

Massachusetts Office of Campaign and Political Finance

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Ballot question committees report \$42.6 million in expenditures, the second highest total ever

Seven ballot question committees spent \$42.6 million on three propositions in 2018, the second highest total ever recorded, according to an OCPF review of ballot question fundraising and spending.

Question 1, concerning patient-to-nurse limits, accounted for 86 percent of all statewide ballot question spending in 2018. The question failed.

The Coalition to Protect Patient Safety ballot question committee, which opposed Question 1, broke the spending record for a single committee, reporting \$24,733,966 in expenditures. The previous record of \$21.6 million was set in 2016 by the Great Schools Massachusetts Committee concerning charter schools.

OCPF's review of ballot question activity covered fundraising and spending in 2017-18 for three questions that appeared on the 2018 statewide ballot:

Question 1: Patient-to-nurse limits (failed)

Question 2: Commission on limiting election spending and corporate rights (passed)

Question 3: Repeal of transgender bill (passed, meaning the current law remains)

The two committees organized for **Question 1** – one in support and one in opposition – reported a total of \$36.9 million in receipts and \$36.8 million in expenditures, in addition to \$2.5 million in in-kind contributions (such as donated staff time).

The Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA) was the primary donor to the Committee to Ensure Safe Patient Care Committee, which supported the question. The MNA contributed \$10,498,403, or 87 percent of the committee's total receipts in support of the question.

The committee in opposition to the question, the Coalition to Protect Patient Safety, received 99 percent of its funding from the Massachusetts Health and Hospital Association – \$24,573,500.

The question failed, 1,858,483 to 787,511. The average spent per vote in opposition was \$15.29, and \$13.31 for every vote in favor.

Question 2 had the least amount of financial activity in 2018.

Two committees were formed, one in support and one in opposition, but only the question's supporters spent money.

The People Govern, Not Money Committee reported \$214,189 in receipts and \$213,932 in expenditures. The opposition group, the No on Two for Freedom of Speech Committee, reported no receipts or expenditures.

The question, which created a citizen's commission concerning campaign finance issues, passed 1,871,989 to 751,447.

Question 3 was a referendum on an existing law concerning gender identity. A "yes" vote maintained the current law.

The committee supporting no change, the Freedom for All Massachusetts Committee, raised \$5.2 million and spent the same amount.

The committee supporting repeal of the law, the Keep Massachusetts Safe Committee, raised \$464,664 and spent \$462,389.

The question passed, 1,806,742 to 857,401.

The figures in this study are based on reports filed by committees covering activity through Dec. 31, 2018, 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 \$115,499 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.

A breakdown of activity for each question follows.

Campaign Finance Activity for the 2018 Statewide Ballot Questions

Totals include receipts and expenditures by each ballot question committee organized with OCPF for 2017 and 2018. In most instances, the committee organized during 2018.

Question 1: Patient-to-nurse limits – Failed

Committee	Receipts	Expenditures	In-Kind Contributions	Outstanding Liabilities
<i>Support</i>				
Committee to Ensure Safe Patient Care (95450)	\$12,044,919	\$12,044,919	\$374,701	--
<i>Totals in favor</i>	\$12,044,919	\$12,044,919	\$374,701	--
<i>Oppose</i>				
Coalition to Protect Patient Safety (95455)	\$24,808,566	\$24,733,966*	\$2,114,484	\$1,000,000
<i>Totals in opposition</i>	\$24,808,566	\$24,733,966	\$2,114,484	\$1,000,000
<i>Question 1 Totals</i>	\$36,853,485	\$36,778,885	\$2,489,185	\$1,000,000

Vote Count

Yes: 787,511 (spent per vote: \$15.29)

No: 1,858,483 (spent per vote: \$13.31)

*The highest total ever reported by a single ballot question committee. The previous record was set in 2016 by Great Schools Massachusetts concerning charter schools (\$21,586,407)

Question 2: Commission on limiting election spending and corporate rights – Passed

Committee	Receipts	Expenditures	In-Kind Contributions	Outstanding Liabilities
	<i>Support</i>			
People Govern, Not Money (95448)	\$214,189	\$213,932	\$116,582	\$20,000
<i>Totals in favor</i>	\$214,189	\$213,932	\$116,582	\$20,000
	<i>Oppose</i>			
No on Two for Freedom of Speech (95460)	\$0	\$0	\$0	--
<i>Totals in opposition</i>	\$0	\$0	\$0	--
<i>Question 2 Totals</i>	\$214,189	\$213,932	\$116,582	\$20,000

Vote Count

Yes: 1,871,989 (spent per vote: 11 cents)

No: 751,447 (spent per vote: 0)

Question 3: Repeal of transgender bill (a ‘yes’ vote maintained the current law) – Passed

Committee	Receipts	Expenditures	In-Kind Contributions	Outstanding Liabilities
	<i>Support</i>			
Freedom for All Massachusetts* (95442)	\$5,197,268	\$5,185,008	\$887,563	--
<i>Total expenditures in favor of retaining the law</i>	\$5,197,268	\$5,185,008	\$887,563	--
	<i>Oppose</i>			
No to 3 (95458)	\$685	\$685	\$45	--
Keep Massachusetts Safe* (95438)	\$464,664	\$462,389	\$179,872	
<i>Total expenditures to repeal</i>	\$465,349	\$463,074	\$179,917	--
<i>Question 3 Total</i>	\$5,662,617	\$5,648,082	\$1,067,480	--

Vote Count

Yes: 1,806,742 (spent per vote: \$2.87)

No: 857,401 (spent per vote: 54 cents)

*This study includes activity for 2017 and 2018. However, the Keep Massachusetts Safe Committee also had minimal 2016 activity

Statewide Ballot Question Expenditures

1988 – 2018

<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
2018	3	7	\$42,640,899

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