

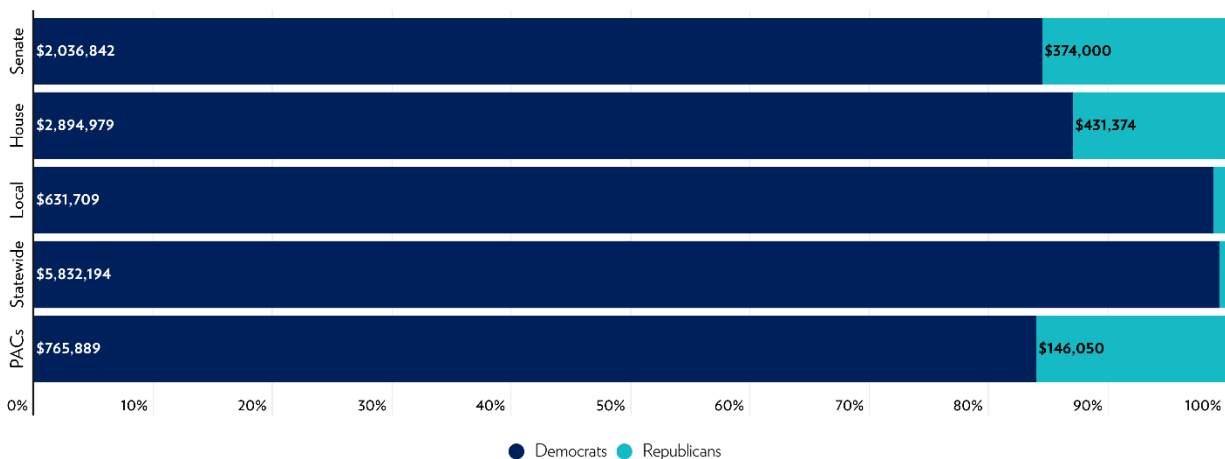
Government Union Political Spending in the 2021–22 Election Cycle

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KEY POINTS

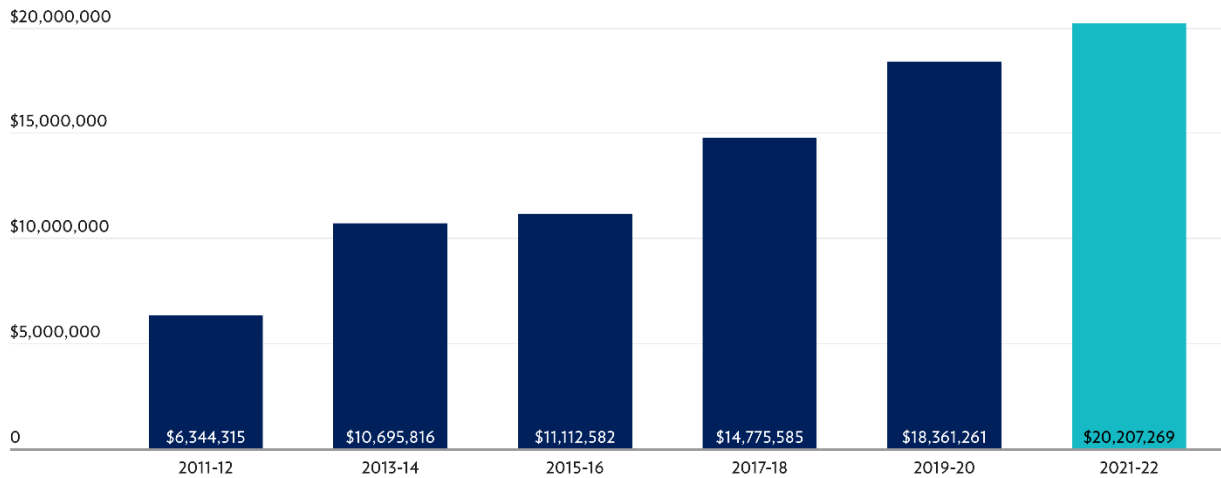
- Government unions are a top interest group in Pennsylvania, spending more than \$190 million on politics since 2007. Government union political action committee (PAC) spending continues to increase, with the 2021–22 cycle setting a new record-high in expenditures.
- In total, government union PACs spent over \$20 million in Pennsylvania, including \$13.1 million directly to candidates and partisan PACs.¹
- In the 2021–22 cycle, 99.6 percent of government union PAC contributions to candidates for statewide office went to Democrats, and 92.3 percent of overall PAC contributions went to Democratic candidates and causes.²
- Government unions’ influence on politics extends beyond campaign finance; unions have sent hundreds of thousands of membership dues—collected using public payroll systems—directly and indirectly to a host of left-leaning nonprofits, PACs, and Super PACs.³
- Government unions contributed a combined \$571,875 across the 16 state House districts that [flipped](#) from Republican to Democrat.⁴

Government Union Donations to Political Candidates by Party



Source: Pennsylvania Department of State, "Campaign Finance Online Reporting."

