



NEWS RELEASE

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2021 Elections Bumped Up Contractor Contributions

Contributions from public contractors shot up 12 percent in 2021 to \$9.7 million during a year when both the governor's seat and all 120 legislative posts were in contention, according to annual disclosure reports filed with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

While well below the record \$16.4 million in contractor contributions in 2007, it was a healthy increase from the \$8.6 million in contributions in 2020, which was the second lowest ever except for 2012, when contractors gave just \$8 million.

Contractors donated \$152,600 to candidates and committees involved in the gubernatorial campaign along with \$2.5 million to legislative fund-raising committees.

Table 1
Contractor Contributions to Legislative or
Gubernatorial Fund-Raising Committees in 2021

CANDIDATE OR COMMITTEE	AMOUNT
Jack Ciattarelli for Governor	\$ 66,900
Phil Murphy for Governor	\$ 37,200
Republican Governors Association	\$ 21,000
Democratic Governors Association	\$ 17,500
Fix NJ Now Inc.(Pro-Ciattarelli)	\$ 10,000
Subtotal- Gubernatorial Election	\$ 152,600
Legislative Campaign Committees	\$2,338,519
Grand Total 2021 Election	\$2,491,119

Jeff Brindle, ELEC's Executive Director, said statewide elections generally cause a spike in political generosity and 2021 was no exception.

"Twenty-six percent of all contributions given out by contractors last year went to gubernatorial or legislative elections," he said.

Brindle noted that state restrictions intended to discourage "pay-to-play" influence definitely have had an impact on their political giving. For instance, ELEC found last year that the two state parties and four legislative leadership committees received 94 percent less money from contractors during the past decade than the previous one, he said.

"Even so, contractors have found ways to maintain some involvement in state elections," he said.

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One reason is because individual legislators can accept larger checks from contractors than the \$300 limit that applies to state or county parties, or legislative leadership committees, Brindle said.

Most contractor contributions to gubernatorial candidates also generally must stay under this cap.

However, there are loopholes that allow larger donations, most notably contributions by contractor employees that do not have an ownership stake of more than 10 percent in their firm. In addition, contractors can make donations to special interest PACs and independent groups, neither which are subject to the pay-to-play law.

YEAR	AMOUNT	CHANGE-%	YEAR	AMOUNT	CHANGE-%
2021	\$ 9,725,735*	12%	2013	\$10,713,401	34%
2020	\$ 8,655,331	-8%	2012	\$ 7,988,882	-20%
2019	\$ 9,402,007	-5%	2011	\$ 9,982,696	3%
2018	\$ 9,946,302	-5%	2010	\$ 9,725,922	-12%
2017	\$10,485,779	15%	2009	\$11,078,713	-9%
2016	\$ 9,083,938	-1%	2008	\$12,120,923	-26%
2015	\$ 9,215,463	-6%	2007	\$16,436,039	8%
2014	\$ 9,843,769	-8%	2006	\$15,157,941	

*Preliminary

Brindle said contractors during election years tend to send more checks to traditional political action committees, which are subject to contribution limits, and special interest independent spending committees, which can accept unlimited contributions.

Traditional PACs and independent groups gave more than \$1.4 million in 2021- 40 percent more than the previous year when no state elections were held. Three independent committees were among the top ten recipients of contractor checks.

Brindle said a new ELEC analysis shows that among contractors that filed annual reports with the agency, engineering firms gave more than \$4 million in 2021 (43 percent) while lawyers gave \$2.7 million (27 percent).

“These two segments alone contributed 70 percent of the \$9.5 million reviewed for our analysis,” said Brindle.

Table 3
Contributions by Public Contractors
by Business Sector in 2021

BUSINESS SECTOR	REPORTED CONTRIBUTIONS	%
Engineering	\$4,035,820	43
Legal	\$2,545,087	27
Insurance	\$ 655,604	7
Construction	\$ 506,873	5
Lobbying	\$ 329,269	3
Finance	\$ 288,000	3
Real Estate	\$ 258,238	3
Accountants	\$ 232,074	2
Telecommunications	\$ 183,800	2
Architects	\$ 89,565	1
All Other Sectors	\$ 360,708	4
Total	\$9,485,038	100

Brindle said among the top ten donors among contractors, *eight* were engineering firms, *one was a law firm* and one was a construction firm. Those ten firms alone gave *30* percent of total contributions reviewed by ELEC.

