



# NEWS RELEASE

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Newark and Jersey City have been the state’s top political battlegrounds among municipalities and counties during the past 40 years, according to a new analysis by the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

Among the most costly 25 municipal or county elections since 1974, Newark hosted seven, while Jersey City had nine, according to “White Paper No. 25- Top Local Elections in New Jersey-A Tale of Two Cities and More.” Joseph Donohue, ELEC’s Deputy Director, authored the study.

While Jersey City had more marquee races, elections in Newark, the state’s largest city by population, have been drawn the biggest bucks.

Four of the top five most expensive elections took place in Newark. The 2006 election, when adjusted for inflation, ranks highest.

**Table 1  
Top 10 Most Expensive Local Races in New Jersey**

LOCATION	YEAR	TYPE	AMOUNT (UNADJUSTED)	AMOUNT (IN 2014 DOLLARS)	KEY RACE
Newark	2006	Municipal	\$11,437,051	\$13,439,543	Cory Booker defeats Ronald Rice for mayor.
Newark	2014	Municipal	\$12,562,933	\$12,562,933	Ras Baraka defeats Shavar Jeffries for mayor.
Newark	2002	Municipal	\$ 8,692,816	\$11,437,916	Mayor Sharpe James defeats Cory Booker.
Newark	2010	Municipal	\$ 9,827,153	\$10,670,090	Mayor Cory Booker defeats Clifford Minor.
Bergen County	2002	General	\$ 7,667,682	\$10,089,055	Dennis McNerney defeats Henry McNamara for Executive.
Jersey City	2001	Municipal	\$ 5,655,735	\$ 7,561,143	Glenn Cunningham defeats Tom DeGise to become mayor.
Jersey City	2009	Municipal	\$ 5,889,743	\$ 6,500,820	Mayor Jerramiah Healy defeats Louis Manzo.
Jersey City	1989	Municipal	\$ 3,041,000	\$ 5,803,435	Gerald McCann defeats Glenn Cunningham to become mayor.
Essex County	1978	General	\$ 1,514,107	\$ 5,505,844	Peter Shapiro defeats Robert Notte to Become Executive.
Jersey City	2013	Municipal	\$ 5,269,015	\$ 5,354,690	Steven Fulop defeats Jerramiah Healy for mayor.

Disregarding inflation, the 2014 election in Newark, which cost \$12.6 million, had the biggest price tag. It featured a fairly new phenomena in local New Jersey politics- \$5.5 million in spending by independent special interest groups not directly controlled by parties or candidates.

“The massive wave of so-called “outside” spending that has washed across politics nationally and in the state has now poured into local campaigns in New Jersey,” said Donohue. “If this trend continues, it represents a fundamental shift in how campaigns are financed in the state.”

Six of the other top 25 local elections took place in counties. The most expensive county election occurred in Bergen County in 2002, when Dennis McNerney defeated state Sen. Henry McNamara. The race cost \$10.1 million in inflation adjusted dollars and ranks 5<sup>th</sup> among all elections.

Among other highlights from the report:

- The involvement of independent groups has led to a sharp change in the pattern of spending, notably a major increase in mass media spending. Eighty-two percent of all independent spending in the 2014 Newark campaign went to media, primarily for either TV or radio. By contrast, candidates spent just 31 percent of their budgets on media.
- No candidate individually spent more than Jerramiah Healy, who sank \$3.5 million into a 2009 election in which he won reelection as Jersey City’s mayor.
- Even so, Former Newark Mayor Cory Booker, who mostly raised funds jointly with other local candidates, appears to be the most prolific local fundraiser of all time. His committees raised and spent more than \$20 million on five Newark elections.
- The most spent on a local ballot question was the \$1.2 million outlay by supporters and opponents of a 2010 proposal to allow private operation of Trenton’s water supply.
- A total of \$763 million has been spent on municipal and county elections during the past three decades.

“This report shows that local elections no longer are just sideshows to state campaigns. Some are becoming major political events,” said Donohue. “As a result, local campaigns are increasingly relying on similar strategies as national and state races.”

“The public, the media, academics and the political community now can use these rankings to compare future campaigns to see if trends continue. Hopefully, this report puts local elections in a clearer context,” he added.

[www.elec.state.nj.us/pdf/whitepapers/white25.pdf](http://www.elec.state.nj.us/pdf/whitepapers/white25.pdf)