



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR RELEASE:
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County Party Fundraising Down During Recent Quarter When COVID-19 Struck New Jersey Hard

County political parties this year have had their smallest six-month fund-raising haul in 20 years, largely due to a sharp drop-off during the second quarter, according to reports filed with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

Through June 30, county parties raised \$1.9 million, less than any half-year period dating back to 2001.

Table 1
Fundraising January Through
June 30 for County Political Parties

YEAR	RAISED	YEAR	RAISED
2001	\$ 5,728,804	2011	\$ 2,617,165
2002	\$ 6,181,702	2012	\$ 2,115,739
2003	\$ 7,932,857	2013	\$ 2,647,728
2004	\$ 6,339,337	2014	\$ 2,379,387
2005	\$ 4,596,354	2015	\$ 2,597,718
2006	\$ 4,354,230	2016	\$ 2,811,365
2007	\$ 5,049,224	2017	\$ 3,585,017
2008	\$ 2,992,406	2018	\$ 2,847,179
2009	\$ 2,829,837	2019	\$ 3,180,991
2010	\$ 2,070,581	2020	\$ 1,955,019

Comparing the first quarter and the second quarter of 2020, fundraising dropped by 50 percent from \$1.3 million to \$648,729. While fundraising also was down between the first two quarters in 2016, it was much smaller- \$69,259, or 4.6 percent. That year was like 2020 because it also followed an election featuring just one house (the state Assembly) up for reelection.

“The COVID-19 pandemic on top of the long-term downward trend in county political party strength has added to the difficulty of party fundraising and it really shows this quarter,” said Jeff Brindle, ELEC’s Executive Director.

Brindle noted that quarter-to-quarter fundraising this year by the so-called Big Six committees- the two state parties and four legislative leadership committees- also suffered, falling 36 percent.

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He added, however, that there still are six months left in the year so party committees have time to make up for the sluggish first half of the year. The big fundraising challenge will come next year when there will be an election for governor and both legislative houses.

“Just like society at large, party officials I’m sure are trying to adapt to the COVID-19 era. Their problem is that even before the pandemic struck, parties already were having trouble raising money compared to the 2000s. Fundraising competition from independent special interest groups plus a steep drop in funds from public contractors due to new laws have shrunk county party coffers,” he said.

“Legislative changes, including bipartisan recommendations by ELEC, may be necessary to aid their turnaround,” Brindle said.

“Some independent groups involved in campaigns operate with little or no public scrutiny. By contrast, party committees are more accountable since they fully disclose their campaign finances,” Brindle said.

“If more donors can be enticed to give checks to the parties instead of so-called “dark money” groups, voters would be better off in the long run,” he said. “At least they would know where more money is coming from when we hold our elections.”

While fundraising by county parties as a whole is down 30 percent from 2016, Republican committees saw a bigger drop than Democratic committees. Democrats have spent 9 percent more than in 2016 and had 25 percent more cash in reserve. Republicans have spent less in 2020 than in 2016 and reported smaller cash reserves.

Table 2
Fundraising By County Party Committees
January 1 Through June 30

2020	RAISED	SPENT**	CASH-ON-HAND	NET WORTH*
Democratic County Party Committees	\$1,249,395	\$1,571,818	\$1,609,362	\$1,619,154
Republican County Party Committees	\$ 705,624	\$ 685,878	\$ 494,060	\$ 900,216
Total- Both Parties	\$1,955,019	\$2,257,696	\$2,103,422	\$2,519,370
2016	RAISED	SPENT	CASH-ON-HAND	NET WORTH
Democratic County Party Committees	\$1,596,678	\$1,440,208	\$1,286,379	\$ 973,719
Republican County Party Committees	\$1,214,687	\$ 969,031	\$ 802,228	\$1,689,000
Total- Both Parties	\$2,811,365	\$2,409,239	\$2,088,607	\$2,662,719
Difference 2020 versus 2016	RAISED	SPENT	CASH-ON-HAND	NET WORTH
Democratic County Party Committees	-22%	9%	25%	66%
Republican County Party Committees	-42%	-29%	-38%	-47%
Total- Both Parties	-30%	-6%	1%	-5%

*Net worth is cash-on-hand adjusted for debts owed to or by the committee.

**Some spending totals exceed fundraising totals because committees dipped into reserves or incurred debt.

Six Democratic county party committees- Camden, Gloucester, Mercer, Passaic, Salem, and Union- reported a cash reserve above \$100,000.

