

# The Gubernatorial Money Race

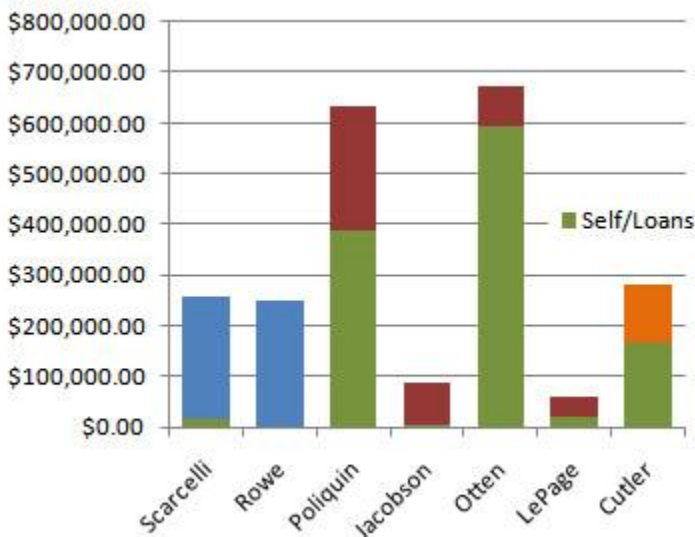
Submitted by Mike Tipping on Fri, 01/22/2010 - 10:52am.

- [Maine Politics](#)

The Maine governor's race has now officially kicked into gear. The fields are set, debates are happening, and the first television ads are hitting the airwaves. Unfortunately, with more than a dozen significant candidates in the race and no real independent polling, it's hard to tell which campaigns are doing well and which are tanking.

With the release of the January fundraising reports, however, we can now begin to get a better picture of some aspects of the race.

Fundraising reports are hard to read, and slight differences in how contributions and expenses are reported can make a difference in how they are perceived. This is further complicated by the two parallel financing systems in Maine, with some candidates running clean and others running privately-financed campaigns. I'll try to give a clear picture of how the candidates stack up across useful metrics, keeping these differences in mind. All candidates that filed January reports are included here. Newly announced candidates (McGowan, Beardsley and Abbot) and those who haven't raised enough money to file a report are not.



First, let's take a look at how the privately-financed candidates are doing. As you can see in the graph above, Republican candidates Bruce Poliquin and Leslie Otten have both passed the \$600,000 mark. For each of them, however, most of the money came from their own pockets rather than from outside donors.

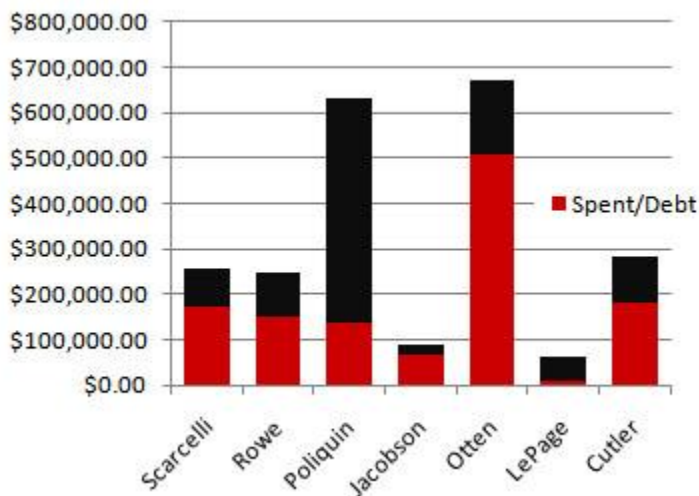
After these numbers came out, the Poliquin campaign declared victory, claiming in a release that "We received over 1,000 individual contributions totaling more than \$632,000. Our closest

opponents raised just over \$88,000, \$85,000, and \$41,000 respectively."

As you can see from the chart, Poliquin is fudging the numbers a bit. He's claiming his own self-financing without acknowledging Otten's. The Poliquin campaign also inflated their donor numbers by counting each of Poliquin's own contributions separately. The campaign actually had 612 reported individual contributors, 54 percent of which were from Maine, not the 1037 and 68 percent claimed by the campaign.

Poliquin's strategy worked. In the press, his claims of overwhelming financial superiority went unquestioned. An [AP story](#) was headlined "GOP's Poliquin boasts biggest war chest in Maine governor's race."

[Another article](#) by Susan Cover in the *Kennebec Journal* stated that "Bruce Poliquin has more than \$440,000 in receipts and \$190,000 in in-kind contributions for a total of more than \$600,000. Of that, \$100,000 came from Poliquin himself." This ignores all of Poliquin's other self-contributions and the fact that all but about \$1,000 of the campaign's in-kind contributions also came from the candidate.



