



NEWS RELEASE

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\$14.5 Million Already Expended on Legislative General Election with Battleground Districts Getting Lion's Share

With the legislative general election moving into full swing, candidates and independent committees already have spent \$14.5 million, with more than two thirds being sunk into five key districts, according to reports filed with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

Based on the latest available reports, candidates have raised \$31.8 million, spent \$12.3 million and reported \$19.5 million cash in reserve. Independent spending committees so far have disclosed spending \$2.3 million. Combining that total with candidate spending, the general election already has cost \$14.5 million.

More than two thirds of that spending has occurred so far in five legislative districts that are among the most competitive in the state. There are 40 legislative districts in New Jersey.

The top five districts already have drawn 58 percent of candidate spending, 94 percent of independent committee spending and 64 percent of combined spending.

Table 1
Total Spending Statewide
and in Five Top Districts

District	Candidates	Indy Spending	Total
2	\$ 1,227,795	\$1,946,377	\$ 3,174,172
8	\$ 1,507,693	\$ 125,000	\$ 1,632,693
11	\$ 1,554,825	\$ 75,400	\$ 1,630,225
3	\$ 1,436,205		\$ 1,436,205
16	\$ 1,397,602	\$ 5,284	\$ 1,402,886
Total Top Five	\$ 7,124,121	\$2,152,061	\$ 9,276,182
Total Statewide	\$12,261,662	\$2,293,361	\$14,555,023
Top Five Districts as Percent of Total Spending	58%	94%	64%

“So-called battleground, or swing, districts typically become the focal point for most spending during legislative elections,” said Jeff Brindle, ELEC’s Executive Director. “Most incumbents face little real risk of losing because redistricting protects their seats. So they can send money to the more competitive districts.”

“Independent groups both nationally and in New Jersey have tended to concentrate their firepower on target districts,” he added.

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Brindle said independent special interest committees already have spent more than the primary and now have expended \$4.5 million to date.

“They have a long way to go, however, to surpass the record \$27.3 million spent on the 2017 legislative election,” he added.

Table 2
Cumulative Spending to Date by Independent Committees on 2021 Legislative Elections

Group	Primary	General	Both Elections
Garden State Forward (NJEA)	\$ 198,493	\$1,821,377	\$2,019,870
American Democratic Majority	\$ 890,253*		\$ 890,253
New Jersey Coalition of Real Estate	\$ 533,887	\$ 40,000	\$ 573,887
Stronger Foundations Inc (Operating Engineers)	\$ 276,629		\$ 276,629
Women for a Stronger New Jersey	\$ 63,512	\$ 112,000	\$ 175,512
Republican State Leadership Committee ¹		\$ 150,000	\$ 150,000
Turnout Project		\$ 150,000	\$ 150,000
Growing Economic Opportunities (Laborers)	\$ 133,161		\$ 133,161
Building Stronger Communities	\$ 77,535		\$ 77,535
Better Days PAC	\$ 30,545		\$ 30,545
Carpenters Action Fund	\$ 25,000		\$ 25,000
America’s Future First	\$ 23,560		\$ 23,560
NJ Bankers Association		\$ 19,984	\$ 19,984
Totals	\$2,252,576	\$2,293,361	\$4,545,937

*\$1,058,991 in total primary spending minus \$168,738 spent to promote Camden mayoral candidate

Democrats hold a 25 to 14 margin with one vacancy in the state Senate. They maintain a 52 to 28 margin in the state Assembly. Democratic majority status has conferred advantages in funds raised, spent and cash reserves.

Table 3
Party Breakdown of Legislative Candidate Campaign Finance Activity for 2021 General

Party	Raised	Spent	Cash
Democrats	\$24,782,067	\$ 9,068,239	\$15,713,827
Republicans	\$ 6,994,653	\$ 3,193,422	\$ 3,801,231
Both parties	\$31,776,720	\$12,261,662	\$19,515,058

Incumbents typically have a sizeable fund-raising advantage over challengers and the trend continues to hold.

Table 4
Breakdown of Spending by Incumbents and Challengers

Party	Raised	Spent	Cash-On-Hand
Incumbents	\$25,032,356	\$ 7,713,884	\$17,318,472
Challengers	\$ 6,744,364	\$ 4,547,778	\$ 2,196,586
All Candidates	\$31,776,720	\$12,261,662	\$19,515,058

¹ RSLC has also directly donated \$79,100 to Republican candidates during 2021. As a 527 political organization, it cannot donate to federal candidates, but it can contribute to state candidates along with doing independent spending.

Upper house *candidates* raised slightly more than Assembly *candidates* and had more cash reserves. Assembly *candidates* spent slightly more.

Table 5
Breakdown of Legislative Campaign
Finance Activity By House

Type	Raised	Spent	Cash
Assembly <i>candidates</i>	\$15,182,099	\$ 6,158,150	\$ 9,023,949
Senate <i>candidates</i>	\$16,594,620	\$ 6,103,512	\$10,491,109
Both houses	\$31,776,720	\$12,261,662	\$19,515,058

The numbers in this report should be considered preliminary. The analysis is based on legislative fundraising reports received by October 7, 2021 and reflects campaign finance activity through October 4.

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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