



NEWS RELEASE

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Candidate and Independent Spending High During 2023 General Election

The 2023 legislative general election already has drawn the second heaviest spending ever, according to 20-day post-election reports filed with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

Combined spending by legislative candidates and independent spending interest groups totaled \$70.3 million. That total, which is preliminary, is the second largest ever behind 2017. Because today’s dollar has less buying power, the 2023 figure ranks fifth compared to other legislative campaigns dating back to 2001.

Table 1
Campaign Finance Activity in 2023
New Jersey Legislative General Election

Year	Raised by Legislators	Spent by Legislators	Houses Running**	Independent Spending	Total Spending	Totals In 2023 Dollars
2017	\$44,117,517	\$44,164,473	S, A	\$26,562,428	\$70,726,901	\$88,775,360
2013	\$46,691,108	\$43,446,977	S, A	\$15,375,071	\$58,822,048	\$77,687,463
2003	\$47,911,008	\$44,990,255	S, A	\$ 4,857	\$44,995,112	\$75,237,452
2007	\$50,797,317	\$47,231,847	S, A	\$ 165,000	\$47,396,847	\$70,331,314
2023*	\$55,852,814	\$47,351,472	S, A	\$22,969,841	\$70,321,313	\$70,321,313
2021	\$47,896,089	\$45,474,841	S, A	\$14,000,959	\$59,475,800	\$67,531,383
2011	\$45,656,674	\$44,024,272	S, A	\$ 1,835,500	\$45,859,772	\$62,726,881
2001	\$34,825,851	\$32,550,394	S, A	\$ 3,166,463	\$35,716,857	\$62,084,978
2015	\$22,883,719	\$22,632,814	A	\$10,908,983	\$33,541,797	\$43,540,498
2005	\$25,081,696	\$23,713,193	A	\$ 3,476	\$23,716,669	\$37,362,679

*Preliminary ** S= Senate, A=Assembly

Additional campaign finance disclosure reports due in January and April will likely increase this year’s total though it is highly unlikely to surpass the \$88.8 million inflation-adjusted record in 2017.

The large wave of spending in 2023 did help finance what appears to be the third most expensive legislative race in New Jersey history.

Spending in the 11th Legislative District came in just under \$10 million.

Table 2
General Election Spending in 11th
Legislative District (Monmouth County)

Party	Candidates	Independent Groups	Combined
Democrats	\$5,913,602	\$2,107,534	\$8,021,137
Republicans	\$1,198,645	\$ 748,244	\$1,946,889
Totals	\$7,112,247	\$2,855,778	\$9,968,026

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The figures include funds spent by candidates along with spending by independent groups specifically earmarked for the district. At this point, only two previous legislative district elections- in 2017 and 2003- cost more factoring in inflation.

Table 3
Top Five Most Expensive Legislative
Campaigns in New Jersey

District	Counties	Year	Total Spending	Total Spending Inflation Adjusted	Winners
3	Gloucester/Salem/Cumberland	2017	\$24,100,941	\$29,434,458	Democrats
4	Camden/Gloucester	2003	\$ 6,142,441	\$10,270,929	Democrats
11	Monmouth	2023	\$ 9,968,026	\$ 9,968,026	Democrats
8	Atlantic/Burlington/Camden	2021	\$ 8,495,560	\$ 9,646,224	Republicans
12	Monmouth	2007	\$ 5,963,939	\$ 8,849,780	Republicans

Democratic spending in the 11th Legislative District exceeded Republican spending by a margin of more than four-to-one. The state’s top contest resulted in a Democratic incumbent senator keeping his seat while his two Democratic Assembly running mates defeated GOP incumbents.

Statewide, Democrats boosted their margins from 46-34 to 52-28 in the state Assembly, while maintaining their 25-15 edge in the state Senate.

The majority party typically has a major fund-raising advantage, and it was evident in seven districts that were the biggest targets this fall. Democratic candidates and independent groups spent nearly \$28 million in those districts versus a total of \$10.7 million by Republicans. More than half of the spending in the state’s 40 legislative districts went to just these seven.

Five of the six Assembly seats gained by the Democrats statewide came from the target districts. Democrats also unseated the incumbent senator in Legislative District 3.

