



NEWS RELEASE

Respond to:
P.O. Box 185
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0185

(609) 292-8700

CONTACT: JOSEPH W. DONOHUE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

FOR RELEASE:
January 21, 2026

Modest Spending in 2025 Assembly Election Had Noteworthy Results

While spending in the 2025 legislative election was overshadowed by the most expensive governor's race in New Jersey history, it still had an impact, according to an analysis of disclosure reports filed with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

At \$38.4 million, overall spending on the legislative general election was relatively modest. The total was dwarfed by the record \$114 million spent on the gubernatorial general election.

Even so, the Democratic majority used a more than two-to-one spending advantage to boost its margin from 52 to 57 seats in the 80-member state Assembly. The majority is the party's largest since Democrats won 66¹ seats in the 1973 election after the Watergate scandal.

The legislative election total includes \$28.1 million spent by candidates and \$10.3 million spent by committees that are legally permitted to support or oppose candidates if they spend their funds independently.

Table 1
Spending Totals in 2025 Legislative
General Election by Party

Party	Candidates	IEFs²	Totals	Percent
Democrats	\$ 20,094,035	\$ 6,547,966	\$26,642,001	69.2%
Republicans	\$ 8,057,077	\$ 3,751,622	\$11,808,699	30.8%
Independent	\$ 2,733		\$ 2,733	0.01%
	\$28,153,845 ³	\$10,299,588	\$38,453,433	100%

¹ According to Fitzgerald's New Jersey Legislative Manual 2025, this was the most seats either party has held in either house dating back to 1900. The Manual indicates the largest Assembly majority for Republicans occurred in 1970 when they controlled 59 seats.

² Independent expenditure-only filers can report to ELEC in three ways: as independent expenditure committees that submit reports 29 and 11 days before the general election and 20 days after; as continuing political committees that file reports every three months; or as filers of IND forms that list their independent expenditures, but not their contributions.

³ This total includes \$127,957 spent on the special state Senate race in 35th Legislative District where Democrats maintained a seat.

Another notable outcome is spending in five legislative districts in the 2025 general election ranked among the top ten costliest contests in Assembly-only election years dating back two decades.

At \$5.8 million, the 8th Legislative District showdown was the most expensive race ever in an Assembly-only election year in nominal dollars⁴. It ranks as the third most expensive when past races are adjusted to reflect inflation.

Table 2
Top Ten Costliest Assembly-Only Elections Since 2005⁵

Rank	Year	District	Amount	Totals in 2025 Dollars
1	2005	2	\$4,458,631	\$7,399,592
2	2015	2	\$5,193,557	\$7,102,217
3	2025	8	\$5,791,276	\$5,791,276
4	2015	1	\$3,607,734	\$4,933,595
5	2025	21	\$4,308,562	\$4,308,562
6	2009	1	\$2,410,257	\$3,641,411
7	2019	21	\$2,753,647	\$3,491,074
8	2025	3	\$3,446,616	\$3,446,616
9	2025	11	\$3,388,210	\$3,388,210
10	2025	16	\$3,097,439	\$3,097,439

Spending totals for elections in the 21st, 3rd, 11th and 16th Legislative Districts also made the list.

The \$38.3 million spent on Assembly campaigns, which is not final, in nominal dollars⁶ topped four previous Assembly-only elections dating back to 2005.

Table 3
Cost of Assembly-Only Elections Since 2005

Year	Assembly Candidates	Independent Expenditures	Amount	Totals in 2025 Dollars
2015	\$22,632,814	\$10,908,983	\$33,541,797	\$45,868,585
2005	\$23,713,193	\$ 3,476	\$23,716,669	\$39,360,441
2019	\$21,626,895	\$ 9,283,402	\$30,910,297	\$39,188,081
2025	\$28,025,888⁷	\$10,299,588	\$38,325,476	\$38,325,476
2009	\$18,584,098	\$ 15,999	\$18,600,097	\$28,100,983

⁴ Money spent at the time of the election.

⁵ None of the 2025 contests are among the top ten most expensive legislative elections. Those cost more than \$7.45 million in current dollars and included spending by both state Senate and Assembly candidates.

⁶ Money spent at the time of the election.

⁷ Excludes \$127,957 spent on special state Senate race in 35th Legislative District.

When totals for past elections are expressed in current dollars, the 2025 total ranks fourth out of five elections since 2005 in which the state Assembly was the only legislative house on the ballot.

Elections featuring both legislative houses cost more since they involve more candidates.

For instance, the 2023 legislative general election, which decided 40 state Senate and 80 state Assembly seats, cost \$70 million.

Just 10 of the state’s 40 legislative districts drew more than \$29 million in spending in the 2025 general election- 76 percent of all spending in the election. Sixty-eight percent of all candidate spending and 98 percent of all independent spending went to the 10 districts, most of which were viewed as competitive by the two parties.

