

THE COLOR **OF MONEY** **IN MARYLAND**

Race and Campaign Finance
in Maryland State Government

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Nobody disputes the importance of money in our political system – both at the federal level and at the state level in Maryland. Those who write big campaign checks clearly get privileged access to lawmakers – otherwise the donors would not keep giving more and more money each election cycle. If campaign contributions are a good indicator of influence in Annapolis, it is worthwhile to see who gives – and who does not. How about African Americans? How much money did they give to state lawmakers in Maryland’s 2002 election cycle?

NOTES ON METHODOLOGY

The raw numbers for this report come from a comprehensive database of contributors in the Maryland 2002 election prepared by the National Institute on Money in State Politics (NIMSP), which was based on numbers available at the Maryland State Board of Elections website.

To get an idea of the racial dimension of campaign contributions, we could not look at individuals because each campaign check is not coded by the race of its giver. The only way to get a glimpse of the race of donors is through zip code analysis. We therefore looked at contributions from the seven zip codes in Maryland with the highest percentage of African American residents. We determined the "blackest" zip codes in Maryland based on an exhaustive search of all zip codes in the state of Maryland using data from the most recent census. We sorted the contributor database by those zip codes and then exhaustively, row by row, determined which contributions came from businesses and organizations and which were given by individuals in those zip codes. Those zip codes are:

21216	
Baltimore City	
Black Percentage	97.4
Population	36242
Total Contributions from individual contributors	\$52,048.21
Avg. Contributions per Individual Contributor	\$125.12
Avg. Contribution per capita	\$1.44
21213	
Baltimore City	
Black Percentage	88.5
Total Population	38442
Total Contributions	\$29004.29
Avg. Contribution per Individual Contributor	\$126.6562882
Avg. Contribution per capita	\$0.754494823
20774	
Upper Marlboro	
Percentage Black	89
Total Pop	32942
Total Contributions	\$142806.86
Avg. Contribution per Individual Contributor	\$138.3787403
Avg. Contribution per capita	\$4.335099873

20747

District Heights	
Percent Black	89.9
Total Pop	39920
Total Contributions	\$38053
Avg Contribution per Individual Contributor	\$96.33670886
Avg. Contribution per capita	\$0.953231463

20746	
Suitland	
Percent Black	89.9
Total Pop	39920
Total Contributions	\$37726.32
Avg Contribution per Individual Contributor	\$93.84656716
Avg Contribution per capita	\$0.945048096

21217	
Baltimore City	
Percent Black	89.8
Total Pop	41636
Total Contributions	\$91,147.00
Avg Contribution per Individual Contributor	\$159.35
Avg Contribution per capita	\$2.19

20743	
Capitol Heights	
Percent Black	93.9
Total Pop	41549
Total Contributions	\$56108
Avg. Contribution per Individual Contributor	\$96.24013722
Avg. Contribution per capita	\$1.350405545

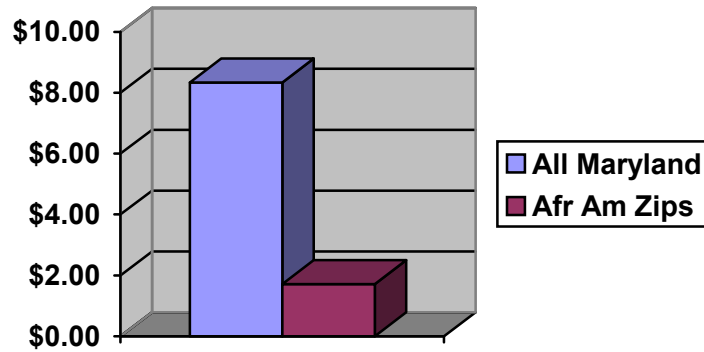
We compared the African American zip codes to individual contributors in Maryland as a whole.

To make sure we were only comparing individuals in the black zip codes to individuals statewide (and not black individuals to organizational donors statewide, such as PACs), we selected a random, statistically significant sample of 799 donors of all kinds statewide. This was the control sample and since it was randomly selected, it is representative of Maryland. This randomly selected, statistically significant sample showed that 77% of the donors were individuals and they gave 59% of all money; whereas 23% of donors were organizations (e.g., corporations, unions, PACs, etc.) and they gave 41% of all money.

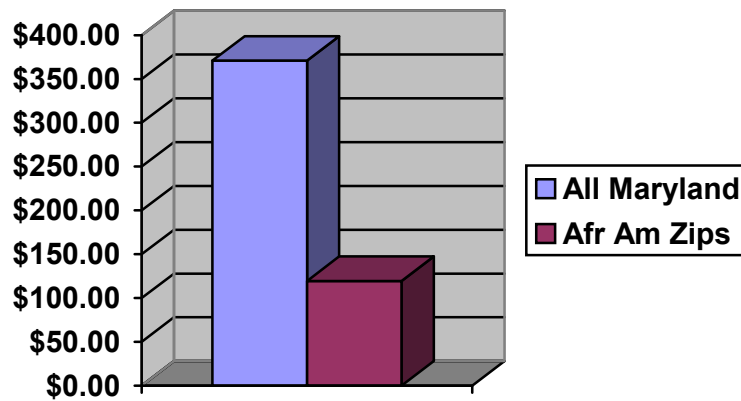
We could then extrapolate to all Maryland donors based on these ratios.

At that point, we could make comparisons between the African American zip codes versus all Maryland.

**AVERAGE INDIVIDUAL CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION PER *RESIDENT*
OF ALL INDIVIDUALS IN MARYLAND
VERSUS INDIVIDUALS IN THE 7 MOST AFRICAN AMERICAN ZIP CODES**



**AVERAGE CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION PER INDIVIDUAL *DONOR*
OF ALL INDIVIDUAL DONORS IN MARYLAND
VERSUS INDIVIDUAL DONORS IN THE 7 MOST AFRICAN AMERICAN ZIP
CODES**



CONCLUSION

Either way you look at it, African Americans give less campaign dollars than do Marylanders in general. In per capita terms, Black zip codes give 5 ½ times less in campaign contributions than does Maryland in general. But even among the few Black donors, they give less per contributor than does the average donor statewide – fully 3 ½ times less money.

How does this disadvantage African Americans? In the General Assembly's frenzied 90-day sessions, there is simply not enough time to consider all of the thousands of bills in the hopper. In Annapolis, those with the biggest checkbooks have the loudest voice, which ensures that their needs get attention. Would slots hog so much attention in Annapolis without the millions of dollars in campaign contributions from the gambling industry? Of course not. The converse is also true: those who do not give contributions tend to get ignored. Considering that money is a political megaphone, it is small wonder that the needs of hardworking African Americans for universal health care, full voting rights for former felons, provisional ballots in cases of disputed voter identity, etc., usually get short shrift in Annapolis. Through skill and tenacity, the Black Caucus and allied advocates sometimes overcome these long odds, but progressives would get a better hearing if we reduced the influence of special-interest money.

Progressive Maryland, the NAACP, Coalition of Asian Pacific American Democrats, and many other groups are working toward that goal by advocating for a voluntary, publicly funded system of campaign finance as practiced in Maine and Arizona. To learn more about this reform, its success in Maine and Arizona, and the legislation to create such a system in Maryland sponsored by Sen. Paul Pinsky and Del. Jon Cardin, go to: www.progressivemaryland.org