Table 3
Campaign Finance Activity of
Democratic County Party Committees
January 1 through June 30, 2020

COUNTY	RAISED	SPENT	CASH-ON-HAND	NET WORTH*
Atlantic	\$ 31,207	\$ 23,402	\$ 16,509	\$ 16,509
Bergen	\$ 227,180	\$ 171,819	\$ 88,496	\$ 88,496
Burlington	\$ 44,300	\$ 26,444	\$ 23,508	\$ 17,133
Camden	\$ 225,342	\$ 446,094	\$ 121,046	\$ 121,046
Cape May	\$ 14,036	\$ 18,115	\$ 134	\$ 134
Cumberland	\$ 48,911	\$ 49,556	\$ 3,757	\$ 3,757
Essex	\$ 134,743	\$ 142,816	\$ 78,267	\$ 78,267
Gloucester	\$ 13,000	\$ 126,748	\$ 435,333	\$ 435,333
Hudson	NA	NA	NA	NA
Hunterdon	\$ 8,385	\$ 10,558	\$ 17,005	\$ 17,005
Mercer	\$ 41,175	\$ 19,397	\$ 219,144	\$ 219,144
Middlesex	\$ 153,668	\$ 193,853	\$ 6,223	\$ 6,223
Monmouth	\$ 68,051	\$ 67,722	\$ 524	\$ 524
Morris	NA	NA	NA	NA
Ocean	\$ 12,209	\$ 9,437	\$ 26,101	\$ 42,268
Passaic	\$ 89,396	\$ 77,325	\$ 298,669	\$ 298,669
Salem*	\$ 0	\$ 1,013	\$ 101,016	\$ 101,016
Somerset	\$ 26,894	\$ 47,368	\$ 40,060	\$ 40,060
Sussex	\$ 4,686	\$ 3,653	\$ 10,479	\$ 10,479
Union	\$ 106,211	\$ 136,498	\$ 123,092	\$ 123,092
Warren**	NA	NA	NA	NA
Democrats-Total	\$1,249,395	\$1,571,818	\$1,609,362	\$1,619,154

*Net worth is cash-on-hand adjusted for debts owed to or by the committee.

NA= Not Available

*First quarter totals

**Does not expect to spend more than \$6,300 this year.

No Republican county party reported a cash reserve larger than \$100,000.

Table 4
Campaign Finance Activity of
Republican County Party Committees
January 1 through June 30, 2020

COUNTY	RAISED	SPENT	CASH-ON-HAND	NET WORTH*
Atlantic	\$ 3,217	\$ 17,310	\$ 7,239	\$ 7,239
Bergen	\$ 77,163	\$ 58,865	\$ 37,023	\$ 27,023
Burlington	\$106,399	\$ 99,939	\$ 26,805	\$466,907
Camden	\$ 12,855	\$ 12,389	\$ 8,470	\$ 8,470
Cape May	NA	NA	NA	NA
Cumberland	\$ 20,426	\$ 12,130	\$ 14,922	\$ 14,922
Essex	\$ 18,500	\$ 1,975	\$ 38,479	\$ 38,479
Gloucester	\$ 63,160	\$ 51,068	\$ 33,810	\$ 33,810
Hudson	NA	NA	NA	NA
Hunterdon	\$ 41,730	\$ 43,666	\$ 1,713	\$ 1,713
Mercer	\$ 2,025	\$ 7,671	\$ 239	\$ 239
Middlesex	\$ 2,800	\$ 2,201	\$ 17,183	\$ 17,183
Monmouth	\$ 62,259	\$ 76,219	\$ 26,018	\$ 23,132
Morris**	\$ 20,959	\$ 18,338	\$ 12,831	\$ 5,231
Ocean	\$ 51,098	\$ 56,059	\$ 11,706	\$ 11,706
Passaic	\$111,395	\$ 78,894	\$ 89,991	\$ 89,991
Salem**	\$ 11,353	\$ 5,757	\$ 38,358	\$ 38,358
Somerset	\$ 35,580	\$ 85,573	\$ 55,928	\$ 42,468
Sussex	\$ 9,520	\$ 11,088	\$ 14,677	\$ 14,677
Union	\$ 36,160	\$ 24,946	\$ 55,419	\$ 55,419
Warren	\$ 19,025	\$ 21,790	\$ 3,249	\$ 3,249
Republicans-Total	\$705,624	\$685,878	\$494,060	\$900,216

*Net worth is cash-on-hand adjusted for debts owed to or by the committee.

NA=Not available.

** Does not expect to spend more than \$6,300 this year.

The numbers in this analysis are based on reports filed by noon August 3, 2020. They have yet to be verified by ELEC staff, and should be considered preliminary.

Individual reports can be reviewed on ELEC's website (www.elec.state.nj.us).

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