

# *Massachusetts Office of Campaign and Political Finance*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Sept. 28, 2017

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## Ballot question committees break spending records in 2016

Ballot question committees spent \$57.5 million on four propositions in 2016, shattering the previous record of \$30.2 million set in 2014, according to an OCPF review of ballot question fundraising and spending.

The spending record was driven by Question 2, An Act to Allow Fair Access to Charter Schools. The five proponents and one opponent reported \$41.2 million in expenditures, breaking the previous record for one question – \$15.5 million, set in 2014, to expand prohibitions on gaming.

In addition to the six committees originally formed for Question 2, another ballot question committee was organized in September of 2017 as part of a legal disposition agreement with OCPF. The committee, Families for Excellent Schools Advocacy, received contributions and then donated those funds to another ballot question committee, Great School Massachusetts. For the purposes of this study, OCPF did not add the Families for Excellent Schools Advocacy activity to the fundraising and spending totals because those contribution totals were previously reported by the Great School Massachusetts Committee in 2016.

OCPF's ballot question election review covered fundraising and spending in 2015-16 for four questions that appeared on the 2016 statewide ballot:

**Question 1:** An Act Relative to Expanded Gaming (failed)

**Question 2:** An Act to Allow Fair Access to Public Charter Schools (failed)

**Question 3:** An Act to Prevent Cruelty to Farm Animals (passed)

**Question 4:** The Regulation and Taxation of Marijuana Act (passed)

Most of the spending for the charter school question, **Question 2**, was reported by the Great Schools Massachusetts Ballot Question Committee. The committee reported \$21.6 million in expenditures and \$21.7 million in receipts. A majority of the committee's funds, \$16.5 million, came from New York-based Families for Excellent Schools Advocacy and a closely related entity, Families for Excellent Schools.

The second highest spending total for a single proposition in 2016 was **Question 4**, to regulate and tax marijuana. Four ballot question committees reported \$9.5 million in spending. The proponent committee, YES on 4, reported \$6.4 million in spending in its successful effort to pass the question. A majority of YES on 4's funding came from the Washington-based New Approach PAC, which contributed \$5.4 million.

The proponents of **Question 1** to expand gaming spent \$3.7 million compared to \$73,250 spent by the proposition's opponents. The question failed.

Total spending for **Question 3** regarding farm animals was \$3 million, with the proponents reporting \$2.7 million of that total. The question passed.

The figures in this study are based on reports filed by committees covering the period through Dec. 31, 2016, and are subject to change due to any subsequent corrections, deletions or additions made as a result of any review conducted by OCPF or amendments filed by committees.

In addition to the fundraising and spending reported by ballot question committees, businesses and other entities reported a total of \$111,491 in spending that was independent of any ballot question committee.

Reports filed by each of the committees may be found on OCPF's website at [www.ocpf.us](http://www.ocpf.us).

*A breakdown of activity for each question follows.*

# Campaign Finance Activity for the 2016 Statewide Ballot Questions

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Totals include receipts and expenditures by each ballot question committee organized with OCPF for 2015 and 2016. In most instances, the committee organized during 2016.

## Question 1: An Act Relative to Expanded Gaming (Failed)

Committee	Receipts	Expenditures	In-Kind Contributions	Liabilities
	<i>Support</i>			
Horse Racing Jobs and Education Committee	\$3,667,799	\$3,663,760	\$107,872	--
<b><i>Totals in favor</i></b>	<b>\$3,667,799</b>	<b>\$3,663,760</b>	<b>\$107,872</b>	--
	<i>Oppose</i>			
No to MORE Casinos	\$68,000	\$68,000	--	--
Committee for Sustainable and Responsible Economic Development	\$5,200	\$5,250	\$50	--
<b><i>Totals in opposition</i></b>	<b>\$73,200</b>	<b>\$73,250</b>	<b>\$50</b>	--
<b><i>Question 2 Totals</i></b>	<b>\$3,740,999</b>	<b>\$3,737,010</b>	<b>\$107,922</b>	--

