



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: JEFF BRINDLE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

FOR RELEASE:
June 7, 2021

Late Wave of Independent Spending Drives Up Spending in Competitive Primary Districts

More than \$1.9 million in spending by independent committees mostly is being targeted on three contested districts in the June 8 primary election, according to disclosure reports filed with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

The three districts- 20, 26 and 37- rank as three of the top five most costly legislative races so far based on combined spending. District 20, located in Union County, has drawn the most overall spending though candidates there have outspent independent groups. In the district, an incumbent Assembly member is challenging an incumbent Senator. There also are six Democrats vying for party nominations for two Assembly seats.

In two other districts, independent committees so far have spent more than candidates.

District 26, which spans Essex, Morris and Passaic Counties, has drawn the most independent spending- \$903,887, or 45 percent more than candidate outlays. In that district, four Republicans are seeking nominations for two Assembly seats.

District 37 in Bergen County has also drawn substantial independent spending- \$722,098, or nearly 32 percent more than candidate spending. In that race, two Democratic incumbent Assembly members are seeking the party nod to replace a retiring state Senator. There also are four Democrats seeking two nominations for Assembly seats.

Table 1
Top Five Legislative Districts Ranked by Primary Spending

District	Candidate Spending	Independent Group Spending	Total Spent
20	\$1,661,995	\$ 81,569	\$1,743,564
26	\$ 573,488	\$903,887	\$1,477,375
36	\$1,296,568		\$1,296,568
37	\$ 532,181	\$722,098	\$1,254,279
11	\$1,173,295		\$1,173,295

“This year’s primary provides yet another example of the growing impact of independent spending committees on New Jersey elections,” said Jeff Brindle, ELEC’s Executive Director.

“We’ve entered an era when special interest groups often prefer to directly target their political dollars on key races rather than just hand over checks to candidates and parties,” he added.

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Eight independent spending committees have reported activity in this year’s legislative campaigns. To date, more than \$1.7 million- 88 percent- of their spending has gone to Districts 20, 26 and 37.

Table 2
Independent Spending by Legislative District

Independent Spending Committee	2	18	20	26	37	District Unspecified	TOTALS
American Democratic Majority					\$693,748		\$ 693,748
New Jersey Coalition of Real Estate		\$65,228	\$16,500	\$352,288		\$ 79,792	\$ 513,807
Stronger Foundations Inc (Operating Engineers)	\$20,000		\$19,409	\$208,870	\$ 28,350		\$ 276,629
Garden State Forward (New Jersey Education Association)				\$198,493			\$ 198,493
Growing Economic Opportunities (Laborers)				\$120,676		\$ 12,485	\$ 133,161
Women for a Stronger New Jersey						\$ 46,012	\$ 46,012
Building Stronger Communities			\$45,660				\$ 45,660
America’s Future First				\$ 23,560			\$ 23,560
Totals	\$20,000	\$65,228	\$81,569	\$903,887	\$722,098	\$138,289	\$1,931,071

Campaign finance statistics analyzed in this press release were taken from reports due from candidates 11 days before the June 8 election. Those reports reflect fund-raising and spending between May 8 and May 25.

Information on independent spending came from 11-day pre-election reports, 48-hour notices filed during the final 13 days of the election, and independent expenditure reports filed with ELEC.

Candidate reports show that Democrats, who control both legislative houses, have raised and spent substantially more than Republicans and report far larger cash reserves. Money left over from the primary elections can be carried over to general election accounts.

Table 3
Breakdown of Legislative Campaign Finance Activity by Party- Candidates Only

Party	Raised	Spent	Cash-on-Hand
Democrats	\$26,869,613	\$13,060,491	\$13,809,121
Republicans	\$ 6,573,487	\$ 3,263,255	\$ 3,310,232
Totals	\$33,443,100	\$16,323,747	\$17,119,354

Incumbents have raised nearly eight times more campaign funds, spent seven times more money than challengers and are sitting on cash reserves that are eight times larger.

Table 4
Breakdown of Legislative Campaign Finance Activity Incumbents Versus Challengers- Candidates Only

Type	Raised	Spent	Cash-on-Hand
Incumbents	\$29,666,427	\$14,404,972	\$15,261,455
Challengers	\$ 3,776,674	\$ 1,918,775	\$ 1,857,899
Totals	\$33,443,100	\$16,323,747	\$17,119,354

State Senate candidates have raised and spent more than Assembly members, and report more cash-on-hand.

Table 5
Breakdown of Legislative Campaign Finance
Activity By House- Candidates Only

Type	Raised	Spent	Cash-on-Hand
Assembly members	\$12,976,041	\$ 5,743,772	\$ 7,232,269
Senate members	\$20,467,059	\$10,579,975	\$ 9,887,085
Totals	\$33,443,100	\$16,323,747	\$17,119,354

This analysis is based on legislative 11-day pre-election reports filed by 5 pm June 1, 2021 and independent fund-raising reports received by June 5, 2021.

Reports filed by legislative candidates and independent committees are available online on ELEC's website at www.elec.state.nj.us. A downloadable summary of data from candidate reports is available in both spreadsheet and PDF formats at www.elec.state.nj.us/publicinformation/statistics.htm.

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