



MONEY AND INCUMBENCY

ADVANTAGES IN STATE LEGISLATIVE RACES, 2004

By

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An analysis of all state legislative races held in 2004, 2003, 2002 and 2001 showed that a dramatic percentage of winners were the candidates who raised the most money for their seat or were unopposed in their races. On average, about 85 percent of winners raised the most money in their races. The percentage of winners with the advantage of being an incumbent legislator was high in the 2002 election cycle and increased in the 2004 election cycle. Generally speaking, 70 to 80 percent of legislative winners have an incumbency advantage.

Less than 7 percent of state-level candidates are able to win a state legislative seat without having either a fund-raising advantage or already holding office.

During the 2002 election cycle, which covers elections held in 2001 and 2002, many states had just experienced redistricting. Many legislative races in the 2002 cycle were the first ones to occur in newly drawn legislative districts. The newly drawn lines displaced some incumbents and usually gave a few new legislative seats to the party in control during the redistricting process. Those changes may have accounted for a lower numbers of winners in the 2002 election cycle having an incumbency advantage. Legislative races in the 2004 election cycle, comprised of all elections held in 2003 and 2004, were not affected by redistricting. The number of winners with an incumbency advantage was higher.

Results for House and Assembly Races by Election Cycle

This study looked at all state House and Assembly races in the 2002 and 2004 election cycles and found:

- In the 2002 cycle, 86.1 percent of winners raised the most money or were unchallenged in their races; in 2004, it was 87 percent.
- In 2002, 69.6 percent of winners had the advantage of incumbency; that grew to 78.2 percent of winners in the 2004 cycle.
- In 2002, 92 percent of the winners enjoyed either a money or incumbency advantage, or both. In the 2004 cycle, that increased to 94 percent.

Results for Senate Races by Election Cycle

The study also looked at the 44 states that had state Senate races in the 2002 election cycle and the 46 states that held Senate races in the 2004 election cycle.

- In the 2002 cycle, 84.5 percent of Senate winners raised the most money or were unopposed in their races; in 2004, that increased to 86.7 percent.
- In 2002, 75.4 percent of Senate winners had the advantage of incumbency; that grew to 78.7 percent of winners in the 2004 cycle.
- In 2002, 92.9 percent of Senate winners enjoyed one or both of these advantages. In 2004, that increased to 94.6 percent.

MONEY AND INCUMBENCY ADVANTAGES IN HOUSE OR ASSEMBLY RACES, 2002-2004

STATE	MOST MONEY		INCUMBENCY		ONE/BOTH	
	2002	2004	2002	2004	2002	2004
Alabama	94.3%	*	70.5%	*	94.3%	*
Alaska	90%	87.5%	62.5%	77.5%	95%	95%
Arizona	65%	75%	41.7%	65%	81.7%	88.3%
Arkansas	90%	92%	60%	62%	92%	92%
California	92.5%	96.3%	60%	71.3%	92.5%	96.3%
Colorado	84.6%	83.1%	67.7%	66.2%	90.8%	89.2%
Connecticut	89.4%	91.4%	76.8%	87.4%	94.7%	95.4%
Delaware	90.2%	85.4%	85.4%	87.8%	92.7%	90.2%
Florida	94.2%	99.2%	70.8%	83.3%	95%	99.2%
Georgia	86.7%	90%	69.4%	75.6%	89.4%	92.8%
Idaho	80%	81.4%	61.4%	78.6%	90%	91.4%
Illinois	96.6%	96.6%	70.3%	94.1%	97.5%	98.3%
Indiana	91%	92%	82%	88%	93%	95%
Iowa	84%	89%	62%	88%	87%	98%
Kansas	95.2%	92.8%	76%	78.4%	96%	95.2%
Kentucky	86%	88%	88%	88%	93%	97%
Louisiana	*	85.7%	*	82.9%	*	90.5%
Maine	66.2%	55%	53.6%	58.9%	83.4%	84.1%
Maryland	70.2%	*	51.1%	*	78.7%	*
Massachusetts	92.5%	91.3%	86.3%	90%	97.5%	96.9%
Michigan	86.4%	88.2%	52.7%	63.6%	88.2%	90.9%
Minnesota	82.8%	85.8%	67.2%	80.6%	88.1%	94%
Mississippi	*	84.4%	*	77%	*	91%
Missouri	87.1%	88.3%	42.3%	76.7%	87.7%	91.4%
Montana	74%	81%	67%	62%	89%	96%
Nevada	90.5%	95.2%	61.9%	71.4%	92.9%	97.6%
New Jersey	90%	86.3%	71.3%	85%	98.8%	92.5%
New Mexico	92.9%	92.9%	80%	80%	95.7%	97.1%
New York	92%	92%	84.7%	88.7%	98%	96.7%
North Carolina	80.8%	88.3%	70.8%	79.2%	88.3%	95%
North Dakota	65.3%	73.5%	63.3%	75.5%	81.6%	98%
Ohio	92.9%	93.9%	58.6%	82.8%	96%	96%
Oklahoma	90.1%	88.1%	81.2%	61.4%	97%	91.1%
Oregon	91.7%	90%	68.3%	60%	93.3%	93.3%
Pennsylvania	91.1%	94.1%	89.2%	94.1%	97%	99%
Rhode Island	85.3%	86.7%	76%	82.7%	90.7%	96%
South Carolina	96%	94.4%	82.3%	90.3%	98.4%	97.6%
South Dakota	78.6%	81.4%	64.3%	65.7%	90%	91.4%
Tennessee	88.9%	92.9%	76.8%	86.9%	89.9%	94.9%
Texas	92%	92%	76%	87.3%	96%	94.7%
Utah	89.3%	85.3%	76%	78.7%	97.3%	92%
Vermont	64%	64%	73.3%	77.3%	90%	94.7%
Virginia	89%	94%	74%	88%	93%	98%
Washington	91.8%	90.8%	78.6%	77.6%	93.9%	96.9%
West Virginia	77%	79%	75%	82%	90%	91%
Wisconsin	83.8%	89.9%	84.8%	80.8%	92.9%	94.9%
Wyoming	81.7%	76.7%	63.3%	55%	86.7%	81.7%
NATIONAL	86.1%	87%	69.6%	78.2%	92%	94%

