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FOLLOW THE MONEY

WHAT THE NJEA REALLY SPENDS ON POLITICS

MIKE LILLEY

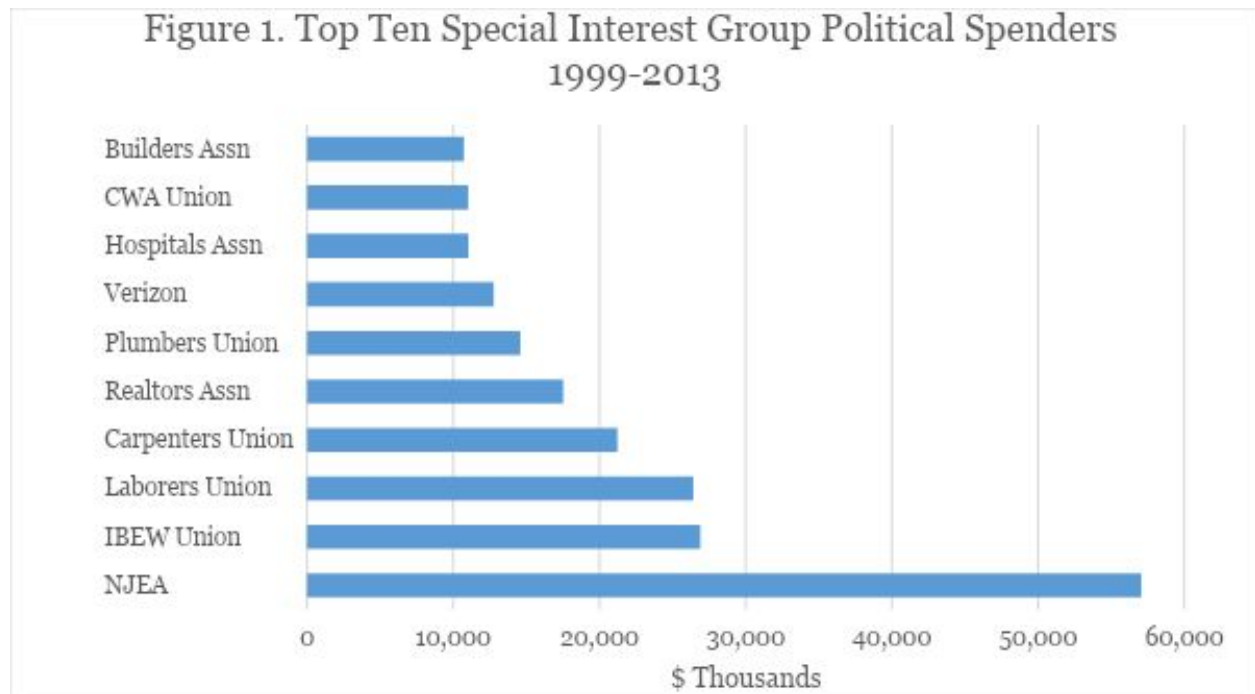
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FOLLOW THE MONEY: WHAT THE NJEA REALLY SPENDS ON POLITICS

According to New Jersey's elections watchdog, the Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC), when it comes to political spending that is officially reported to ELEC, the NJEA is by far the dominant player at both the state and local levels. As will be shown later in this report, the NJEA's reported political spending is dwarfed by the amount of its actual political spending, most of which is covert and unreported.

Reported Political Spending

State-Level Spending. A 2014 ELEC report analyzed state-level political spending from 1999-2013, looking at direct campaign contributions, lobbying¹ and independent expenditures. The NJEA's \$57 million almost doubled the next highest spender (Figure 1).



Source: New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission.

While the NJEA has been the most powerful special interest in the state for decades, 2013 is noteworthy because it marked the NJEA's emergence as the powerhouse in the modern era of political spending. The landscape for

¹ Lobbying includes both traditional, person-to-person lobbying and grassroots issue advocacy, whereby groups advocate to the general public for or against issues rather than candidates.

political spending has changed over the years. ELEC's Executive Director, Jeff Brindle, described the evolution: "Lobbying is shifting away from the traditional [person-to-person] to grassroots or issue advocacy."² And: "In the past, special interest groups used [traditional] lobbying and political action committees [direct donations] as their main vehicle for influencing public policy. During the last decade, independent groups have quickly become their preferred weapon."³ There are of course reasons for this evolution: traditional lobbying was (and is) heavily regulated and fully and promptly disclosed; and direct donations were (and are) strictly limited by state and federal campaign finance laws.

In contrast, the new vehicles for political spending, including independent expenditures and grassroots issue advocacy, are generally not fully or promptly disclosed and are not limited by campaign finance laws. Deep-pocketed special interests like the NJEA sensibly opted for these new vehicles because they could spend unlimited amounts for political advocacy with less disclosure.

Reflecting this evolution, the NJEA set the single-year record for spending in 2013, with \$19.5 million spent,⁴ which was a full one-third of the total amount it spent for the fifteen years 1999-2013. Brindle described the magnitude of the NJEA's modern-era political spending: "This is unprecedented ... NJEA spent 16 times more on total lobbying and elections combined in 2013 than it did 10 years earlier."⁵ And, of course, the NJEA crushed the competition: political spending for 2013 totaled \$55.4 million, and the NJEA's record \$19.5 million was an eye-opening 35 percent of the total. The next highest spender came in at \$4.1 million, or 7 percent (Figure 2).⁶

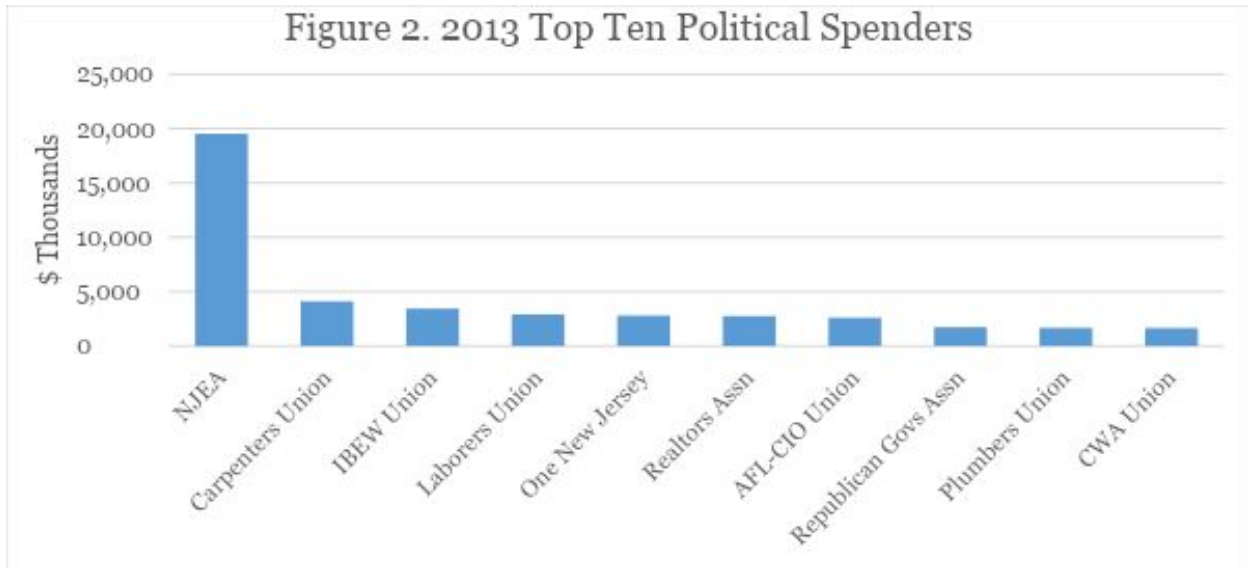
² Grassroots issue advocacy uses cable TV, radio, print and lately web/digital advertising, with messaging shaped by political consultants and pollsters, to mobilize the public on behalf of an issue, blurring the lines between lobbying and political campaigns. See, Jeffrey Brindle, "Spending on Grassroots, Issue Advocacy Should Be Disclosed to Public," New Jersey News Room, March 21, 2011; and Jeffrey Brindle, "Lobbying Is Changing in New Jersey," New Jersey News Room, April 20, 2010 (for links to ELEC, see "Follow the Money" endnote 58).

³ New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission, "News Release," press release, September 12, 2018, https://www.elec.nj.gov/pdf/press_releases/pr_2018/pr_09122018.pdf.

⁴ John Mooney, "State Teachers Union Shatters Record for Political Spending," NJ Spotlight, March 7, 2014, <http://www.njspotlight.com/stories/14/3/06/state-teachers-union-shatters-record-for-political-spending/>.

⁵ Ibid.

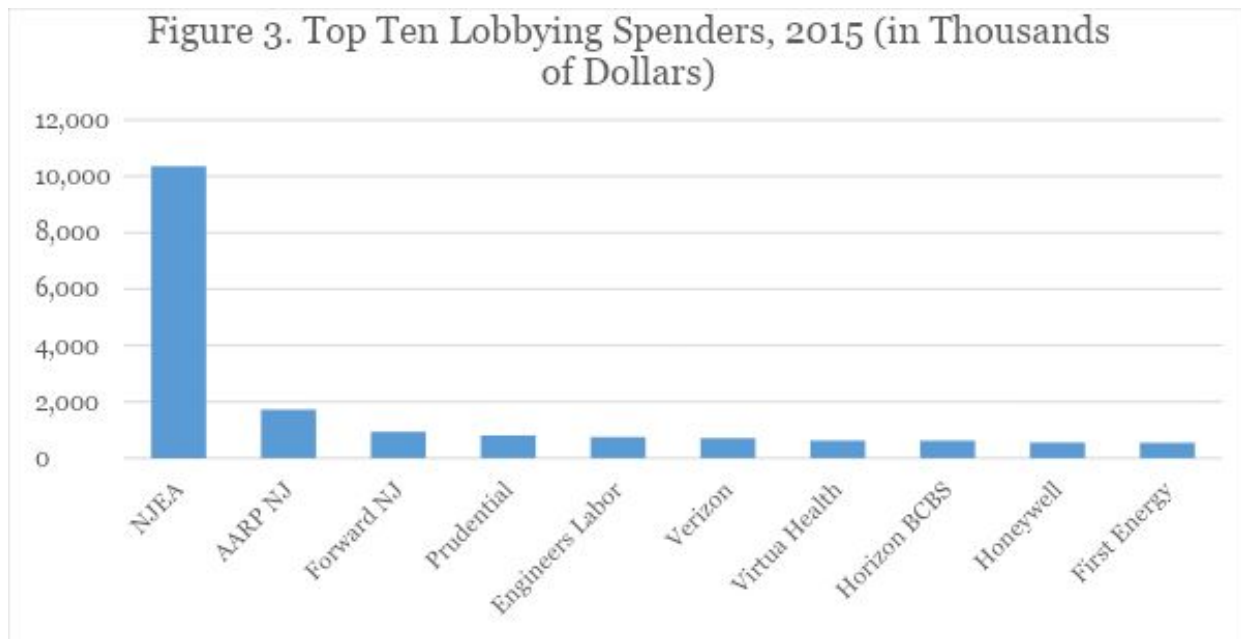
⁶ New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission, "News Release," press release, September 10, 2014, http://www.elec.state.nj.us/pdf/press_release/pr_2014/pr_09102014.pdf. New Jersey holds elections on odd-numbered years, and 2013 saw a full slate of elections for assembly, state senate and governor.



