

# **Introducing Two New Datasets: An Overview of North Dakota Legislative Campaign Contributions and Expenditures During the 2022 Election Cycle**

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## **Introduction**

This study introduces a pair of new datasets derived from 2022 year-end financial reports provided by candidates for the North Dakota Legislative Assembly to the North Dakota Office of Secretary of State.<sup>i</sup> It then compares 2022 campaign contributions and expenditures to those reported to the Secretary of State in 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020.

The 2022 data has been organized into two searchable Excel files and uploaded to the Upper Midwest Center on Public Policy's website for public use.<sup>ii</sup> The 2022 datasets include 1) aggregate contributions and expenditures for some 257 legislative campaign committees and 2) information on 2,496 individual contributions to those campaign committees. The dataset on individual contributions includes such variables as contributor name, address, and amounts given as well as basic material on the candidates receiving those contributions.

The Center's website also has searchable Excel files for Legislative Campaign Committees from 2010 through 2020.

A full understanding of recent year-end reports requires historical context: in 2017, the North Dakota legislature made significant modifications to the reporting requirements for candidates running for state house or senate. Prior to these modifications, legislative campaign committees reported contributions from a single source only when those contributions exceeded \$200. Consequently, smaller contributions went unreported. In addition, these committees were not required to report their campaign expenditures at all. Starting with the 2018 election cycle, though, legislative campaign committees had to report the aggregate totals of all contributions \$200 or less as well as aggregate expenditures across certain broad categories. Reporting requirements for contributions above \$200 remained the same.

These changes made it possible to calculate the total amounts raised and spent by legislative candidates in their pursuit of public office. This is a considerable boon for anyone trying to understand North Dakota politics.

Laws overseeing campaign contributions are found in Chapter 16.1-08.1 of the North Dakota Century Code.

**Contributions to Legislative Campaign Committees**

Table 1 provides an overview of contributions to 197 active legislative campaign committees across North Dakota in 2022. These committees were active in that each received some amount of money across the election cycle (some 57 committees reported receiving zero contributions over 2022, but most of these committees supported candidates who were not up for election). The total contributions received by all such committees was \$2,397,372. The candidate receiving the largest amount was Steven Swiontek (R), House candidate in the District 10, at \$97,181. The average active committee received \$12,169, though there was considerable variability. Indeed, some 30 active committees reported receiving zero contributions of \$200 or less while 38 active committees received total contributions of under \$1,000.

**Table 1: Contributions to Active North Dakota Legislative Campaign Committees, 2022**

	<b>All Campaign Committees</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>
<b>Total Contributions of \$200 or less to active legislative campaign committees</b>	\$464,582 (19.4% of total)	\$0.00	\$24,502	\$2,358
<b>Total Contributions over \$200 to active legislative campaign committees</b>	\$1,932,790 (80.6% of total)	\$0.00	\$80,774	\$9,811
<b>Total Contributions to active legislative campaign committees</b>	\$2,397,372	\$100.00	\$97,181	\$12,169

(N=197) (Using 2022 dollars)

Finally, small contributions of \$200 or less made up approximately 19.4% of all reported contributions in 2022.

Table 2 provides an overview of contributions to active legislative campaign committees in 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020. The numbers found in this table have also been adjusted

for inflation using 2022 dollars. Candidates for the North Dakota state legislature received \$2,397,372 in total contributions over the 2022 election cycle, which was an 0.9% decrease from 2020.

**Table 2: Contributions to Active ND Legislative Campaign Committees 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020**

	Total Contributions of \$200 or less	Total Contributions over \$200	Total Contributions
<b>2014</b> <b>N=127 (198 cases total)</b>		\$1,273,635	
<b>2016</b> <b>N= 141 (230 cases total)</b>		\$1,593,393	
<b>2018</b> <b>N=149 (213 cases total)</b>	\$590,324 (25.7% of total)	\$1,708,381 (74.3% of total)	\$2,298,705
<b>2020</b> <b>N=160 (217 cases total)</b>	\$618,587 (25.6% of total)	\$1,800,246 (74.4% of total)	\$2,418,833

(Using 2022 dollars)

Contributions greater than \$200 grew by 25.1% between 2014 and 2016, 7.2% between 2016 and 2018, 5.4% between 2018 and 2020, and 7.4% from 2020 to 2022.

