



Newsletter

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AN ELECTION LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION NEWSLETTER
“Furthering the Interest of an Informed Citizenry”

ELEC Staff Speeds Up Disclosure of 2023 Legislative General Election Reports

By Joe Donohue

With some mid-election adjustments, staff members of the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC) sought to live up to the name and spirit of the Elections Transparency Act.

Signed April 3 by Governor Phil Murphy, the act overhauled several of ELEC’s guiding statutes. Along with raising most contribution limits for the first time since 2005, the new law also for the first time in the agency’s 50-year history required independent expenditure committees to file reports listing not only their expenditures but also contributions (above \$7,500).

The new law also led to disclosure of more small contributions by lowering the disclosure threshold from \$300 to \$200. It reduced from \$1,900 to \$200 the disclosure threshold for contributions and expenditures received during the final 13 days of the campaign.

In response to media requests, ELEC staff reduced the turnaround time for reports filed with the agency during the general election.

“Bureaucracies are not always known for their nimbleness. But ELEC has always had a service-oriented tradition. Our staff tries to be responsive whenever possible,” said Joe Donohue, acting Executive Director.

Continuing political committee (CPCs) reports were released five days before the originally scheduled release date. Legislative reports due 11 days before the general election were released six days sooner than the original schedule, while 20-day post-election reports were made public eight days sooner.

Notices of last-minute expenditures and contributions above \$200 were released three times daily instead of once daily in previous general elections.

Even as the staff got reports out quicker, the agency continued to prepare analytical press releases that offered comprehensive snapshots of fund-raising and spending trends as well as historical context. The press releases and spreadsheets were also distributed sooner than the original launch dates.

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Changes in Disclosure Schedules	Original	Revised	Days Earlier
Continuing political committee reports	10/23/2023	10/18/2023	5
Legislative reports- 11-day pre-election	11/2/2023	10/27/2023	6
Analytical press release on 11-day reports and summary spreadsheet	11/2/2023	10/31/2023	2
Legislative reports- 20-day post-election	12/5/2023	11/27/2023	8
Analytical press release on 20-day reports and summary spreadsheet	12/5/2023	12/1/2023	4
72/24 reports due within 13 days of election	Once Daily (Previous Elections)	Three Times Daily	

Particularly before the election, faster disclosure gave media members, filers, and voters more time to review campaign finance reports. Going forward, the earlier release schedules will continue.

Donohue said the older disclosure schedules were developed during the era when candidates and committees filed paper reports and turnaround time was much longer. In 2020, electronic filing became mandatory. In addition, the former release dates were influenced by the seven-day waiting period allowed under the Open Public Records Act (OPRA).

The earlier release dates were achievable because of the collaboration and diligence of Compliance Director Stephanie Olivo and Information Technology Director Anthony Giancarli and their respective staffs. The changes were made with the support of ELEC's four-member commission.

2024 Commission Meeting Schedule

The New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission has announced its meeting schedule for 2024. Unless otherwise indicated in the future, meetings will be held at the Commission's offices at 25 South Stockton Street, 5th Floor, in Trenton. It is anticipated that meetings will begin at 11:00 a.m., unless otherwise indicated.

January	16, 11:00 a.m.
February	20, 11:00 a.m.
March	19, 11:00 a.m.
April	16, 11:00 a.m.
May	21, 11:00 a.m.
June	18, 11:00 a.m.
July	16, 11:00 a.m.
August	20, 11:00 a.m. (if necessary)
September	17, 11:00 a.m.
October	15, 11:00 a.m.
November	19, 11:00 a.m.
December	17, 11:00 a.m.

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

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.

Note: This analysis was originally released December 1, 2023.