Source: New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission.

From 2014-2017, the NJEA continued to dominate the political landscape, with another \$29 million spent, bringing its 1999-2017 total to \$86mm.⁷ ELEC has not tabulated the amounts for the top ten political spenders for that time span. However, annual data for 2015 and 2017 does reveal that the NJEA has retained its preeminent position. Figure 3 shows the top ten lobbying spenders (including state-level grassroots issue advocacy), as that was what ELEC published for the year, and the NJEA spent \$10.3mm of the top ten's total of \$17.6mm, or a remarkable 58 percent of the total. Once again, it crushed the competition.

⁷ New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission, "News Release," press release, March 3, 2016, https://www.elec.nj.gov/pdf/files/press_releases/pr_2016/PR_03032016.pdf.



Source: New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission.

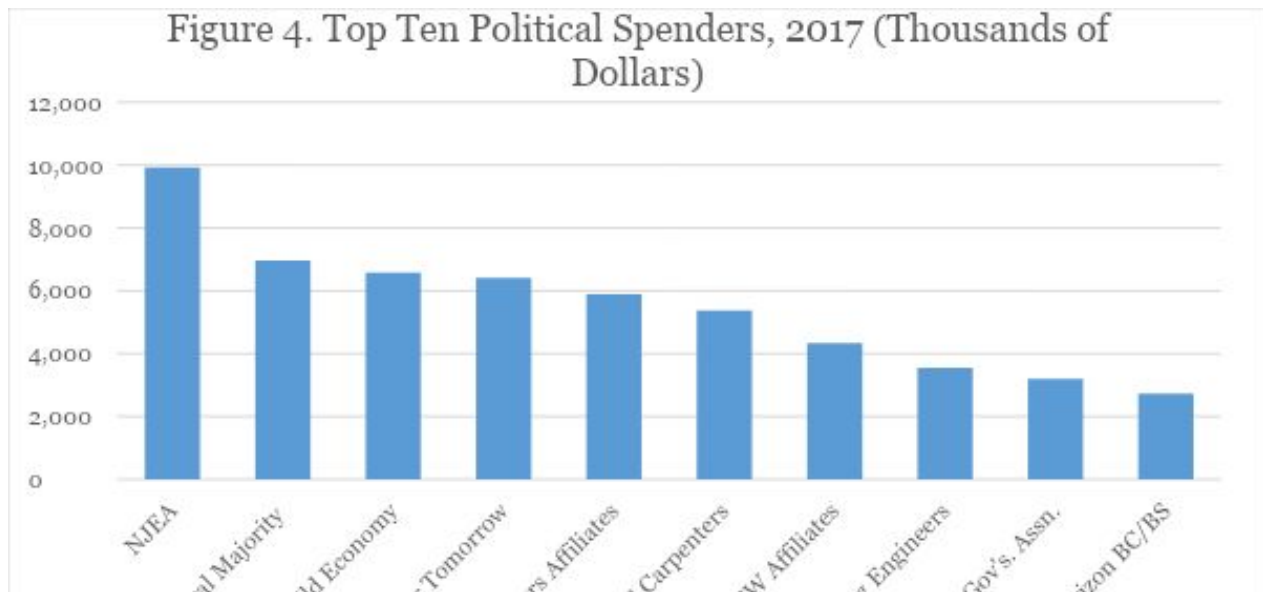
The story remained the same for 2017, a year with a full slate of state elections and a record year for independent expenditures (\$41 million, 56 percent higher than 2013). The NJEA was again the top spender with a total of \$8.5 million in independent expenditures.⁸ Much of this spending occurred in Legislative District 3, where the NJEA tried to unseat Senate President Steve Sweeney in a settling of scores from Sweeney’s 2016 refusal to bow to the NJEA’s wishes for a constitutional amendment guaranteeing teacher pensions. The NJEA’s independent expenditure committee, Garden State Forward, spent a jaw-dropping \$4.8mm on that race alone, and helped make it likely the most expensive state legislative race in U.S. history. ELEC’s Brindle noted that: “... spending records seem to be falling by the wayside almost every cycle. The amount spent on the third legislative district alone this year is staggering. It is more than most past gubernatorial candidates have spent statewide.”⁹

All told, the NJEA spent \$9.92 million in 2017, by far the most of any special interest, and 42 percent more than the next highest spender (Figure 4). In all categories of political spending, the top 25 special interest spenders spent \$74 million, or 34 percent more than in 2013.¹⁰

⁸ New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission, “News Release,” press release, September 12, 2018, https://www.elec.nj.gov/pdf/press_releases/pr_2018/pr_09122018.pdf.

⁹ New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission, “News Release,” press release, December 1, 2017, https://www.elec.nj.gov/pdf/press_releases/pr_2017/pr_12012017.pdf.

¹⁰ New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission, “News Release,” press release, September 12, 2018, https://www.elec.nj.gov/pdf/press_releases/pr_2018/pr_09122018.pdf.



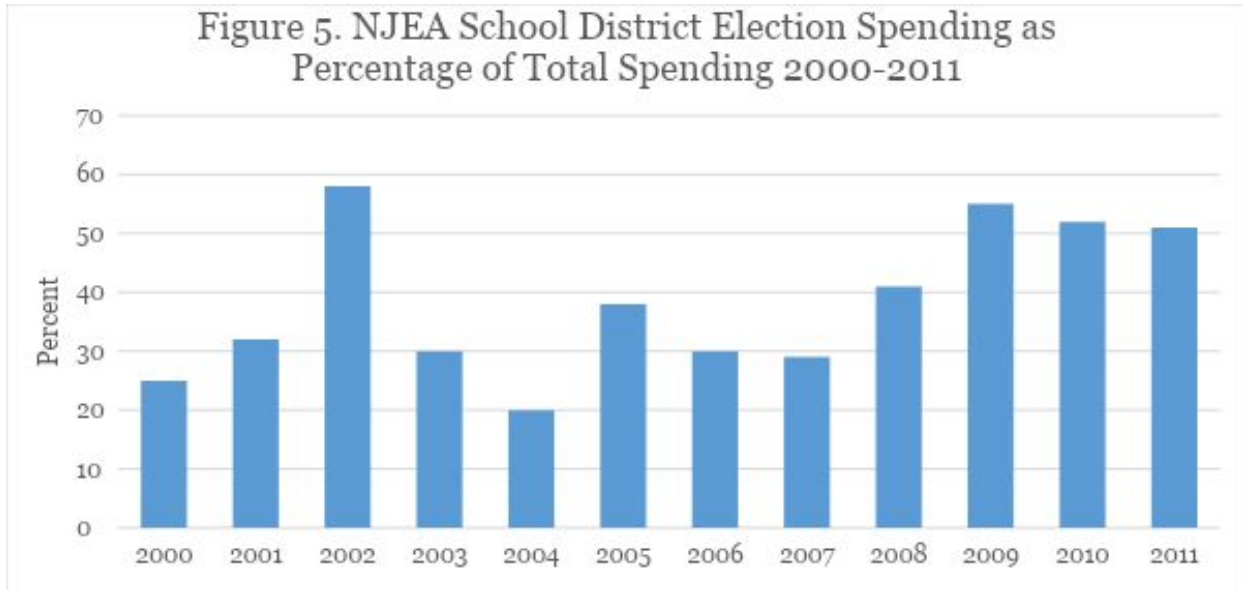
Source: New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission.

Local Political Spending. ELEC also did a study of local school district elections from 2000-2009. Like the growth in state-level spending, ELEC found that total spending in such elections had more than doubled from the previous decade. Once again, the NJEA was far and away the biggest spender at \$3.7mm, or 39 percent of the \$9.6mm total, with a range of 20-58 percent of the total each year (Figure 5).¹¹ Similarly, ELEC reported that the NJEA's local spending amounted to 52 percent of the total in 2010 and 51 percent in 2011.¹² This is consistent with an ELEC study of the 1990s when the NJEA spent 40 percent of the total amount, by far the highest percentage of any group.¹³

¹¹ The NJEA's School Elections Committee spent this \$3.7 million in supporting passage of local school budgets. This amount does not include money spent on ads in statewide issue-advocacy campaigns that were aimed at influencing local elections, such as amounts spent on PRIDE television ad campaigns. New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission, "School Elections Campaign Financing: An Update," December 2010, <http://www.elec.state.nj.us/pdffiles/whitepapers/white21.pdf>; and New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission, "News Release," press release, December 10, 2012, https://www.elec.nj.gov/pdffiles/press_releases/pr_2012/pr_12102012.pdf.