*No elections held in this election cycle. Hawaii is not included in this list because the Institute was unable to obtain complete data for all candidates.

MONEY AND INCUMBENCY ADVANTAGES IN SENATE RACES, 2002-2004

STATE	MOST MONEY		INCUMBENCY		ONE/BOTH	
	2002	2004	2002	2004	2002	2004
Alabama	88.6%	*	82.9%	*	88.6%	*
Alaska	88.2%	72.7%	76.5%	100%	94.1%	100%
Arizona	66.7%	63.3%	80%	83.3%	90%	90%
Arkansas	82.9%	83.3%	77.1%	100%	91.4%	100%
California	90%	90%	65%	80%	90%	100%
Colorado	88.2%	100%	70.6%	83.3%	94.1%	100%
Connecticut	97.2%	86.1%	91.7%	91.7%	100%	100%
Delaware	90.5%	100%	90.5%	100%	100%	100%
Florida	90%	100%	57.5%	100%	90%	100%
Georgia	91.1%	91.1%	80.4%	66.1%	94.6%	91.1%
Idaho	77.1%	82.9%	51.4%	80%	88.6%	91.4%
Illinois	93.2%	91.3%	83.1%	91.3%	94.9%	95.7%
Indiana	96%	92%	92%	84%	100%	92%
Iowa	85.7%	88%	57.1%	68%	91.4%	96%
Kansas	*	87.5%	*	65%	*	92.5%
Kentucky	84.2%	78.9%	94.7%	63.2%	100%	89.5%
Louisiana	*	87.2%	*	79.5%	*	94.9%
Maine	60%	65.7%	71.4%	71.4%	88.6%	91.4%
Maryland	78.7%	*	80.9%	*	89.4%	*
Massachusetts	100%	87.5%	100%	95%	100%	100%
Michigan	78.9%	*	78.9%	*	92.1%	*
Minnesota	91%	*	70.1%	*	92.5%	*
Mississippi	*	86.5%	*	71.2%	*	92.3%
Missouri	76.5%	88.2%	52.9%	29.4%	82.4%	88.2%
Montana	72%	92%	24%	44%	72%	96%
Nebraska	85.7%	84%	75%	68%	85.7%	88%
Nevada	100%	80%	90.9%	60%	100%	90%
New Hampshire	83.3%	75%	62.5%	70.8%	91.7%	91.7%
New Jersey	90%	92.5%	77.5%	90%	95%	97.5%
New Mexico	*	88.1%	*	78.6%	*	90.5%
New York	91.9%	95.2%	85.5%	95.2%	96.8%	96.8%
North Carolina	92%	86%	68%	70%	96%	92%
North Dakota	61.5%	82.6%	73.1%	91.3%	92.3%	100%
Ohio	82.4%	93.8%	82.4%	87.5%	100%	100%
Oklahoma	87.5%	92%	70.8%	44%	87.5%	92%
Oregon	73.3%	94.1%	93.3%	70.6%	100%	100%
Pennsylvania	96.3%	100%	81.5%	92%	100%	100%
Rhode Island	84.2%	94.7%	84.2%	84.2%	97.4%	100%
South Carolina	*	89.1%	*	89.1%	*	93.5%
South Dakota	80%	82.9%	60%	82.9%	94.3%	94.3%
Tennessee	76.5%	87.5%	64.7%	75%	82.4%	87.5%
Texas	96.8%	100%	80.6%	100%	96.8%	100%
Utah	81.3%	86.7%	68.8%	73.3%	81.3%	86.7%
Vermont	53.3%	60%	73.3%	83.3%	90%	93.3%
Virginia	*	95%	*	90%	*	100%
Washington	87.5%	96.4%	91.7%	92.9%	95.8%	100%
West Virginia	70.6%	94.1%	76.5%	88.2%	82.4%	94.1%
Wisconsin	100%	75%	82.4%	68.8%	100%	87.5%
Wyoming	86.7%	87.5%	86.7%	43.8%	100%	87.5%
NATIONAL	84.5%	86.7%	75.4%	78.7%	92.9%	94.6%