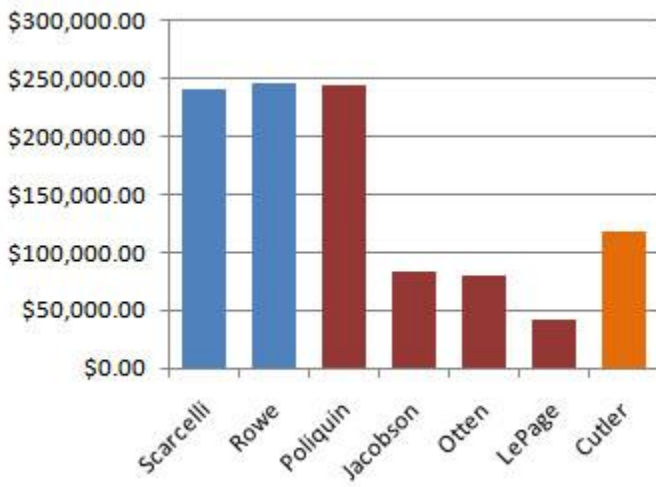
Another important measure is the amount of money raised compared to the amount spent. Here we can see that Poliquin is legitimately ahead of Otten and his other Republican competitors in available cash and seems to be in the best financial shape of all the privately-financed candidates.

Republican Matt Jacobson has spent almost as much as he has raised. With his low totals, and as he seems to lack the kind of grassroots support that his opponent Paul LePage appears to command, he looks to be the GOP candidate with the worst political hand going into the next stages of the campaign.

Here you can also see what Otten's television buys have cost him financially. He has to be hoping that they've gained more for him in name recognition and early support.

Independent Eliot Cutler, Democrat Steve Rowe and especially Democrat Rosa Scarcelli have all

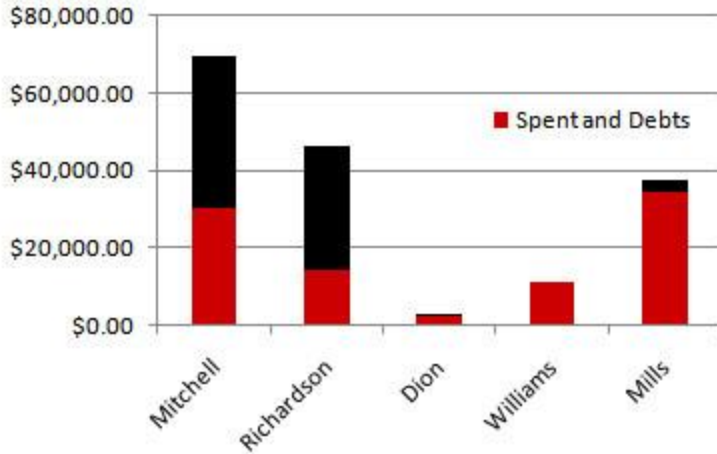
already spent a majority of what they've taken in. For them, the fundraising has just started if they want to be competitive in June.



Perhaps the most useful metric with which to examine privately-financed candidates at this point in the game, however, is the amount they've raised from individual contributors. If you take away the loans and the self-financing, you find that Scarcelli, Rowe and Poliquin have all attracted a similar level of support (although, as we'll see later, much more of Rowe's haul is from in-state). Here, Poliquin does legitimately outpace his GOP opponents, but not by the margin he claims in his release.

The Scarcelli campaign at least recognized that this was an important point of comparison, but the claims they make don't quite add up. In an email with the subject "Rosa Scarcelli is Top Fundraiser in Race!" Campaign Manager Patsy Wiggins stated that "Of all the candidates in the race, Rosa received the most support from individual contributors - more even, than some of the better known traditional party candidates who have been around for decades."

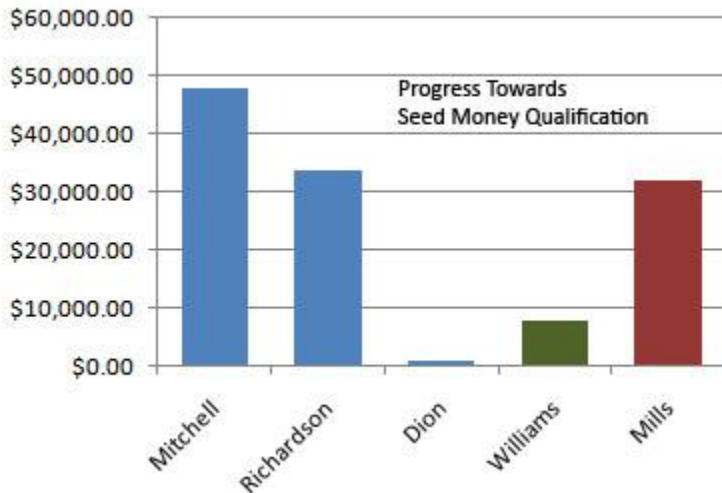
As you can see from the graph, that's just not true. Scarcelli actually had \$241,015 in cash and in-kind contributions from individuals other than herself and her husband, compared to Rowe's \$246,470.12 and Poliquin's \$243,446.79. Scarcelli only moves ahead of the others if you include a \$16,300 loan to her campaign.



Let's now turn to the candidates seeking public financing under Maine's clean election laws. Here, self-financing is less of an issue. As you can see in the chart above, Democrat Libby Mitchell is currently ahead of her competitors, both in money raised and cash on hand.

