**2014 Newark, New Jersey: Mayoral Race**

In 2014, [two candidates ran for mayor of Newark, New Jersey](http://www.essexclerk.com/Election/View/51) seeking to fill a special election vacancy created when the prior mayor, Cory Booker took the place of deceased New Jersey Senator, Frank Lautenberg. The candidates, both African American men, were Ras Baraka and Shavar Jeffries. [Baraka](http://rasjbaraka.com/about/) was the six-year principal Newark’s Central High School and a South Ward Councilman. Jeffries was the founding Board President of Newark’s Team Academy Charter School – part of the KIPP Network of charters and a former Assistant Attorney General. [Early in the race](http://www.nj.com/essex/index.ssf/2013/08/newark_mayoral_candidates_hold_their_first_forum.html) it became clear that the future of public education in Newark would to be a pivotal issue in the campaign.

At the time, the Newark School District was under the leadership of the often volatile school [superintendent, Cami Anderson](https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/23/nyregion/newark-schools-superintendent-is-stepping-down.html) who had been appointed by Cory Booker and Governor Chris Christie. In December of 2013, Anderson [unveiled One Newark, her universal enrollment plan](http://www.njspotlight.com/stories/13/12/18/one-newark-reform-plan-proves-divisive-even-before-official-release/). [The plan](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/05/14/newark-schools-ras-baraka_n_5319450.html), which would force the closure of several public schools and the expansion of school choice in the city, was immediately controversial and Anderson and her One Newark plan would become key issues in the election.

Ras Baraka was vocal in his opposition to both Anderson and the One Newark plan, and rallied the Newark community to fight against the proposed public school closings. Jeffries, in contrast, was a supporter of corporate reform and charter schools. During the campaign Jeffries came out [strongly in favor of school choice](http://www.nj.com/essex/index.ssf/2014/02/newark_mayoral_candidate_shavar_jeffries_hits_superintendent_opponent_in_rollout_of_education_plan.html), and while he was critical of the development and roll-out of Anderson’s One Newark plan, he supported expanding Newark’s charter school sector.

Democrats for Education Reform (DFER) Executive Director, Joe Williams, took note of Jeffries “[reform cred](http://www.dfer.org/blog/reformer-of-the/)” and made a plea for donations for Jeffries on the DFER website. He also warned that Baraka was being supported by the Newark Teacher’s Union and was set to “undo progress made during Cory Booker’s tenure.” [DFER Board member Whitney Tilson](http://edreform.blogspot.com/2014/04/shavar-jeffries-for-mayor-of-newark.html) made a similar plea, calling Jeffries "a courageous reformer."

Williams’s and Tilson’s pleas helped not only raise enormous donations outside the Garden State, it also resulted in the creation of an Independent Expenditure Committee (IEC) that was funded almost exclusively by a DFER associated non-profit known as Education Reform Now (ERN). ERN would be the biggest spender in the Newark mayoral election of 2014.

Education Reform Now (ERN), which is based in New York City [describes itself](https://edreformnow.org/) on its website as “progressives leading a non-partisan 501c3 organization that cultivates and supports leaders who champion America’s public schoolchildren”, and that is the “sister organization” to Democrats for Education Reform (DFER).

Most consider the organization, however, to be more neo-liberal than progressive, due to its strong allegiance to the corporate reform movement and charter schools. Both ERN and DFER support school choice, school funding portability, mayoral control of urban school districts, and “clearly-articulated national standards and expectations for core subject areas.”

[According to its 2014 990 tax form](https://www.citizenaudit.org/organization/203687838/education-reform-now-inc/), ERN is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with a related 501(c)(4) lobbying nonprofit, ERN Advocacy. Both share the same address: 928 Broadway, New York, New York. As non-profit organizations, neither ERN nor ERN Advocacy are required to disclose their donors. Listed at the same 928 Broadway address was [Newark First](http://www.nj.com/essex/index.ssf/2014/04/newark_mayors_race_negative_advertisements_intensify_in_final_stretch.html), an independent expenditure committee (IEC) that would spend millions on the election. According to its 20-day post-election filing, *Newark First* raised a total of $4.237 million,with $3.581 million (85 percent) coming from out-of-state contributors (Table 1).

Out-of-state donors to *Newark First* included New York billionaire and former mayor, [Michael Bloomberg](https://www.forbes.com/profile/michael-bloomberg/); [Lee Ainslee](http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/inside-a-hedge-fund-an-interview-with-the-managing-partner-of-maverick-capital), [Carl Kuehner](http://www.bloomberg.com/research/stocks/private/person.asp?personId=52003875&privcapId=51706612), and [John Mack](http://www.crainsnewyork.com/article/20131022/BLOGS04/131029973/guv-lures-ex-wall-street-titan-into-ny-role), who are financial investment executives. In 2013, Mack was also appointed as an advisor to New York Governor Andrew Cuomo.

