

Politics

Gov. Ige's Campaign Cash As Low As His Poll Numbers

The incumbent, who has held just three fundraisers, has raised far less than most sitting governors at this point.

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By Chad Blair    / About 16 hours ago

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With the primary election just one year away, Hawaii Gov. David Ige has just \$250,000 in his re-election war chest.

For an incumbent with [low poll numbers](#) and lots of talk around the state of [potential challengers](#), Ige's fundraising haul is paltry in comparison to most sitting governors.

Four years ago at this time, for instance, Gov. Neil Abercrombie had \$2.1 million in cash on hand. By the end of July 2013, he had raised a total of \$2.3 million toward his 2014 re-election bid and spent more than half of it.

Ige's overall numbers, according to his most recent filing with the state [Campaign Spending Commission](#), are not even close to Abercrombie's in terms of receipts and expenditures.



Cory Lum/Civil Beat

David Ige, center, with Shan Tsutsui, left, and U.S. Sen. Mazie Hirono, right, on election night in November 2014.

The former governor's fundraising chops ended up not helping him, however.

Abercrombie lost to Ige in the 2014 Democratic primary in a historic landslide, even though he outspent his challenger by [a 10 to 1 ratio](#), or \$5 million to \$500,000.

For the 2014 general election campaign, money from the usual suspects — labor, business, unions and lawyers — flowed Ige's way.

He prevailed in a four-candidate field and out-raised his nearest opponent, Republican Duke Aiona, \$2.4 million to \$1.5 million.

Ige also appears not to have devoted much time to fundraising in the current election cycle. Records show that he has held just three fundraisers, the last one in January.

Abercrombie held 11 fundraisers over a comparable time, including three in the days before the June 30, 2013, filing period concluded.

It's not clear if Ige plans to pick up his fundraising pace, as he did before the 2014 election, when he held several dozen fundraisers in less than three months.

An inquiry to Ige's interim campaign manager, Leighton Kim, was not answered Wednesday.

A Generous Staff

Ige's shallow coffers may suggest vulnerability.

It's possible that many big donors are waiting to see if another candidate, such as U.S. Rep. Colleen Hanabusa or Kauai Mayor Bernard Carvalho Jr., emerges to challenge the governor.

Already, several candidates have declared a run for lieutenant governor. Lt. Gov. Shan Tsutsui has expressed interest in running for Maui mayor, but has not formally announced.

For his part, Ige has long said he would seek a second term, and that he expects a primary challenge.

He has already crafted a re-election platform, one reflected in a "Capitol Connection" email from his campaign last week showing the governor demonstrating his support for education, seniors and housing.

Ige's campaign spending reports show him receiving donations from a variety of sources, many of them individuals who have given to many candidates over the year:

Victor Kimura (Kyo-ya Management), attorney Mitchell Imanaka, Queens Health System executive Arthur Ushijima, environmentalist Jeff Mikulina, developer Jeff

Stone, general contractor Ralph S. Inouye, consultants Jennifer Sabas and Charles Toguchi, city managing director Roy Amemiya, utility executive Alan Oshima, retired utility executive Robbie Alm, Oceanit founder Patrick Sullivan and lobbyists Robert Toyofuku, Bruce Coppa, John Radcliffe, Red Morris and Blake Oshiro.

The governor has also received money from the Hawaii State Teachers Association (\$2,900), the United Public Workers (\$4,000), the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (\$6,000) and the United Association of Plumbers and Fitters (\$4,000).

Ige is also getting financial support from dozens of people who work for him, which is not uncommon for chief executives. Though Ige's staff seems especially giving, donating about \$40,000 so far.

Donors include Chief of Staff Mike McCartney, Attorney General Doug Chin, Communications Director Cindy McMillan and 27 department directors and deputy directors.

The governor's campaign spent \$158,000 during the January to June reporting period. Tens of thousands of dollars went to Honolulu-based Pono Media for consulting and digital services, and to Crossroads Consulting of Washington, D.C., for help with the web and email.

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