Government Union PAC Spending by Cycle



Source: Pennsylvania Department of State, "Campaign Finance Online Reporting"

STATEWIDE CANDIDATE CONTRIBUTIONS

Government unions contributed \$5.86 million to candidates seeking statewide office in Pennsylvania, with 99.6 percent of this going to Democratic candidates. Contributions to statewide candidates accounted for 44.6 percent of all government union campaign contributions during the 2021–22 cycle.⁵

- The gubernatorial race accounted for most of these contributions. Pennsylvania's new governor, Josh Shapiro, a Democrat, received more than \$5.5 million from government unions (including contributions to his transition team and inauguration). Shapiro was victorious over Republican opponent Doug Mastriano, who received \$1,000 in contributions from government unions.
 - Lieutenant Governor candidates Austin Davis (\$77,000) and Carrie Lewis Delrosso (\$1,550) also received contributions.
 - During the Republican primary, Jake Corman received \$11,500 and Lou Barletta received \$5,000 from government unions in their bids for the party nomination for governor.

Government Unions in the 2022 Gubernatorial Race



Amount	Union	Candidate
\$1,500,000	SEIU	Shapiro
\$1,260,000	AFSCME	Shapiro
\$1,175,000	PSEA/NEA	Shapiro
\$757,500	AFT	Shapiro
\$797,400	All Other Government Unions	Shapiro
\$500	Pennsylvania State Corrections Officers Association	Mastriano
\$500	Pennsylvania Fraternal Order of Police State Lodge	Mastriano

*Government unions gave an additional \$85,000 to Shapiro's transition team and inaugural committee.

Source: Pennsylvania Department of State, "Campaign Finance Online Filing," Accessed February 3, 2023. <https://www.campaignfinanceonline.pa.gov/Pages/CFReportSearch.aspx>

- The second-highest recipient was Pennsylvania Supreme Court candidate Maria McLaughlin, who received \$156,600 from government unions. McLaughlin lost the election to Republican Kevin Brobson in 2021, who received \$1,000 in campaign contributions from the Fraternal Order of Police State Lodge.
 - Other Democratic statewide judicial candidates received support from government unions, including Lori Dumas (\$25,000), Timika Lane (\$22,500), David Spurgeon (\$15,500) and Amanda Green-Hawkins (\$4,500). Voters elected Dumas to the Commonwealth Court, while Lane and Spurgeon lost their elections. Green-Hawkins did not advance from the Democratic primary for the Commonwealth Court.
 - Republican candidate Drew Crompton received \$2,000 from government unions during his unsuccessful bid to the Commonwealth Court.

LEGISLATIVE AND LOCAL CANDIDATE CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions to local and state legislative candidates made up 48.5 percent of all direct government union contributions during the 2021–22 cycle.⁶ Much like in statewide races, Democrats received most of the contributions. In fact, all top-ten legislative candidates receiving government union money were Democrats.

Top 10 Legislative Recipients of Government Union Money

2021-22

Recipient	Total	Outcome	Party
Lindsey Williams	\$333,013	Win	Democrat
Vincent Hughes*	\$322,000	N/A	Democrat
Joanna McClinton	\$311,000	Win	Democrat
Jay Costa*	\$243,000	N/A	Democrat
Matt Bradford	\$216,500	Win	Democrat
Katie Muth	\$211,000	Win	Democrat
Nick Miller	\$154,100	Win	Democrat
Jordan Harris	\$144,000	Win	Democrat
Marty Flynn	\$125,800	Win	Democrat
Paul Friel	\$116,000	Win	Democrat

*Candidate was not on the ballot in 2021 or 2022

Source: Pennsylvania Department of State, Campaign Finance Database.