Table 4
Top Ten Legislative Districts by Spending

Legislative District	Candidates	IEFs*	Totals
8	\$ 2,216,488	\$ 3,574,788	\$ 5,791,276
21	\$ 3,015,651	\$ 1,292,911	\$ 4,308,562
3	\$ 2,049,384	\$ 1,397,232	\$ 3,446,616
11	\$ 2,733,103	\$ 655,107	\$ 3,388,210
16	\$ 2,267,009	\$ 830,430	\$ 3,097,439
38	\$ 2,274,684	\$ 821,783	\$ 3,096,467
4	\$ 1,598,481	\$ 1,261,870	\$ 2,860,351
36	\$ 1,236,449		\$ 1,236,449
19	\$ 1,052,514		\$ 1,052,514
25	\$ 738,254	\$ 263,607	\$ 1,001,861
Top Ten Districts	\$19,182,018	\$10,097,728	\$29,279,746
Totals- All 40 Districts	\$28,025,888	\$10,299,588	\$38,325,476
Percent Top Ten	68%	98%	76%

*Independent expenditure-only filers.

The 8th Legislative District was the biggest “battleground” district by combined spending. For decades, it was controlled by Republicans until Democrats picked up one Assembly seat in the 2023 election.

Democratic candidates and their allies only slightly outspent Republicans but they reelected their incumbent and captured the second Assembly seat for the first time since the district’s creation for the 1973 election.

Table 5
Party Spending in the
8th Legislative District

Filers	Democrats	Republicans	Totals
Candidates	\$1,509,491	\$ 706,997	\$2,216,488
IEFs*	\$1,441,247	\$2,133,541	\$3,574,788
Totals	\$2,950,738	\$2,840,538	\$5,791,276

*Independent Expenditure-only Filers.

Candidates and independent expenditure-only filers supporting them spent \$29.1 million to elect 80 candidates- an average of \$364,329 to secure each legislative seat. Democrats spent more than Republicans in their winning districts- \$452,922 versus \$144,772.

The spending advantage paid off. No Democratic incumbents lost but five Republican incumbents suffered defeats - two in the 21st Legislative District, and one each in the 2nd, 8th and 25th Legislative Districts.

Almost \$9.2 million was expended on behalf of 79 losing candidates- \$116,192 per candidate.

Table 6
Total Spending by Wins and Losses

Won	Candidates	IEFs*	Totals	Number of Candidates	\$ / Candidate
Democrats	\$19,268,592	\$ 6,547,966	\$25,816,558	57	\$452,922
Republicans	\$ 3,188,448	\$ 141,313	\$ 3,329,761	23	\$144,772
Total- Won	\$22,457,040	\$ 6,689,279	\$29,146,319	80	\$364,329
Lost					
Republicans	\$ 4,863,599	\$ 3,610,310	\$ 8,473,908	52	\$162,960
Democrats	\$ 702,516		\$ 702,516	23	\$ 30,544
Independents	\$ 2,733		\$ 2,733	4	\$ 683
Total- Lost	\$ 5,568,847	\$ 3,610,310	\$ 9,179,157	79	\$116,192
Total Spending	\$28,025,888	\$10,299,588	\$38,325,476	159	\$241,041

*Independent expenditure-only filers.

Averaging the \$38.3 million in total expenditures among 159 Assembly candidates who took part in the race, the amount spent per candidate was \$241,041.

One reason some Republican incumbents may have lost is because independent expenditure-only filers supporting Democrats spent about twice as much as those backing Republicans- \$6.5 million versus \$3.7 million.

Seventeen groups filed reports with ELEC indicating they made independent expenditures in support of legislative candidates. Nine supported Democrats while seven backed Republicans.

Table 7
Spending by Independent Expenditure-only
Filers (EIFs) in 2025 Legislative General Election

IEFs Supporting Democrats	\$ 6,547,966
Middle Ground*	\$ 2,578,010
Community Affordability Project	\$ 1,656,100
American Representative Majority	\$ 839,713
Prosperity Rising Inc.*	\$ 832,749
Garden State Forward	\$ 525,920
New Jersey Coalition of Real Estate*	\$ 77,739
Fight For Our Rights PAC	\$ 25,000
Moveon.Org	\$ 7,536
Unidosus Action PAC	\$ 5,200
IEFs Supporting Republicans	\$ 3,751,622
Stronger Foundations	\$ 2,024,489
Republican State Leadership Committee- New Jersey PAC	\$ 1,617,322
New Jersey Coalition of Real Estate*	\$ 78,164
Women for a Stronger New Jersey*	\$ 13,500
NRA Political Victory Fund*	\$ 8,463
New Jersey Right to Life PAC*	\$ 5,684
Coalition Against Lawsuit Abuse Action PAC	\$ 4,000
Total- Both Parties	\$10,299,588

*Some or all of spending information from 72/24 reports due right before election.

All reports filed by candidate committees and independent expenditure-only filers are available online at ELEC's website at www.elec.nj.gov. Assistance in retrieving reports can be obtained by calling ELEC's help desk members at 609-292-8700.

A summary of legislative candidate data can be downloaded at:

<https://www.elec.nj.gov/publicinformation/statistics.htm>.

###