*Table 1: Out-of-state Contributors to the Independent Expenditure Committee, Newark First, in 2014*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Contributor | Date | Amount |
| Lee Ainslee III | 04/01/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Michael Bloomberg | 05/09/2014 | $400,000.00 |
| Education Reform Now (ERN) | 04/11/2014  04/28/2014  04/30/2014  05/01/2014  05/06/2014  05/07/2014  05/09/2014 | $850,000.00  $300,000.00  $750,000.00  $200,000.00  $400,000.00  $300,000.00  $250,000.00 |
| Carl Kuehner | 03/28/2014 | $50,000.00 |
| John Mack | 04/03/2014 | $126,000.00 |

[*Source*](http://www.elec.state.nj.us/ELECReport/SearchContribCandidate.aspx)*: New Jersey Campaign Financing and Lobbying Disclosure*

*Table 2: In-state Contributors to the Independent Expenditure Committee, Newark First, in 2014*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Contributor | Date | Amount |
| Samuel Cole | 05/08/2014 | $25,000.00 |

[*Source*](http://www.elec.state.nj.us/ELECReport/SearchContribCandidate.aspx)*: New Jersey Campaign Financing and Lobbying Disclosure*

What is especially disturbing in the table above are the repeated large donations made by Education Reform Now (ERN)—donations that totaled over $3 million dollars. ERN is a 501(c)(3) organization which is forbidden, by law, from making political donations. Education Reform Now has, however, a related 501(c)(4) organization, Education Reform Now Advocacy (ERNA), which can participate, *on a limited basis*, in partisan politics. On its 2014 990, ERNA lists its $3,050,000 donation to *Newark First*, along with an additional donation of $300,000 to *Newark First Action Fund*.

Beginning in April of 2014 shortly before the special election, *Newark First* began running ads that slammed Jeffries opponent, Baraka. [Baraka returned fire](http://www.nj.com/essex/index.ssf/2014/04/newark_mayors_race_negative_advertisements_intensify_in_final_stretch.html) by claiming that Education Reform Now (ERN) was using its organization to hide the identity of donors to *Newark First* by funneling the money because it (ERNA) was not under obligation to divulge its donors, a charge that ERNA indignantly disavowed.

Baraka, of course, was right. In 2014, ERNA received nearly $7 millions dollars in contributions. ERNA was funneled over $5.7 million dollars of its total $7.4 million dollar expenditures to political races via Independent Expenditure Committees and PACs without having to disclose the names of contributors. In 2014, those political contributions well exceeded the 50% limit for political spending for a non-profit 501 (c) (4), which the organization acknowledged on its required 990 return, with a promise to better monitor spending in the future.

In addition to *Newark First,* Jeffries enjoyed the support of *Team for Newark*, a joint candidates’ committee that collected contributions for Jeffries and the slate of candidates on his ticket. The committee brought in total receipts of almost $2.5 million as per its 20-day post-election filing. Again, over $1.5 million dollars in contributions of $5,000 or more came from out-of-state donors (Table 3), with only $200,000 in contributions of $2,600 or more coming from in-state donors – and none of those donors lived in the city of Newark.