- Democrat House candidates received \$2.8 million, compared to \$431,374 given to Republicans.
 - Government unions gave to 131 Democratic House candidates and 81 Republican House candidates. Joanna McClinton (\$311,000), now Speaker McClinton, was the top Democratic recipient, while Tom Mehaffie (\$75,250) was the top Republican recipient.
 - In six Senate races and 14 House races, candidates from both parties received contributions. For example, Democrat Lisa Borowski received \$100,875 from government unions, while her Republican opponent Chris Quinn received \$28,600. Borowski won.
 - Government unions contributed a combined \$571,875 across the 16 state House districts that [flipped](#) from Republican to Democrat.⁷
- Democrat Senate candidates received \$2,036,842 compared to \$374,000 given to Republican candidates.
 - These donations went to 29 Democratic senators and candidates. Thirty Republican senators and candidates received donations. These numbers include senators not on the ballot in 2021 or 2022, such as Democrats Vincent Hughes (\$322,000) and Jay Costa (243,000).
 - In addition to directly supporting legislative candidates, government union PACs gave to party campaign committees. Contributions to Democratic party committees were over 10 times higher than contributions to Republican party committees.

Party Committee Recipients of Government Union PAC Donations, 2021–22

Republican Committees	Amount	Democratic Committees	Amount
House Republican Campaign Committee	\$24,000	House Democratic Campaign Committee	\$158,000
Senate Republican Campaign Committee	\$16,000	Senate Democratic Campaign Committee	\$227,500
Pennsylvania Republican Party	\$0	Pennsylvania Democratic Party	\$25,500
TOTAL	\$40,000	TOTAL	\$411,000

Source:

Pennsylvania Department of State, "Campaign Finance Online Filing," Accessed February 3, 2023.
<https://www.campaignfinanceonline.pa.gov/Pages/CFReportSearch.aspx>

- Democratic candidates for local office received \$631,709 from government unions, compared to \$7,500 given to their Republican counterparts.
 - This money was given to 181 Democratic candidates and four Republican candidates. Most candidates were in Allegheny County, Philadelphia, and the Philadelphia suburbs.
 - Former Philadelphia City Councilmember Helen Gym was the top recipient in local races, taking in \$43,300 from government unions. Controversial Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner (\$36,900) and Pittsburgh Mayor Ed Gainey (\$35,500) were other top recipients.
 - Dauphin County Commissioners Mike Pries and Chad Saylor were the top-earning local Republicans, receiving \$3,000 from government unions in their joint PAC.
 - In 2023, voters will elect a new Mayor in Philadelphia and a new Executive in Allegheny County, meaning that government unions will likely increase expenditures on local elections in the upcoming cycle.

PAC AND ORGANIZATION CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions to other PACs and other organizations accounted for approximately 7 percent of all expenditures by government unions in the 2021–22 election cycle. Trends mostly mirrored other spending trends, with 84 percent of contributions going to left-wing PACs and organizations.⁸ During this election cycle, government unions gave:

- \$250,000 to Pennsylvania United, a progressive grassroots organization based in Western Pennsylvania. The organization's website states that it made over three million calls and over one million texts to Pennsylvanians in support of President Joe Biden's candidacy in 2020. Pennsylvania United is also involved in influencing elections for local officials.
- \$150,000 to Allegheny County Justice for All, which made independent expenditures during the 2021–22 cycle. Allegheny County Justice for All also financially supported One Pennsylvania, a left-wing advocacy organization.
- \$137,889 in donations under \$25,000 to various liberal PACs and organizations.
- \$100,000 to Put Pennsylvania First, which created and ran political advertisements opposing Republican Mastriano's stance on abortion.
- \$87,500 to the Pennsylvania Opportunity and Jobs PAC, which primarily made contributions to Republican candidates.

- \$75,000 to the CASA in Action PAC, which endorsed and supported exclusively Democratic candidates during the 2022 elections.
- \$58,550 in donations under \$25,000 to various conservative PACs and organizations.
- \$27,500 to CBSD Neighbors United, an organization supporting the 5 Democratic candidates for the Central Bucks School District (CBSD) school board election in 2021. This district has received significant media [attention](#) for controversies surrounding its diversity policies.⁹

USING DUES FOR POLITICS

Unions also spend membership dues to influence policy and politics. Although most unions have not yet reported any political expenditures for 2022, Pennsylvania’s government unions have collectively spent nearly \$100 million on politics from membership dues since 2007.¹⁰ As with their PAC contributions, government unions use membership dues predominantly in support of liberal causes and organizations. In total throughout the 2021–22 election cycle, government unions gave:

