



NEWS RELEASE

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Spending by county political parties in 2017 reached its highest point in nearly a decade as an open gubernatorial seat drew national attention and both legislative houses faced reelection, according to reports filed with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

Preliminary numbers show that Democratic and Republican county party committees together spent at least \$14.1 million in last year's election. That sum is less than the \$14.3 million spent in 2007. It is larger than the 2009 total of \$13.3 million though below the inflation-adjusted figure (\$15.2 million).

Table 1
County Party Committee Spending During
Statewide Election Years- 2007-2017

Group	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017
Democrats	\$10,519,929	\$10,102,842	\$5,499,129	\$ 6,218,016	\$5,882,648	\$10,259,704
Republicans	\$ 3,752,112	\$ 3,203,454	\$3,196,938	\$ 3,851,172	\$3,000,577	\$ 3,855,217
Both Parties	\$14,272,041*	\$13,306,296**	\$8,696,067	\$10,069,188	\$8,883,225	\$14,114,921
Elections***	S/A	G/A	S/A	G/S/A	A	G/S/A

*\$16.9 million adjusted for inflation **\$15.2 million adjusted for inflation ***G=Gubernatorial S=Senate A=Assembly

Jeff Brindle, ELEC's Executive Director, said the upturn in county party fundraising after several lackluster years was driven by unusual conditions in 2017. Most importantly, New Jersey and Virginia were the only two states with gubernatorial elections and both parties were eager to win.

"I'm sure most county chair-people last year were thrilled to receive the flood of large checks from national party committees, unions, state parties and candidates. But the fact that county party spending increased last year will not reverse the overall downward trend in financial activity experienced over the last several years," he said.

"Even the \$14.1 million spent last year pales against the peak year of 2003, when county parties spent \$27 million- \$36 million if adjusted for inflation," Brindle said.

"Hopefully, Governor Murphy's administration and the Legislature will give serious consideration to enacting ELEC-recommended reforms that could help reinvigorate county and state parties in New Jersey while offsetting the influence of independent groups."

These suggestions include excluding party committees from pay-to-play fundraising constraints, letting state parties participate in gubernatorial elections, allowing county parties to give to each other even during primaries and requiring more disclosure by independent special interest committees.

While Democrats spent more than twice as much as Republicans, both parties benefited from the special infusions available during the gubernatorial election year.

Table 2
Top Five Donors to County Parties in 2017

Democratic Committees	Total
Democratic Governors Association	\$703,000
Northeast Regional Council of Carpenters Non-Partisan PEC	\$653,500
NJ Laborers PAC	\$629,000
Democratic National Committee	\$444,000
CWA NJ PEC	\$405,500
Republican Committees	Total
GOPAC	\$130,000
Choice for Change (Republican State Committee)	\$ 89,895
EFO Tom MacArthur for Congress	\$ 74,000
NJEA PAC	\$ 73,000
Operating Engineers Local 825	\$ 62,000

Both the Democratic and Republican Governors Associations spent heavily on independent spending in the governor’s race. The DGA also gave at least \$747,900 in contribution to candidates or party committees.

Table 3
Spending by Democratic and Republican
Governors Associations on 2017 New Jersey Campaign

	Democratic Governors Association	Republican Governors Association	Both Associations
Independent Spending	\$2,449,330	\$2,355,445	
Contribution to Democratic State Committee	\$ 25,000		
Contributions to County Parties	\$ 703,000		
Contributions to Local Parties	\$ 15,600		
Contributions to Gubernatorial Candidates	\$ 4,300	\$ 4,300	
Subtotal- Contributions to Candidates or Parties	\$ 747,900	\$ 4,300	
Total Independent Spending and Contributions	\$3,197,230	\$2,359,745	\$5,556,975

Compared to 2013, the last election that featured a gubernatorial campaign and elections for both legislative houses, combined Democratic county fundraising rose while overall Republican county fundraising declined.