Reporting Dates

	INCLUSION DATES	REPORT DUE DATE
FIRE COMMISSIONER – FEBRUARY 18, 2023		
29–day Preelection Reporting Date	Inception of campaign* – 1/17/2023	1/20/2023
11–day Preelection Reporting Date	1/18/2023 – 2/4/2023	2/7/2023
20–day Postelection Reporting Date	2/5/2023 – 3/7/2023	3/10/2023
48–Hour Notice Reporting Starts on 2/5/2023 through 2/18/2023		
APRIL SCHOOL BOARD – APRIL 25, 2023 – UPDATED PER CHANGE BY THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION		
29–day Preelection Reporting Date	Inception of campaign* – 3/24/2023	3/27/2023
11–day Preelection Reporting Date	3/25/2023 – 4/11/2023	4/14/2023
20–Day Postelection Reporting Date	4/12/2023 – 5/12/2023	5/15/2023
48–Hour Notice Reporting Starts on 4/12/2023 through 4/25/2023		
MAY MUNICIPAL – MAY 9, 2023		
29–day Preelection Reporting Date	Inception of campaign* – 4/7/2023	4/10/2023
11–day Preelection Reporting Date	4/8/2023 – 4/25/2023	4/28/2023
20–Day Postelection Reporting Date	4/26/2023 – 5/26/2023	5/30/2023
48–Hour Notice Reporting Starts on 4/26/2023 through 5/9/2023		
RUNOFF (JUNE)** – JUNE 13, 2023		
29–day Preelection Reporting Date	No Report Required for this Period	
11–day Preelection Reporting Date	4/26/2023 – 5/30/2023	6/2/2023
20–Day Postelection Reporting Date	5/31/2023 – 6/30/2023	7/3/2023
48–Hour Notice Reporting Starts on 5/31/2023 through 6/13/2023		
PRIMARY (90 DAY START DATE: MARCH 8, 2023)*** - JUNE 6, 2023		
29–day Preelection Reporting Date	Inception of campaign* – 5/5/2023	5/8/2023
11–day Preelection Reporting Date	5/6/2023 -5/23/2023	5/26/2023
20–Day Postelection Reporting Date	5/24/2023 – 6/23/2023	6/26/2023
48–Hour Notice Reporting Starts on 5/24/2023 through 6/6/2023		
GENERAL (90 DAY START DATE: AUGUST 9, 2023)*** - NOVEMBER 7, 2023		
29–day Preelection Reporting Date	6/24/2023 – 10/6/2023	10/10/2023
11–day Preelection Reporting Date	10/7/2023 – 10/24/2023	10/27/2023
20–day Postelection Reporting Date	10/25/2023 -11/24/2023	11/27/2023
48–Hour Notice Reporting Starts on 10/25/2023 through 11/7/2023		
RUN–OFF (DECEMBER)** – DECEMBER 5, 2023		
29–day Preelection Reporting Date	No Report Required for this Period	
11–day Preelection Reporting Date	10/25/2023 – 11/21/2023	11/24/2023
20–day Postelection Reporting Date	11/22/2023 – 12/22/2023	12/26/2023
48 Hour Notice Reporting Starts on 11/22/2023 through 12/5/2023		

PACS, PCFRS & CAMPAIGN QUARTERLY FILERS

1 st Quarter	1/1/2023 – 3/31/2023	4/17/2023
2 nd Quarter	4/1/2023 – 6/30/2023	7/17/2023
3 rd Quarter	7/1/2023 – 9/30/2023	10/16/2023
4 th Quarter	10/1/2023 – 12/31/2023	1/16/2024

GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AGENTS (Q-4)

1 st Quarter	1/1/2023 – 3/31/2023	4/10/2023
2 nd Quarter	4/1/2023 – 6/30/2023	7/10/2023
3 rd Quarter	7/1/2023 – 9/30/2023	10/10/2023
4 th Quarter	10/1/2023 – 12/31/2023	1/10/2024

*Inception Date of Campaign (first time filers) or from January 1, 2023 (Quarterly filers).

**A candidate committee or joint candidates committee that is filing in a 2023 Runoff election is not required to file a 20-day postelection report for the corresponding prior election (May Municipal or General).

***Form PFD-1 is due on April 6, 2023 for Primary Election Candidates and June 19, 2023 for Independent General Election Candidates.

Note: A fourth quarter 2022 filing is needed for Primary 2023 candidates if they started their campaign prior to December 8, 2022. A second quarter 2023 filing is needed by Independent/Non-Partisan General Election candidates if they started their campaign prior to May 10, 2023.

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