



NEWS RELEASE

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With both parties grappling over a handful of legislative districts as the state Assembly election nears its final weekend, independent spending by special interest groups is playing a major role in those targeted areas, according to a new analysis of disclosure reports by the Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

Table 1
Spending by Independent Committees and
Legislative Candidates through October 23, 2015

GROUP	PRIMARY	GENERAL	COMBINED
General Majority PAC	None	\$ 3,882,672	\$ 3,882,672
Garden State Forward*	None	\$ 3,798,674	\$ 3,798,674
Carpenters Fund for Growth and Progress**	\$ 768,796	\$ 491,127	\$ 1,259,923
National Association of Realtors Fund	\$ 116,765	\$ 268,295	\$ 385,060
NJ Coalition of Real Estate	\$ 39,958	\$ 79,423	\$ 119,381
New Jerseyans for a Better Tomorrow***	None	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000
NJ League of Conservation Voters for a Clean Environment	None	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000
TOTALS			
Independent Committees	\$ 925,519	\$ 8,548,191	\$ 9,473,710
Legislative Candidates	\$12,527,364	\$12,038,113	\$24,565,477
TOTAL-ALL	\$13,452,883	\$20,586,304	\$34,039,187

*Includes \$3,500,000 in contributions to General Majority PAC.

**Includes \$400,000 contribution to General Majority PAC.

***Contribution to General Majority PAC.

Reports filed with ELEC show that special interest groups already have spent \$8.5 million on the general election for a total of \$9.5 million, including the primary. That compares to an estimated \$14.8 million spent by independent committees during the entire 2013 legislative elections, which included a campaign for governor and state Senate members on the ballot.

Except for one candidate running for a state Senate seat in Legislative District 5, only Assembly members are up for reelection this year. Legislative candidates so far have spent just over \$12 million on the general election.

Of the total spending of \$20.6 million, independent committees represent 42 percent- the largest share ever for a statewide election. In 2013, independent spending represented less than 19 percent of total spending.

“Dollar-wise, independent spending was higher in 2013. But on a percentage basis, it is having a bigger impact on this year’s elections,” said Jeff Brindle, ELEC’s Executive Director.

The top ten most expensive districts so far have attracted \$8.7 million from legislative candidates. Most of the \$8.5 million in independent spending also appears to be targeted at swing districts though reports filed by

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those groups link only about \$4 million to specific districts. Independent spending on general expenses such as polling, consulting and administration are not broken out by legislative district.

“The \$12.6 million spent so far in the top ten districts represents 61 percent of the \$20.6 million expended on the general election to date,” said Brindle. He explained that swing districts attract the most campaign money because they are locations where officials from one or both parties think they have a change of ousting an incumbent.

“Elections in most of the 40 legislative districts are not highly competitive because redistricting gives one party or the other an edge in voter registration. In the 2013 election, 97 percent of incumbent Assembly members won,” Brindle said. “It is hard to defeat an incumbent. Swing districts represent the best chance.”

Table 2
Top Ten Districts by Total Spending
through October 23, 2015

DISTRICT	LEGISLATIVE CANDIDATES	INDEPENDENT COMMITTEES	TOTAL
2	\$2,138,144	\$1,507,453	\$ 3,645,597
1	\$1,161,382	\$1,456,300	\$ 2,617,682
38	\$1,444,399	\$ 373,741	\$ 1,818,140
11	\$ 974,765		\$ 974,765
14	\$ 537,605	\$ 298,674	\$ 836,279
16	\$ 484,013	\$ 250,400	\$ 734,413
7	\$ 658,188	\$ 63,718	\$ 721,906
6	\$ 561,025	\$ 10,635	\$ 571,660
21	\$ 361,727	\$ 9,054	\$ 370,781
27	\$ 345,030		\$ 345,030
TOTALS	\$8,666,279	\$3,969,975	\$12,636,254

The biggest independent spender this year has been highly active in so-called “battleground” districts. The group is named General Majority PAC, which is working to elect Democrats.

It has already spent nearly \$4 million, including \$3.3 million focused directly in three perennial battlegrounds- Legislative Districts 2 (Atlantic County), 1 (Cape May County and parts of Atlantic and Cumberland Counties), and 38 (parts of Bergen and Passaic).

Table 3
Spending by General Majority
PAC in Targeted Districts*

DISTRICT	AMOUNT
2	\$ 1,507,453
1	\$ 1,456,300
38	\$ 373,741
TOTAL	\$ 3,337,494

*Based on latest independent expenditure reports.

General Majority PAC, formerly known as Fund for Jobs Growth and Security, spent \$8 million on legislative elections in 2013, mostly in the same three districts.

The \$12 million spent so far by candidates vying for 80 Assembly seats is about \$2 million less than estimated spending by Assembly candidates in 2013, and \$1.4 million less than in 2011.

Table 4
Spending by State Assembly Candidates
through 11 Days before Election versus Two Previous Elections

YEAR	AMOUNT*	DIFFERENCE-\$	DIFFERENCE-%
2015	\$12,038,113		
2013	\$14,058,886	\$(2,020,773)	-17%
2011	\$13,409,324	\$(1,371,211)	-11%

*Includes estimates for Assembly members who jointly filed disclosure reports with Senate candidates

Democrats hold a 47-to-32 margin in the Assembly with one vacancy in the heavily Democratic 5th District (parts of Camden and Gloucester) that they are expected to maintain. Democratic candidates continue to raise and spend more money than Republicans or independents, and also have larger cash reserves. Most spending by independent groups also benefits Democrats.

Table 5
Breakdown of Legislative Spending
by Party through October 23, 2015

PARTY	RAISED	SPENT	CASH-ON-HAND
Democrats	\$12,331,893	\$8,856,665	\$3,473,346
Independents	\$ 1,973	\$ 1,658	\$ 315
Republicans	\$ 5,225,901	\$3,179,789	\$2,064,324
ALL PARTIES	\$17,559,767	\$12,038,113	\$5,537,984

Incumbents enjoyed a big edge over challengers since they are sitting on 12 times more cash reserves heading into the final days of the November 3 election.

Table 6
Breakdown of Spending by Incumbents
and Challengers through October 23, 2015

PARTY	RAISED	SPENT	CASH-ON-HAND
Incumbents	\$13,961,610	\$ 8,864,195	\$5,100,631
Challengers	\$ 3,598,157	\$ 3,173,918	\$ 437,353
ALL CANDIDATES	\$17,559,767	\$12,038,113	\$5,537,984

The numbers in this report should be considered preliminary. The analysis is based on legislative fundraising reports received by noon on October 27, 2015.

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