” said Brindle. Both have been highly competitive over the last decade.

The 2nd was the third most expensive district since 1999, while the 38th was the ninth most expensive district, according to “Trends in Legislative Campaign Financing: Fundraising in the Era of Pay-to-Play, Self-Funders and Recession- 1999-2009 3rd Volume,” an ELEC “white paper” available on its website.

So far this year, fundraising has topped \$1 million in 11 districts. Spending has exceeded that threshold in 8 districts.

While the level of spending is significant in the 14th (Mercer and Middlesex) and 1st (Cape May, Atlantic and Cumberland) districts, it is not nearly as heavy as in recent past elections, Brindle added. “The 14th district was the most expensive during the previous decade, while the 1st was the second most expensive,” he said.

The latest reports bear out another new trend- incumbents are raising far more funds than challengers compared to historical patterns. Currently, incumbents are outraising challengers 78 percent to 22 percent margin- a far larger share than in the past, when the ratio was closer to 60 percent to 40 percent.

Table 4
Incumbents Continue to Hold Commanding Edge Over Challengers

	Raised	Spent	Cash-on-Hand
Incumbents	\$ 28,324,461	\$ 18,308,680	\$ 10,149,380
Challengers	\$ 8,078,543	\$ 6,520,012	\$ 1,634,243

Brindle said this shift could be a direct consequence of state pay-to-play restrictions, which limit contributions that can be made by state contractors. “With contractors less able to give more money these days, they may be more inclined than ever to favor incumbents over challengers,” he said.

Democrats, who control majorities in both legislative houses, have raised more than twice as much as Republicans, spent three times as much, and have nearly twice as much set aside in cash reserves.

Table 5
Campaign Finance Trends among Legislative Candidates
by Political Party through October 25, 2011

	Raised	Spent	Cash-on-Hand
Democrats	\$ 26,241,276	\$ 18,970,910	\$ 7,418,943
Republicans	\$ 10,089,307	\$ 5,812,800	\$ 4,338,162
Independents	\$ 72,421	\$ 44,981	\$ 26,518

Senate candidates have raised slightly more money than Assembly candidates even though there are half as many Senate members (40 versus 80), and have larger reserves. Assembly candidates have spent more than Senate candidates.

Table 6
Estimated Amount Raised By Legislative Candidates
in the Two Legislative Houses* through October 25, 2011

House	Raised	Spent	Cash-on-Hand
Assembly	\$ 18,120,871	\$ 13,409,324	\$ 4,840,789
Senate	\$ 18,282,133	\$ 11,419,368	\$ 6,942,834

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

As in the previous report on general election fundraising, the ten candidates with the most cash-on-hand all are State Senators. All are incumbents.

Table 7
Top Ten Legislative Candidates
Ranked by Cash-on-Hand on October 25, 2011

Candidate	Cash-on-Hand
Senator Richard J. Codey	\$ 860,355
Senator Shirley K. Turner	\$ 587,988
Senator Thomas H. Kean Jr.	\$ 446,376
Senator Joe Kyrillos Jr.	\$ 386,978
Senator Bob Smith	\$ 383,333
Senator Stephen M. Sweeney	\$ 354,441
Senator Paul A. Sarlo	\$ 315,223
Senator Nicholas P. Scutari	\$ 311,372
Senator Donald W. Norcross	\$ 310,827
Senator Kevin J. O'Toole	\$ 273,691

The numbers contained in this report should be considered preliminary. The report is based on legislative fundraising reports received by noon on November 1, 2011. Those reports reflect fundraising activity between October 8 through October 25, 2011.

Reports filed by legislative candidates are available online on ELEC's website at 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.

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