



NEWS RELEASE

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Legislative Candidates End Primary With \$10.5 Million Unspent; Most Will Be Transferred to General Election

With both legislative houses on the ballot on November 2, primary candidates reported \$10.5 million left in their coffers that could be rolled over into the general election, according to post-election reports filed with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

The \$37.3 million raised by candidates for the 2021 primary was the most ever in dollars unadjusted for inflation. However, if totals from previous years are stated in today's dollars, 2011 and 2017 totals would be higher.¹

This year's fundraising boon did provide a post-election windfall that is nearly three times more than the \$3.4 million remaining at this point in 2019. Two years ago, only Assembly members ran for reelection except for one special Senate election. This year, both the Assembly and Senate are in play.

Table 1
Campaign Finance Activity by Legislative Candidates
in 2021 Primary Election Versus Earlier Elections

YEAR	RAISED	SPENT	CASH RESERVES*	CHANGE	ELECTIONS**
2021	\$37,327,028	\$26,778,655	\$10,548,373	212%	G/S/A
2019	\$14,410,074	\$11,025,486	\$ 3,384,588	-77%	A ²
2017	\$34,875,842	\$27,665,721	\$14,774,600	122%	G/S/A
2015	\$14,661,031	\$12,527,364	\$ 6,644,378	-50%	A
2013	\$28,111,870	\$22,153,242	\$13,398,825	-2%	G/S/A
2011	\$34,165,804	\$27,258,440	\$13,698,365		S/A

*Cash-on-Hand or Transferred to General Election

**G=Gubernatorial, S=Senate, A=Assembly

Jeff Brindle, ELEC's Executive Director, said incumbents are entering the general election with far more cash in the bank than challengers- \$9.6 million versus \$920,556, or 91.3 percent of the leftover cash.

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¹ Adjusted for inflation, 2011 would be \$40,887,812; 2017 would be \$38,301,250

² Included special election for state Senate seat in first legislative district.

“One advantage of being an incumbent is you usually have a much easier time raising campaign funds. We are seeing the same trend this year,” he said. “Since most incumbents have relatively safe seats and face little chance of defeat, they often end the primary with leftover funds that they can use for the general election.”

“The incumbent advantage is clearly reflected in this year’s numbers. Incumbents have ten times more cash in reserve than challengers,” he added.

Table 2
Cash Reserves 20 Days After June 8, 2021
Election- Incumbents Versus Challengers

GROUP	CASH RESERVES	PERCENT
Incumbents	\$ 9,627,817	8.7%
Challengers	\$ 920,556	91.3%
Total	\$10,548,373	100.0%

Independent spending by special interests in legislative primaries reached a new high in 2021 at just over \$2 million. The total towers over the miniscule \$15,000 spent during the 2019 legislative primary elections.

Table 3
Independent Spending on Legislative
Primaries by Special Interest Groups

Year	Indy Spending
2013	\$ 650,623
2015	\$ 927,561
2017 ³	\$ 727,746
2019	\$ 15,000
2021	\$2,252,576

Legislative districts 26, 37 and 20, respectively, attracted the most independent spending based on disclosure reports that identify target districts.

Table 4
Independent Spending by Legislative District

INDEPENDENT SPENDING COMMITTEE	2	18	20	26	37	DISTRICT UNSPECIFIED	TOTALS
American Democratic Majority					\$693,748	\$196,505	\$ 890,253
New Jersey Coalition of Real Estate		\$85,308	\$ 16,500	\$352,288		\$ 79,792	\$ 533,887
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
Building Stronger Communities			\$ 77,535				\$ 77,535
Women for a Stronger New Jersey						\$ 63,512	\$ 63,512
Better Days PAC	\$30,545						\$ 30,545
<i>Carpenters Action Fund</i>				\$ 25,000			\$ 25,000
America’s Future First				\$ 23,560			\$ 23,560
Totals	\$50,545	\$85,308	\$113,444	\$928,887	\$722,098	\$155,789	\$2,252,576

³ While nearly \$2,160,922 was spent during the 2017 legislative primary period, \$1,433,177 went to the Third Legislative district where neither candidate had a primary opponent. ELEC views that race as one long general election race for purposes of totaling independent spending. That reduces the 2017 primary total to \$727,746.

Democrats, who have controlled the legislative majority since 2001, spent four times more than Republicans on the primary - \$21.4 million versus \$5.3 million- while also ending up with nearly four times more money in the bank- \$8.3 million versus \$2.3 million.

Table 5
Party Breakdown of Legislative Campaign
Finance Activity for 2021 Primary

PARTY	RAISED	SPENT	CASH
Democrats	\$29,704,930	\$21,421,110	\$ 8,283,820
Republicans	\$ 7,622,097	\$ 5,357,545	\$ 2,264,553
Both parties	\$37,327,028	\$26,778,655	\$10,548,373

State Senate candidates raised and spent more than Assembly members during the primary, and report more cash-on-hand heading into the general election.

Table 6
Breakdown of Legislative Campaign
Finance Activity By House

TYPE	RAISED	SPENT	CASH
Assembly members	\$15,378,586	\$11,752,808	\$ 3,625,778
Senate members	\$21,948,442	\$15,025,847	\$ 6,922,595
Both houses	\$37,327,028	\$26,778,655	\$10,548,373

The numbers in this report should be considered preliminary. The analysis is based on legislative fundraising reports received by June 30, 2021.

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

ELEC also can be accessed on Facebook (www.facebook.com/NJElectionLaw) and Twitter (www.twitter.com/elecny).

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