

The 2016 Richmond mayoral race was most expensive in the city's history

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The candidates for mayor in Richmond spent a combined \$2.2 million on the race, making it by far the most expensive election in the city's history.

"I think it showed a real interest that people had in the race, and it showed that two candidates in particular had a lot of friends who were happy to support them," political scientist Bob Holsworth said.

The biggest spender was not the winner. Former Venture Richmond Director Jack Berry came in second place, while his expenditures on the race through Dec. 1 topped \$1 million.

His spending on campaign advertisements, mailings and staff worked out to just under \$30 for each of the 34,380 votes he ultimately won.

Television ad buys made up the largest chunk of overall spending on the mayor's race, with Berry and winner Levar Stoney paying nearly \$700,000 for commercials, according to campaign finance data compiled by the Virginia Public Access Project.

Stoney reported \$365,000 in advertising expenses through Dec. 1. Berry reported spending \$326,000 over the course of the campaign.

In addition to leading spending, Berry's campaign is the only one to report closing out the election with significant debt. Berry said in a report filed with the Department of Elections that his campaign owes Richmond businessman Jim Ukrop \$150,000, which the campaign said it borrowed to "fund campaign expenses, some of which need to be prepaid."

Berry was not reachable for comment Friday but has recently said he has not yet determined how he will handle his campaign debt.

Holsworth said it's typically very difficult for a losing candidate to raise money to repay outstanding debt.

Stoney, who won the race with 36 percent of the vote, reported spending \$900,000 through Dec. 1, which works out to \$25 for each of the 36,107 votes he won.

Former Del. Joe Morrissey, who came in third place with 21 percent of the vote, spent just less than \$200,000 on the race, or about \$9 for each of the 21,422 votes he won.



mayoral candidate forum

Jon Baliles (left), Jack Berry, Bobby Junes, Joe Morrissey, Michelle Mosby, Levar Stoney and Lawrence Williams attended a mayoral candidates forum at the VMFA on Sept. 29.

His biggest expense was \$52,526 to pay the salaries of canvassers, phone bankers and poll workers. He reported spending another \$34,000 for printing and mailings.

“Overall, he was dependent on name recognition and he certainly did run some ads, but by no means did he have the full operation that the two candidates that bested him did,” Holsworth said.

Michelle Mosby, who came in fourth, reported spending \$44,000. Jon Baliles, who dropped out of the race and endorsed Stoney, reported spending \$40,000.

The next most expensive election in Richmond came in 2008, when sitting mayor Dwight C. Jones was elected. Total spending then was \$967,000, according to campaign finance data collected by the Virginia Public Access Project.