



NEWS RELEASE

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PRESS ADVISORY

Over the last decade the electoral landscape in New Jersey has changed from one that was candidate-centered to one dominated by political parties, according to a new report released by the Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

The report, the 17th in a series of white papers authored by Deputy Director Jeffrey M. Brindle, analyzes the legislative election of 2003 in the context of similar elections since 1993.

“Out of \$48 million collected by legislative candidates in the general election of 2003 almost two-thirds of their contributions came from political party entities,” Brindle said. “This percentage is profoundly higher than ten years before when political parties were being overshadowed by special interest PACs in terms of financial support to candidates.”

The report traces the change to campaign finance reforms enacted in 1993, when lawmakers passed legislation imposing limits on contributions to candidates that were significantly lower than those imposed on donations to party entities.

Brindle noted that at the time there was good reason for amendments to New Jersey’s campaign finance laws. “Legislative candidates in 1993 received 15 percent of their funds from special interest PACs and just nine percent from political party organizations,” he said.

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“Lawmakers and political scientists,” added Brindle, “had sufficient cause for concern about the weak party system and the rise of special interests. No one foresaw the dramatic changes that would occur in electoral politics over the next decade as the result of the reforms.”

The 1993 amendments imposed an \$1,800 limit per election on contributions to candidates and a \$25,000 per year limit on contributions to party entities. They placed no limits on party contributions to their candidates and prevented circumvention of contribution limits by restricting the number of committees controlled by candidates.

Through statistical analyses of contribution activity by legislative candidates the report demonstrates the dominant place of parties in campaigns. The data shows that while contributions to candidates of more than \$20,000 (from parties) constituted two percent of the number made, they accounted for 48 percent of all funds received.

The publication, entitled “Legislative Election 2003: The Rise of Party-Oriented Campaigning,” reveals that the average contribution over \$20,000 to legislative candidates was \$76,000.

Brindle said that the report also analyzes expenditures, noting that most legislative expenditures were made for cable television advertising and direct mail. He added that 64 percent of legislative spending, \$23.2 million, occurred in six targeted districts.

The report is available by contacting the Election Law Enforcement Commission or accessing its web site at www.elec.state.nj.us/.

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