Republican Peter Mills has spent most of what he has raised and is actually in a slightly worse position financially than he was in his 2006 race at the same point in time, which is surprising based on the experience he likely gained from that race.

There's no black on Green Party candidate Lynne Williams' bar. That's because she has actually spent more than she's raised so far. Not a position you want to be in, especially as a clean elections candidate. MCEA funds cannot be used to pay off debt accrued while working to qualify for public financing.



The changes in the clean election law this year mean that candidates must collect \$40,000 of seed money in \$100 increments from registered Maine voters by April 1st to qualify (along with 3,250 five-dollar contributions). The chart above looks at how close each candidate is to that mark.

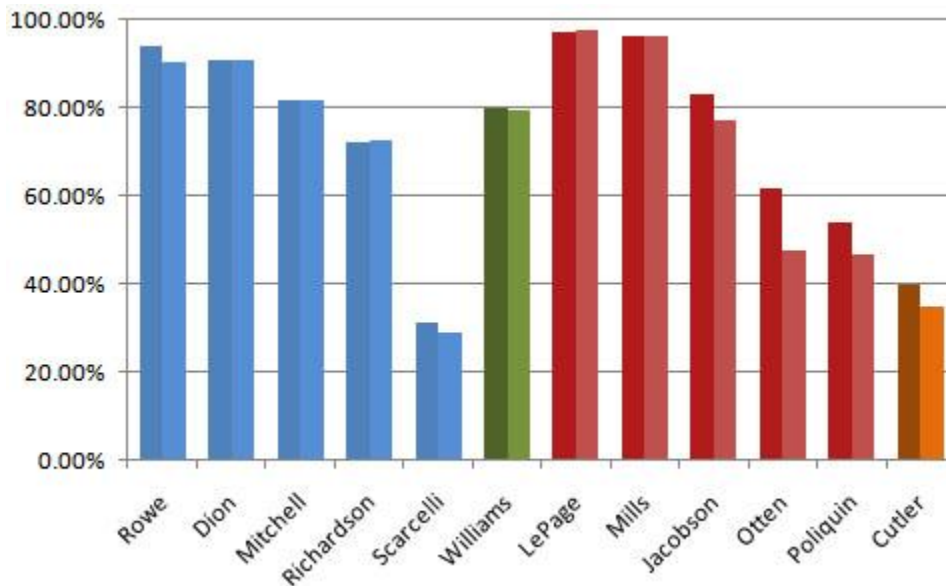
Libby Mitchell has already passed this requirement (although her campaign says she is still collecting \$5 qualifying checks) and Mills and Democrat John Richardson are closing in quickly.

Williams, however, is well below that total and must now raise more than three times as much money in the next few months as she has in her entire campaign up to this point.

Democrat Donna Dion is done. There's no way she'll qualify for clean election funds. She has raised only \$2,500 from eleven donors, four of whom have the last name Dion. Let's not talk about her any more.

It's important to note that for these candidates, the fundraising doesn't stop when they reach \$40,000. They can each raise and spend up to \$200,000 in seed money before April (any unspent funds are deducted from their MCEA disbursement).

Finally lets look at two measures with similar validity across all candidates: the percentages of donors and funds raised from within Maine, as opposed to out-of-state.



You might think that clean candidates would top this list, considering that they have more of an incentive to go after Maine-based donors, but for both major parties the highest percentages came from privately-financed contenders. Rowe topped the Democrats with 90 percent of his money (the lighter bar) and 94 percent of his donors (the darker bar) hailing from the state of Maine. Rowe also had more listed individual donors than any other candidate in the race, with 1,128. He is trailed by Poliquin with 612 and Mitchell with 588.

LePage had the highest in-state percentages for the Republicans, followed closely by Mills. Both had around 97 percent of their donors and cash come from in-state. Only three of LePage's donors were from outside of Maine (all three are Floridians).

The outliers here seem to be Culter and Scarcelli, both candidates who appear to have significant

national connections. Only 31 percent of Scarcelli's donors and 29 percent of her funds came from the state of Maine.

In addition to these trends and comparisons we can also learn something about the race by skimming the names and occupations of the listed donors.

For instance, some contributors like Hannaford Government Relations VP Stephen Culver "[pulled an Otten](#)" by giving to more than one candidate. Culver gave \$100 each to Democrats Mitchell and Scarcelli and Republican Mills.

Other names stand out as well. A look at Mills' donors reveals that one H. Allen Fernald, chairman of Down East Enterprise, gave him a contribution (remember that if Al Diamon and I start saying nice things about Mills).

Eliot Cutler's report is packed with the names of Washington insiders, including Bill Clinton confidant [Vernon Jordan](#). He also received a contribution from Sheryl Sandberg, the COO of Facebook (I'm guessing she paid in FarmVille dollars).

Scarcelli's report, however, takes the prize for interesting contributors. She's received contributions from both "poison pen" biographer [Kitty Kelley](#) and Cheap Trick guitarist [Rick Nielsen](#).

Rock on.