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New Jersey Lobbying Expenditures Up Slightly in 2023 as Budget, Health, Labor, Liquor Reform and Casino Smoking Rank Among Top Issues

New Jersey lobbyists in 2023 spent \$96.1 million on efforts to shape, kill or advance legislation, a one percent increase above the previous year, according to annual reports filed with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

Table 1
Annual Lobbying Expenditures in
New Jersey by Year 2013-2023

Year	Spending	Change-%	2023 Dollars
2023	\$ 96,151,384	1%	\$ 96,151,384
2022	\$ 95,076,034	-1%	\$ 98,989,792
2021	\$ 95,987,195	-10%	\$107,936,267
2020	\$106,807,644	5%	\$125,746,211
2019	\$101,642,742	11%	\$121,141,791
2018	\$ 91,720,129	0.001%	\$111,296,407
2017	\$ 91,718,809	2%	\$114,013,155
2016	\$ 90,362,129	-1%	\$114,719,660
2015	\$ 91,504,710	10%	\$117,635,731
2014	\$ 83,480,316	-6%	\$107,447,195
2013	\$ 88,715,104		\$116,037,164

While the total was slightly higher than in 2022, it was well below record spending in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic unleashed a tsunami of legislation.

“2020 was highly unusual because it featured scores of hastily written emergency bills that had unexpected and broad-ranging impacts,” said Joe Donohue, ELEC’s Acting Executive Director.

While lobbying expenditures in 2023 may have reflected a more normal level of activity, it was only the fifth time spending topped \$95 million. However, when adjusted for inflation, 2023 expenditures were at their lowest point in a decade.

“Every year, the state budget, which is more like 1,000 bills in one, attracts the most lobbying activity,” said Donohue. “In 2023, there also was a wide array of other issues that drew attention in the statehouse. They

--more--

included the most sweeping overhaul of liquor laws in nearly 80 years, numerous bills affecting the state’s large pharmaceutical industry, a proposed ban on smoking in Atlantic City casinos, and bills expanding worker job protections.”

Table 2
Key Bills Proposed During 2022-23 Legislative Session
Ranked By Most Official Contacts by Lobbyists¹

Rank	Bills	Official Contacts	Subject	Action
1	S-2024/A-5669	463	Budgets \$54,357,547,000 in State funds for fiscal year 2023-2024.	Signed 2023
2	S-1615/A-2840/S-329/A-1747	378	Provides more transparency for prescription drug prices.	Signed 2023
3	A-4682/ S-2389	191	Increases job protection for certain service employees during changes of ownership.	Signed 2023
4	A-536/S-1616/A-2841	190	Expands oversight of pharmacy benefit managers.	Signed 2023
5	S-4265/A-5912/S-3038/A-4630 and others	185	Adopts most sweeping reform of liquor licensing laws since 1940s.	Signed January 2024
6	A-1255/S-1794	144	Streamlines health insurance prior approval rules.	Signed January 2024
7	A-822/S-723	130	Offers greater job rights and protections for domestic workers.	Signed January 2024
8	S-332/A-1971	112	Increases privacy rights involving personal information used by commercial Internet providers.	Signed January 2024
9	A-1474/S-511	86	Extends more job rights to temporary laborers.	Signed 2023
9	A-4496/S-3247	86	Revises law governing construction of school facilities projects and operations of New Jersey Schools Development Authority.	Signed January 2024
10	A-426/A-1444	85	Packaging stewardship bill	Hearing 2023
Other Notable Bills				
11	S-247/A-1966	80	Reduces standard voter registration deadline to eight days before election and allows voter registration at polling place on election day.	No Action 2023
13	S-264/A-2151	72	Eliminates smoking ban exemption for casinos and simulcasting facilities.	Committee Hearing 2023
13	S-3177/A-4758	72	Increases protections against "forever" chemicals.	No Action 2023
14	A-2839/S-1614	70	Requires health insurance carriers to provide coverage for epinephrine auto-injector devices and asthma inhalers; limits cost sharing for health insurance coverage of insulin.	Signed 2023
17	A-677/S-896	65	Streamlines teacher hiring process.	Signed 2022
20	S-2866/A-4372	62	Elections Transparency Act	Signed 2023

An analysis of fees paid to multi-client lobbying firms along with spending by special interest organizations found that the health care industry spent the most- \$17.5 million. This represents 18.3 percent of

¹ See explanatory note on page 6 for how official contact rankings were developed.

the \$96.1 million in total expenditures. The total includes spending by non-hospital health industry firms, hospitals and pharmaceutical firms².

Development interests ranked second at \$8.3 million or 8.6 percent.

Energy interests ranked third at \$8.2 million and 8.5 percent. The energy total includes spending by major electric and gas utilities and affiliated firms, along with direct spending by solar and wind energy companies³.

