



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR RELEASE:
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Nearly \$2.1 Million Raised Mostly To Promote Marijuana Legalization Initiative

A state ballot question that would greenlight the recreational use of marijuana in New Jersey has prompted \$2.1 million in fund-raising, according to reports filed with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

With the election looming Tuesday, Jeff Brindle, ELEC’s Executive Director, said supporters have raised more than 99 percent of the funds. The latest reports reflect campaign finance activity through October 20.

“Assuming all available funds are spent, the marijuana ballot question already ranks eighth among the top ten most expensive public referenda in the Garden State,” Brindle said.

“There is virtually no chance we will see a new record this year given the nearly \$27 million price tag of the 2016 referendum on a proposed casino in Northern New Jersey. It is possible this year’s ballot question may make it into the top five when the final expenses are tallied,” said Brindle.

Table 1
Top Ten Costliest New Jersey Ballot Question Elections Based on Inflation-Adjusted Numbers

Rank	Referendum	Outcome	Year	Spending Unadjusted for Inflation	Spending Inflation Adjusted
1	Allow two new casinos in North Jersey	Failed	2016	\$24,669,426	\$26,716,004
2	Allow casinos in Atlantic City	Passed	1976	\$ 1,351,865	\$ 6,175,291
3	Jersey City short-term rental restrictions	Passed	2019	\$ 5,615,109	\$ 5,708,695
4	Increase state minimum wage	Passed	2013	\$ 3,167,928	\$ 3,534,564
5	Allow simulcasting at state race tracks	Passed	1985	\$ 1,006,918	\$ 2,432,306
6	Allow casinos in four New Jersey locations	Failed	1974	\$ 612,500	\$ 2,339,204
7	Higher education bond Issue	Passed	2012	\$ 2,019,690	\$ 2,286,444
8	Legalize marijuana use in New Jersey	Pending	2020	\$ 2,083,943*	\$ 2,083,943*
9	Build professional baseball stadium	Failed	1987	\$ 593,948	\$ 1,358,959
10	Allow sale of Trenton Water Works to private firm	Failed	2010	\$ 1,104,799	\$ 1,316,896

*Funds raised. Assumes all funds are spent.

Currently in fifth place is the successful 1985 initiative allowing simulcasting at race tracks. It cost the equivalent of \$2.4 million in 2020 dollars.

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Seventeen past state initiatives seeking legalization of marijuana for recreational use have averaged \$8.3 million in combined spending, according to the National Institute for Money in Politics. South Dakota, Montana, and Arizona are holding similar referenda this year.

“Keep in mind that marijuana interests already have spent \$4.1 million on lobbying between 2017 and 2019. So the industry’s overall political investment in New Jersey already has topped \$6 million,” Brindle noted.

Table 2
Campaign Finance Activity Related to Proposed Ballot
Question to Legalize Marijuana Use in New Jersey
(Through October 20, 2020)

Ballot Question Committee (11-Day Pre-Election Report)	Raised	Spent	Pro/Con
NJ CAN 2020	\$ 851,330	\$ 679,296	Pro
Building Stronger Communities Action Fund Inc.	\$ 700,100	\$ 386,455	Pro
Don't Let NJ Go to Pot Inc.	\$ 9,913	\$ 6,581	Con
Donations to Above Committees Not Listed in 11-Day Pre-Election Reports			
Growing Economic Opportunities (Laborers) to Building Stronger Communities	\$ 302,600		Pro
American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey to NJ CAN 2020	\$ 200,000		Pro
Acreage CCF New Jersey LLC to NJ CAN 2020	\$ 20,000		Pro
Totals	\$2,083,943	\$1,072,332	

While there does not appear to be significant spending on two other ballot initiatives appearing on next week’s referendum, the League of Women Voters of New Jersey has reported spending \$4,966 opposing public question three.

It asks voters to approve a two-year delay in the redrawing of state legislative districts if U.S. Census data is unavailable by February 15, 2021.

To view reports filed by political committees involved in this year’s referendum election, go to <https://www.elec.nj.gov/>.

Click on the “Candidate or committee reports” button and set location to “statewide,” office to “cmte ballot question,” and year to “2020” (see below).

The screenshot shows the NJ ELEC website's search interface for candidate and committee filing reports. The header includes the NJ ELEC logo and the text 'State of New Jersey' and 'New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission'. A navigation menu contains links for Home, Public Information, Candidates/Committees, Lobbying, Pay-to-Play, Legal Resources, and About ELEC. The main content area features a tabbed interface with 'Filings' selected. Below the tabs is a search form titled 'CANDIDATE / COMMITTEE FILING REPORTS'. The form includes a 'Help' button, a 'Candidate or Committee Name' section with radio buttons for 'First' and 'MI Last' and a 'Suffix' field, a 'Location' section with radio buttons for 'STATEWIDE' and 'ALL (Select Alphabetically)', and a table of filters for 'Office', 'Party Affiliation', 'Election Type', and 'Year'. The 'Search' and 'Clear Fields' buttons are at the bottom.

Post-election ballot question reports are due November 23, 2020. ELEC will make them public December 1, 2020.

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