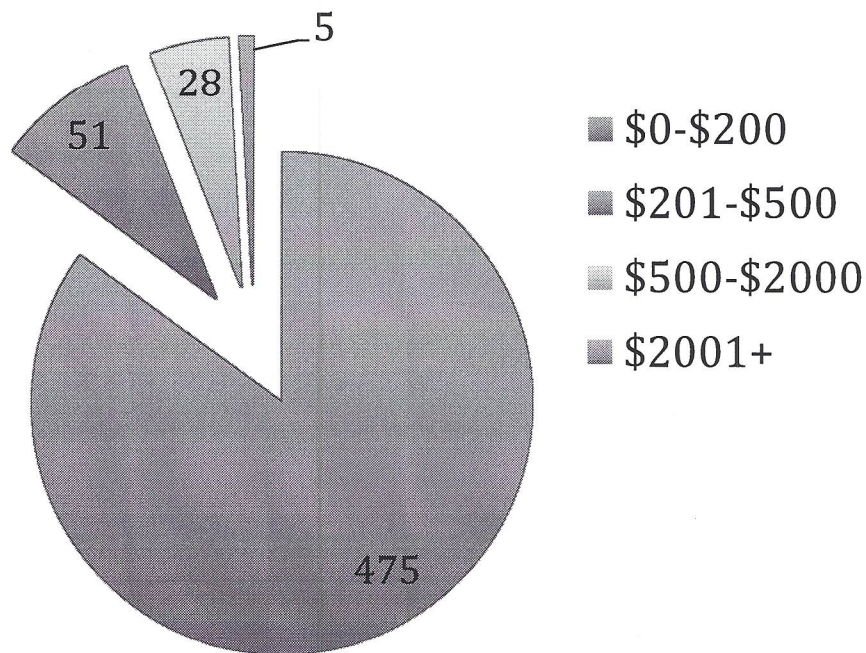


A summary of campaign finance from the election of
delegates to the 1986 Constitutional Convention

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Every ten years, Rhode Islanders are provided with the opportunity to change our State Constitution through a referendum, and we are facing this question again this November. 1986 was the most recent time that the State Constitution was modified; a Convention was held after voters passed a referendum two years prior. Even though the election of Constitutional Delegates is held on a special “off-year”, the race garnered a large number of candidates. Of the 100 different districts in the Convention race, 558 people appeared on ballots. The average number of votes cast per district was 956, although there was significant variance among districts. Analyzing the financial records of this election can paint an incomplete picture of just how much it might cost to run for delegate should the people authorize a convention this November. This is a particularly difficult set of data to analyze, simply because such a large chunk of it is missing data. 477 of the total 562 did not report any spending, which impacted the

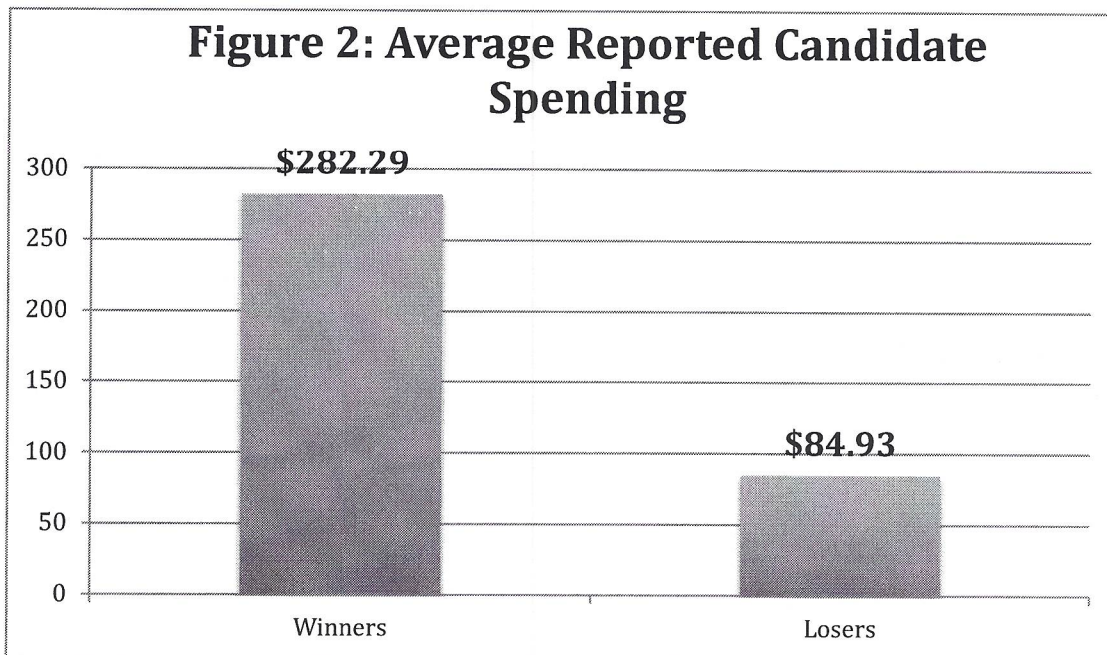
Figure 1: Number of candidates categorized by reported spending