Table 4
Business Entities that Made Most Contributions in 2021

BUSINESS ENTITIES	AMOUNT	CONTRACTS
Remington & Vernick Engineers	\$ 599,350	\$ 48,925,524
CME Associates	\$ 483,050	\$ 48,910,533
<i>Colliers Engineering & Design Inc. dba Maser Consulting</i>	<i>\$ 347,250</i>	<i>\$ 42,862,249</i>
Richard A. Alaimo Business Entities ¹	\$ 335,850	\$ 10,509,149
T&M Associates	\$ 335,680	\$ 33,583,228
Pennoni Associates Inc.	\$ 204,470	\$ 17,462,360
Rainnone Coughlin Minchello LLC	\$ 187,100	\$ 6,616,842
French and Parrello Associates PA	\$ 158,455	\$ 8,309,113
The Michaels Organization LLC	\$ 157,500	NA
Neglia Engineering Associates	\$ 143,500	\$ 11,044,336
Top Ten Donor Totals	<i>\$2,952,205</i>	<i>\$228,223,334</i>
Top Ten Donors as % Of Overall Totals	30%	2%

While their contracts totaled just *two* percent of all reported contracts, their value is nearly *77* times more than the contributions the firms gave out.

Since ELEC began analyzing contractor contributions in 2009, engineering firms have topped all donors *11* of the *13* years.

¹ The Alaimo Group Inc., Richard A. Alaimo Associates, Richard A. Alaimo Association of Engineers, Richard A. Alaimo Engineering Associates, Richard A. Alaimo Engineering Company.

Year	Firm	Contributions
2021	Remington & Vernick	\$599,350
2020	Remington & Vernick	\$432,700
2019	Remington & Vernick	\$556,550
2018	153 Halsey Street Partnership/ Hartz Mountain Industries Inc.	\$528,650
2017	Remington & Vernick	\$512,550
2016	Remington & Vernick	\$430,920
2015	Remington & Vernick	\$474,100
2014	Bloomberg Finance LP	\$422,800
2013	Remington & Vernick	\$529,400
2012	Remington & Vernick	\$457,050
2011	CME Associates	\$537,960
2010	T&M Associates	\$435,110
2009	T&M Associates	\$534,300

Former Senate President Stephen Sweeney and his running mates drew the most funds from public contractors in 2021. Three independent spending committees with links to South Jersey Democratic leader George Norcross- General Majority PAC, American Democratic Majority and Prosperity First Committee Inc.- also ranked in the top five.

While General Majority was a major spender in the 2015, 2017 and 2019 legislative races, and American Democratic Majority was active in the 2021 legislative election as well as in Camden elections, little is known about Prosperity First Committee.

RECIPIENT	AMOUNT
Stephen Sweeney for Senate / EFO Stephen Sweeney, John Burzichelli and Adam Taliaferro	\$187,950
General Majority PAC	\$156,000
American Democratic Majority	\$152,200
Prosperity First Committee, Inc.	\$150,000
Shanti Narra for County Commissioner (Middlesex County)	\$136,325
Ronald Rios for County Commissioner (Middlesex County)	\$129,425
Claribel Cortes for Surrogate (Middlesex County)	\$123,075
Vin Gopal for Senate	\$120,345
Robert Damminger & Denise DiCarlo for County Commissioner (Gloucester County)	\$118,950
Chanelle Scott McCullum for County Commissioner (Middlesex County)	\$118,825

Prosperity First Committee is a 501c4 social welfare non-profit that does not disclose its donors. However, a Form 990 filed with the IRS for 2019 by General Growth Committee, another now-defunct 501c4 group that also was tied to Norcross, contributed \$742,355 to Prosperity First.

Form 990s filed by Prosperity First indicate it would not be involved with candidate elections. Social welfare groups are allowed to spend up to 50 percent of their funds on campaigns. The forms say its purpose is to be “integral in making our communities affordable again for both working families and businesses.”

The Michaels Organization LLC, a construction firm that shares an office building with Norcross’s insurance firm in Camden, gave \$150,000 to Prosperity First Committee in 2021. Michael Levitt, its owner, also wrote a \$5,000 check to General Majority and \$2,500 to American Democratic Majority. Those two groups do publicly disclose their contributions and expenses.

An annual report filed with ELEC by The Michaels Organization reported no contracts but noted: “Affiliates of The Michaels Organization LLC received tax credit subsidies, mortgages from NJHMFA (NJ Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency) and Pilots aggregating over \$50,000 in 2021.”

Rounding out the top recipients of contractor funds last year were another state legislator, five county commissioners and a county surrogate candidate.