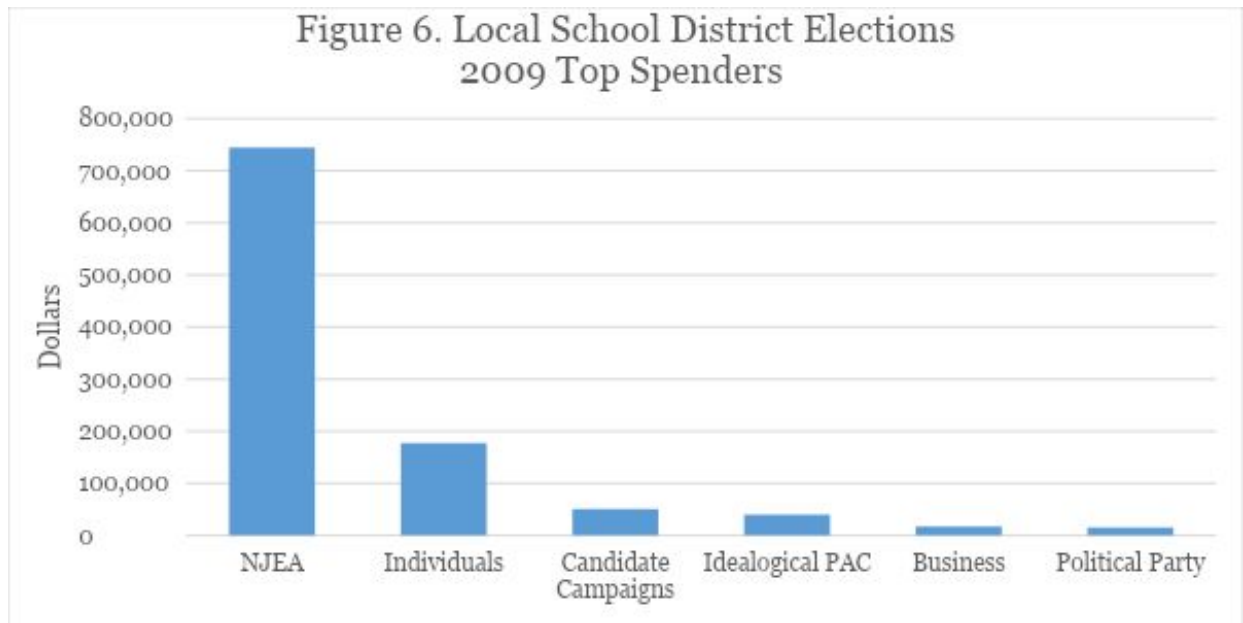
¹² New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission, "News Release," press release, December 10, 2012, https://www.elec.nj.gov/pdffiles/press_releases/pr_2012/pr_12102012.pdf. Local spending data is only relevant through 2011. A 2012 state law permitted school districts to move elections to November from stand-alone elections in April. This law resulted in more than 86 percent of school districts doing so, leading to a precipitous drop in school board election spending.

¹³ New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission, "School Board Campaign Financing," April 2002, 28. <http://www.elec.state.nj.us/pdffiles/whitepapers/white5.pdf>.



Source: New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission.

ELEC did not break out spending by other groups from 2000-2009, but it did break out such spending for 2009, when the NJEA spent \$745,000, a then-record amount for school board elections. The next highest spending, individuals, came in at a mere \$177,000 (Figure 6).¹⁴



Source: New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission.

¹⁴ New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission, “School Elections Campaign Financing: An Update,” December 2010, <http://www.e:ec.state.nj.us/pdffiles/whitepapers/white21.pdf>

Covert Political Spending

As shown above, the NJEA's total dominance in reported political spending is well documented. What is far less known – if not unknown – is the extent of the NJEA's covert and largely unreported political spending. Much of this spending involves political action at the local level.

The NJEA Views Local Associations Through a Political Lens. Like much of what the NJEA does, the NJEA views its county and local affiliates and their various activities through a decidedly political lens. In a striking admission, head of Government Relations, Ginger Gold Schnitzer, noted that: “all of the work a local association undertakes is a form of organizing whether it is to bargain a contract, to enforce a contract, to provide professional development, or to ensure good education policy - particularly through elections and lobbying.”¹⁵ Indeed, the NJEA views even such seemingly non-political local association issues as professional development (just as Schnitzer described), health and safety, communication and research as organizing opportunities.¹⁶

The NJEA views county associations in much the same way: a county association's purpose is to “coordinate activities in political action, training, bargaining, and organizing with local associations...” – all of which is political activity – “... as well as social activities.”¹⁷

The NJEA's political view of local associations is also confirmed by how the NJEA regards the training of local association leaders. The NJEA holds two annual “leadership” conferences aimed at developing local association leaders, but what constitutes “leadership” appears to have a decidedly political nature. The Government Relations Division makes this clear: “If you are interested in running for office or learning the nuts and bolts of political organizing, the following programs might interest you: NJEA [Jack Bertolino] Summer Leadership Conference; NJEA Winter Leadership Conference” and three programs that help members run for office, including the NJEA Political Leadership Academy – which is also run by Government Relations and trains members to run for office.¹⁸ The summer

¹⁵ New Jersey Education Association, “NJEA higher education collective bargaining summit focuses on political action,” *NJEA Review* 91, no. 4 (November 2017): 15.

¹⁶ For example, in 2017, the Freehold Boro Education Association worked with a UniServ field rep who “brought in organizing specialists on health and safety, professional development, communications, and research.” Kathryn Coulibaly, “The faces of inadequate school funding,” *NJEA Review* 91, no. 7 (February 2018): 25.

¹⁷ New Jersey Education Association, “NJEA Organizational Directory,” *NJEA Review* 91, no. 6 (January 2018): 67.

¹⁸ New Jersey Education Association, “Political Action Guide 2019,” <https://actioncenter.njea.org>, p. 2.

conference is “dedicated to developing association advocate representatives” and offers 37 workshops “that equip members to become stronger association advocates.”¹⁹

Given the NJEA’s view of local associations as essentially political operations, the link between the NJEA and the local associations – known as UniServ – merits a close look.

UniServ

At the heart of the NJEA’s overall political effort is UniServ (short for “United Services”). UniServ is the link between the state-level NJEA and its hundreds of affiliated county and local associations. UniServ field representatives direct the flow of NJEA resources, assist local associations in their operations and ensure that NJEA political objectives are transmitted down to the local level. Most importantly, UniServ provides the political operatives who organize, mobilize and direct the legions of union foot soldiers who volunteer for political campaigns, lobby legislators and join in the many NJEA-sponsored political protests.

Indeed, the NJEA describes UniServ as the “cornerstone” of the NJEA’s services to its members. Now that the NJEA has moved from a “service model” to an overtly political “organizing model,” UniServ is the cornerstone of that model, too.²⁰ In advance of the shift to an organizing model, the entire UniServ Headquarters was transferred to the Executive Office and the NJEA headquarters staff is now dominated by former UniServ professionals and political organizers.²¹

Currently, UniServ has 63 professional field representatives and 47 associate staff members working out of 20 regional offices across the state, as well as four regional directors. They are supported by 44 professionals and 76 associate staff members in other divisions who work out of NJEA headquarters in Trenton. Finally, there are another 96 UniServ consultants working on a part-time basis. That’s a total of 324 NJEA employees working on the UniServ mission – nearly 60 percent of the NJEA’s estimated 550 employees.²²

¹⁹ New Jersey Education Association, “2018 Jack Bertolino Summer Leadership Conference,” *NJEA Review* 91, no. 9 (April 2018): 36. See p. 19 of this report for examples of such workshops.

²⁰ For more on this shift in operating model, see SPCNJ’s report “NJEA: New Jersey’s Political Machine.”

²¹ Functionally, there is no difference between the current Executive Office political organizers and UniServ political organizers past and present. Their roles are interchangeable and personnel are constantly shifted back and forth between UniServ and the Executive Office.

²² New Jersey Education Association, “NJEA Organizational Directory, UniServ Regional Offices,” *NJEA Review* 92, no. 6 (January 2019): 57. Number of employees taken from: Michael Antonucci, “Return of the New Jersey Kerfuffle,” *eiaonline.com*, September 25, 2017,

<http://www.eiaonline.com/intercepts/2017/09/25/the-return-of-the-new-jersey-kerfuffle/>

Not all UniServ activities are identifiably political. UniServ representatives also assist with issues such as grievance adjudication, retirement consultation, and local association business management. However, as will be shown, a UniServ field rep’s job includes a heavy dose of political activity – including mobilizing members for political activities, administering NJEA resources such as PRIDE funds, politically organizing local associations and communities, advising and directing local collective bargaining and supporting local association and NJEA political goals through communications and public relations activities.

The bottom line is that the extent to which the NJEA and local associations are engaged in political activity is the extent to which UniServ is, and, as will be shown, the NJEA and its local associations are heavily engaged in political activity. Accordingly, the NJEA’s spending on UniServ will be included as political spending with this caveat.

Political Organizing: Most of what the NJEA does is political. NJEA President Marie Blistan explains why: “Everything in our profession is legislated and regulated. We must empower our members to get involved in politics. Involvement is not only voting but actively seeking and supporting pro-public education voices to get elected – including NJEA members who run for office.”²³

The NJEA’s mission statement on its website corroborates this: “The mission of the New Jersey Education Association is to advance and protect the rights, benefits and interests of members ...” – listed first, all of which are political goals, followed by - “..., and promote a quality system of public education for all students.” On the website, the backdrop for the mission statement is a large photograph of a political rally in front of the Statehouse in Trenton in which hundreds of red-shirted NJEA members (the NJEA often has its political protesters don red union shirts) are holding up signs. This adds an unmistakable political context to the words of the mission statement.²⁴

Those protestors were undoubtedly organized and mobilized by UniServ because its field reps are the means by which the NJEA recruits, trains and deploys its army of political “volunteers” who contact legislators, turn out

²³ Patrick Rumaker, “There is power in the union,” *NJEA Review* 91, no. 1 (September 2017): 27.

²⁴ New Jersey Education Association, “About, Mission,” <https://www.njea.org/about/mission/>. As for the red shirts, for example, NJEA members are currently participating in the NJEA’s #RedforEd campaign to support the passage of union-friendly legislation. “Red for Ed has become synonymous for respect for public education. Politicians know that when educators are wearing red, they are fully committed to stand up for themselves and the children they serve.” New Jersey Education Association, “We Wear #RedforEd Because...,” *NJEA Review* 92, no. 10 (May 2019): 58.

for rallies, staff campaigns and otherwise provide the NJEA with its most powerful political weapon. As NJEA President Dennis Testa said: “Our dollar contribution isn’t the deciding factor. We provide phone banks and phone calls and people who are willing to go door-to-door across the state.”

