



NEWS RELEASE

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More than \$2.3 Million Raised Primarily To Promote Marijuana Legalization Initiative

A state ballot question that authorized recreational use of marijuana in the Garden State on November 3 generated a total of \$2.3 million in fund-raising, according to post-election reports filed with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

“Based on what appears to be the final fund-raising total, the marijuana ballot question was the seventh most expensive in New Jersey history,” said Jeff Brindle, ELEC’s Executive Director. “While the amount is low compared to some previous New Jersey referendums and most marijuana initiatives in other states, it still is significant.”

Table 1
Top Ten Costliest New Jersey Ballot Question
Elections Based on Inflation-Adjusted Numbers

Rank	Referendum	Outcome	Year	Spending Unadjusted for Inflation	Spending Inflation Adjusted
1	Allow two new casinos in North Jersey	Failed	2016	\$24,669,426	\$26,716,004
2	Allow casinos in Atlantic City	Passed	1976	\$ 1,351,865	\$ 6,175,291
3	Jersey City short-term rental restrictions	Passed	2019	\$ 5,615,109	\$ 5,708,695
4	Increase state minimum wage	Passed	2013	\$ 3,167,928	\$ 3,534,564
5	Allow simulcasting at state race tracks	Passed	1985	\$ 1,006,918	\$ 2,432,306
6	Allow casinos in four New Jersey locations	Failed	1974	\$ 612,500	\$ 2,339,204
7	Legalize marijuana use in New Jersey	Passed	2020	\$ 2,331,969*	\$ 2,331,969*
8	Higher education bond Issue	Passed	2012	\$ 2,019,690	\$ 2,286,444
9	Build professional baseball stadium	Failed	1987	\$ 593,948	\$ 1,358,959
10	Allow sale of Trenton Water Works to private firm	Failed	2010	\$ 1,104,799	\$ 1,316,896

*Funds raised. Assumes all funds will be spent.

“Don’t forget that marijuana interests also spent \$4.1 million on lobbying between 2017 and 2019 on various legislative initiatives related to marijuana use. So the industry’s overall political investment in New Jersey is more than \$6.3 million in just three years,” Brindle noted.

Based on preliminary results compiled by Associated Press, voters overwhelmingly approved the ballot question by 2,737,674 to 1,343,603- a 67-to-33 percent margin. The huge support might have been a factor that kept spending relatively low.

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Also on November 3, voters in three other states- Arizona, Montana and South Dakota- legalized recreational use of marijuana while Mississippi authorized marijuana use for medical purposes.

NJ CAN 2020, a coalition supporting the New Jersey initiative, raised \$1.1 million and spent just under that amount, leaving a \$1,871 balance. It did not yet submit its final report.

Nor did another supporter of the initiative called Building Stronger Communities Action Fund Inc. It raised \$905,100, spent \$891,865 and reported \$13,325 in unspent funds.

Growing Economic Opportunities, an independent spending committee operated by the New Jersey State Laborers union, contributed \$302,600 to Building Stronger Communities that has not yet been reported by the recipient committee.

Table 2
Campaign Finance Activity Related to Ballot
Question Legalizing Marijuana Use in New Jersey
(Through November 20, 2020)

Ballot Question Committee (20-Day Post-Election Report)	Raised	Spent	Unspent	Pro/Con
NJ CAN 2020	\$1,112,071	\$1,110,200	\$ 1,871	Pro
Building Stronger Communities Action Fund Inc.	\$ 905,100	\$ 891,865	\$ 13,235	Pro
Don't Let NJ Go to Pot Inc.	\$ 12,198	\$ 12,198	0	Con
Growing Economic Opportunities (Laborers) to Building Stronger Communities*	\$ 302,600			Pro
Totals	\$2,331,969	\$2,014,263	\$ 15,106	

*Not yet reported by Building Stronger Communities

Advocates of the marijuana legalization initiative raised 99.5 percent of the funds.

The lone opponent was Don't Let NJ Go to Pot Inc. It reported raising \$12,198 and spending the full amount. It filed its final report.

To view reports filed by political committees involved in this year's referendum election, go to <https://www.elec.nj.gov/>.

Click on the “Candidate or committee reports” button and set location to “statewide,” office to “cmte ballot question,” and year to “2020” (see below).

The screenshot shows the NJ ELEC website interface. At the top, there are logos for the State of New Jersey and the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC). Below the logos, the text reads "State of New Jersey" and "New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission". A navigation menu includes "Home", "Public Information", "Candidates/Committees", "Lobbying", "Pay-to-Play", "Legal Resources", and "About ELEC".

The main content area features a tabbed interface with the following tabs: "Summary", "Filings", "48-Hr", "IND. Exp", "Contribution", "Listing", "By Location", "Expense", and "Er". The "Filings" tab is selected, and the sub-header reads "CANDIDATE / COMMITTEE FILING REPORTS".

Below the sub-header is a search form with a "Help" button. The form includes the following fields and options:

- Candidate or Committee Name:** A section with two radio buttons. The first is selected and labeled "First MI Last Suffix", with input fields for "First", "MI", "Last", and "Suffix". The second radio button is unselected.
- Location:** A section with two radio buttons. The first is selected and labeled "STATEWIDE", with a dropdown menu. The second is unselected and labeled "ALL (Select Alphabetically)", with a dropdown menu.
- Office:** A dropdown menu with the selected value "CMTE BALLOT QUESTION".
- Party Affiliation:** A dropdown menu with the selected value "ALL".
- Election Type:** A dropdown menu with the selected value "ALL".
- Year:** A dropdown menu with the selected value "2020".

At the bottom of the form are two buttons: "Search" and "Clear Fields".

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