Table 4
Spending in Seven Districts
Targeted Most Heavily by Two Parties

District	Democrats			Republicans			District Totals
	Candidates	Independent Groups	Subtotals	Candidates	Independent Groups	Subtotals	
11	\$ 5,913,602	\$ 2,107,534	\$ 8,021,137	\$1,198,645	\$ 748,244	\$ 1,946,889	\$ 9,968,025
16	\$ 3,328,384	\$ 2,052,849	\$ 5,381,233	\$ 845,528	\$ 217,271	\$ 1,062,799	\$ 6,444,033
4	\$ 2,115,651	\$ 1,355,051*	\$ 3,470,702	\$ 889,242	\$1,936,680	\$ 2,825,922	\$ 6,296,624
3	\$ 2,349,764	\$ 2,419,373	\$ 4,769,137	\$ 924,227	\$ 43,890	\$ 968,116	\$ 5,737,253
38	\$ 3,535,669	\$ 420,816	\$ 3,956,484	\$ 775,554	\$ 197,261	\$ 972,815	\$ 4,929,300
2	\$ 530,972	\$ 1,158,071*	\$ 1,689,044	\$1,261,851	\$ 163,603	\$ 1,425,454	\$ 3,114,498
8	\$ 99,185	\$ 564,247	\$ 663,431	\$1,132,768	\$ 391,574	\$ 1,524,342	\$ 2,187,774
Totals	\$17,873,227	\$10,077,942	\$27,951,168	\$7,027,816	\$3,698,522	\$10,726,338	\$38,677,506

*Includes \$95,070 in District 4 and \$119,626 in District 2 spent by Democrats to promote independent candidates.

At least 25 independent committees have poured almost \$23 million into the legislative general election.

Table 5
Spending by Independent Committees
on 2023 Legislative General Election¹

Group	Spent	Party
Brighter Future Forward	\$ 3,663,219	Democrat
Middle Ground	\$ 2,649,658	Democrat
American Representative Majority	\$ 2,396,563	Democrat
Garden State Forward (NJEA) ²	\$ 2,329,155	Democrat
Prosperity Rising NJ Inc	\$ 2,255,881	Democrat
Stronger Foundations Inc (Operating Engineers)	\$ 1,997,565	Republican
Working for Working Americans (Carpenters) ³	\$ 1,500,000	Democrat
Growing Economic Opportunities (Laborers) ⁴	\$ 1,159,374	Democrat
Carpenters Action Fund ⁵	\$ 1,000,000	Democrat
Strengthen Our State	\$ 675,254	Republican
Women for a Stronger New Jersey	\$ 597,127	Republican
Republican State Leadership Committee	\$ 765,295	Republican
Planned Parenthood	\$ 361,731	Democrat
New Jersey Coalition of Real Estate	\$ 351,492	Both Parties
Progress for NJ PAC	\$ 250,000	Democrat
South Jersey Strong	\$ 217,709	Republican
Jersey Freedom	\$ 214,696	Democrat
Garden State Success	\$ 209,742	Republican
NJ League of Conservation Voters Victory Fund	\$ 166,414	Democrat
AFT Solidarity	\$ 100,000	Democrat
Patriots for Progress	\$ 49,760	Republican
America's Future Fund	\$ 38,300	Uncertain
NRA Political Victory Fund	\$ 7,497	Republican
NJ Right to Life PAC	\$ 7,320	Republican
NJ Family Policy Center	\$ 6,089	Republican
Grand Total	\$22,969,841	

Democrats spent \$51.6 million on the general election or 73 percent. Republicans spent \$18.4 million or 26 percent. A committee funded by Democratic affiliates spent \$214,696 promoting independent candidates in Districts 2 and 4.

Table 6
Party Breakdown of Election Spending

Party	Candidates	Independent Groups	Totals	Percent
Democrats	\$33,502,431	\$18,105,931	\$51,608,362	73%
Republicans	\$13,835,919	\$ 4,610,914	\$18,446,833	26%
Independents	\$ 13,122	\$ 214,696	\$ 227,818	0.3%
Uncertain		\$ 38,300	\$ 38,300	0.1%
Total	\$47,351,472	\$22,969,841	\$70,321,313	100%

¹ Some totals omit spending on local races. Some groups are continuing political committees that will file quarterly reports in January.

² Contributed \$1 million to Prosperity Rising and \$900,000 to Middle Ground.

³ Contributed to Brighter Future Forward.

⁴ Contributed \$450,000 to Prosperity Rising and \$400,000 to Middle Ground.

⁵ Contributed to Brighter Future Forward.

Legislative candidates who won spent more than six times the amount of losing candidates. Winning candidates also had significant funds left to roll over into their next elections.

Table 7
Breakdown of Winners and Losers

Winners	Spent	Cash	Transferred
Democrats	\$32,378,850	\$7,174,014	\$ 5,392,608
Republicans	\$ 8,675,836	\$1,026,044	\$ 1,844,159
Totals- Winners	\$41,054,685	\$8,200,058	\$ 7,236,767
Losers			
Democrats	\$ 1,123,581	\$ 153,397	
Republicans	\$ 5,160,083	\$ 140,842	\$ 2,019
Independents	\$ 13,122	\$ 7,045	
Totals- Losers	\$ 6,296,786	\$ 301,284	\$ 2,019
Totals- All	\$47,351,472	\$8,501,342	\$7,238,786

These totals reflect candidate spending only. They do not include spending by independent committees to promote or oppose candidates.

Candidate totals in this analysis are based on 20-day post-election day reports that reflect campaign finance activity through November 24, 2023. Independent spending totals are based on reports filed as recently as November 30.

Reports filed by legislative candidates and independent spenders 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 www.elec.nj.gov/publicinformation/statistics.htm.

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