

At \$1 million, DA race most expensive in Fresno County history

[fb fresnobee.com /2014/05/27/3947219/fresno-county-das-race-tops-1.html](http://fresnobee.com/2014/05/27/3947219/fresno-county-das-race-tops-1.html)

John Ellis



Fresno County District Attorney incumbent, Elizabeth Egan, left, and candidate Lisa Sondergaard Smittcamp.

SPECIAL TO THE BEE

Note: An earlier version of this story said Daniel Parra, a Fresno County Board of Supervisors District 4 candidate, has not filed the latest disclosure forms. The county clerk's office said the forms arrived in time but had been misplaced.

The heated Fresno County district attorney's race has topped the \$1 million plateau in money raised and spent.

That makes the showdown between incumbent Elizabeth Egan and challenger Lisa Sondergaard Smittcamp the most expensive district attorney's race in Fresno County history -- by far.

"That's the most ever spent, no question," said Anthony Capozzi, a longtime defense attorney and former federal prosecutor who unsuccessfully ran for mayor in 1989.

Smittcamp has raised more than \$685,000. Egan raised around \$430,000 since Jan. 2013, though she started off with a hefty account from past campaigns.

Befitting a hard-fought race, both sides have not only raised more than \$1 million combined, they've also spent that amount.

There's been multiple television commercials, several radio advertisements, a multitude of campaign mailers, as well as pollsters, consultants, staffers, attorneys and fundraisers -- who are paid money to raise money.

Campaign finance reports through May 17 show Smittcamp and Egan have each spent as part of that \$1 million more than \$90,000 on television ads and in excess of \$12,000 on radio spots. On campaign mailers, Egan's total is close to \$69,000, while Smittcamp is around \$63,000.

The race's competitiveness -- as well as its level of rancor -- surprised Capozzi because in the start he viewed it as an internal dispute between Egan and Smittcamp and their competing factions in the county's legal community.

But he said both sides have done a good job of getting out their respective issues of concern to the average voter. And both sides, he said, have also gone negative in their campaigns.

"Negative politics works," Capozzi said. "It really does."

None of this likely comes as a surprise to any local television watchers or radio listeners, or those regular voters who head to their mailboxes.

What all the money adds up to is a total that dwarfs the last competitive DAs race, which came in 2002 when Egan was first elected to the office, beating challenger Jeff Hamilton in a runoff after the two finished at the front of a five-person primary.

By comparison, this race will be decided next Tuesday because there are only two candidates.

The totals also include major family loans. For Egan, it is \$100,000 from her husband Richard's business, DirectFile. And for Smittcamp, it is \$50,000 from her husband, Brent.

Totals through May 17 don't include any money raised or spent from that point through next Tuesday's primary or beyond.

Some of Egan's biggest donors between March 18 and May 17 include \$10,000 from the California Correctional Peace Officers Association and \$3,500 from Table Mountain Rancheria.

For Smittcamp, it is \$5,000 each from Tahmazian Farming, the Fresno Police Officers Association and businessman and Lincoln Club of Fresno chairman Michael Der Manouel Jr.

But, as it has been throughout the campaign, Smittcamp's family -- including father-in-law Bob -- has been her main financial supporter. That includes a recent \$25,000 donation from Wawona Packing, bringing the company total to almost \$126,000 for the election, and \$10,000 from Lyons Magnus for a total of \$50,000 from the Fresno beverage and frozen- and canned-fruit company.

Elsewhere:

- In the two Fresno County supervisors' races, Brian Pacheco is the leading money raiser in District 1 and Buddy Mendes leads the District 4 candidates.

As of May 17, Pacheco has more than \$127,000 on hand while his nearest competitor, Fresno City Council Member Blong Xiong had less than \$14,000 remaining. But Xiong received more than \$40,000 in late donations from organized labor groups since the latest disclosure forms were filed.

Kerman City Council Member Gary Yep, also running in District 1, is close behind in fundraising and has more than \$83,200 going into the final stretch of the campaign.

Mendota pastor John Flores has raised more than \$6,000, and has about \$1,300 remaining. Frank Maldonado, a Washington Union School District teacher, reported raising and spending no money.

In District 4, a huge gap exists between Mendes, a farmer, and his four competitors. He has raised more than \$204,000 and has nearly \$66,000 in reserve. First 5 official Steve Rapada has accumulated the second-highest amount in donations -- about \$42,000 -- but has just shy of \$3,700 in reserve.

Magdalena Gomez, a financial coordinator, has raised just over \$29,300 and has \$19,500 remaining after last week's filings.

Daniel Parra, a computer systems analyst, reported receiving about \$16,700 since March and has received \$36,600 in contributions since last year. He has a balance of \$4,296 in his campaign account, the financial disclosure forms said. It was initially thought Parra's campaign had not filed its latest reports. County Clerk Brandi Orth said Wednesday the forms were submitted in time but had been misplaced.

Businessman Amandip Singh Gill raised \$2,116 and has \$1,150 remaining in his treasury.

- The most competitive Fresno City Council race is the District 1 contest to replace Blong Xiong, who is termed out.

In that race, Esmeralda Soria is the top fund-raiser. She has raised more than \$98,000 -- including a \$4,800 self-loan that remains outstanding -- spent around \$80,000, has a cash balance of around \$22,000 and has \$12,000 in debts.

Next is Rama Dawar, who has raised around \$91,000, has spent nearly \$70,000, has \$21,000 in his account and more than \$38,000 in unpaid bills -- including a \$30,000 loan to himself.

Cary Catalano has raised more than \$87,000 -- including a \$24,000 loan, which remains unpaid. He has spent nearly \$60,000 and has around \$7,300 left in his account.

Mark Castro raised \$11,546 and spent more than \$13,000.

Rebeca Rangel loaned herself \$5,000 and has less than \$1,000 left in her account.

Lawrence Cano and Jackson Shepherd have not filed the latest report, according to the Fresno County Clerk's website.

Staff writer Marc Benjamin contributed to this report. The reporter can be reached at (559) 441-6320, jellis@fresnobee.com or [@johnellis24](https://twitter.com/johnellis24) on Twitter.