²⁵ Leo Troy, professor of economics at Rutgers University-Newark, observed that the NJEA’s “political power is enormous not only because they contribute a lot of cash, but more important is the in-kind contributions, the free labor from the staff of the unions and the members of the unions.”²⁶

To mobilize members for political action, UniServ field reps often work with the NJEA’s statewide network of county “Legislative Action Teams (LATs).” These LATs “organize[] members for legislative and political action.” Working hand-in-hand with the Government Relations Division, UniServ informs the LATs about the NJEA’s political goals at the state, county and local level, and the LAT members relay this to their local associations to take political action: this includes “contacting elected or appointed officials, recruiting volunteers to work on campaigns, attending lobby days...” LAT members also undertake political action themselves: they “inundate legislators with phone calls, emails ... they attend State Board lobby days and write letters to board members to influence regulatory changes; and they help pro-public education candidates get elected by working on campaigns.”²⁷

Mobilizing Local Associations for State-Level Priorities. When it comes to these political operations, UniServ field reps are the political organizers and enforcers who ensure that the NJEA’s political priorities are executed at the local level.

A classic example of member mobilization for a state-level priority was the NJEA’s “Members4Murphy” campaign supporting the gubernatorial candidacy of Phil Murphy in 2016-2017. Run by a career political pro in the Executive Office,²⁸ the unprecedented 13-month campaign began during

²⁵ Neil Reisner, “Political Donations Target Status Quo,” *Record*, December 31, 1995.

²⁶ Herb Jackson, “Unions a Force in NJ Politics Give a Big Boost to Democrats,” *Record*, September 3, 2001.

²⁷ New Jersey Education Association, “Know. Lead. Act. Become an associate LAT member,” *NJEA Review* 91, no. 4 (November 2017): 8.

²⁸ At the time, Deborah Cornavaca was a field representative for field-based organizing. Prior to the re-organization of the NJEA Executive Office in 2013, this would have been a UniServ position. Recognized as a “statewide organizing expert” with nearly two decades of experience as a political operative, including as Legislative Director for New Jersey Working Families, Cornavaca currently serves on Governor Murphy’s senior staff as Deputy Chief of Staff of Outreach. Office of the Governor, “Senior Staff,” <https://nj.gov/governor/admin/staff/>. For role with Members4Murphy see, New Jersey Education Association, “NJEA Delegate Assembly. Minutes of November 11, 2017.,” *NJEA Review* 91, no. 8 (March 2018): 52

the primary when the NJEA delivered more than 6,800 signatures to place Murphy on the primary ballot. The NJEA's LATs, UniServ consultants and rank-and-file members "canvassed, made phone calls, and communicated with members" The NJEA also deployed Summers Fellows²⁹ to contact members. Near election day, members from all 21 counties "went door-to-door, made phone calls, mailed postcards, and organized events to encourage members to support Murphy and other endorsed candidates."³⁰

In other recent examples, a UniServ Regional Director described "member-led campaigns to promote proposed legislation for relief from Chapter 78" and for protection of Education Support Personnel (ESPs) from out-sourcing.³¹

Organizing Local School District Political Activities. One of the major roles that UniServ professionals play is assisting local associations with their collective bargaining negotiations. UniServ's "specially trained and battle-hardened"³² negotiating and organizing experts give the locals advice on strategy and tactics and provide extensive research on contracts in nearby towns. Oftentimes, UniServ representatives help local associations come together to form Coordinated Bargaining Councils under UniServ direction, which share negotiating best practices and develop unified bargaining positions across districts. Having unified bargaining positions benefits the local associations because "contracts established by the most affluent communities end up setting the statewide standard."³³

The issue of whether collective bargaining is political activity was settled by the U.S. Supreme Court in the *Janus* case. The Court ruled that the union's

²⁹ These Summer Fellows were part of the Summer Fellows Program (SFP), a "bold and unprecedented move to organize members" in political action. The SFP was part of the NJEA's shift from a "services model" to an "organizing model" in 2016, and claimed it turned 45,000 members into political activists. Katie Quinn, "NJEA Summer Fellows Program Boosts Member-Driven Advocacy," *NJEA Review* 90, no. 3 (November 2016): 24-26.

³⁰ New Jersey Education Association, "As Gov. Murphy takes office, NJEA members anticipate a new era," *NJEA Review* 91, no. 7 (February 2018): 15.

³¹ New Jersey Education Association, "Delegates Adopt NJEA Audit," *NJEA Review* 92, no. 7 (February 2019): 10. Other examples include: the use of standardized tests in teacher evaluations and a 2005 campaign to block a Constitutional Convention. The AEI report "Follow the Money" also catalogues message traffic from UniServ Region 3/4 to local association presidents over a five-year period, which reveals the constant drumbeat of political action as well as the political "muscle" that Uniserv provides in the form of outright directives to local association presidents. In each case, and in many others, UniServ organizing pros assist and direct local political action in support of the NJEA's state-level policy priorities. See Part I of the AEI series, "Follow the Money," p. 9-11.

³² Bob Ivry, "Cops and Teachers: Can NJ Afford the Rising Bill?," *Record*, July 16, 2006.

³³ Matt Bai, "When I Run Out of Fights to Have, I'll Stop Fighting," *New York Times Magazine*, February 27, 2011.

involvement in collective bargaining is not a private matter but a public one, and therefore political activity.³⁴ Similarly, the union’s advocating for wage and tax increases as well as expressing views about education policy, child welfare, healthcare and other subjects – all in the context of collective bargaining – are all political speech.³⁵ Collective bargaining is political, and, accordingly, UniServ’s substantial role in local collective bargaining is political. This would perforce make UniServ’s role in contract enforcement political as well.³⁶

Having helped the local association negotiate a collective bargaining agreement (CBA), UniServ field reps then assist it in mobilizing members and organizing the local community in a campaign to pass the school budget that reflects the new CBA. Indeed, the NJEA’s annual Jim George Conference (named after a UniServ field representative) includes seminars such as “Political Organizing for Collective Bargaining” to provide members with “ideas for using political organizing to achieve success at the bargaining table.” Another offering is “Using Social Media to Communicate with Members and the Community” in which participants learn “strategies and best practices for creating a social media plan that helps your local achieve its goals – on the web and at the bargaining table.”³⁷

Similarly, UniServ field reps assists local associations support union-friendly candidates for school board seats. While historically garnering little public attention or voter turnout, school board elections are extremely important to the local association and the NJEA. By electing a friendly school board, local associations essentially elect their own bosses. Schnitzer again provides the rationale: “When you bargain a contract for your members, you sit across the table from people who are appointed by people who are elected. If you want to have power at the table, you need to engage in elections.”³⁸

³⁴ Citing an earlier case, the Court stated: “[I]t is impossible to argue that the level of ... state spending for employee benefits ... is not a matter of great public concern.” *Janus v. American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, Council 31, et al.*, No. 16-1466, 585 U.S. ____ (2018), 27.

³⁵ The Court concluded: “In short, the union speech at issue in the case is overwhelmingly of substantial public concern.” *Janus v. American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, Council 31, et al.*, No. 16-1466, 585 U.S. ____ (2018), 31.

³⁶ Another UniServ role – grievance processing – may also be political speech. While not ruling on the issue, the court cited a previous case: “Even union speech in the handling of grievances may be of substantial public importance and may be directed at the ‘public square.’” *Ibid.* In addition, any UniServ functions regarding representation of members before administrators and boards of education, which necessarily may implicate matters of local education policy or spending, could also be seen as political in nature.

³⁷ New Jersey Education Association, “Overnight Conference to Prepare Members for Bargaining Challenges,” *NJEA Reporter* 55, no. 1 (September 2011): 7.

³⁸ New Jersey Education Association, “NJEA higher education collective bargaining summit focuses on political action,” *NJEA Review* 91, no. 4 (November 2017): 15. Note also that

The NJEA has been very clear about the role UniServ political organizers should play in both these types of local election campaigns: “With a targeted campaign, local associations can have a positive influence on the outcome [of school board and budget elections]. NJEA offers county-wide training sessions to local and county associations as they plan for elections. For help and advice with your campaign, contact your UniServ office.”³⁹

PRIDE

School budget votes were and are very important to the NJEA.⁴⁰ In 1994, the NJEA created the Pride in Public Education campaign (PRIDE) campaign as a political solution to a major political problem: the defeat of almost 50 percent of school budget votes by fed-up property taxpayers.⁴¹ PRIDE is essentially an NJEA-directed, school-district-level political organizing and public relations campaign administered by UniServ. The brainchild of NJEA President Dennis Testa, PRIDE’s goals were:

1. To pass more school budgets and elect pro-education school board members.
2. To improve the outcome of collective bargaining by making maintenance and improvement of quality schools the first board priority rather than control the tax rate.
3. To increase positive legislative initiatives concerning public schools and minimize negative proposals.
4. To create and enlarged cadre of leaders and members actively involved in continuing a program of community organizing.⁴²

Every one of these goals was demonstrably political. There is simply no question that PRIDE was conceived for political purposes at both the state and local level. So important was PRIDE that the Delegate Assembly approved a special dues assessment of \$10 million to fund a “massive television and radio advertising budget” and local initiatives.⁴³ To put that amount into perspective, in 1994, the NJEA collected \$36 million in regular membership dues. PRIDE dues became a permanent fixture and have been

Schnitzer - presumably speaking for the NJEA – confirms the inherently political nature of collective bargaining.

³⁹ New Jersey Education Association, “Now is the Time to Prepare for School Board and Budget Elections,” *NJEA Reporter* 49, no. 6 (January 2006): 1.

⁴⁰ If a school budget vote fails and a new CBA not provided for, then the previous contract remains in place and any automatic wage increases would crowd out other spending, creating a budget squeeze. Under the 2012 law, school districts could move elections to November and forego budget votes so long as budgets remained under a two percent cap.

