



NEWS RELEASE

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Fueled by record independent spending for a gubernatorial election and significant candidate self-financing, 2017 ranked as the second most expensive gubernatorial election not accounting for inflation, according to the latest reports filed with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission.

Candidates for governor spent \$34.3 million on the primary and \$20.3 million on the general election, while independent groups spent \$9.1 million on pre-primary and primary spending along with \$15.3 million during the general election. The grand total including candidates and independent groups: \$79.1 million.

“The \$24.5 million spent independently on the election not only sets a new record but reflects the growing dominance of these groups in national and New Jersey elections,” said Jeff Brindle, ELEC’s Executive Director.

“However, public disclosure rules for these committees are woefully outdated. Some of these groups deserve credit because they voluntarily disclose their contributions and expenditures. But New Jersey’s current law is so inadequate that most independent spending can be done without voters ever knowing who provided the funds. We continue to urge both parties to consider passing ELEC-recommended legislation that would correct this massive loophole,” he said.

The 2017 election was 57 percent higher than the 2013 combined total. However, the 2005 clash between Democrat Jon Corzine and Republican Doug Forrester remains history’s top gubernatorial race so far at \$88.1 million (\$111.3 million inflation adjusted).

That campaign, which was won by Corzine, was marked by heavy personal spending by both candidates. Unlike more recent campaigns, there was very little independent spending by special interest groups. The 2009 campaign also is slightly higher than 2017 when comparing inflation-adjusted figures.

Table 1
Total Spending on Gubernatorial Election through November 24, 2017
(Includes Pre-Primary, Primary and General)

YEAR	CANDIDATES	INDEPENDENT	TOTAL	INFLATION ADJUSTED
2005	\$87,724,988	\$ 407,748	\$88,132,736	\$111,311,239
2017	\$54,328,897	\$24,476,688	\$79,065,332	\$ 79,065,332
2009	\$56,099,909	\$14,080,168	\$70,180,077	\$ 80,689,244
2013	\$26,821,334	\$21,350,619	\$48,171,953	\$ 50,687,076
2001	\$41,233,708	\$ 6,783,119	\$48,016,827	\$ 66,915,111
1989	\$25,978,338	\$ 287,000	\$26,265,338	\$ 52,247,476
1997	\$25,793,621		\$25,793,621	\$ 39,640,697
1993	\$22,868,517	\$ 326,000	\$23,194,517	\$ 39,593,281
1981	\$19,493,157	\$ 14,600	\$19,507,757	\$ 52,935,554
1985	\$10,459,473		\$10,459,473	\$ 23,977,370

Brindle said heavy spending was inevitable this year with Governor Chris Christie not running for reelection. “In addition, the fact that only New Jersey and Virginia had gubernatorial campaigns drew national interest and was reflected in the surge in independent spending.”

As he did throughout the campaign, Democratic Governor-Elect Phil Murphy easily eclipsed all challengers during the general election. His \$14.5 million in general election spending was more than twice the six other contestants combined. Ranking second was Republican Lt. Governor Kimberly Guadagno, who spent \$5.6 million.

Table 2
General Election Campaign Finance
Activity Through November 24, 2017

CANDIDATE	PARTY	RAISED	SPENT	CASH-ON-HAND
Murphy, Phil	Democrat	\$14,715,173	\$ 14,517,279	\$ 197,895
Guadagno, Kimberly	Republican	\$ 5,748,740	\$ 5,616,120	\$ 132,621
Kaper-Dale, Seth	Green	\$ 104,321	\$ 114,221	\$ -2,701
Genovese, Gina	I	\$ 52,146	\$ 50,558	\$ 0
Rohrman, Peter**	Libertarian	\$ 7,765	\$ 6,142	\$ 1,623
Riccardi, Matthew	Constitution	NA	NA	NA
Ross, Vincent*	I	NA	NA	NA
TOTAL - CANDIDATES		\$20,628,145	\$ 20,304,320	\$ 329,438
Independent Committees – General			\$ 15,353,317	
TOTAL – GENERAL			\$ 35,657,637	
Primary/Pre-Primary				
Candidates			\$ 34,284,324	
Independent Committees			\$ 9,123,371	
TOTAL- PRIMARY/PRE-PRIMARY			\$ 43,407,695	
TOTAL- ENTIRE ELECTION			\$ 79,065,332	

*Does not expect to spend more than \$5,100

**From 11-day pre-election report

Murphy also enjoyed the bulk of the support from special interest groups spending independently of the candidates and parties.

