

# Suffolk cop unions' contributions

Super PAC gave more than \$755G to political races

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A super PAC run by Suffolk police unions last year made more than \$755,000 in independent expenditures on local political races, including a record \$329,600 to promote the election of former Police Commissioner Timothy Sini for county district attorney.

The bulk of the money spent by the Long Island Law Enforcement Foundation only showed up in the Jan. 15 campaign finance report, filed with the state Board of Elections more than two months after Election Day.

Prior to Election Day, campaign filings with the state showed the foundation had spent only \$48,522 on Sini's be-

half, \$14,022 for Democratic Sheriff candidate Errol Toulon Jr. and \$5,507 each for Democratic county legislators William Lindsay III, Sarah Anker and William Spencer.

The most recent filing shows the foundation spent \$72,211 on Lindsay and \$53,355 on Toulon — who both were in tight races — as well as \$69,553 on Anker, who has won narrowly in the past, and \$44,644 on Spencer's behalf.

The police super PAC earlier spent \$104,665 on Republican State Sen. Phil Boyle's losing bid for county sheriff in a September GOP primary and \$56,007 helping Legis. Monica Martinez rebuff a Democratic primary challenge from Angela Ramos, wife of Assemb. Phil Ramos (D-Brentwood).

The foundation also spent \$25,718 on Amityville's March 2017 village election, but did not report the spending until late November.

Spending by the foundation for Sini exceeded the \$249,000 it

spent on Democrat James Gaughran in 2014 in his losing bid for Suffolk County comptroller. It's also more than the \$200,000 the super PAC spent against GOP Assemb. Michael Fitzpatrick in 2014, and the \$170,000 it spent against former Riverhead Supervisor Sean Walter in 2015. Both won their races.

Noel DeGerolamo, president of the Suffolk Police Benevolent Association, the county's largest police union, said the foundation's spending levels were, "not any different from the political parties in general or individuals who are able to spend as much as they care to in any given election" through independent expenditures.

"The foundation represents over 5,000 active and retired members, and given the individual limitations [on direct donations] we are far under what could be spent," DeGerolamo said.

DeGerolamo said the foundation has accountants and attor-

neys who are separate from the union, and "once they have an opportunity to review everything and make the filing then it's done."

The union spending comes as the PBA and unions representing superior officers, detectives face the expiration of their eight year contract at year's end and are under pressure to make \$30 million in health care concessions. The unions want to alter the two-tier salary scale that lowered pay for new officers and lengthened the time for new officers to reach the top salary step from five to 12 years.

The money spent by the police unions on the district attorney's race is over and above the \$1.4 million Sini's own campaign committee raised for the race.

Sini, who was barred by state law from soliciting donations while police commissioner, a job he kept through year's end, said he disassociated himself from all fundraising and did not attend any fundraisers until after he be-

came district attorney Jan. 1.

Direct contributors to the countywide races for district attorney and sheriff were limited to \$48,349. Maximum donations to legislative races range from \$1,802 to \$3,076, depending on the number of voters in the district.

The U.S. Supreme Court in its 2010 decision in the Citizen United and Speech Now.org cases ruled that independent expenditure-only committees such as the Long Island Law Enforcement Foundation can spend unlimited amounts for and against candidates as long as there is no coordination with candidates.

Critics say such independent spending skews the electoral process, especially when dealing with crucial jobs such as district attorney. "It creates the perception of a disproportionate influence over a very sensitive law enforcement office," said Paul Sabatino, a former Suffolk chief deputy county executive.

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