



NEWS RELEASE

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FACING FALL ELECTIONS, LEGISLATIVE CANDIDATES HAVE NEARLY \$8 MILLION IN THE BANK

With all 120 legislative seats in play this fall, legislative candidates have \$7.7 million in leftover funds they can spend on the upcoming general election, according to post-primary reports filed with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

Democrats, who control both the state Senate and Assembly, have almost four times as much cash set aside as Republicans- \$6.4 million versus \$1.3 million.

Table 1
Primary Election Campaign Finance
Activity of Two State Parties- 2023

Party	Raised	Spent	Cash
Democrats	\$29,552,031	\$23,147,149	\$6,404,882
Republicans	\$ 9,953,443	\$ 8,687,674	\$1,265,769
Grand Total	\$39,505,474	\$31,834,823	\$7,670,651

In addition, Democrats in current dollars spent the most ever on a legislative primary election- \$23.1 million- though their primary spending in 2021, adjusted for inflation, was higher.¹

Overall primary spending of \$31.8 million also represented a new high based on current dollars though the purchasing power in 2017 was greater.²

Table 2
Primary Election Campaign Finance Activity- 2013-2023

Year	Raised	Spent	Reserves	Elections?
2023	\$39,505,474	\$31,834,823	\$ 7,670,651	S/A
2021	\$37,327,028	\$26,778,655	\$10,548,373	G/S/A
2019	\$14,410,074	\$11,025,486	\$ 3,384,588	A
2017	\$34,875,842	\$27,665,721	\$14,774,600	G/S/A
2015	\$14,661,031	\$12,527,364	\$ 6,644,378	A
2013	\$28,111,870	\$22,153,242	\$13,398,825	G/S/A

¹ \$24 million in inflation-adjusted dollars; \$21.4 million in 2021 dollars.

² \$34.3 million inflation-adjusted dollars; \$27.7 million in 2017 dollars.

Jeff Brindle, ELEC’s Executive Director, said independent spending by special interest groups has become a growing force in state elections during the last 15 years. It totaled almost \$1 million in this year’s primary contest. The record was \$2.2 million in 2021.

**Table 3
Independent Spending in Legislative
Primary Elections by Year**

Year	Total
2023	\$ 999,039
2021	\$2,252,576
2019	\$ 15,000
2017	\$ 727,746
2015	\$ 927,561
2013	\$ 650,623

“Independent spending is often concentrated in competitive legislative districts. This year’s primary was no exception, ” Brindle said. Four of five districts where such spending was earmarked hosted contested primaries.

The district that drew the heaviest spending was the 4th Legislative District, where 20-year incumbent Sen. Fred Madden (D-Gloucester) is retiring.

It attracted almost \$400,000 in independent spending and is likely to be one of the top battlegrounds this fall.

**Table 4
Independent Spending by Legislative District**

Committee	LD3	LD 4	LD8	LD24	LD 27	No District Specified	Total
Stronger Foundations Inc (Operating Engineers)		\$303,216	\$35,417	\$78,634			\$417,267
Middle Ground						\$174,526	\$174,526
New Jersey Coalition of Real Estate					\$90,289	\$ 82,062	\$172,351
American Representative Majority*	\$2,904	\$ 93,720				\$ 15,384	\$112,008
Women for a Stronger New Jersey						\$ 75,387	\$ 75,387
Garden State Success Inc.						\$ 47,500	\$ 47,500
Total	\$2,904	\$396,936	\$35,417	\$78,634	\$90,289	\$394,859	\$999,039

*Formerly American Democratic Majority

Stronger Foundations Inc., an independent committee operated by International Union of Operating Engineers Local 825, was the top spender, shelling out \$417,267 during this year’s legislative primary.

As in past years, incumbents hold a major fund-raising advantage over challengers.

In the 2023 primary, incumbents raised and spent five times as much as challengers while setting aside more than five times as much for the general election.

Only one incumbent lost in the primary when a redrawn district pitted two state Senators against each other.

Table 5
Legislative Candidate
Campaign Finance Activity-
Incumbents Versus Challengers

Type	Raised	Spent	Cash-on-Hand
Incumbents	\$32,875,266	\$26,371,257	\$6,504,009
Challengers	\$ 6,630,208	\$ 5,463,566	\$1,166,642
Totals	\$39,505,474	\$31,834,823	\$7,670,651

This analysis is based on legislative candidate 20-day post-election reports filed by 1 pm June 30, 2023 and independent fund-raising reports received by noon June 29, 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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