*No elections held in this election cycle. Hawaii is not included in this list because the Institute was unable to obtain complete data for all candidates.

CLEAN ELECTIONS STATES STAND OUT

Arizona and Maine, with their systems of public funding for state-level candidates, both stand out in the previous tables as states with lower percentages of high-dollar winners compared to other states. This is most noticeable in the House and Assembly tables when the final column, one or both advantages, is ranked from lowest to highest.

In the 2002 state House and Assembly races, Maryland had the lowest percentage of winners with one or both advantages at 78.7 percent, followed by North Dakota at 81.6 percent. Third and fourth lowest were the Clean Elections states. In Arizona, 81.7 percent of winners had at least one advantage, and in Maine, 83.4 percent of winners had an advantage. The next state with a comparatively low percentage was Wyoming with 86.7 percent.

In the 2004 House and Assembly races, Wyoming had the lowest money or incumbency advantage with 81.7 percent. Maine was second lowest, with 84.1 percent of winners having one or both advantages, and Arizona was third at 88.3 percent.

In the 2002 Senate races, Utah had the lowest money or incumbency advantage with 81.3 percent of winners having an advantage of some kind. In the 2004 cycle, Tennessee, Wisconsin and Wyoming all had the lowest percentage of winners with one or both of these advantages, at 87.5 percent.

However when Senate elections are ranked based only on the advantage of money, Arizona and Maine were near the bottom in each cycle. In the 2002 Senate races, Vermont had the lowest percentage of winners who raised the most in their race, 53.3 percent, followed by Maine with 60 percent, North Dakota with 61.5 percent, and Arizona at 66.7 percent.

In the 2004 Senate races, Vermont had the lowest percentage of winners raising the most money, at 60 percent, followed by Arizona at 63.3 percent and Maine at 65.7 percent.

Drawing concrete conclusions from statistics can be difficult, but in general, public funding has made it possible for more candidates in Arizona and Maine to win a seat without raising the most money in a race. But in the Senate, at least, incumbency is still an important advantage.

AGAINST ALL ODDS

So in which states are the odds of winning a legislative seat the lowest for non-incumbents who don't raise the most money? Ranking these states from highest to lowest based on the percentage of winners having either a money or incumbency advantage shows New Jersey winners had one or both advantages 98.8 percent of the time in 2002 House or Assembly races, followed by South Carolina at 98.4 percent and New York at 98 percent.

In the 2004 House and Assembly races, Florida winners had an advantage in 99.2 percent of their races, followed by Pennsylvania with 99 percent and Illinois with 98.3 percent.

In Senate races, 100 percent of the winners had one or both of the advantages in 11 states in 2002 and 16 states in 2004. Often a legislative winner raised the most money in a race and was also the incumbent for that seat. Frequently these candidates were unopposed, as well.