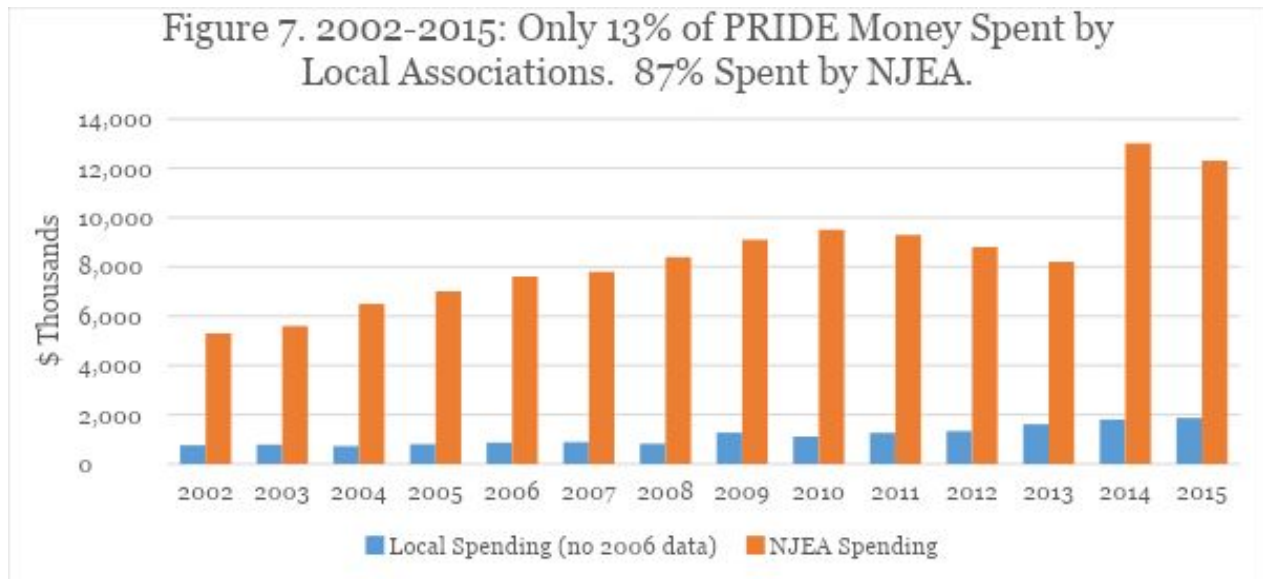
⁴¹ Neal Thompson, “Sense of Urgency Marks NJEA Convention,” *Record*, November 13, 1994.

⁴² New Jersey Education Association, “A Matter of Pride,” *NJEA Review* 69, no. 9 (May 1996): 76.

⁴³ New Jersey Education Association, “20 Years of PRIDE: Turning the Tide of Public Opinion,” *NJEA Review* 88, no. 2 (October 2014): 25.

collected every year since 1994, even after school budget votes became less relevant after 2012.

PRIDE is Largely Political Issue Advocacy Directed by the State-Level NJEA. The NJEA’s internal monthly magazine, *NJEA Review*, regularly provides pictures of PRIDE events with lots of smiling kids and parents, so an outside observer might be fooled into thinking that PRIDE funds are primarily used for benign local community outreach events. But the reality is that local associations’ PRIDE spending amounts to only 13 percent of overall PRIDE spending (Figure 7). The state-level NJEA controls 87 percent of PRIDE spending, and the NJEA is not organizing coffee klatches. More than 60 percent of all PRIDE spending goes to media advertising – mostly TV ads - and local associations are not cutting TV ads.⁴⁴



Source: New Jersey Education Association, IRS Form 990 “Group” filings; and audited financial statements published in *NJEA Review*.

The NJEA’s use of PRIDE-funded media advertisements is part of the broader evolution in New Jersey politics described earlier by ELEC’s Jeff Brindle. Brindle believes that the nature of political lobbying has changed from traditional, person-to-person lobbying to predominantly grassroots

⁴⁴ The data for local PRIDE spending for 2002-15 are compiled from NJEA “Group” 990s. The Group 990s include the vast majority of local and county associations; fewer than five local and county associations filed their own 990s in 2015, and only one, Jersey City, was a large association. The data on NJEA PRIDE spending for 2002-15 are from annual audited financial statements published in the *NJEA Review*. See, for example, New Jersey Education Association, “Independent Auditor’s Report,” *NJEA Review* 92, no. 9 (April 2019): 50. The data on components of NJEA PRIDE spending for 2002-15 are from annual NJEA budgets published in the *NJEA Reporter*. See, for example, New Jersey Education Association, “NJEA Budget,” *NJEA Reporter* 57, no. 11 (June 2014). PRIDE spending after 2013 is reported in the *NJEA Review*. See, for example, New Jersey Education Association, “NJEA Budget Summary,” *NJEA Review* 89, no. 11 (June 2016): 50.

issue advocacy, which blurs the lines between lobbying and political campaigns. With issue advocacy, groups use “hot button issues,” with digital media “connecting people to politics, recruiting supporters, and mobilizing the public.” Brindle identifies the NJEA as a leader of this trend and gets to the heart of the NJEA’s intent: “It helps to have public opinion on your side” in a political fight. As with every other type of political spending, Brindle notes that the NJEA is far outspending other groups in this area.⁴⁵

So while PRIDE’s original main purpose was local politics – winning more school board and budget elections – it is now an NJEA-directed, statewide issue advocacy and political organizing campaign. NJEA President Marie Blistan makes clear how the modern NJEA interweaves local political action with the NJEA’s state-level objectives: “Election Day wasn’t the end, it’s the beginning. It’s the start of a new legislative era in which we continue to expand the scope of our organizing to include our parents, our community members, and all stakeholders in our fight to pass strong, pro-public school legislation ...”⁴⁶ PRIDE is a key part of such organizing.

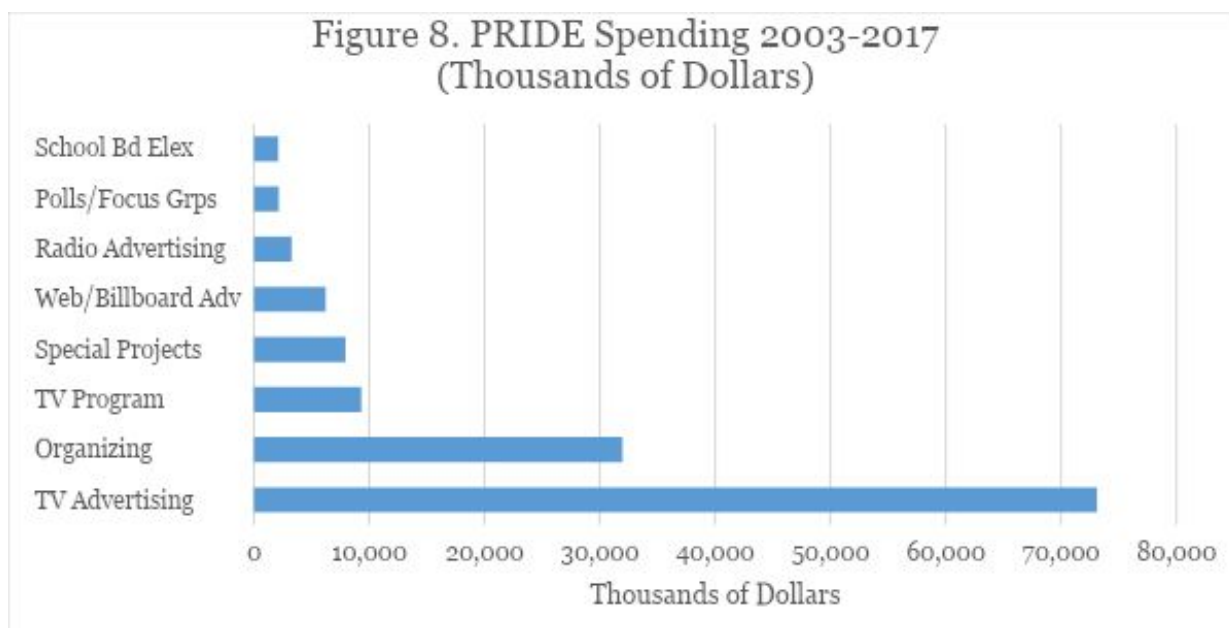
So per Blistan and Brindle, almost all of PRIDE spending is political. From 2003-2017, 25 percent of PRIDE spending was directly political: money spent on political organizing and school board elections. Another 61 percent was spent on advertising – mainly television advertising – which is essentially political issue advocacy aimed at getting voters to pass local school budgets and support state-level political initiatives. As Brindle surmised, PRIDE expenditures for polling and focus groups do indeed support and help target PRIDE advertising and thus are part of issue-advocacy efforts.⁴⁷ All told, from 2003-2017, 88 percent of PRIDE spending was either directly political or issue-advocacy related (Figure 8).⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Jeffrey Brindle, “Spending on Grassroots, Issue Advocacy Should Be Disclosed to Public,” New Jersey News Room, March 21, 2011; and Jeffrey Brindle, “Lobbying Is Changing in New Jersey,” New Jersey News Room, April 20, 2010 (for links to ELEC, see “Follow the Money” endnote 58).

⁴⁶ New Jersey Education Association, “Legislative conference inspires action beyond election day,” *NJEA Review* 91, no. 9 (April 2018): 16.

⁴⁷ See, e.g., New Jersey Education Association, “NJEA Delegate Assembly, Minutes of March 15, 2008,” *NJEA Review* 82, no. 1 (September 2008): money transferred into “cost center 3641 Pride Polls and Research to fund extensive research and polling for the creation of new Pride TV ads.”

⁴⁸ These political spending calculations exclude the 7 percent of PRIDE spending that went to the weekly TV program *Classroom Close-up, NJ* and another 6 percent to “Special Projects.” Given PRIDE’s stated political purposes and the NJEA’s near-total control over PRIDE spending, this may be an overly generous assumption. *Classroom Close-up, NJ* is arguably political issue advocacy. As art of PRIDE, it was intended to enhance the public perception of teachers and thus help pass school budgets and other NJEA initiatives. The same is likely true for “Special Projects.” PRIDE spending data for 2003-13 and 2015-17 are taken from annual NJEA budgets as detailed in footnote 26. Data for 2014 are budgeted amounts.



Source: NJEA annual budgets published in *NJEA Reporter* and *NJEA Review*.

