



NEWS RELEASE

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Supporters and foes of a proposed ballot question to let casinos operate in Northern New Jersey already have spent a record of nearly \$21 million, according to reports filed with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

“We expected big spending on this issue, and the first wave of disclosure reports bear that out,” said Jeff Brindle, ELEC’s executive director. “I still wouldn’t be surprised if final spending approaches \$40 million.”

A political committee named Trenton’s Bad Bet, which was established to defeat the ballot question, so far has spent the most- \$11.3 million. Our Turn NJ, another committee set up to oppose the public question, spent \$8.4 million. Three other groups combined spent another \$1 million.

Table 1
Spending on Casino Ballot Question
Through October 11, 2016

GROUP	TOTAL
Trenton’s Bad Bet	\$11,323,868
Our Turn NJ	\$ 8,452,530
Hotel Restaurant and Club Employees and Bartenders Union Local 6 UNITE HERE	\$ 500,000
New York Hotel and Motel Trades Council, AFL-CIO	\$ 500,000
DGMB Casino LLC*	\$ 25,594
Grand Total	\$20,801,992

*A portion incurred not paid.

Brindle said the heavy spending follows a national, state and local trend during the last decade- a big surge in independent spending by special interest groups. Independent groups outspent state parties in 2013 by shelling out more than \$41 million on the gubernatorial and legislative elections along with ballot issues.

“Just as we’ve seen a large increase in independent spending in candidate elections, the trend is now spilling over to elections involving public questions,” said Brindle.

Brindle also took note that four of the top five ballot questions in New Jersey history have involved proposals to allow more gambling.

“For those engaged in the casino arms race, it comes down to what is in their special interest. For the voters, it comes down to what is in the public interest,” he added.

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The previous record spending on a public ballot question also involved gambling. The 1976 referendum that permitted casinos in Atlantic City cost \$1.4 million at the time. Adjusted for inflation, the same campaign would cost \$5.6 million today.

Table 2
Five Most Expensive New Jersey
Ballot Questions by Spending

COMMITTEE	REFERENDUM	OUTCOME	YEAR	UNADJUSTED FOR INFLATION	INFLATION ADJUSTED*
Multiple for and against	Allow two new casinos in North Jersey	Pending	2016	\$ 20,801,992	\$ 20,801,992
Committee to Rebuild Atlantic City and its opposition	Allow casinos in Atlantic City	Passed	1976	\$ 1,351,865	\$ 5,631,195
Multiple for and against	Increase state minimum wage	Passed	2013	\$ 3,167,928	\$ 3,223,139
Pro- and anti-casino interests	Allow casinos in four New Jersey locations	Failed	1974	\$ 612,500	\$ 2,944,684
New Jersey Committee for Simulcasting	Allow simulcasting at state race tracks	Passed	1985	\$ 1,006,918	\$ 2,217,999

*Except for 2016, all numbers in 2015 dollars

Copies of reports involving the ballot question are available on ELEC's website (www.elec.nj.state.us). Those who need assistance finding them can call ELEC's help desk at (609) 292-8700 or Toll Free within NJ at 1-888-313-3532.

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