



# Money in Politics Research Action Project

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## The “Money Party” Wins 85 Percent of Oregon Legislative Races

Fundraising prowess once again proves to be a powerful predictor of Oregon legislative winners. The top money gatherers were the top vote getters in 85 percent of 2006 legislative races.

**Chart 1: Fundraising Success and Electoral Wins**

Who Won	# of Senate Races	% of 15 Senate Races	# of House Races	% of 60 House Races	# of Legislative Races	% of 75 Legislative Races
Top Fundraiser	13	87%	51	85%	64	85%
Fundraising Underdog	2	13%	9	15%	11	15%

Analysis based on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> general election reporting period contributions and on contributions listed on the two supplemental reports due on 10/30 and 11/3, plus beginning cash balances that reflect money raised but not spent during the primary and available for general election expenditures. Based on Elections Division data, which could change due to auditing and amendments.

The exceptions include seven candidates who raised at least 80 percent of the total that the leading fundraiser in the race garnered, granting them an equal opportunity to get their messages out to voters. Two of these candidates, Sara Gelser and Jan Cowan, came into their races with the advantage of having run and lost these seats previously. Two other candidates, Senator Vicki Walker and Representative Chuck Riley, are incumbents.

Several incumbents also won at the polls despite raising less than 75 percent of their opponent’s fundraising. They include Representatives Betty Komp, Larry Galizio and Andy Olson. The remaining candidate who won his election despite trailing in the money race was former state legislator Rod Monroe.

News reports often focus on the top fundraisers for the most competitive races, which sometimes leaves voters and potential candidates thinking that candidates must raise large pots of money to win elective office. The typical candidate needed to raise substantial dollars to win – about \$66,000 for a House seat and \$146,000 for a Senate seat. However, the top fundraiser for the 2006 House raised 13 times more money than the typical winning House candidate and the top fundraiser for the 2006 Senate raised almost four times more than the typical winning Senate candidate.

**Chart 2: Typical Winners Fundraising Levels Versus Top Fundraising**

	House Races	Senate Races
<b>Typical Fundraising</b>	\$66,032	\$146,360
<b>Highest Fundraising Campaign</b>	\$863,669	\$549,663

Typical fundraising levels reflect the median contribution amount raised across all candidates for House and Senate, which means that in each chamber half of the winners raised more and half raised less. Analysis based on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> general election reporting period contributions and on contributions listed on the two supplemental reports due on 10/30 and 11/3, plus beginning cash balances that reflect money raised but not spent during the primary and available for general election expenditures. Based on Elections Division data, which could change due to auditing and amendments.

The level of competition in the House was fierce in a few select districts, but two-thirds of the races were either unopposed or had candidates who drowned out their opponents by raising an

overwhelming amount of cash. Fundraising was more competitive among candidates in the Senate, where only one-third of the races had a candidate who was unopposed or drowned out by an overwhelming fundraising advantage.

Only 16 percent of Oregon’s legislative races were between candidates who competed with equivalent amounts of money to deliver their messages, an improvement over the 10 percent figure for 2004. The increase in races with candidates who raised competitive amounts of money is a factor in an increase in the percentage of financial underdogs who won their races. In 2004, only 9 percent of races were won by financial underdogs; in 2006, 15 percent were. Candidates with competitive amounts of campaign cash are more likely to be able to be able to run competitive campaigns.

**Chart 3: Final Competition Analysis of 2006 General Election Legislative Races**

Competitiveness	# of Senate races	% of 15 Senate Races		# of House Races	% of 60 House Races		# of Legislative Races	% of 75 Legislative Races	
Unopposed	1	7%	34%	6	10%	67%	7	9%	60%
Drowned Out	4	27%		34	57%		38	51%	
Lopsided	2	13%		8	13%		10	13%	
Struggle to Keep Up	3	20%		5	8%		8	11%	
Equal Opportunity	5	33%		7	12%		12	16%	

“Drowned Out” races, fundraising underdogs raise 25 percent or less of the top fundraiser’s total. “Lopsided” races, fundraising underdogs raised between 25 and 50 percent of the top fundraiser’s total. “Struggle to Keep Up” races, fundraising underdogs raised between 50 and 75 percent of the top fundraiser’s total. “Equal Opportunity” races, the fundraising underdogs raised more than 75 percent of the top fundraiser’s total. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Analysis based on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> general election reporting period contributions and on contributions listed on the two supplemental reports due on 10/30 and 11/3, plus beginning cash balances that reflect money raised but not spent during the primary and available for general election expenditures. Based on Elections Division data, which could change due to auditing and amendments.

The governor’s race offers a clear case where having enough money to get out a message can allow a candidate to prevail even where the winning candidate significantly trails the opponent’s fundraising lead. Democratic candidate Ted Kulongoski raised \$5,302,881 for his race enough to run a viable statewide campaign even though it was only 60 percent of the total his opponent, Ron Saxton, raised. By contrast, Constitution party candidate Mary Starrett raised \$48,254, or about three-fourths of the money a candidate could have expected to need to win a typical Oregon House race this election. Green party candidate Joe Keating raised \$3170 and Libertarian Richard Morley raised \$5215.

“While fundraising leaders do not always prevail, candidates must have enough money to deliver a message to voters in order to win. And, absent other factors, like incumbency or previous experience as a candidate, it is very tough for a fundraising underdog to win election. Any campaign finance reform needs to be carefully crafted to ensure that more candidates have access to enough money to run a viable campaign if we want to give voters more choice of candidates with different points of view,” said Sarah Wetherson, research and outreach associate with the Money in Politics Research Action Project.

To view the complete competition analysis by House and Senate race, please go to our website at [www.oregonfollowthemoney.org/ElectionSummary/2006/2006election.html](http://www.oregonfollowthemoney.org/ElectionSummary/2006/2006election.html).

The Money in Politics Research Action Project is a non-partisan, not-for-profit group whose goals are to increase accountability and opportunities for participation in politics.

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