Table 3
Business Sectors That Spent more
than \$750,000 on Lobbying in 2023

Rank	Sector	Total Fees Paid	Percent
1	Health Care	\$17,553,495	18.3%
2	Development	\$ 8,254,285	8.6%
3	Energy	\$ 8,209,357	8.5%
4	Business- Miscellaneous	\$ 5,704,726	5.9%
5	Insurance	\$ 5,048,686	5.3%
6	Education	\$ 4,260,377	4.4%
7	Technology	\$ 3,680,835	3.8%
8	Transportation	\$ 3,670,608	3.8%
9	Finance	\$ 3,370,755	3.5%
10	Gaming	\$ 2,218,507	2.3%
11	Ideological	\$ 2,129,230	2.2%
12	Telecommunications	\$ 2,008,058	2.1%
13	Real Estate	\$ 1,967,170	2.0%
14	Environmental Protection	\$ 1,434,151	1.5%
15	Alcoholic Beverages	\$ 1,226,883	1.3%
16	Public Agencies	\$ 1,205,602	1.3%
17	Chemicals	\$ 1,134,117	1.2%
18	Lawyers	\$ 1,052,588	1.1%
19	Engineering	\$ 1,024,249	1.1%
20	Union	\$ 1,003,542	1.0%
21	Marijuana	\$ 951,327	1.0%
22	Food Retail	\$ 934,846	1.0%
23	Water	\$ 818,554	0.9%
24	Tobacco	\$ 782,078	0.8%
	Other	\$16,507,359	17.2%
	Total Lobbying Expenditures	\$96,151,384	100%

Annual reports filed for 2023 show that eight of the top ten spenders last year also ranked among the top ten in 2022. For the second year in a row, and for only the second time in a decade, no group spent more than \$1 million.

² Health care total includes miscellaneous= \$8,668,277; hospitals=\$4,289,362; pharmaceuticals=\$4,595,856.

³ Energy total includes miscellaneous= \$5,509,916; solar only= \$1,392,346; wind only=\$1,307,095.

Table 4
Top Ten Special Interest Lobbying Spenders
2023 Versus 2022

Group	2023	2022	Difference-\$	Increase %
Engineers Labor Employer Cooperative*	\$ 807,869	\$ 566,394	\$ 241,475	43%
AARP NJ*	\$ 700,065	\$ 648,590	\$ 51,475	8%
Public Service Enterprise Group*	\$ 690,709	\$ 849,112	\$ (158,403)	-19%
CEP Renewables LLC (solar energy)*	\$ 685,000	\$ 605,685	\$ 79,315	13%
Chemistry Council of NJ (includes State Street Associates)*	\$ 680,766	\$ 636,306	\$ 44,460	7%
NJ State League of Municipalities*	\$ 678,652	\$ 646,740	\$ 31,912	5%
NJ Business & Industry Association*	\$ 663,100	\$ 550,851	\$ 112,249	20%
Fuel Merchants Association of NJ	\$ 561,548	\$ 361,337	\$ 200,211	55%
Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of NJ	\$ 536,963	\$ 545,488	\$ (8,525)	-2%
NJ Hospital Association*	\$ 492,236	\$ 608,069	\$ (115,833)	-19%
Total Top Ten Spending	\$ 6,496,908	\$6,018,573	\$ 478,336	8%
Total Lobbying Spending	\$96,151,384			
Top Ten as Percent of Total	7%			

*Also on list in 2022

Communications spending rose eight percent in 2023 to \$3.3 million but remained about three percent of total spending- the same share as in 2022. The top ten spenders made up 66 percent of all communication spending.

Table 5
Top Ten Expenditures on
Communications in 2023

Group	Amount
Engineers Labor Employer Cooperative	\$ 623,869
AARP NJ	\$ 404,959
Fuel Merchants Association Of NJ	\$ 291,495
NJ League Of Conservation Voters	\$ 251,199
Labor Industry Cooperative Fund	\$ 158,000
NJ Business & Industry Association	\$ 137,028
Public Service Enterprise Group	\$ 132,913
Altria Client Services Inc & Its Affiliates	\$ 73,966
Health Care Institute Of New Jersey Inc	\$ 69,527
American Civil Liberties Union Inc	\$ 66,261
Communications Expenditures- Top Ten	\$2,209,216
Communications Expenditures- Total	\$3,339,298
Top Ten as Percent of Total	66%

The number of lobbyists fell from 914 to 892 in 2023. While the drop was just 2.4 percent, the total is the lowest since 2005, when an estimated 613 registered lobbyists roamed the state Capitol. The largest number of registered lobbyists was 1,043 in 2008.