Democratic committees raised 81 percent more funds, spent 65 percent more, and had 163 percent more cash in reserve by the elections end. Republican fundraising declined 3 percent, spending was about the same and cash reserves in 2017 were 24 percent higher.

Table 4
Summary of Campaign Finance Activity
by County Party Committees
2017 Versus 2013

	Raised- 2017	Spent-2017	Cash-On-Hand	Net Worth*
Democratic County Party Committees	\$10,673,468	\$10,259,704	\$2,529,074	\$2,319,327
Republican County Party Committees	\$ 3,891,106	\$ 3,855,217	\$ 603,741	\$1,419,554
Total- Both Parties	\$14,564,574	\$14,114,921	\$3,132,815	\$3,738,881
	Raised-2013	Spent-2013	Cash-on-Hand	Net Worth*
Democratic County Party Committees	\$ 5,889,643	\$ 6,218,016	\$ 960,624	\$ 519,637
Republican County Party Committees	\$ 4,019,208	\$ 3,851,172	\$ 487,917	\$1,140,845
Total- Both Parties	\$ 9,908,851	\$10,069,188	\$1,448,541	\$1,660,482
Difference 2017 versus 2013				
Democratic County Party Committees	\$ 4,783,825	\$ 4,041,688	\$1,568,450	\$1,799,690
Republican County Party Committees	\$ (128,102)	\$ 4,045	\$ 115,824	\$ 278,709
Total- Both Parties	\$ 4,655,723	\$ 4,045,733	\$1,684,274	\$2,078,399
Democratic County Party Committees	81%	65%	163%	346%
Republican County Party Committees	-3%	0.1%	24%	24%
Both Parties	47%	40%	116%	125%

While Democratic committees generally outraised Republicans, the Burlington County Republican Committee topped all committees. It also was the second largest spender behind the Essex County Democratic Committee. The Passaic County Democratic Committee had the most funds remaining after the campaign.

Table 5
Top Five County Party Committees
By Category through December 31, 2017

County	Party	Raised
Burlington	Republican	\$1,315,746
Bergen	Democratic	\$1,100,119
Monmouth	Democratic	\$ 998,408
Essex	Democratic	\$ 950,953
Gloucester	Democratic	\$ 905,995
County	Party	Spent
Essex	Democratic	\$1,401,395
Burlington	Republican	\$1,295,751
Monmouth	Democratic	\$ 995,494
Bergen	Democratic	\$ 978,024
Middlesex	Democratic	\$ 914,621
County	Party	Cash-On-Hand
Passaic	Democratic	\$ 528,304
Camden	Democratic	\$ 349,003
Gloucester	Democratic	\$ 323,081
Essex	Democratic	\$ 276,313
Salem	Republican	\$ 223,165

Fourteen of the 21 Democratic county party committees spent more than \$250,000 during the 2017 election- Essex, Monmouth, Bergen, Middlesex, Gloucester, Passaic, Atlantic Hudson, Mercer, Union, Camden, Somerset, Cumberland and Burlington.

Table 6
Campaign Finance Activity of Democratic County
Party Committees January 1 through December 31, 2017