*Table 3: Out-of-state Contributors of $5,000 or More to the Jeffries Team for Newark (2014 Election Filings)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Contributor | Date | Amount |
| Karen Ackman (Pershing Square Capital) | 03/21/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| William Ackman (Pershing Square Capital) | 03/21/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Elizabeth Ainslee (wife of Lee Ainslee) | 05/05/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Philip Anschutz | 04/29/2014 | $5,000.00 |
| Anthony Asnes | 03/21/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Daniel Benton (Andor Capital) | 03/21/2014 | $5,000.00 |
| Michael Bloomberg | 02/19/2014 | $15,000.00 |
| Geoffrey Boisi | 05/05/2014 | $5,000.00 |
| Francisco Borges | 04/21/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Andrew Boaszhardt (Great Oaks Management Company) | 04/11/2014 | $20,000.00 |
| Campbell Brown | 03/12/2014 | $7,800.00 |
| Patricia Callan Crafts | 03/18/2014 | $26,000.00 |
|  |  |  |
| Peter Chernin | 04/29/2014 | $10,000.00 |
| Adam Cioth (Rolling Hills Capital) | 03/13/2013 | $26,000.00 |
| Ravenel Curry III (Eagle Capital Management) | 12/27/2013  05/06/2014 | $26,000.00  $26,000.00 |
| Elizabeth Curry (Wife of Ravenel) | 05/06/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Mark Dalton | 05/09/2014 | $10,000.00 |
| DFER | 03/31/2014 | $14,000.00 |
| Millard Drexler | 05/07/2014 | $5,000.00 |
| Doris Fisher | 04/10/2014  04/25/2014 | $20,000.00  $6,000.00 |
| John Fisher | 04/25/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| John Fitzgibbons | 04/28/2014 | $10,000.00 |
| Neil Gagnon (Gagnon Securities) | 01/30/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Lois Gagnon (Gagnon Securities) | 01/30/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Kiernan Goodwin (Panning Capital Management) | 04/15/2013  03/26/2014 | $2,600.00  $23,400.00 |
| Catherine Goodwin Rocco (Panning Capital Management) | 03/26/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Amy Griffin | 03/15/2014 | $5,000.00 |
| John Griffin | 04/26/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Kenneth Hirsch | 03/18/2014 | $5,000.00 |
| Lorna Brett Howard | 04/10/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Ryan Israel (Pershing Square Capital) | 03/18/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Marta Jaramillo | 04/24/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Laurene Powell Jobs (Steve Jobs’ widow) | 03/18/2014  05/07/2014 | $5,000.00  $20,000.00 |
| Paul Jones II | 04/29/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Sonia Jones | 04/29/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Lewis Katz (Gabriel Investments) | 04/10/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Stephanie Katzovich | 04/21/2014 | $11,000.00 |
| Willem Kooyker | 04/29/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Harlen Korenvaes | 04/25/2016 | $5,000.00 |
| Joseph Kusnan (JCK Partners) | 02/23/2013 | $10,000.00 |
| Sheila Labrecque | 04/26/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Kenneth Langone | 05/06/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Mark Lerner (CP Management) | 12/09/2013 | $13,000.00 |
| Traci Lerner | 12/10/2013 | $13,000.00 |
| Dan Lufkin (Allen & Company, Inc.) | 04/08/2014 | $10,000.00 |
| Christy Mack (Wife of John Mack) | 10/21/2013 | $26,000.00 |
| Jenna Mack (Daughter of John Mack) | 05/07/2014 | $5,000.00 |
| John Mack (Morgan Stanley/Cuomo advisor) | 11/20/2012  05/07/2014 | $26,000.00  $26,000.00 |
| Stephen Mack (Son of John Mack) | 05/07/2014 | $5,000.00 |
| Puradyn Filter Technologies | 05/05/2014 | $5,000.00 |
| Perry Rahbar (Former JP Morgan) | 01/16/2014 | $5,000.00 |
| John Regan, Jr. | 05/06/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Frank Richardson (F.E. Richardson & Co.) | 04/11/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Julian Robertson (Tiger Management) | 04/10/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| E. Burke Ross, Jr. | 04/18/2014 | $25,000.00 |
| Susan Ross | 04/29/2014 | $25,000.00 |
| Rothstein Kass Family Office Grp. | 05/12/2014 | $10,000.00 |
| Herbert Siegel | 05/06/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Whitney Tilson (T2 Partners) | 03/11/2014 | $5,520.00 |
| Andrew Tisch | 04/18/2014 | $5,000.00 |
| Henrik Vanderlip | 04/24/2014 | $20,000.00 |
| Joseph Vittoria | 04/30/2014 | $5,000.00 |
| Jeffrey Walker (Former JP Morgan) | 04/10/2014 | $22,600.00 |
| Frank E. Walsh, Jr., Trust | 04/26/2014 | $25,500.00 |
| Mary D. Walsh, Trust | 04/26/2014 | $25,500.00 |
| Elaine Wynn | 05/07/2014 | $5,000.00 |

*[Source](http://www.elec.state.nj.us/ELECReport/SearchContribCandidate.aspx): New Jersey Campaign Filing and Lobbying Disclosure*