Contracts reached a new high in 2021 of \$13.6 billion. That was an increase of 47 percent- also the largest ever.

YEAR	AMOUNT	CHANGE-%	YEAR	AMOUNT	CHANGE-%
2021	\$13,649,310,780*	47%	2013	\$ 6,752,690,921	13%
2020	\$9,283,082,291	-5%	2012	\$ 5,954,013,939	8%
2019	\$9,793,538,080	-2%	2011	\$ 5,509,000,868	-6%
2018	\$9,984,404,581	-4%	2010	\$ 5,831,430,755	-4%
2017	\$10,395,932,831	19%	2009	\$ 6,061,413,903	21%
2016	\$ 8,747,203,681	6%	2008	\$ 5,003,469,665	-12%
2015	\$ 8,280,639,442	19%	2007	\$ 5,686,393,016	-45%
2014	\$ 6,982,725,369	3%	2006	\$10,396,758,835	

*Preliminary

The number of contracts for 2021 is 18,628, up one-half a percent. The total number of business entities filing reports is 1,933- 5 percent fewer than in 2020.

Numbers in this report reflect information available to the Commission through April 5,2022 and should be considered preliminary. Some contractors are likely to submit reports or amendments after that date that could change the totals. Totals before 2021 may be different than those in last year’s press release for these reasons. All reports are available at ELEC’s website at www.elec.state.nj.us.

Under pay-to-play laws, all businesses that have received \$50,000 or more through public contracts must indicate whether they have made any reportable contributions and if so, must disclose contracts and contributions to ELEC by March 30th for the previous calendar year.

With some exceptions, most firms with state contracts in excess of \$17,500 are barred from contributing more than \$300 to gubernatorial candidates, other candidates, state political parties, legislative leadership committees, county political parties and municipal political party committees. Firms that exceed this limit must seek refunds of excess contributions within a necessary time period or relinquish their contracts for four years.

The average contribution made by contractors in 2021 was \$1,254- down 8 percent from the record high average of \$1,369 in 2020.

The top ten contractors, lead by Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield Affiliates, received \$11.5 billion worth of contracts. That represents 84 percent of the total contracts. The group gave just \$195,049 in contributions- just two percent of the total.

Table 8		
Top Ten Business Entities That Reported Largest Contract Totals in 2021*		
BUSINESS ENTITY	CONTRACTS	CONTRIBUTIONS**
Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield Affiliates ²	\$ 7,453,085,593	\$ 56,400
The Bank of New York Mellon	\$ 1,983,013,286	\$ 7,200
Verizon New Jersey Inc.	\$ 1,049,621,822	\$ 55,200
South State, Inc.	\$ 259,422,781	\$ 10,259
WSP USA Inc.	\$ 151,718,511	\$ 11,600
George Harms Construction Co., Inc.	\$ 132,798,528	\$ 21,450
Magyar Bank	\$ 128,622,056	\$ 1,200
Earle Asphalt Company	\$ 106,420,977	\$ 13,000
Joseph M. Sanzari, Inc.	\$ 104,106,528	\$ 5,400
Crisdel Group, Inc.	\$ 101,789,389	\$ 13,340
Top Ten Totals	\$11,470,599,470	\$195,049
Top Ten as % of Overall Totals	84%	2%

*Lists only public contractors that made reportable political contributions.

**Some totals adjusted to avoid double-counting.

Along with several smaller contracts, Horizon holds the biggest single contract listed in reports filed with ELEC- a \$7.3 billion for providing Medicaid managed care services through the state Department of Human Services.

It is little surprise, then, that Human Services- by far- is the largest contracting agency. The \$12 billion in contracts awarded by the top ten contracting agencies represents 88 percent of all contracts reported for 2021.

Table 9	
Top Ten Contracting Agencies in 2021	
CONTRACTING AGENCY	AMOUNT
New Jersey Department of Human Services	\$7,429,071,697
New Jersey Turnpike Authority	\$1,917,991,678
New Jersey Department of Treasury	\$1,055,386,827
New Jersey Department of Transportation	\$ 761,056,885
New Jersey Educational Facilities Authority	\$ 485,353,315
New Jersey Transit	\$ 138,773,710
Port Authority of New York & New Jersey	\$ 80,447,423
Middlesex County	\$ 78,406,333
City of Elizabeth	\$ 60,791,829
City of New Brunswick	\$ 52,728,604
Total- Top Ten	\$12,060,008,301

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² Horizon Healthcare of NJ Inc., Horizon Insurance Co., Horizon Casualty Services Inc., and Horizon Healthcare Dental Inc.