



NEWS RELEASE

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Spending by independent special interest groups is on pace to shatter records for a legislative election as an intense battle in the 3rd legislative district shapes up as the most expensive in state history, according to reports filed with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

Including the primary, there already has been \$12.9 million†† in independent spending on the 2017 legislative elections. That represents the second largest amount since the 2013 total of \$16.1 million. The current total, which is only preliminary, already has eclipsed the \$11.6 million spent in the 2015 legislative campaigns.

Table 1
General Election Spending Independent Committees
(Numbers before 2017 are for Entire Election)

YEAR	PRIMARY	GENERAL	BOTH ELECTIONS	HOUSES RUNNING
2007	\$ 0	\$ 165,000	\$ 165,000	Senate, Assembly
2009	\$ 0	\$ 15,999	\$ 15,999	Assembly
2011	\$ 0	\$ 1,835,000	\$ 1,835,500	Senate, Assembly
2013	\$ 635,354	\$15,442,717	\$16,078,071	Senate, Assembly
2015	\$ 924,723	\$10,724,287	\$11,649,010	Assembly
2017*	\$2,160,923††	\$10,695,427†	\$12,856,350††	Senate, Assembly

*Preliminary

“We have been predicting since 2010 that independent groups would become a major force in New Jersey campaigns. This year’s campaign lends further credence to that prediction,” said Jeff Brindle, ELEC’s Executive Director.

“The growing influence of these groups makes it more important than ever for the Legislature to update state laws to reflect recent U.S. Supreme court rulings that permit full disclosure by independent groups,” he said. “Both parties have bills pending that would bring this about. We hope there will be action on this critical legislation after the election.”

Reports that reflect campaign finance activity through October 6, which is 29 days before the November 7 general election, show legislative candidates have raised \$26.9 million, spent \$12.2 million, and report \$14.7 million in cash reserves headed into the campaign’s final stretch. Overall spending so far in the race, including independent committees, is \$22.9 million†.

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Table 2
Campaign Finance Activity of Legislative
Candidates through October 6, 2017

GROUP	RAISED	SPENT	CASH-ON-HAND
Legislative Candidates	\$26,885,761	\$12,191,375	\$14,724,696
Independent Committees	NA	\$10,695,463†	NA
Total		\$22,886,838†	

Much of the independent money is flooding into the 3rd legislative district.

The New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) is spending heavily against Senate President Stephen Sweeney (D-3rd) of West Deptford, who has represented the district since 2002. NJEA is supporting his Republican opponent, Fran Grenier of Woodstown. The union represents about 200,000 teachers and other school employees.

Using its federal 527 political fund-raising committee named Garden State Forward, the teachers union has been running advertisements continuously since mid-summer on Philadelphia network television stations and sponsored digital ads even earlier.

Television advertisements countering NJEA's broadsides have been run by Sweeney's personal and joint legislative fundraising committees, a 527 political committee called New Jerseyans for a Better Tomorrow that was formed by Sweeney supporters, and the Carpenters Fund for Growth and Progress, which supports the fellow trade union member.

Table 3
Independent Committee Spending on the 2017 Legislative Elections

GROUP	PRIMARY	GENERAL	BOTH ELECTIONS
Garden State Forward (New Jersey Education Association)	\$ 640,574	\$ 4,450,187	\$ 5,090,761
New Jerseyans for a Better Tomorrow	\$ 825,043	\$ 2,629,562	\$ 3,454,605
General Majority PAC		\$ 1,637,498	\$ 1,637,498
Stronger Foundations Inc (Operating Engineers Local 825)	\$ 285,100	\$ 1,024,060	\$ 1,309,160
Carpenters for Growth and Progress		\$ 756,020†	\$ 756,020†
Better Education for Kids Inc.	\$ 80,726	\$ 198,100	\$ 278,826
Growing Economic Opportunities (Laborers) ††	\$ 158,491††		\$ 158,491††
National Association of Realtors Fund	\$ 117,481		\$ 117,481
Local Government Voter Education	\$ 36,058		\$ 36,058
NJ Coalition of Real Estate	\$ 15,000		\$ 15,000
New Jersey Family First	\$ 2,450		\$ 2,450
Total	\$2,160,923††	\$10,695,427†	\$12,856,350††

Research by ELEC indicates that the \$6.1 million campaign in 2003 between Democratic Senator Fred Madden (D-4th) and Republican George Geist drew the most money ever to a legislative district. In current dollars, it cost \$8.2 million.