Additionally, the participation of any NJEA staff personnel – whether from UniServ, the Communications Division, the Government Relations Division, or the Executive Office – in PRIDE’s issue-advocacy campaigns is also political activity by Brindle’s definition.⁴⁹

The use of PRIDE for statewide political issue advocacy through the media was institutionalized in 2001 when the original Pride in Public Education Committee morphed into the Public Relations Committee, which was to advise the NJEA:

1. On NJEA’s statewide advertising and public relations programs;
2. On affiliate organizations’ public relations projects and programs;
3. On programs to improve the external public’s perception of public schools ... as transmitted by the media ...;
4. On media materials and organizational efforts to involve members and affiliate leaders in public relations, community action and NJEA campaigns for reaching parents and other citizens; and
5. On training opportunities for school personnel in public relations and community organizing.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Underscoring the political nature of PRIDE’s media ad campaigns, the NJEA’s 2016 PRIDE TV ads won two awards from the American Association of Political Consultants, which recognizes excellence in political advertising and communications. The award-winning political ads were produced by professionals from the New Media Firm, a political media consulting and advertising agency. From 2009-15, the NJEA paid over \$53 million to the New Media Firm. New Jersey Education Association, IRS Form 990 “Parent” filings 2009-15.

⁵⁰ New Jersey Education Association, “Delegate Assembly to Consider Bylaw Change,” *NJEA Review* 75, no. 1 (September 2001): 62.

This is PRIDE of today.

NJEA Takes Advantage of an Election Law Loophole. The \$39 million reported to ELEC as NJEA lobbying from 1999-2017 is but a fraction of the \$136 million spent on PRIDE during that time. As indicated by the NJEA budgets, \$85 million was spend on media advertising and polling, of which \$73 million was spent on TV advertising alone.⁵¹ Again, this was almost certainly grassroots issue advocacy, and thus “lobbying,” as defined by Brindle. By any measure, the reported numbers dramatically understate the NJEA’s actual lobbying spending.

This discrepancy is likely explained by a New Jersey election law loophole. New Jersey requires that only state-level lobbying be reported to ELEC. All local lobbying, including all local issue advocacy, is not required to be reported. To the extent that the NJEA characterizes the PRIDE campaign and UniServ’s activities as local grassroots issue advocacy, this spending is not reported and thus not reflected in ELEC’s political spending numbers for the NJEA.

First, this means that as dominant as the NJEA in terms of reported political spending in local elections, the reported numbers do not come close to capturing what the NJEA really spends at the local level. Therefore, the NJEA’s actual dominance of local politics is far greater than is commonly known.

In addition, given that the state-level NJEA controls 88 percent of PRIDE expenditures and that the NJEA’s goals for PRIDE include influencing state-level legislation, this local-versus-state distinction for ELEC reporting purposes appears blurred to the point on meaninglessness. NJEA President Michael Johnson confirmed this blurring of the lines by describing PRIDE’s overlapping local- and state-level purposes:

Everything we do and have is a direct result of legislation or regulations which are driven by the legislature. We’re involved in political action because it establishes every parameter that we work within. I would like to heighten our members’ awareness of the need for political involvement. The local organizing effort in terms of educating the community about the quality of what’s happening in their schools [that is, PRIDE] must continue.⁵²

⁵¹ New Jersey Education Association annual budgets as published in *NJEA Reporter* and *NJEA Review*.

⁵² New Jersey Education association, “Johnson: On Organizational Goals,” *NJEA Review* 71, no. 1 (September 1997): 19.

Even Purely Local PRIDE Activities Are Political. True to PRIDE’s stated goals, even the 13 percent of PRIDE spending that is actually spent by local associations is, at root, political. This is corroborated by the details of the PRIDE grant process. PRIDE grant requests state that to qualify for PRIDE funding, a grantee must include “a description of your plans to ‘get-out-the-vote’ to help pass your local school budget,” and the grant request includes a Get-Out-the-Vote Plan Form for this purpose.⁵³ Likewise, the NJEA PRIDE reimbursement form refers to the “NJEA PRIDE Community Organizing Program” – that is, community *political* organizing – and requires that the local association provide all the personal contact information from the PRIDE event so that members can follow up with attendees and “reach out to them during [collective bargaining] negotiations or privatization attacks” (but only after consulting the UniServ representative). The resulting contact information databases are made available to local associations via UniServ representatives.⁵⁴

In PRIDE’s 25 years of existence, the NJEA has spent \$188 million, or about \$7.5 million per year. Over the last five years – the modern era of political spending – the NJEA has spent over \$60 million, or about \$12 million per year.⁵⁵

PRIDE Is Run Through Uniserv. As the NJEA’s cadre of political field operatives, UniServ reps play a key role in administering NJEA PRIDE grants to local associations. For example, in 2004, NJEA President Edythe Fulton called on members to organize for “pass the budget” campaigns by accessing NJEA resources and staff “who can teach you how to get out the ‘yes’ votes.” UniServ’s role is made clear: “Call your UniServ office to secure the help you need to win on April 20.”⁵⁶

Similarly, in preparing for local elections, members are encouraged to host events with parents and residents in the local community. NJEA PRIDE grants are offered to fund these events, and members are directed to the NJEA website for guidance on how to host an event. UniServ’s role is again made clear: “Don’t forget to reach out to your UniServ field representative to discuss your ideas.”⁵⁷

Indeed, UniServ is the conduit through which PRIDE grants pass through the NJEA system. The local association PRIDE Committee chairperson sends a completed PRIDE grant proposal to the regional UniServ office,

⁵³ Bridgeton Education Association, “PRIDE,” bridgetonea.org/pride-2/.

⁵⁴ New Jersey Education Association, “NJEA PRIDE Reimbursement Form.” See “Follow the Money” endnote 67 for link to the reimbursement form.

⁵⁵ Data from audited annual financial statements as published in *NJEA Review* 1995-2018.

⁵⁶ New Jersey Education Association, “It’s Not in the Bag,” *NJEA Review* 77, no. 7 (March 2004): 5.

⁵⁷ New Jersey Education Association, “Know. Lead. Act.,” *NJEA Review* 90, no. 3 (November 2016).

which reviews and approves the proposal and then sends it to NJEA headquarters for final approval. Once the event is held, the local chairperson submits the reimbursement form to the UniServ office, which again reviews and approves it and sends it to the NJEA headquarters for final approval.⁵⁸

With the NJEA's shift to an "organizing model" and the movement of UniServ political organizers into the Executive Office, inquiries about PRIDE grants now go directly to the Executive Office field representative for organizing.⁵⁹ This is simply the same UniServ function under an Executive Office title.

An NJEA primer explains how locals should work with their UniServ field representatives to gain community support for passing school budgets using social media:

Work backwards from the date of the election and set deadlines for campaign goals. Start collecting parent information, such as cell phone numbers and email addresses ... Plan on promoting the Facebook site no less than eight weeks before the election ... Tailor messages around the good work that district staff are already doing and what things the school budget would allow staff to do in the future.⁶⁰

The same article makes UniServ's role clear: "Local associations seeking to communicate support for board candidates or budget should work closely with their UniServ field reps."⁶¹

Tellingly, in the NJEA's 1995 financial statements, \$800,000 of the original PRIDE expenditures were placed into the UniServ Headquarters line item, underscoring the key role UniServ plays in administering PRIDE. These were later backed out and placed into a separate PRIDE line item.⁶²

FAST. Working in tandem with PRIDE as a community organizing tool is the Families and Schools Work Together for Children (FAST) program. As its name suggests, FAST focuses on encouraging family involvement in schools and is supported by a coalition of community groups. Inquiries

⁵⁸ New Jersey Education Association, "PRIDE Reimbursement Form." Hard copy.

⁵⁹ New Jersey Education Association, "Grants. Pride.," <https://www.njea.org/grants/pride/>.

⁶⁰ New Jersey Education Association, "Locals Use Social Media for Public Support," *NJEA Reporter* 55, no. 7 (March 2012): 9.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² For the 1995 financial statements, see New Jersey Education Association, "NJEA Report of Audit," *NJEA Review* 70, no. 7 (March 1996): 73. For 1996 financial statements, see New Jersey Education Association, "NJEA Report of Audit," *NJEA Review* 71, no. 7 (March 1997): 57.

about FAST directed to the same Executive Office field representative for organizing as PRIDE grant inquiries are.⁶³

Like local PRIDE events, the substance of FAST events is benign and praiseworthy: getting families involved in their local schools. But, like PRIDE, the NJEA sees FAST as an organizing tool to engender support for local associations and the NJEA. The NJEA's 2018 Winter Leadership Conference presented the seminar topic "FAST and PRIDE as Effective Organizing Tools for Your Local."⁶⁴ Likewise, the Jack Bertolino Summer Leadership Conference offered a workshop entitled: "Using PRIDE as Effective Organizing Tool for Your Local." The workshop is described as:

"PRIDE and FAST are widely used across the state to engage the community (PRIDE) and families (FAST) in the positive work of our members. This session will prepare local leaders, PRIDE and FAST chairs, and committee members to build strong and successful programs, *building our union power* [emphasis added] and member engagement in the union."⁶⁵

The NJEA makes very clear that FAST and PRIDE are, at root, local political organizing tools. Thus it should come as no surprise that the political organizer who ran FAST as the Executive Office field representative for family-school involvement program, was formerly an Executive Office field representative for field-based organizing, who while in that position also ran the NJEA's "Members4Murphy"⁶⁶ political campaign supporting the election of Governor Phil Murphy.

UniServ and PRIDE in Action

For a sense of the scope of the current UniServ role, the NJEA describes its successes during the 2017-18 school year: "NJEA staff worked closely with local presidents and negotiating teams to ensure that the approximately 300 local associations currently bargaining had the expertise, support, training and resources they needed to bargain the best deal possible for their members."⁶⁷ This "expertise, support, training and resources" came via UniServ and other NJEA Executive Office field reps.

⁶³ New Jersey Education Association, "Community. Family Involvement.," <https://www.njea.org/community/family-involvement/>.

⁶⁴ New Jersey Education Association, "2018 Winter Leadership Conference. Seminar Topics.," *NJEA Review* 91, no. 3 (October 2017): 40.

⁶⁵ New Jersey Education Association, "2018 Jack Bertolino Summer Leadership Conference. Workshops.," *NJEA Review* 91, no. 9 (April 2018): 39.

⁶⁶ Deborah Cornavaca. See footnote 28.

⁶⁷ Kathryn Coulibaly, "NJEA: A Year of Progress," *NJEA Review* 91, no. 11 (June 2018): 21.