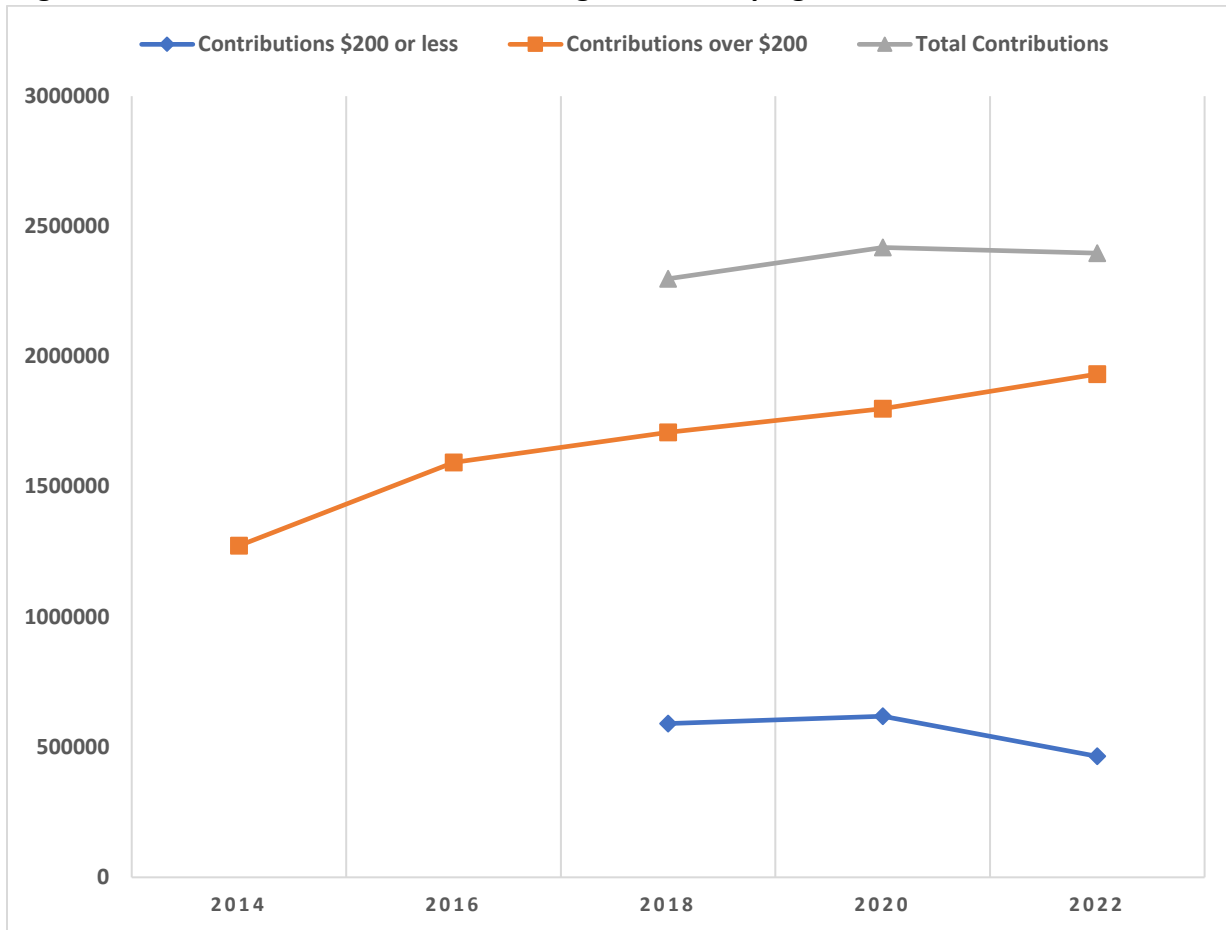
Finally, contributions of \$200 or less grew by 4.8% from 2018 to 2020 but fell by 24.9% in 2022. Thus, candidates for the state house and state senate in 2022 were much less reliant on small contributions to finance their campaigns. This difference in small contributions led to the small decline in total contributions between 2020 and 2022.