While fewer lobbyists are doing business in Trenton, they are representing a record high number of clients- 2,341 in 2023, an increase of 3.8 percent. It was the fifth straight year that the number of clients reached a new high.

A new record low was also set as the amount spent on “benefit passing”- gifts like meals, trips or other things of value- fell to \$1,145 from \$2,349. The all-time spending record was set 31 years ago at \$163,375. Since then, the total has steadily diminished to a fraction of that amount.

Receipts paid to governmental affairs agents rose to \$72.2 million- an increase of 3 percent. The percentage of fees received by the top ten remained about 65 percent of all fees paid to governmental affairs agents. Nine of ten firms were on the top ten list in 2022.

Table 5
Top Ten Multi-Client Lobbying
Firms Ranked by 2023 Receipts

Firm	Receipts
Princeton Public Affairs Group Inc*	\$11,512,203
Public Strategies Impact LLC*	\$ 7,696,173
CLB Partners Inc*	\$ 6,248,390
MBI Gluckshaw*	\$ 4,038,560
The Zita Group LLC*	\$ 3,950,001
Gibbons PC*	\$ 3,653,929
McCarter & English LLP*	\$ 2,660,920
Capital Impact Group*	\$ 2,409,141
Optimus Partners LLC*	\$ 2,334,100
River Crossing Strategy Group	\$ 2,330,250
Receipts- Top Ten	\$46,833,667
Receipts- Total	\$72,232,831
Top Ten as Percent of Total	65%

*Also on top ten list in 2022

Table 6
Lobbying Expenses by Category- 2019-2023

Category	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2022-2023 % + or -
Salary ¹	\$ 56,148,622	\$ 55,465,036	\$58,515,812	\$61,826,240	\$62,560,485	1%
Support Personnel	\$ 2,650,872	\$ 2,152,834	\$ 2,556,858	\$ 2,649,580	\$ 2,673,981	1%
Fees ²	\$ 2,826,599	\$ 4,976,172	\$ 3,592,512	\$ 2,236,067	\$ 2,465,123	10%
Communication Costs ⁴	\$ 13,717,962	\$ 18,141,915	\$ 7,163,184	\$ 3,097,942	\$ 3,339,298	8%
Travel	\$ 486,061	\$ 168,658	\$ 144,250	\$ 233,767	\$ 331,972	42%
Benefit Passing ³	\$ 5,180	\$ 2,783	\$ 1,367	\$ 2,349	\$ 1,145	-51%
Total	\$ 75,835,295	\$ 80,907,398	\$71,973,983	\$70,045,945	\$71,372,004	2%
Compensation to Governmental Affairs Agent Not Included on Annual Reports ⁵	\$ 25,807,447	\$ 25,900,246	\$24,013,212	\$25,030,089	\$24,779,380	-1%
Adjusted Total*	\$101,642,742	\$106,807,644	\$95,987,195	\$95,076,034	\$96,151,384	1%

- 1- Salary includes in-house salaries and payments to outside agents.
- 2- Fees include assessments, membership fees and dues.
- 3- Benefit passing includes meals, entertainment, gifts, travel and lodging.
- 4- Communication costs include: printed materials, postage, telephone calls, faxes, receptions, and, in 2006 and years following, also includes direct mail pieces, newspaper advertisements, and television and radio broadcasts.
- 5- Compensation paid by Represented Entities filing the Form L-2 designating a Governmental Affairs Agent now being added due to a change in ELEC methodology to better capture all payments to outside agents

In New Jersey, lobbyists who raise or spend more than \$2,500 were required to file a report on February 15th that reflects activity from the prior calendar year.

Summary information about lobbyist activities in 2023 can be obtained at the following website:

https://www.elec.nj.gov/publicinformation/gaa_annual.htm. Copies of annual reports are also available on ELEC’s website.

Explanatory notes about most official contact rankings

While state law requires lobbyists to disclose their official contacts involving legislation and other regulated activities, the reader should be aware that such a contact can be limited or broad. So rankings are best guesses, not necessarily exact.

For example, a lobbyist might report that a client hospital’s chief executive met with the legislative sponsor and an aide in an office. That would count as one contact.

Another lobbyist might report sending emails to all 120 members of the legislature urging them to support, oppose or modify the same bill. ELEC staff counts such an outreach effort as one official contact even though it may target more than one lawmaker.

Another caveat- while quarterly lobbying reports disclose direct attempts to influence legislation, they don’t disclose more indirect efforts. Lobbyists sometimes organize “grassroots” campaigns to mobilize the public for or against legislation using advertisements aired on television or other media. Efforts to harness legislative constituents in this way are disclosed in annual lobbying reports.

Finally, official contacts on some bills signed in early January 2024 are not yet available. This means totals for some bills, such as the liquor reform bill, are likely low.