As a result, the NJEA successfully defeated the outsourcing of ESPs “in almost every district that considered it.”⁶⁸ Likewise, the NJEA describes: “Working closely with NJEA field representatives [UniServ/Executive Office] and Research Division staff, more than 100 local associations have bargaining language providing Chapter 78 relief for their members.”⁶⁹

A brief look at three actual examples of UniServ in action reveals the role its cadre of trained professionals play, as well as the roles played by other NJEA departments and programs such as PRIDE and FAST. In each case, professional political organizers from UniServ or the NJEA headquarters staff helped the local associations run public relations campaigns to garner and mobilize support from the local community in order to pressure boards of education to meet their negotiating demands.

Highland Park 2014. When contract negotiations reached an impasse, the Highland Park Education Association (HPEA) and the NJEA mobilized members and sympathetic residents to fight the resulting layoffs and force a settlement. The HPEA used UniServ-administered PRIDE grants to “actively engag[e] the community” and form a new parent-activist group to support the HPEA. Based on the HPEA example, the NJEA provided advice for other associations facing similar challenges: “Work closely with your UniServ field rep ... Build alliances with parent and residential groups. Establish a PRIDE committee and apply for NJEA PRIDE grants to enhance your community outreach.”⁷⁰

Neptune Township 2015-2017. When their contract expired in 2015, the Neptune Township Education Association (NTEA) negotiated for a new contract with Chapter 78 relief and better pay for ESPs but reached an impasse with the school board. The UniServ field rep, with “more than 40 years’ experience in education, collective bargaining, and organizing” set “a long-term goal to change the composition of the [school] board” and “launched an extensive community organizing campaign [PRIDE].” Post the contract settlement, “three new board members supportive of the NTEA were elected.”⁷¹ Talk about electing your own bosses!

Monroe Township 2017-18. The Monroe Township Education Association (MTEA) negotiated a new contract with reduced healthcare costs and higher salaries. To get the school budget passed, beginning in the summer of 2017, MTEA launched extensive PRIDE and FAST campaigns – both run by UniServ and NJEA staff political organizers – “to promote, market and brand the association,” which included a “yearlong series of events and

⁶⁸ Ibid.

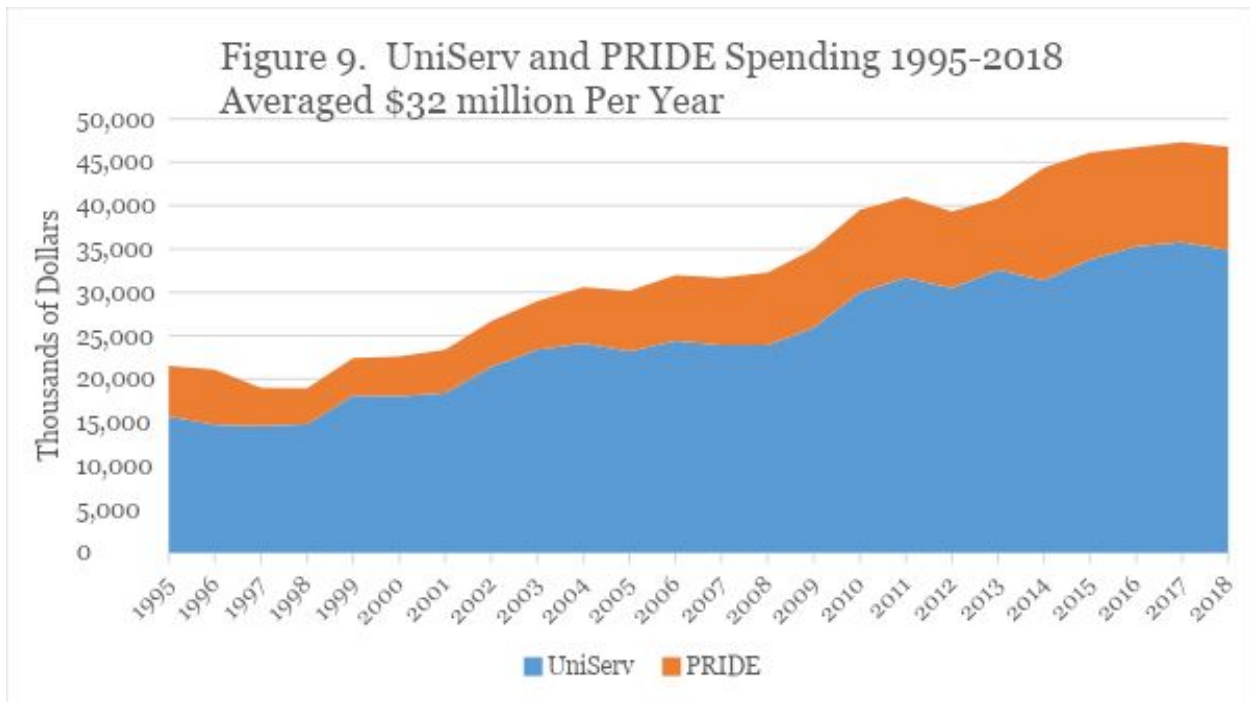
⁶⁹ Note the role that the Research Division staff played in negotiating CBAs – a local political issue. Ibid.

⁷⁰ Patrick Rumaker, “Highland Park Rising,” *NJEA Review* 88, no. 1 (September 2014): 40-43.

⁷¹ Kathryn Coulibaly, “Extraordinary Circumstances,” *NJEA Review* 91, no. 7 (February 2018): 23.

activities to inspire community support.” The MTEA won the 2018 Jim George Collective Bargaining Award (named for the same UniServ field representative as the conference) for its successful effort.⁷²

UniServ and PRIDE: \$32 million Per Year. The money the NJEA has spent on UniServ underscores the importance of UniServ’s political activities to the NJEA. From 1995 to 2018, the NJEA spent \$600 million on UniServ. That amounts to 31 percent of the NJEA’s total operational expenditures,⁷³ which were \$1.9 billion during that period, by far the largest expenditure line item.⁷⁴ Adding together UniServ and PRIDE, the combined spending behind these two largely political efforts comes to \$788 million, or 41 percent of operational expenditures, or more than \$32 million per year (Figure 9).⁷⁵



Source: Annual audited financial statements published in *NJEA Review*.

⁷² Kathryn Coulibaly, “Monroe Township EA Wins Collective Bargaining Award,” *NJEA Review* 92, no. 5 (December 2018): 22.

⁷³ Operational expenditures exclude depreciation and amortization, capital purchases, and pension contributions.

⁷⁴ NJEA audited financial statements from *NJEA Review*, 1995-2018. In 2014, the UniServ Headquarters line item was shifted to the NJEA Executive Office along with much of the UniServ Headquarters staff. What was once under the “UniServ Headquarters” section is now under “Executive Organizational Development” section of the financial statements.

⁷⁵ Amounts for UniServ for 2014-2018 include spending for Executive Organizational Development. In 2013, UniServ Headquarters was moved to the Executive Office and accounted for as “Executive Organizational Development” in the NJEA’s financial statements.

Other Political Spending

In addition to UniServ and PRIDE, the NJEA also spends significant amounts of money on other divisions that support the NJEA's political efforts. This undoubtedly comprises some or all of the 120 professionals and staffers from other divisions who the NJEA describes as assisting UniServ at the NJEA's headquarters.

Communications. The Communications Division is responsible for all aspects of the NJEA's communications efforts, both internal and external. The division handles all media relations and uses the media to inform members, the public and elected officials about the NJEA's objectives. Communications also helps local affiliate leaders use public relations and mass media techniques to fulfill organizational objectives.

The division has some overtly political aspects. First, it runs training and workshops about how communications strategies can aid local political organizing. For example, an announcement for an "NJEA Communications Tools Workshop this May" is based on the experience that a "strong local or county association uses effective communications strategies to engage and organize members and the community. Learn ways to keep your members informed and ready for action ..."⁷⁶

Given its role in local political organizing, the division has a position for "associate director, organizing and coalition building."⁷⁷ Communications staff also work directly in the field on NJEA political campaigns. The three-person team running the \$4.8 million Independent Expenditure campaign for the battle to unseat Senator Sweeney included a Communications Division "associate director, public relations."⁷⁸ Evidently, "public relations" includes running explicitly political independent expenditures campaigns. There are two such associate directors for public relations.

As for its more indirect political role, it is fairly easy to discern the political thread. For example, communications staff are the NJEA personnel who handle the tens of millions of dollars of PRIDE TV ads, which are aimed at

⁷⁶ New Jersey Education Association, "Communications Tools Workshop in May," *NJEA Review* 91, no. 8 (March 2018): 9. Additionally, the division provides a website for these communications tools (www.njea.org/CommTools) and a contact person from the division.

⁷⁷ A position once held by current NJEA Executive Director Ed Richardson. See, e.g., New Jersey Education Association, "NJEA Staff," *NJEA Review* 92, no. 9 (April 2019): 6.

⁷⁸ Associate director, public relations Christy Kanaby. New Jersey Education Association, "NJEA Delegate Assembly, Minutes of November 11, 2017," *NJEA Review* 91, no. 8 (March 2019): 52.

winning collective bargaining settlements and district elections and supporting state-level political initiatives. Communications handles all contact with the media, and the NJEA's political activities are frequently in the news. So any spinning or amplifying of the NJEA's political initiatives in the media would come from communications personnel. Finally, the division helps local associations with the public relations and media aspects of their own communications efforts, which, as we have seen, are often political in orientation.

Interestingly, in the NJEA's 1995 financial statements, \$4.9 million of the original PRIDE expenditures was initially accounted for in the Communications Division and was later backed out and put into a separate PRIDE line item. That PRIDE political spending was so easily placed into the Communications Division line item indicates the political nature of the division's activities.⁷⁹

The net result is that the extent to which the NJEA and its local affiliates are engaging in political activity is the extent to which the Communications Division engages in political activity. The result is a Communications Division that is heavily involved in political activity. From 1995-2018, the NJEA spent \$118 million on the Communications Division.⁸⁰

Government Relations. The Government Relations Division (GRD) coordinates all NJEA legislative activities and political campaigns and organizes members for political action. In addition to traditional lobbying of legislators, the GRD staff provides training for NJEA members and helps them build relationships with elected and appointed officials at all levels of government. They also run the NJEA Political Leadership Academy, which provides members with the tools, resources and information they need to run for political office.