One explanation for these results is that 2020 was a presidential election year, which usually marks a high point for general interest in campaigns and elections. In contrast, 2022 was a midterm election, which usually leads to reduced engagement by voters as well as potential contributors. A second explanation is that there were fewer competitive

racers for state house and senate in 2022 and, therefore, less opportunities for potential contributors to shape election results.

Figure 1 illustrates reported contributions to legislative campaign committees over the past five election cycles in terms of total contributions, contributions of \$200 or less, and contributions over \$200.

**Figure 1: Contributions to North Dakota Legislative Campaign Committees, 2014-2022**



(Using 2022 dollars)

Table 3 presents the top twenty contributors to legislative campaign committees in 2022. It should be emphasized that people and organizations who contributed less than \$200 or less cannot be identified. Unlike in previous years, the top contributors were all political action committees.

**Table 3: Top Contributors to North Dakota Legislative Campaign Committees 2022**

	<b>Number of Contributions (greater than \$200)</b>	<b>Total Contributions (greater than \$200)</b>
North Dakota Oil PAC	76	\$89,650
North Dakota Republican House Caucus	43	\$64,750
North Dakota Rural Electric PAC	79	\$61,250
House Republican Leadership Fund	22	\$52,000
Marathon Oil Company Employee PAC (MEPAC)	52	\$47,500
Broadband Association of North Dakota PAC-T	87	\$46,500
ND Association of Realtors PAC	35	\$39,700
United Political Action Committee - ND United	28	\$31,000
Coal PAC	49	\$26,000
Capitol Way PAC	42	\$21,650
ND Long Term Care Association PAC	50	\$21,600
Minnkota Power Action Committee	43	\$20,250
North Dakota Ethanol Producers Association PAC	36	\$19,200
Next Era Energy PAC	21	\$18,300
North Dakota Bankers Association PAC	39	\$17,350
ND Association of Builders PAC	29	\$16,750
ND Chamber PAC	35	\$15,800
Conoco Phillips Spirit PAC	38	\$13,500
Midcontinent Communications NDPAC	43	\$13,250
Independent Community Banks of North Dakota PAC	26	\$10,250

(2022 dollars)

## Expenditures by Legislative Campaign Committees

Table 4 provides an overview of campaign expenditures for all active legislative campaign committees in 2018, 2020, and 2022. Controlling for inflation, legislative candidates spent \$2,368,574 in 2022, a 17.4% increase from 2020 and 30.0% more than 2018. In 2022, Jessica Bell (R) running for state senate in District 33 spent the most at \$98,966 followed by Steven Swiontek (R) for state house in District 10 at \$96,000.

In 2022, legislative campaign committees allocated 67.3% of total expenditures to Advertising, 1.5% to Campaign Loans, 13.0% percent to Campaign Operations, 3.3% percent to Travel, and 14.9% to Miscellaneous Expenditures. This distribution of expenditures is very similar to the spending patterns found in 2018 and 2020.

**Table 4: Expenditures by Active ND Legislative Campaign Committees, 2018, 2020, & 2022**

	<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>Advertising</b>	<b>Campaign Loan</b>	<b>Operations</b>	<b>Travel</b>	<b>Misc.</b>
<b>2022 Spending by active legislative campaign committees (N=212)</b>	\$2,368,574	\$1,593,848 (67.3%)	\$35,735 (1.5%)	\$308,839 (13.0%)	\$77,645 (3.3%)	\$352,506 (14.9%)
<b>2020 Spending by active legislative campaign committees (N=175)</b>	\$2,017,716	\$1,393,363 (69.1%)	\$49,713 (2.5%)	\$250,069 (12.4%)	\$27,100 (1.3%)	\$297,468 (14.7%)
<b>2018 Spending by active legislative campaign committees (N=149)</b>	\$1,818,122	\$1,219,400 (67.1%)	\$39,579 (2.2%)	\$257,630 (14.2%)	\$61,778 (3.4%)	\$239,733 (13.2%)

(Using 2022 dollars)

Unfortunately, state law does not require legislative campaign committees to provide any specifics regarding who received this money and what services were provided.

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> See <https://cf.sos.nd.gov/search/cfsearch.aspx>

<sup>ii</sup> See [https://www.ndsu.edu/centers/publicpolicy/studies\\_and\\_reports/](https://www.ndsu.edu/centers/publicpolicy/studies_and_reports/)