*Table 4: In-state Contributors of $2,600 or More to the Jeffries Team for Newark (2014 Election Filings)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Contributor | Date | Amount |
| Raymond Chambers (Wesray Capital Corporation) | 12/13/2013  03/31/2014 | $15,000.00  $19,000.00 |
| Patricia Chambers (wife of Raymond) | 12/13/2013 | $15,000.00 |
| Christine Chambers Gilfillan (daughter of Raymond/MCJ Foundation) | 04/10/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Jennifer Chambers-Myers | 04/22/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Sam Cole (State Street Corporation) | 11/15/2012  03/28/2013  02/03/2014 | $10,000.00  $20,000.00  $26,000.00 |
| John Cozzi | 12/31/2012 | $2,600.00 |
| Wendy Cozzi | 12/31/2012 | $2,600.00 |
| Thomas Dunn (New Holland Capital) | 11/26/2012 | $12,500.00 |
| Susan Dunn (Wife of Thomas) | 11/26/2012 | $12,500.00 |
| Thom Jackson (Edison Learning CEO) | 04/02/2014 | $2,600.00 |
| Lewis Katz (Gabriel Investments) | 04/10/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Stewart Massey (Massey, Quick & Co., LLC) | 03/19/2014 | $2,600.00 |
| Leslie Quick III (Massey, Quick & Co., LLC) | 03/22/2014 | $10,020.00 |
| Arthur Samberg (Hawkes Financial, LLC) | 03/08/2014 | $26,000.00 |
| Josh Weston (Former CEO of ADP) | 02/11/2014 | $16,100.00 |

[*Source*](http://www.elec.state.nj.us/ELECReport/SearchContribCandidate.aspx)*: New Jersey Campaign Filing and Lobbying Disclosure*

Combing through the list of in- and out-of-state contributors is a veritable Who's Who of education reform and Wall Street billionaires. The Mack family added to the $126,000 contribution it made to *Newark First* with direct donations to Jeffries' campaign. Another $26,000 apiece came from John Mack and his wife Christy, and $5,000 each from two of their three children, Jenna and Stephen.

DFER made a direct $14,000 contribution to the campaign in late March, and  [DFER co-founder](http://newamerica.net/user/356) and ERNA Board member, Boykin Curry, contributed $26,000 as well. Contributions from former Newark Mayor [Cory Booker supporter and hedge fund manager Bill Ackman](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-10-28/ackman-money-for-booker-brings-wall-street-to-newark-with-240-million-aid.html), his wife, and others from his Pershing Square Capital Management, totaled over $100,000.

Doris Fisher, the California founder of The Gap and the Chambers family of New Jersey also made generous contributions. Both Fischer and the MCJ Amelior Foundation, run by Raymond Chambers’ daughter Christine, were both [early donors to the Newark Charter School Fund.](http://www.philanthropynewsdigest.org/news/national-local-foundations-pledge-19-million-to-strengthen-newark-charter-schools)

Donors hailed from San Francisco and Palo Alto, California; Baltimore, Maryland; Rye New York and New York City. There were donations from those who live in Montclair and Morristown New Jersey, but not a single one of the big money donors lives or works in Newark.

Jeffries’ opponent and [critic of charter school expansion](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/15/nyregion/rebuke-of-charter-schools-is-seen-in-newark-election.html?_r=0),Ras Baraka, filed campaign finance reports including 382 contribution entries totaling $1,266,048, mostly of $500 (42 contributions) or $1,000 (111 contributions). Nearly all came from individuals, businesses, and organizations in New Jersey. Contributions of $5,000 or more comprise only $53,254, or 4% of Baraka’s total as noted on his 2014 campaign filings.

Despite the fact that Baraka’s financial support was about 20% the money that supported Jeffries’ candidacy, on May 13, 2014, Baraka won the election for mayor of Newark. The dark money that flowed through ERNA was not enough.

In September 2015, [Jeffries became CEO of ERN’s “sister organization,” DFER](http://www.wsj.com/articles/ex-newark-mayor-candidate-shavar-jeffries-to-lead-education-group-1441252538). On its web site, [DFER lauds its president, Jeffries](http://dfer.org/about-us/staff-national/national-president-shavar-jeffries/), for pulling almost 46 percent of the vote in the 2014 Newark mayor’s race “despite being a first-time municipal candidate” without informing readers as to DFER-related ERN’s multi-million role in supporting Jeffries’ campaign.

*Table 5* – *Top 5 Out-of-State Contributions to Newark First and Jeffries Team for Newark*.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Top Five Out-of-State Contributors** | **Amount** |
| Education Reform Now (ERN) | $3,050,000.00 |
| Michael Bloomberg | $415,000.00 |
| John Mack and Family | $214,000.00 |
| Ravenel and Elizabeth Curry | $78,000.00 |
| Ackman, Ainslee, Fisher, Gagnon, Goodwin, Griffin, and Jones Families (each contributed) | $52,000.00 |

*Table 6* – *Top 5 In-State Contributions to Newark First and Jeffries Team for Newark*.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Top Five In-State Contributors** | **Amount** |
| Chambers Family | $101,000.00 |
| Sam Cole | $81,000.00 |
| Lewis Katz | $26,000.00 |
| Arthur Samberg | $26,000.00 |
| Thomas and Susan Dunn | $25,000.00 |