### Vote Count

Yes: 1,240,877

No: 1,919,893

## Question 2: An Act to Allow Fair Access to Public Charter Schools (Failed)

Committee	Receipts	Expenditures	In-Kind Contributions	Liabilities
	<i>Support</i>			
Yes on Two	\$710,100	\$710,100*	--	--
Campaign for Fair Access to Quality Public Schools	\$2,418,576	\$2,394,667**	\$1,900	\$15,000
Great Schools Massachusetts	\$21,691,324	\$21,586,407***	\$914,200	--
Advancing Obama's Legacy on Charter Schools Ballot Committee	\$722,040	\$722,040	--	--
Expanding Educational Opportunities	\$575,002	\$575,002****	--	--
<b>Totals in favor</b>	<b>\$26,117,045</b>	<b>\$26,012,127</b>	<b>\$916,100</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>
	<i>Oppose</i>			
Save Our Public Schools	\$15,407,239	\$15,188,667	\$1,820,950	--
<b>Totals in opposition</b>	<b>\$15,407,239</b>	<b>\$15,188,667</b>	<b>\$1,820,950</b>	<b>--</b>
<b>Question 2 Totals</b>	<b>\$41,524,284</b>	<b>\$41,200,797</b>	<b>\$2,737,050</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>

### Vote Count

**Yes: 1,243,665**

**No: 2,025,840**

\*\$703,770 of this total was transferred to another ballot question committee.

\*\*\$567,000 of this total was transferred to another ballot question committee.

\*\*\*\$100,000 of this total was transferred to another ballot question committee.

\*\*\*\*\$574,835 of this total was transferred to another ballot question committee.

**Note:** The Families for Excellent Schools Advocacy Ballot Question Committee was organized in September, 2017, as part of a legal [disposition agreement](#) with OCPF. The committee received contributions and then donated the vast majority those funds to another committee, Great School Massachusetts. For the purposes of this study, the Families for Excellent Schools Advocacy activity was not added to the fundraising and spending totals because those contribution totals were previously reported by the Great School Massachusetts Committee in 2016.

### Question 3: An Act to Prevent Cruelty to Farm Animals (Passed)

Committee	Receipts	Expenditures	In-Kind Contributions	Liabilities
	<i>Support</i>			
Citizens for Farm Animal Protection	\$2,755,513	\$2,742,874	\$697,506	--
<i>Total expenditures in favor</i>	<b>\$2,755,513</b>	<b>\$2,742,874</b>	<b>\$697,506</b>	--
	<i>Oppose</i>			
Citizens Against Food Tax Injustice	\$302,600	\$287,867	\$28,137	--
<i>Total expenditures in opposition</i>	<b>\$302,600</b>	<b>\$287,867</b>	<b>\$28,137</b>	--
<i>Question 3 Total</i>	<b>\$3,058,113</b>	<b>\$3,030,741</b>	<b>\$725,643</b>	--

Vote Count

Yes: 2,530,143

No: 728,654

## Question 4: The Regulation and Taxation of Marijuana Act (passed)

Committee	Receipts	Expenditures	In-Kind Contributions	Liabilities
	<i>Support</i>			
YES on 4	\$6,431,549	\$6,447,495	\$365,921	--
<i>Total expenditures in favor</i>	<b>\$6,431,549</b>	<b>\$6,447,495</b>	<b>\$365,921</b>	
	<i>Oppose</i>			
Safe Cannabis Massachusetts	\$300	\$298	--	--
Smart Approaches to Marijuana Action	\$25,000	\$25,000	--	--
The Campaign for a Safe and Healthy Massachusetts	\$3,051,498	\$3,036,434	\$1,004	--
<i>Total expenditures in Opposition</i>	<b>\$3,076,798</b>	<b>\$3,061,732</b>	<b>\$1,004</b>	--
<i>Question 3 Total</i>	<b>\$9,508,347</b>	<b>\$9,509,227</b>	<b>\$366,925</b>	--

### Vote Count

Yes: 1,769,328

No: 1,528,219

# Statewide Ballot Question Expenditures

## 1988 – 2016

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Questions</i>	<i>Number of Committees</i>	<i>Total spent</i>
1988	4	18	\$13,317,952
1990	6	20	\$ 5,661,062
1992	4	8	\$16,139,661
1994	9	23	\$11,155,835
1996	1	3	\$1,210,777
1998	3	9	\$9,999,283
2000	8	16	\$15,340,199
2002	3	6	\$2,332,880
2006	3	6	\$15,320,327
2008	3	7	\$11,516,215
2010	3	9	\$9,098,307
2012	3	13	\$9,554,909
2014	4	13	\$30,193,266
2016	4	15	\$57,477,775

Note: There were no questions on the statewide ballot in 2004.

**## End ##**