- As an alternative to giving directly to outside organizations, the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA) set up its political organization in 2018, the “Fund for Student Success.” As a 527 non-profit organization,¹¹ the Fund for Student Success may spend unlimited money supporting or opposing candidates for political office.
 - This new entity allowed the PSEA to divert union dues to political activity, without disclosing the end-user on reports filed with the U.S. Department of Labor. These reports (called LM-2 reports) show that the PSEA gave \$3.27 million to the Fund for Student Success from 2018 to 2022, including \$1.775 million during the 2021–22 election cycle.
 - However, the Fund for Student Success must file Form 8872 financial disclosure forms with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). These filings show that the organization contributed \$1.475 million to the Democratic Governors Association (DGA). The DGA, through its Pennsylvania PAC, was the largest contributor to Shapiro, giving more than \$7.25 million to Shapiro for Governor.
 - IRS filings show that The Fund for Student Success also contributed \$300,000 to Pennsylvania Alliance Action.¹²
- \$125,000 to PA Alliance action, a 501c4 entity created by notorious Philadelphia trial lawyer Sam Pond.
 - This organization gave \$1.4 million to the Pennsylvania Fund for Change (following \$1.45 million in the 2018 cycle and \$4.025m in the 2020 cycle). PA Fund for Change spent \$3.5 million in 2022 on TV ads and mail campaigns, attacking eight Republican candidates for the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. All eight lost in contested races.
- \$111,000 to Keystone Research Center, a progressive state think tank that advocates for higher government spending, more taxes, and more unionization.
- \$60,000 to Pennsylvania Spotlight, a left-wing advocacy organization.
- \$50,800 to Pennsylvania United, a progressive organization which also received significant PAC contributions from government unions.

- \$50,000 to Commonwealth Communications, an organization founded J.J. Abbott, who worked as former Governor Wolf’s press secretary and deputy press secretary from 2015 to 2020. Commonwealth Communications describes itself as the “communication and digital hub of Pennsylvania’s progressive infrastructure.”
- \$25,000 to For Our Future Action, a nonprofit organization seeking to establish a progressive infrastructure in Pennsylvania.
- Pennsylvania government union members also pay dues to national affiliates, which are heavily involved in politics. For more information on how national unions spend dues money, Americans for Fair Treatment’s “Where Do Your National Dues Go?” series.¹³

Pennsylvania Government Union PACs in the 2021–22 Election Cycle

Union	Revenue	Expenditures	Cash on Hand
Pennsylvania State Education Association	\$2,831,256	\$2,869,620	\$365,454
Service Employees International Union, State Council	\$3,069,012	\$2,609,276	\$158,870
AFSCME Council 13	\$1,328,024	\$1,226,051	\$248,084
United Food & Commercial Workers, 1776	\$737,204	\$804,545	\$66,981
Service Employees International Union, Healthcare Pennsylvania	\$798,270	\$721,280	\$97,229
Pennsylvania State Corrections Officers Association	\$776,955	\$623,040	\$1,207,184
Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties	\$376,744	\$395,199	\$286,525
Philadelphia Federation of Teachers	\$725,951	\$368,121	\$1,002,110
American Federation of Teachers, Pennsylvania	\$363,260	\$322,200	\$173,819
AFL-CIO, Pennsylvania	\$323,468	\$302,424	\$164,733
Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers	\$227,144	\$204,532	\$21,410
Fraternal Order of Police, State Lodge	\$177,539	\$166,785	\$10,984
Service Employees International Union, 668	\$57,791	\$44,000	\$13,791
Pennsylvania Professional Fire Fighters Association	\$42,374	\$41,070	\$13,256
SEIU International*	\$61,503,689	\$4,524,544	\$10,118,900
AFSCME PEOPLE*	\$3,209,436	\$3,209,428	\$ -
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO COPE*	\$12,000,394	\$927,654	\$3,229,820
NEA Fund for Children and Public Education*	\$5,005,393	\$400,000	\$1,820,221
UFCW International*	\$13,655,889	\$327,500	\$3,810,558
IAFF	\$5,106,322	\$120,000	\$2,284,053
TOTALS	\$112,316,115	\$20,207,269	\$25,093,982
State	\$11,834,992	\$10,698,143	\$3,830,430
National	\$100,481,123	\$9,509,126	\$21,263,552

*National PAC

Source: Pennsylvania Department of State, “Campaign Finance Online Filing.” Accessed February 3, 2023.