Preliminary numbers indicate that spending in this year's 3rd district race already has surpassed

that record.†

Table 4
Projected Cost of 3rd District
Legislative General Election†

GROUP	AMOUNT	NOTE
Garden State Forward	\$ 4,083,346	Assumes all reported TV and digital ad outlays went to 3 rd District
New Jerseyans for a Better Tomorrow	\$ 2,629,562	
Candidate Spending	\$ 1,590,944	
General Majority PAC	\$ 895,000	Contribution to New Jerseyans
Carpenters Fund for Growth and Progress	\$ 756,020†	Includes \$250,000 to General Majority
Better Education for Kids	\$ 198,100	
Stronger Foundations Inc.	\$ 121,900	
Sub-Total	\$10,274,872†	
Candidates- Cash-on-Hand	\$ 1,045,667	Assumes cash reserve is spent
Total	\$11,320,539†	

Looking solely at legislative candidate spending, the top ten districts have emerged as the state's most expensive. Seventy-one percent of total spending has been done in those districts.

Table 5
Top Ten Districts by
Total Spending through October 6, 2017

DISTRICT	RAISED	SPENT	CASH-ON-HAND
11	\$2,227,592	\$ 1,799,420	\$ 428,173
3	\$2,636,610	\$ 1,590,944	\$ 1,045,667
16	\$1,593,981	\$ 1,341,550	\$ 252,431
2	\$1,873,486	\$ 1,300,624	\$ 572,862
38	\$1,104,643	\$ 580,228	\$ 524,415
39	\$ 853,611	\$ 534,403	\$ 319,208
14	\$ 933,341	\$ 444,409	\$ 488,175
21	\$ 960,467	\$ 352,042	\$ 608,425
6	\$ 658,108	\$ 349,433	\$ 308,676
1	\$ 357,992	\$ 321,541	\$ 36,451
	Subtotal-Top Ten	\$ 8,614,594	
	All Spending	\$12,191,375	
	Percent Top Ten	71%	

Democrats control 24 of 40 seats in the Senate, and 52 of 80 seats in the Assembly- 63 percent of all seats in the Legislature. They have outraised and outspent Republicans by more than a three-to-one margin, and have more than three times the cash reserves.

Table 6
Party Breakdown of Legislative Campaign
Finance Activity through October 6, 2017

PARTY	RAISED	SPENT	CASH-ON-HAND
Democrats	\$20,220,226	\$ 9,151,214	\$11,097,836
Independent Candidates	\$ 6,725	\$ 2,787	\$ 3,938
Republicans	\$ 6,658,809	\$ 3,037,373	\$ 3,622,922
Total	\$26,885,761	\$12,191,375	\$14,724,696

Incumbents have nearly five times more cash reserves than challengers, and have out-raised and spent them by large margins.

Table 7
Campaign Finance Activity
Incumbents Versus Challengers

GROUP	RAISED	SPENT	CASH-ON-HAND
Incumbents	\$20,028,649	\$ 7,858,510	\$12,205,789
Challengers	\$ 6,857,111	\$ 4,332,865	\$ 2,518,907
Total	\$26,885,761	\$12,191,375	\$14,724,696

Assembly candidates have raised slightly more than Senate candidates and spent nearly \$850,000 more. Senate candidates have more cash-on-hand.

Table 8
Campaign Finance Activity by Legislative
House

GROUP	RAISED	SPENT	CASH-ON-HAND
Senate Candidates	\$13,342,777	\$ 5,671,888	\$ 7,667,256
Assembly Candidates	\$13,542,983	\$ 6,519,487	\$ 7,057,441
All Candidates	\$26,885,761	\$12,191,375	\$14,724,696

The numbers in this report should be considered preliminary. The analysis is based on fundraising reports received by noon October 16, 2017†.

Reports filed by legislative and gubernatorial candidates are available online on ELEC's website at www.elec.state.nj.us. A downloadable summary of data from legislative reports is available in both spreadsheet and PDF formats at <http://www.elec.state.nj.us/publicinformation/statistics.htm>.

Several, but not all, independent groups also file reports with ELEC. These reports can be searched at <http://www.elec.state.nj.us/ELECReport/SearchIndExp.aspx>. Some also disclose their activities in reports made public by the Internal Revenue Service at www.irs.gov/Charities-&-Non-Profits/Political-Organizations.

ELEC also can be accessed on Facebook (www.facebook.com/NJElectionLaw) and Twitter (www.twitter.com/elecny).