As might be expected, GRD staff also engage directly in NJEA political campaigns: one of the three-person Independent Expenditure team for the battle against Senator Sweeney was a GRD associate director.⁸¹ A GRD associate director also co-headed the NJEA organizing team assigned to the race.⁸²

⁷⁹ For the 1995 NJEA financial statements, see New Jersey Education Association, "NJEA Report of Audit," *NJEA Review* 70, no. 7 (March 1996): 73; and for 1996, see New Jersey Education Association, "NJEA Report of Audit," *NJEA Review* 71, no. 7 (March 1997): 57.

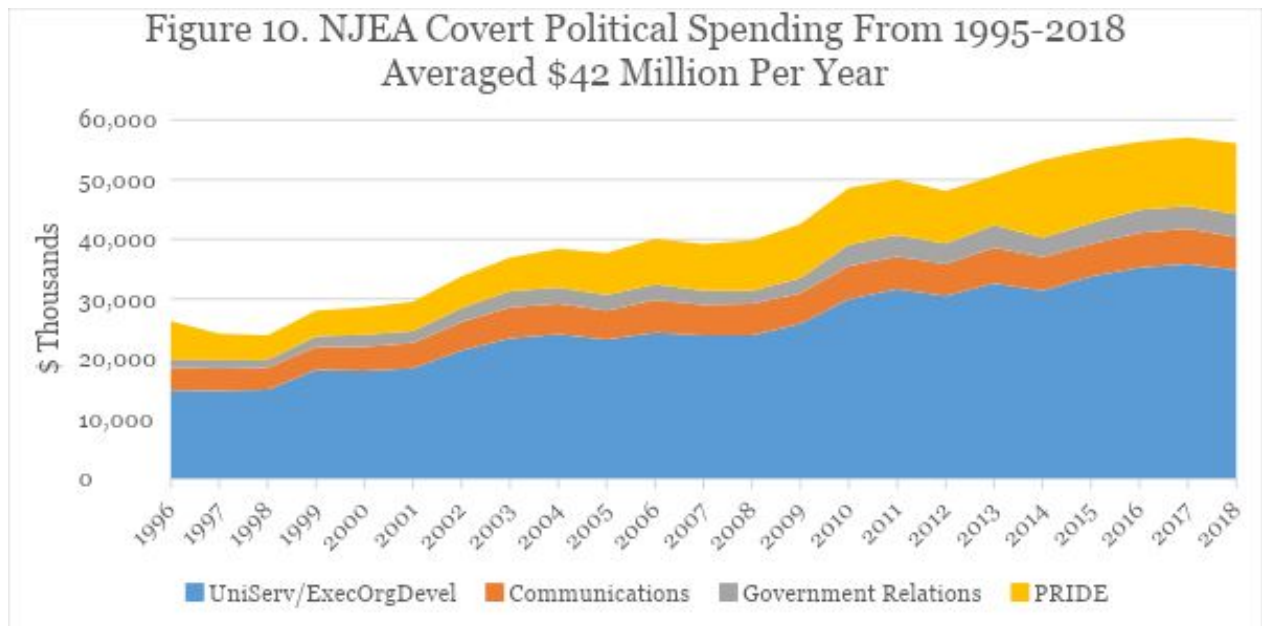
⁸⁰ NJEA audited financial statements as published in *NJEA Review*, 1995-2015.

⁸¹ GRD associate director Mike Giglio. New Jersey Education Association, "NJEA Delegate Assembly, Minutes of November 11, 2017," *NJEA Review* 91, no. 8 (March 2019): 52.

⁸² GRD associate director Marybeth Beichert. *Ibid.*

As its title suggests, and from the NJEA’s own description, the GRD manifestly engages in political activity. From 1995-2018, the NJEA spent \$64 million on the GRD.

Total Covert Political Spending: \$42 Million Per Year. Adding together all these weapons in the NJEA’s political arsenal – UniServ, PRIDE, communications and government relations – total NJEA spending on divisions and campaigns involved in political activities from 1995-2018 was an astounding \$1 billion, or 53 percent of operational expenditures, and nearly \$42 million per year (Figure 10).⁸³



Source: Annual audited financial statements published in *NJEA Review*.

Total NJEA Political Spending

ELEC’s reports that from 1999 to 2017, the NJEA spent \$86 million. During this period, the NJEA spent another \$837 million on its covert array of political tools – UniServ, PRIDE, and the Communications and Government Relations Divisions and the PRIDE campaign.

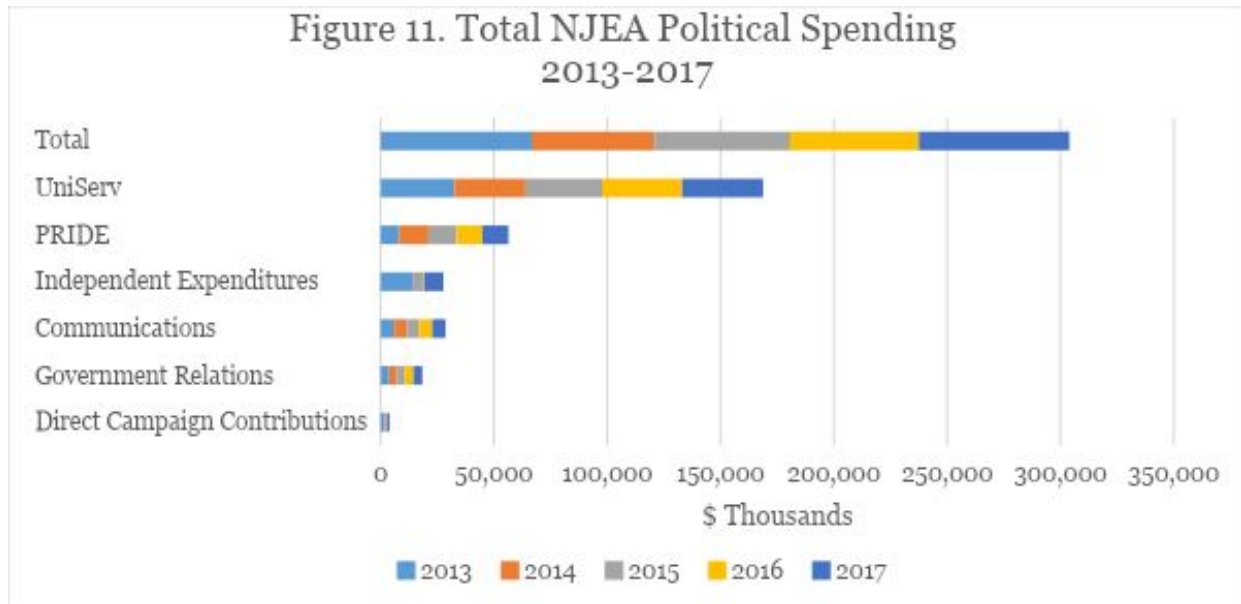
⁸³ This 53 percent of operational expenditures spent on political activities is consistent with a study by the *Wall Street Journal*, which found that for the Service Employees International Union in 2010, politics and lobbying accounted for at least 50% of the hours worked by 1,966 union employees. Tom McGinty and Brody Mullins, “Political Spending by Unions Far Exceeds Direct Donations,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 10, 2012. See “Follow the Money” endnote 96 for electronic link.

Covert and reported spending do overlap some. The \$39 million spent on state-level lobbying reported to ELEC includes expenditures for staff and communications, which are presumably included in the NJEA's expenses reported for the Communications and Government Relations Divisions and the PRIDE campaign. That leaves \$47 million spent on independent expenditures and direct campaign contributions. Adding to this the \$837 million results in a total of \$884 million spent, or 56 percent of total operational expenditures for the period, and about \$44 million per year. *And this still does not account for the thousands of NJEA "volunteers" who have worked on both NJEA political campaigns and directly for candidates' election campaigns during this time.*

The Modern-Era NJEA's Total Political Spending: \$65 Million Per Year.

While the NJEA's political spending from 1999 to 2017 gives a much more accurate reflection of the NJEA's political clout during that time, looking at the NJEA's political spending from 2013-17 – the modern era of political campaigns with digital and social media, grassroots issue advocacy, independent expenditure campaigns and the NJEA's move to an organizing model – tells us about the NJEA of the present. Using the same formula as above, from 2013-17, the NJEA spent as much as \$327 million, or \$65 million per year, and 58 percent of total operational expenditures (Figure 11). Note the small role of direct campaign contributions, limited as they are by campaign finance laws, and the outsized roles of UniServ,⁸⁴ PRIDE and independent expenditures, the unlimited drivers of the NJEA's covert political spending.

⁸⁴ In 2014, the entire UniServ Headquarters was moved to the Executive Office. In the NJEA's financial statements, spending for UniServ Headquarters was thereafter placed under the Executive Organizational Development section, which has now been included in the overall UniServ numbers. Previous research in the AEI report "Follow the Money" did not capture this spending for 2013-15 and thus the UniServ and overall political spending numbers were understated.



Source: New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission; and annual audited financial statements as published in *NJEA Review*.

The real political spending of the modern, all-politics-all-the-time NJEA model: \$65 million a year. That is a more accurate measure of the NJEA’s enormous political clout – a clout that allows the NJEA to dominate New Jersey’s political landscape and slant the playing field in its favor at both the state and local level.⁸⁵ *Again, this does not include the NJEA’s army of campaign volunteers that is perhaps its most potent political weapon.*

Two decades ago, Education Commissioner Leo Klagholz identified the NJEA as “certainly the most powerful force in Trenton – not just in education, the most powerful force period.”⁸⁶ Having spent over a billion property tax dollars and teachers’ dues on politics since then, the NJEA remains so today.

So New Jersey is stuck with a rigged, special-interested-dominated political system, where our governor now appears in NJEA-funded TV ads.⁸⁷ All funded by our tax dollars and teachers’ dues.

New Jersey deserves better than this.

⁸⁵ As will be discussed in SPCNJ’s “The Powerhouse’ of New Jersey Politics.”

⁸⁶ Neal Thompson, “Sense of Urgency Marks NJEA Convention,” *Record*, November 13, 1994.

⁸⁷ See SPCNJ’s first report, “NJEA: New Jersey’s Political Machine,” for a description of the NJEA’s \$2.5 million in funding for New Direction New Jersey’s TV ad campaign.