

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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## Nearly \$2.1 Million Raised Mostly To Promote Marijuana Legalization Initiative

A state ballot question that would greenlight the recreational use of marijuana in New Jersey has prompted \$2.1 million in fund-raising, according to reports filed with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

With the election looming Tuesday, Jeff Brindle, ELEC's Executive Director, said supporters have raised more than 99 percent of the funds. The latest reports reflect campaign finance activity through October 20.

"Assuming all available funds are spent, the marijuana ballot question already ranks eighth among the top ten most expensive public referenda in the Garden State," Brindle said.

"There is virtually no chance we will see a new record this year given the nearly \$27 million price tag of the 2016 referendum on a proposed casino in Northern New Jersey. It is possible this year's ballot question may make it into the top five when the final expenses are tallied," said Brindle.

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

| Rank | Referendum  | Outcome | Year | Spending<br>Unadjusted for<br>Inflation | Spending<br>Inflation<br>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    | Higher education bond Issue                       | Passed  | 2012 | \$ 2,019,690                            | \$ 2,286,444                      |
| 8    | Legalize marijuana use in New Jersey              | Pending | 2020 | \$ 2,083,943*                           | \$ 2,083,943*                     |
| 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                      |

<sup>\*</sup>Funds raised. Assumes all funds are spent.

Currently in fifth place is the successful 1985 initiative allowing simulcasting at race tracks. It cost the equivalent of \$2.4 million in 2020 dollars.

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Seventeen past state initiatives seeking legalization of marijuana for recreational use have averaged \$8.3 million in combined spending, according to the National Institute for Money in Politics. South Dakota, Montana, and Arizona are holding similar referenda this year.

"Keep in mind that marijuana interests already have spent \$4.1 million on lobbying between 2017 and 2019. So the industry's overall political investment in New Jersey already has topped \$6 million," Brindle noted.

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

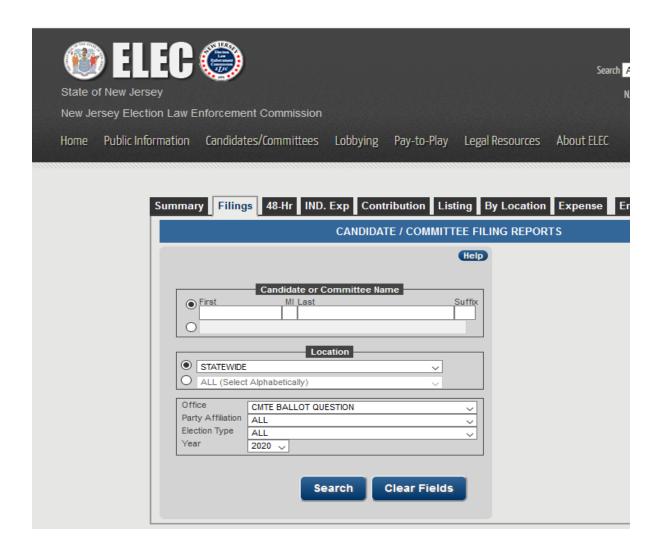
| <b>Ballot Question Committee (11-Day Pre-Election Report)</b>              | Raised      | Spent       | Pro/Con |
|--|-------------|-------------|---------|
| NJ CAN 2020  | \$ 851,330  | \$ 679,296  | Pro     |
| Building Stronger Communities Action Fund Inc.                             | \$ 700,100  | \$ 386,455  | Pro     |
| Don't Let NJ Go to Pot Inc.  | \$ 9,913    | \$ 6,581    | Con     |
| <b>Donations to Above Committees Not Listed in</b>                         |             |             |         |
| 11-Day Pre-Election Reports  |             |             |         |
| Growing Economic Opportunities (Laborers) to Building Stronger Communities | \$ 302,600  |             | Pro     |
| American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey to NJ CAN 2020                | \$ 200,000  |             | Pro     |
| Acreage CCF New Jersey LLC to NJ CAN 2020                                  | \$ 20,000   |             | Pro     |
| Totals   | \$2,083,943 | \$1,072,332 |         |

While there does not appear to be significant spending on two other ballot initiatives appearing on next week's referendum, the League of Women Voters of New Jersey has reported spending \$4,966 opposing public question three.

It asks voters to approve a two-year delay in the redrawing of state legislative districts if U.S. Census data is unavailable by February 15, 2021.

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

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



Post-election ballot question reports are due November 23, 2020. ELEC will make them public December 1, 2020.

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