Table 3
Spending by Independent Committees
Related to Gubernatorial Campaign
(Ranked by Spending)

SUPPORTS	INDEPENDENT COMMITTEES	SPENT	NOTE
	GENERAL		
Murphy, Phil	Committee to Build the Economy	\$ 6,549,875	
Murphy, Phil	Our New Jersey (Democratic Governors Association)	\$ 2,449,330	Gave \$1 million to Build the Economy
Guadagno, Kimberly	Republican Governors Association	\$ 2,355,445	
Murphy, Phil	Growing Economic Opportunities (Laborers)	\$ 1,500,000	Gave to Build the Economy
Murphy, Phil	Garden State Forward (NJEA)	\$ 1,500,000	Gave to Build the Economy
Murphy, Phil	Carpenters Fund for Growth and Progress	\$ 500,000	Gave to Build the Economy
Murphy, Phil	NJ League of Conservation Voters Victory Fund	\$ 241,698	
Murphy, Phil	New Start NJ	\$ 125,842	
Murphy, Phil	Planned Parenthood Action Fund of New Jersey	\$ 119,472	
Murphy, Phil	New Jersey Working Families	\$ 11,655	
	TOTAL GENERAL	\$ 15,353,317	
	TOTAL- PRIMARY/PRE-PRIMARY	\$ 9,123,371	
	TOTAL – ENTIRE ELECTION	\$ 24,476,688	

Several candidates this year tapped personal funds for their campaigns. But Murphy towered over all competitors by spending an estimated \$22.5 million from his own pocket, mostly either prior to the primary or during the primary election. He took part in the gubernatorial public financing program for the general election.

The bulk of Murphy’s spending, which he did jointly with his wife Tammy, went to his primary campaign—\$16.3 million. He also spent \$6.2 million on two non-profit groups, New Start New Jersey and New Way for New Jersey, mainly before the primary. These groups helped promote his agenda and raised his public profile before the campaign officially began. He and his wife also gave \$4,300 checks to his general election campaign.

While his self-financing total is a huge sum, it ranked seventh among the New Jersey residents who have self-financed all or part of their campaigns.

Table 4
Top Ten New Jersey Candidates Who Self-Financed Campaigns

CANDIDATE	YEAR	OFFICE	AMOUNT	INFLATION ADJUSTED
Corzine, Jon	2000	US Senate	\$60,198,967	\$86,230,301
Forbes, Steve	1996	President	\$37,394,000	\$58,787,229
Forbes, Steve	2000	President	\$38,675,038	\$55,398,960
Corzine, Jon	2005	Governor	\$43,135,570	\$54,480,026
Forrester, Doug	2005	Governor	\$29,927,189	\$37,797,902
Corzine, Jon	2009	Governor	\$27,460,000	\$31,572,018
Murphy, Phil	2017	Governor	\$22,537,081	\$22,537,081
Lautenberg, Frank	1982	US Senate	\$ 5,100,000	\$13,036,076
Forrester, Doug	2002	US Senate	\$ 7,485,000	\$10,262,771
MacArthur, Tom	2014	House	\$ 5,000,000	\$ 5,209,664

The most personal wealth ever expended on a gubernatorial race was the \$144.2 million spent by Margaret “Meg” Whitman in her unsuccessful 2010 bid for the California governorship, according to information available from the National Institute on Money in State Politics.

Under a program enacted in 1974, New Jersey candidates who prove their viability by raising above a certain threshold can receive two dollars in public funds for every \$1 in private funds they raise up to limits adjusted higher every four years. This year, candidates were eligible for up to \$4 million in public funds for the primary, and \$9.3 million for the general.

Murphy received the most from the program by reaching the maximum \$9.3 million during the general election. However, public funds amounted to just 26 percent of his total spending. Guadagno ranked second with \$5.9 million in total public funds received. Public funds helped underwrite 66 percent of her combined spending in the two elections.

Table 5
Public Funds Received by
2017 Gubernatorial Candidates

CANDIDATE	PRIMARY	GENERAL	TOTAL	PARTY
Murphy, Phil	None	\$ 9,300,000	\$ 9,300,000	Democrat
Guadagno, Kim	\$2,254,295	\$ 3,700,485	\$ 5,954,780	Republican
Johnson, James	\$2,055,175	None	\$ 2,055,175	Democrat
Wisniewski, John	\$1,299,886	None	\$ 1,299,886	Democrat
Ciattarelli, Jack	\$1,096,760	None	\$ 1,096,760	Republican
Totals	\$6,706,116	\$13,000,485	\$19,706,601	

Brindle said New Jersey was the first state to provide public funding for its gubernatorial elections and its program has won national praise and has been adopted in other states.

“As an example, in 2013, the program cost New Jersey taxpayers about \$2.56 each. This seems a small price for gubernatorial campaigns that have a tradition of being scandal-free and issue-oriented, while also reducing direct candidate reliance on contributions from special interest groups,” Brindle said.

The analysis of gubernatorial candidate reports is based on 20-day post-election reports received by noon on November 28, 2017. Independent spending totals reflect activity reported through noon November 27, 2017.

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