

POLITICS

Cashing In: Early Election-Season Filings Show Campaign Cash Trickling In

Recently released campaign finance data shows more than \$1.8 million has flowed into local candidates' campaign coffers since the 2014 elections.

AUGUST 6, 2015 • By Nick Grube   

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We might be in the political offseason when it comes to local elections, but that doesn't mean politicians aren't stockpiling cash for an impending showdown in 2016.

The [Hawaii Campaign Spending Commission](#) released political donation data Monday showing that candidates for state and local offices raised more than \$1.8 million in individually identifiable contributions between the Nov. 4, 2014 general election and June 30, 2015.

Individually identifiable contributions are those that add up to more than \$100 from a single source, and typically make up the lion's share of all donations to candidates.



own off his fundraising prowess ever since winning the 2012 election.

Honolulu Mayor [Kirk Caldwell](#), who's up for re-election in 2016, was the clear frontrunner among all those vying for office, pulling down nearly \$500,000 in eight months, according to Campaign Spending Commission data.

That's more than four times as much as his presumptive challenger, Honolulu City Council Chairman [Ernie Martin](#), who raised over \$116,000 in the same span, making him one of the top fundraisers in the state.

(For more on that potential race — and the money involved — check out Civil Beat reporter Chad Blair's [column from Monday](#).)

There's a large drop-off from there as most campaigns have yet to get off the ground.

The 2016 election is still more than a year away, and many people considering a run at an incumbent have yet to announce their intentions.

Here's what we know now:

Governor

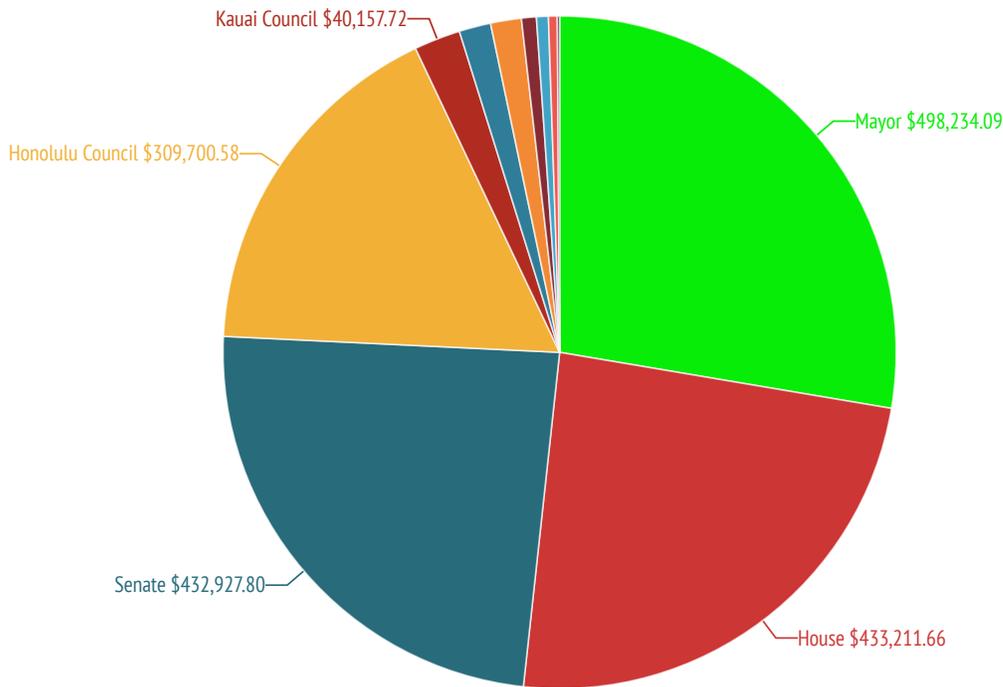
Hawaii Gov. David Ige hasn't been padding his bank account. In fact, he's only raised about \$22,000 since upsetting former Gov. Neil Abercrombie in a [historic landslide](#) and cruising through the general election. What made Ige's 2014 victory over Abercrombie all the more impressive was how [little money he had](#) at the time.

Ige, however, isn't much of an outlier when compared to Abercrombie in his first eight months after taking the Hawaii helm. Between Nov. 9, 2010, when Abercrombie was elected and June 30, 2011, he raised nearly \$22,000, which is identical to what Ige brought in during his first eight months in office.

Caldwell, on the other hand, who arguably holds the second-most politically powerful office in the state, didn't waste much time after being elected to start planning his 2016 run. The mayor's campaign finance filings show that after he beat former Hawaii Gov. Ben Cayetano in November 2012 he immediately began filling his coffers with political cash.

Caldwell reported receiving nearly \$620,000 in donations over \$100 in the eight months immediately following his victory. That's almost 30 times what Ige reported during a comparable time frame.

Contributions by Office



Contributions of more than \$100 (Source: Hawaii Campaign Spending Commission)

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State Senate

Thirteen of 25 state Senate seats are on the ballot in 2016, but currently available campaign spending data doesn't clearly show a real push by incumbents to get ahead of the competition.

