

# Democracy North Carolina

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## GENERAL ASSEMBLY CANDIDATES WILL TOP \$30 MILLION, BREAK FUNDRAISING RECORD

### PACs and Political Parties Giving at Record Levels

A watchdog group today said General Assembly candidates are on track to raise well over \$30 million in the 2006 election, shattering the 2004 record of \$26 million – even though half the seats in the General Assembly are uncontested in the general election.

Bob Hall of the watchdog group Democracy North Carolina offered his estimate after reviewing dozens of disclosure reports filed this week at the State Board of Elections.

He said political action committees (PACs) are giving at record levels, in several cases dishing out donations of \$4,000 apiece to a host of legislators, and so are political parties, which can make unlimited contributions in targeted races.

“There’s an orgiastic flurry of money moving around, from PACs to candidates, between candidates, and from candidates and special-interest groups to party committees and then to candidates in hot contests,” Hall said.

“Legislative candidates with little or no opposition this November are sending big checks to their colleagues or political caucus in order to gain personal power and partisan control in the legislature.”

He estimated that as much as one fourth of the money going into all legislative campaigns (over \$7 million) is passing through another candidate or party committee, which can inflate the total numbers. “Much of this money is double counted when you look at total fundraising, because it shows up as being raised by Candidate A and by Candidate B but it’s really the same money circulating through two campaigns.”

#### **Examples: Numbing Numbers**

- Reports through October 21, show that more than **a dozen PACs** have already given over \$200,000 to state candidates and party committees in the 2006 election cycle.
  - Citizens for Higher Education, backing its view of what UNC-CH needs, has donated \$8,000 to 17 legislators and from \$4,000 to \$6,000 to nearly 40 other members.
  - The NC Association of Realtors PAC has given \$4,000 or more to 65 legislators.
  - The NC Medical Society has sent 30 legislative candidates at least \$4,000 through its federal and state PACs.
  - The Academy of Trial Lawyer’s PAC gave \$4,000 or more to 22 candidates for the General Assembly.

- As of October 30, Senate President Pro-Tem Marc Basnight had transferred more than \$1 million from his campaign to the NC Democratic Party, where it will be used mostly to support legislative candidates in swing districts. Basnight has donated at that level before, but this year other **Senate Democrats are transferring super-sized amounts** to the party.

- Tony Rand sent the party \$415,000 – twice his giving during the 2004 cycle; next came Kay Hagan at \$161,000 and Linda Garrou at \$129,050.

- Senators R. C. Soles, John Kerr, Dan Clodfelter, Charlie Albertson, and David Hoyle have each pitched in at least \$60,000 by October 30.

- **Democratic House members are stepping up** to fill the more than \$650,000 House Speaker Jim Black forwarded to the Democratic Party in the 2004 election.

- Leading transfers include \$56,000 from House Majority Leader Joe Hackney, \$57,250 from Nelson Cole, \$41,740 from Pryor Gibson, \$41,000 from Bill Owens, and \$35,175 from Marian McLawhorn.

- *Note: The danger of using specific amounts is that they could change with the next 48-hour report; it is probably best to just list the leaders and say they have each given more than \$35,000.*

- The Democratic Party is raising **6-figure donations** from repeat donors like the National Education Association and Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee (DLCC), plus much higher contributions – in excess of \$350,000 each – from the Service Employees Union and NC Academy of Trial Lawyers.

- Meanwhile, the Republican Party has pulled in a \$100,000 donation from the Republican State Leadership Committee, a 527 committee similar to the DLCC.

- **Republican Senators have struggled** to imitate the Senate Democrats' coordinated fundraising machine; they're closer this year, but still fall well short.

- Minority Leader Phil Berger has given \$191,000 to the NC Republican Party and Deputy Leader Tom Apodaca has sent \$145,500.

- Senators Stan Bingham, Ed Goodall, Jerry Tillman, Brunstetter, Robert Pittenger, Richard Stevens, Neal Hunt, Harry Brown, Keith Presnell, and Fred Smith have each transferred at least \$10,000 to the state GOP.

- The advantage of the **Democrats' fundraising muscle** is evident in how much the party's state Senate candidates are receiving from the party itself.

- In four tight races, Democrats Pete Bland, Julia Boseman, John Snow and Joe Sam Queen have already received between \$280,000 and \$575,000 (for Bland) from the party, while the most any of their opponents has received from the Republican Party is \$127,150 (for Jean Preston at of Nov. 1).

“The arms race in political fundraising shows no signs of slowing down,” Hall said. “Unfortunately, we’re not getting more informed voters, only more cynical voters, as a result of the money chase. At the same time, many good candidates who can’t attract huge sums are being squeezed out and those who do survive know they’ll have special interests knocking on their doors for extra attention.”

“The amount involved in legislative campaigns – \$22 million after subtracting the double-counted dollars – sounds huge, but over the two-year election cycle, it’s only a half a penny a day per adult,” he pointed out. “A public campaign program with that kind of money could dramatically change the arms race and power of special-interest donations.”