

Cost Per Vote for Recent Winners of Competitive Elections

Putting together a budget for a political campaign can be a confusing and inexact process and is subject to a review by common sense. A good method is to look at who won previous competitive races for your office and add an amount for inflation. If you have no competition, the process becomes inexpensive and easy because you really don't need budgeting, polling, strategy or advertising. This chart assumes there IS competition and should help you get a handle on expected costs. Look at the voter turnout in the past two similar elections and determine how many votes you need in order to get at least 50% plus one – then multiply by the per vote cost for an average budget. If it is a primary election, vote totals will be lower. If it is a presidential year election, vote totals will be higher and your race will be more expensive. The year after presidential elections means lower turnout and lower costs accordingly – but you will need an accurate and complete voter list. Please note that candidates spending less than the “low budget” amounts are nearly always losers, but there are exceptions to every rule. These estimates do NOT include the expenditures of special interest groups.

Office	Low Budget	Average Budget	High Budget
Governor	\$10	\$15	\$50
US Senate	\$10	\$15	\$60
US Representative	\$10	\$15	\$50
State Senate	\$ 7	\$10	\$60
State House	\$10	\$20	\$75
State Board of Education	\$0 .25	\$ 1	\$ 2
State Supreme Court	\$0 .25	\$ 0 .5	\$ 1
State Treasurer	\$ 1	\$ 3	\$ 5
County & Local Races	\$ 2	\$ 7	\$25