County	Raised	Spent	Cash-On-Hand	Net Worth*
Atlantic	\$ 592,856	\$ 618,229	\$ 9,217	\$ 9,217
Bergen	\$ 1,100,119	\$ 978,024	\$ 150,582	\$ 89,951
Burlington	\$ 294,045	\$ 272,598	\$ 23,695	\$ 6,117
Camden	\$ 617,061	\$ 405,641	\$ 349,003	\$ 349,003
Cape May	\$ 10,203	\$ 4,540	\$ 6,858	\$ 6,858
Cumberland	\$ 356,097	\$ 337,241	\$ 32,486	\$ 32,468
Essex	\$ 950,953	\$ 1,401,395	\$ 276,313	\$ 276,313
Gloucester	\$ 905,995	\$ 910,781	\$ 323,081	\$ 323,081
Hudson	\$ 661,023	\$ 599,943	\$ 144,324	\$ 5,180
Hunterdon	\$ 224,815	\$ 213,867	\$ 19,063	\$ 19,063
Mercer	\$ 524,223	\$ 472,746	\$ 123,685	\$ 123,685
Middlesex	\$ 852,354	\$ 914,621	\$ 39,564	\$ 39,564
Monmouth	\$ 998,408	\$ 995,494	\$ 8,686	\$ 8,682
Morris***	\$ 304,861	\$ 149,606	\$ 167,392	\$ 167,392
Ocean	\$ 203,289	\$ 151,094	\$ 66,235	\$ 82,402
Passaic	\$ 804,868	\$ 712,577	\$ 528,304	\$ 528,304
Salem	\$ 200,062	\$ 127,730	\$ 101,292	\$ 101,292
Somerset	\$ 422,362	\$ 341,382	\$ 40,437	\$ 40,437
Sussex	\$ 165,291	\$ 168,702	\$ 6,326	\$ 6,326
Union	\$ 457,789	\$ 453,846	\$ 111,784	\$ 103,230
Warren**	\$ 26,795	\$ 29,649	\$ 764	\$ 764
Democrats-Total	\$10,673,468	\$10,259,704	\$2,529,074	\$2,319,327

*Net worth is cash-on-hand adjusted for debts owed to or by the committee.

**First Quarter Report.

***Third Quarter Report.

Three Republican county party committees spent more than \$250,000 during the 2017 election- Burlington, Somerset and Monmouth.

Table 7
Campaign Finance Activity of Republican County
Party Committees Through December 31, 2017

County	Raised	Spent	Cash-On-Hand	Net Worth*
Atlantic	\$ 82,375	\$ 62,495	\$ 22,400	\$ 22,400
Bergen	\$ 97,491	\$ 131,273	\$ 7,337	\$ 7,337
Burlington	\$1,315,746	\$1,295,751	\$ 23,610	\$ 860,937
Camden	\$ 30,695	\$ 29,711	\$ 20,075	\$ 20,075
Cape May***	\$ 121,818	\$ 97,559	\$ 37,201	\$ 37,201
Cumberland	\$ 201,503	\$ 222,885	\$ 14,539	\$ 14,539
Essex***	\$ 12,500	\$ 20,029	\$ 828	\$ 828
Gloucester	\$ 61,955	\$ 36,390	\$ 8,338	\$ 8,338
Hudson	NA	NA	NA	NA
Hunterdon	\$ 126,982	\$ 128,137	\$ 8,548	\$ 8,548
Mercer	\$ 41,545	\$ 24,708	\$ 21,427	\$ 21,427
Middlesex	\$ 47,654	\$ 70,965	\$ 10,339	\$ 10,339
Monmouth	\$ 424,849	\$ 396,703	\$ 37,770	\$ 37,770
Morris	\$ 126,343	\$ 142,873	\$ 9,011	\$ (10,989)
Ocean	\$ 158,161	\$ 170,298	\$ 2,309	\$ 2,309
Passaic	\$ 46,058	\$ 51,706	\$ 23,649	\$ 23,649
Salem	\$ 340,619	\$ 136,979	\$223,165	\$ 223,165
Somerset	\$ 354,512	\$ 545,401	\$ 41,834	\$ 40,319
Sussex	\$ 75,352	\$ 63,630	\$ 34,347	\$ 34,347
Union	\$ 129,640	\$ 139,942	\$ 42,682	\$ 42,682
Warren	\$ 95,311	\$ 87,782	\$ 14,333	\$ 14,333
Republicans- Total	\$3,891,106	\$3,855,217	\$603,741	\$1,419,554

*Net worth is cash-on-hand adjusted for debts owed to or by the committee.

***Third quarter totals.

NA=Not Available

The numbers in this analysis are based on reports filed by noon January 31, 2018. They have yet to be verified by ELEC staff, and should be considered preliminary. Individual reports can be reviewed on ELEC's website (www.elec.state.nj.us).

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