Combined, senators raised about \$433,000 since the 2014 general election, with Sen. Josh Green leading the pack with \$67,500 in donations of more than \$100. That's not surprising considering Green has been one of the more prolific fundraisers in the Senate over the past several years.

Up until recently, the Big Island

PF Bentley/Civil Beat

doctor was the head of the influential Senate Health Committee, which took up several key bills during the 2015 legislative session, including one to create medical marijuana dispensaries and another to allow the privatization of Maui hospitals. He typically receives a number of big donations from medical professionals.



State Sen. Josh Green has been one of the top fundraisers in Hawaii. But with a Senate shake-up he might no longer have the clout to pull in the dough.

But the Senate's recent reorganization — in which former Senate President Donna Mercado Kim was supplanted by Ron Kouchi — could shake up the donation spectrum. For instance, Green is no longer a committee chair, which could mean those who have tried to influence him with campaign cash could decide to spend their money elsewhere.

Kouchi also stands to gain along with others who have taken on more prominent roles in the Senate as a result of the reorganization.

Candidate	Contributions	Seat up for Election?
Josh Green	\$67,500.00	No
Michelle Kidani	\$58,219.62	No
Donna Mercado Kim	\$44,295.00	Yes
Gil Keith-Agaran	\$31,074.74	Yes
Donovan Dela Cruz	\$28,778.11	Yes
Ron Kouchi	\$27,479.99	Yes
Rosalyn Baker	\$25,322.33	No
Glenn Wakai	\$23,276.01	Yes
Jill Tokuda	\$18,675.00	No

Gilbert Kahele	\$15,200.00	No
Brickwood Galuteria	\$12,001.01	No
Lorraine Inouye	\$11,200.00	No
Will Espero	\$10,100.00	Yes
Maile Shimabukuro	\$8,595.00	No

Hawaii House

Hawaii representatives — all 51 of whom are up for election in 2016 — raised more than \$433,000 in individually identifiable contributions of more than \$100 since the November 2014 general election.

Rep. Sylvia Luke has pulled down the most money so far, reporting \$76,000 in political donations in the current election cycle. Some of her biggest donors come from Hawaii's construction industry.

Campaign records show she received \$10,000 from employees of Mitsunaga & Associates and another \$6,000 from representatives of RM Towill Corporation. Both companies are major political donors in Hawaii and often receive lucrative contracts for government work.

Other top earners in the House include Speaker Joe Souki and his predecessor, Rep. Calvin Say, who was overthrown in 2013 after 15 years in the position.

Candidate	Contributions
Sylvia Luke	\$73,300.00
Joe Souki	\$42,353.00
Calvin Say	\$30,950.00
Isaac Choy	\$14,600.00
Ty Cullen	\$13,300.00
Scott Saiki	\$12,950.00

Bob McDermott	\$11,321.97
Karl Rhoads	\$10,990.00
Angus McKelvey	\$9,992.34
Henry Aquino	\$9,900.00
Ryan Yamane	\$8,950.00
Derek Kawakami	\$8,450.00
John Mizuno	\$7,800.00
Mark Nakashima	\$7,800.00
Chris Lee	\$7,600.00

Honolulu City Council

Martin's decision on the mayor's race is one of the biggest questions facing the Honolulu City Council this election season.

The council chairman has raised more money than any of his colleagues in the eight months after the November election, and has just over \$428,000 socked away even though his current seat isn't up for election until 2018.



Honolulu City Councilman Trevor Ozawa was only elected to office in 2014, but he's been pulling in significant

City Councilman Trevor Ozawa, who similarly doesn't have to run for re-election for three more years, has also raked in a significant amount of cash compared to his peers. Ozawa reported \$75,250 in campaign contributions of more than \$100 from Nov. 5, 2014, to June 30, 2015, which is less than only Caldwell and Martin statewide.

Many of Ozawa's top donors are

campaign donations from those in the business sector.

individuals tied to real estate developers, such as the

McNaughton Group, as well construction and engineering consulting firms, including MCE International and Mitsunaga & Associates.

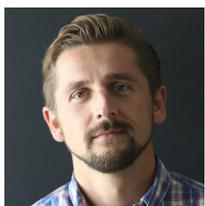
Council members whose seats are on the ballot in 2016 include Kymberly Pine, Ikaika Anderson, Ann Kobayashi, Joey Manahan and Ron Menor.

Pine's campaign spending reports had not been posted as of Tuesday. Campaign Spending Commission data reflected that Menor did not receive any contributions of more than \$100 in the current election cycle.

Candidate	Contributions	Seat Up For Election?
Ernie Martin	\$116,925.00	No
Trevor Ozawa	\$75,250.00	No
Joey Manahan	\$34,812.52	Yes
Ikaika Anderson	\$33,950.00	Yes
Carol Fukunaga	\$21,155.00	No
Ann Kobayashi	\$1,500.00	Yes
Brandon Elefante	\$1,000.00	No

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