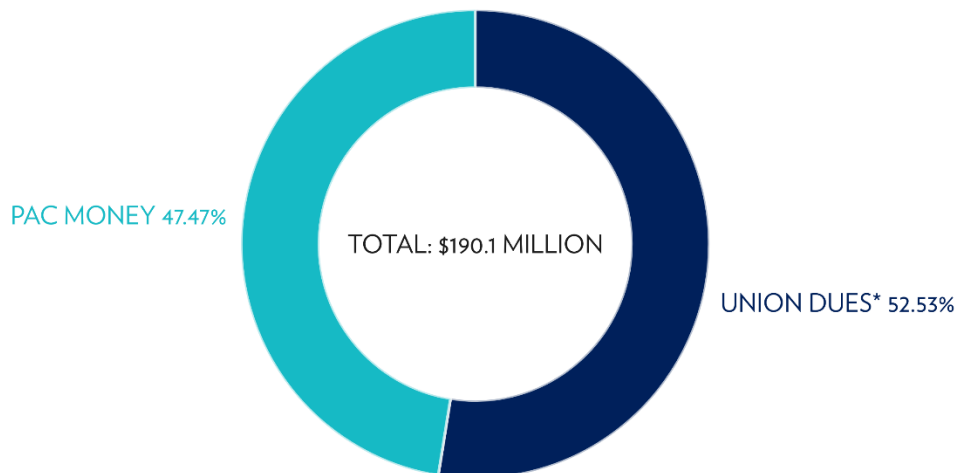
<https://www.campaignfinanceonline.pa.gov/Pages/CFReportSearch.aspx>

CONCLUSION

Government unions continue to be an outsized influential force in Pennsylvania. Government union political spending continues to increase, with the 2021–22 cycle seeing over \$20 million in government union PAC expenditures. Government unions primarily gave to Democrats, with 99.6 percent of government unions’ PAC contributions to candidates for statewide office going to Democrats, and 92.3 percent of overall PAC contributions going to Democratic candidates and causes. Additionally, government unions spend significant amounts of membership dues on political activity, almost exclusively toward liberal causes. Pennsylvania’s government unions have spent over \$190 million on politics using membership dues since 2007.

Government unions' immense political power derives from a host of special privileges engrained in Pennsylvania state law. Government union executives use this power to trap government employees in unions, deny them alternative representation, and lobby against fiscal and educational reforms needed to make Pennsylvania more prosperous. Changing laws surrounding union election rules, union dues deductions, and union resignation would help level the playing field.

Pa. Government Union Political Spending, 2007 to 2022



Sources: The U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Labor-Management Standards, Form LM-2 Reports, Pa. Department of State, Campaign Finance Database.

*Most 2022 dues expenditure data is not available

¹ To the reader, government union PACs reported spending approximately \$7.1 million on consulting, apparel, and transfers to other organizations that were not inherently political or ideological.

² Pennsylvania Department of State, "Campaign Finance Online Reporting," <https://www.campaignfinanceonline.pa.gov/Pages/CFReportSearch.aspx>.

³ U.S. Department of Labor, "Office Of Labor-Management Standards (OLMS) – LM Reports and Constitutions and Bylaws," https://olmsapps.dol.gov/olpdr/?_ga=2.155219453.795852441.1676478675-638021529.1674498453.

⁴ Stephen Caruso and Katie Meyer, "Democrats Win Control of the State House After Picking Up 12 Seats," *Spotlight PA*, November 16, 2022, <https://www.spotlightpa.org/news/2022/11/pa-governor-election-2022-results-house-democrats-flip-republican-control/>

⁵ Pennsylvania Department of State, "Campaign Finance Online Reporting."

⁶ Pennsylvania Department of State, "Campaign Finance Online Reporting."

⁷ Caruso and Meyer, "Democrats Win Control of the State House."

⁸ Pennsylvania Department of State, "Campaign Finance Online Reporting."

⁹ Annie McCormick, "Central Bucks School District Passes Controversial Policy," 6ABC, January 11, 2023, <https://6abc.com/central-bucks-school-board-meeting-vote-aclu-complaint-new-policy/12686739/>.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Labor, "Office Of Labor-Management Standards (OLMS) – LM Reports."

¹¹ To the reader, Section 527 of the Internal Revenue Code grants tax-exempt status to 527 political committees at the national, state, and local level. A 527 is a non-profit organization that files reports with the IRS and not with the Federal Election Commission.

¹² Internal Revenue Service, "Form 8872," <https://www.irs.gov/forms-pubs/about-form-8872>.

¹³ Americans for Fair Treatment, "Where Do Your National Union Dues Go?," <https://americansforfairtreatment.org/where-do-your-national-union-dues-go/>.