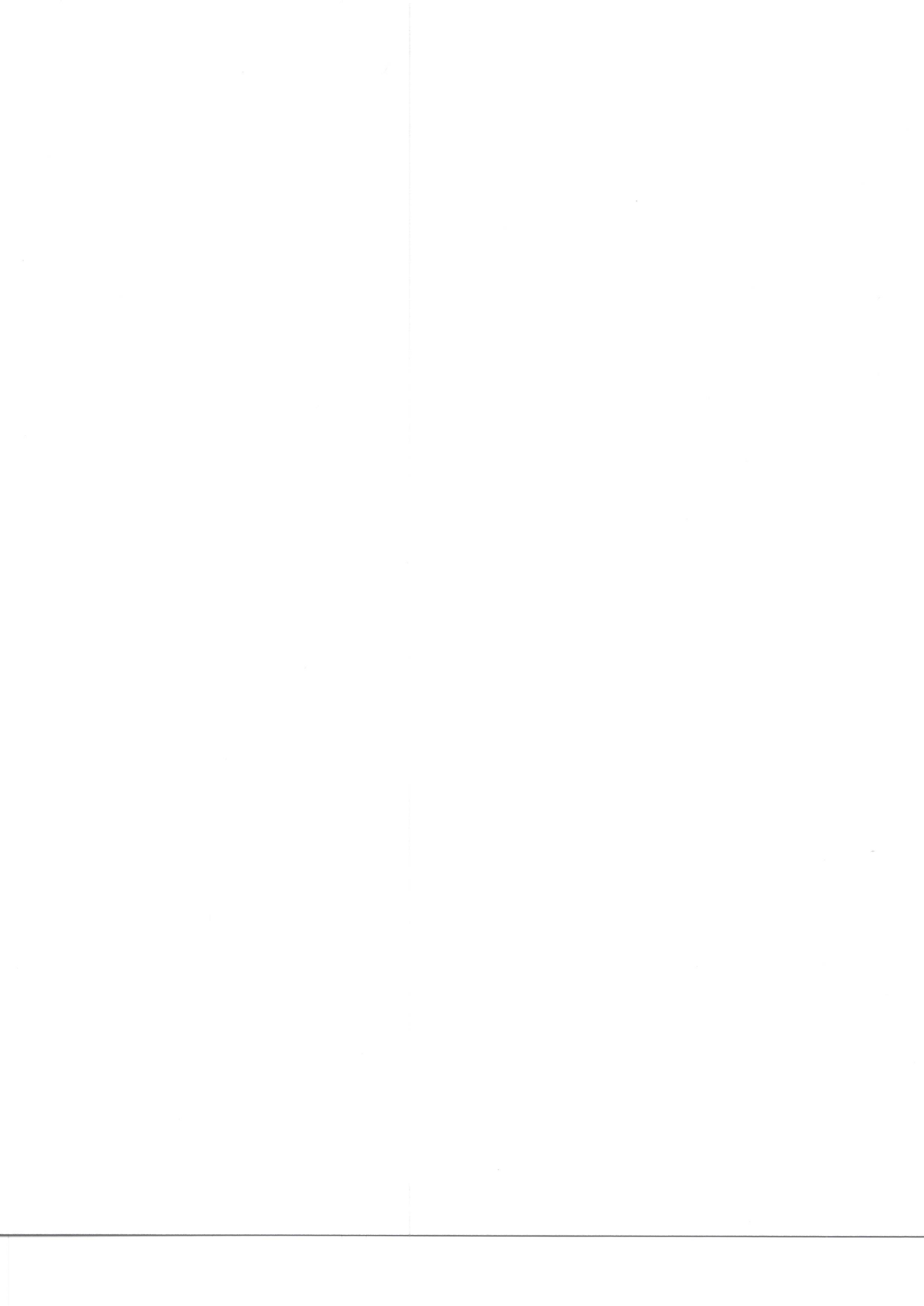


effectiveness of this report.

