



NEWS RELEASE

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 Revisions in bold italics

Contested Legislative Seats Spur Surge in Independent Spending

With the June 6 legislative primary election less than a week away, the latest reports filed with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC) show that special interest groups have quickly ramped up their independent spending.

Independent spending shot up ten-fold from less than \$79,000 through mid-May to \$815,300 since that time. The reports reflect spending from May 6 through May 23. They must be filed 11 days before the election.

The hottest district so far is the Fourth Legislative District, which has drawn nearly half the total independent spending. Seven Republicans are vying for the district's Senate and two Assembly seats.

While not all independent spending has been broken out by district, *four of* five districts targeted by independent groups have contested primaries.

Table 1
Independent Spending by Legislative District

Committee	LD3	LD 4	LD8	LD24	LD 27	No District Specified	Total
Stronger Foundations Inc (Operating Engineers)		\$280,086	\$12,016	\$75,134			\$367,236
Middle Ground						\$153,078	\$153,078
New Jersey Coalition of Real Estate					\$57,389	\$ 82,062	\$139,451
Women for a Stronger New Jersey						\$ 75,387	\$ 75,387
Garden State Success Inc.						\$ 47,500	\$ 47,500
American Representative Majority*	\$2,904	\$ 14,360				\$ 15,384	\$ 32,648
Total	\$2,904	\$294,446	\$12,016	\$75,134	\$57,389	\$373,410	\$815,300

*Formerly American Democratic Majority

Table 2
**Independent Spending in Legislative
 Primary Elections by Year**

Year	Total
2023	\$ 815,300*
2021	\$2,252,576
2019	\$ 15,000
2017	\$ 727,746
2015	\$ 927,561
2013	\$ 650,623

*Preliminary

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Jeff Brindle, ELEC’s Executive Director, said this year’s independent spending in the primary is unlikely to top the \$2.3 million spent in 2021.

It could, however, end up the second highest total depending on the final tally.

“Independent spending rarely occurred in state races before 2009. It has become a major force in legislative, gubernatorial and even some local elections,” Brindle said. “This spending has been especially pronounced in so-called ‘battleground’ legislative districts where races are the most competitive.”

Independent spending totals mostly were taken from so-called “48-hour” notices that must be filed during the final 13 days before the election. Those detail significant last-minute outlays.

Reports filed by candidates 11 days before the election indicate that Democrats have raised and spent more than Republicans and hold larger cash reserves. Funds remaining after the primary election can be used in the general election.

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

Party	Raised	Spent	Cash-on-Hand
Democrats	\$26,444,297	\$11,512,292	\$14,932,005
Republicans	\$ 8,843,412	\$ 4,944,212	\$ 3,899,200
Totals	\$35,287,709	\$16,456,504	\$18,831,205

Incumbents have raised and spent nearly six times more campaign funds and have six times more cash in their bank accounts.

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

Type	Raised	Spent	Cash-on-Hand
Incumbents	\$30,146,175	\$14,023,074	\$16,123,101
Challengers	\$ 5,141,534	\$ 2,433,429	\$ 2,708,105
Totals	\$35,287,709	\$16,456,504	\$18,831,205

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	\$15,280,511	\$ 7,573,696	\$ 7,706,815
Senate members	\$20,007,198	\$ 8,882,808	\$11,124,390
Totals	\$35,287,709	\$16,456,504	\$18,831,205

This analysis is based on legislative candidate 11-day pre-election reports filed by 5 pm May 30, 2023 and independent fund-raising reports received by noon May 31, 2023.

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 candidate reports is available in both spreadsheet and PDF formats at <https://www.elec.nj.gov/publicinformation/statistics.htm>.

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