In 1986, the total reported cost of the Constitutional Convention campaigns was \$67,383.81. Adjusted for current dollars the total amount of reported spending would be \$146,264.68. While this number does not come close to rivaling the spending we currently see for other Rhode Island elections, it is important to note that the Board of Elections, through state statute, only required candidates to file financial reports if their total spent was larger than \$200. While compiling the information for this report, it became evident that the system for tracking campaign finance was flawed in 1986. Many candidates who dropped out were forced to file campaign finance reports, while a few who appeared on the ballot did not file at all. There were 641 people who gave financial reports while only 558 appeared on the ballot.

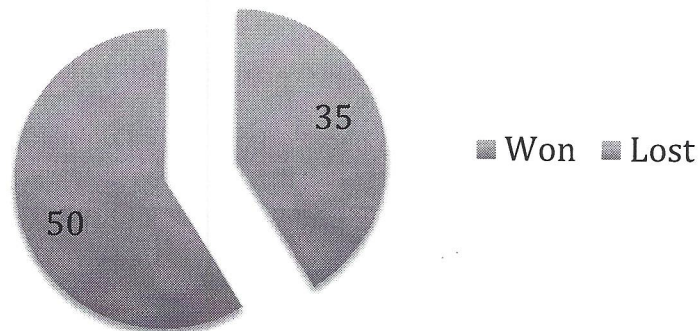
Although there were only 85 candidates of the total 558 who reported any money spent, there is a large difference between the average amount spent by winners and losers.





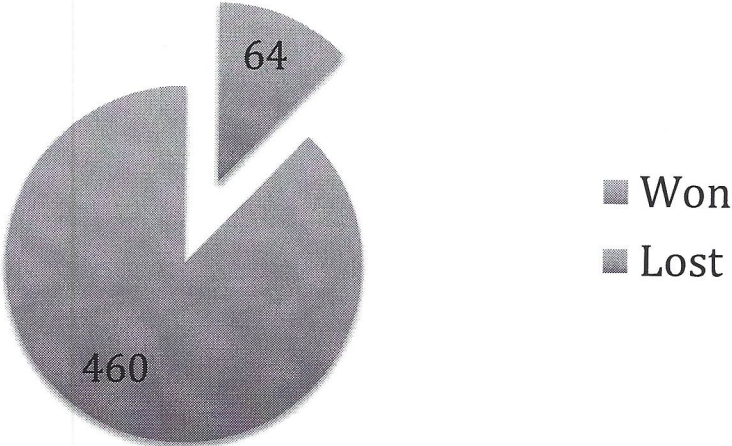
As shown in Figure 2, winners reported spending an average of \$282.29 on their elections, while compared to \$84.93 for losers. There were significant outliers when it came to spending, however. District 2 winner, and later Governor, Bruce Sundlun spent twice that of the next closest fundraiser, totaling in at a whopping \$7,915.04, which inflated the average spending for winners.

Figure 3: Electoral Results of Candidates who Reported Spending Above \$200



One of the most intriguing portions of this election is that, of the candidates who reported spending money, it is difficult to pinpoint a relationship between success rate and the amount that they spent. Of the top 15 spenders in the election, eight of them won their respective elections. Figure 3 looks at all of the candidates who reported any money spent, and shows that 35 out of 85, or 41% prevailed in their race. Figure 4 shows that 64 of 524, or 12%, of candidates who reported no spending won their race. When reviewing this information however, it is important to note that 66%, or two-thirds, of the winners reported no spenders.

Figure 4: Electoral Results of Candidates Who Reported No Spending



Quick Facts:

- Of the top 15 spenders in the election, eight of them won their respective elections.
- 100 different districts
- 641 people gave financial reports even though only 558 appeared on the ballot
- Bruce Sundlun : Highest spender in race, spent nearly twice that of his closest financial competitor: 7,915.04
- Edward Buccelato: Spent the 2nd highest amount of money, \$3,858
- Of the top 15 spenders, 8 of them won their respective elections
- Only 85 people spent more than \$200
- Of these 85, 35 were winners, 41.17% of the people who spent more than \$200 won their races
- Campaign total in 1986: \$67,383.81
- Campaign total in 2014 dollars: \$146,264.68
- 66%: Percent of winners who did not report spending more than \$200.
- 475 People spent \$0-\$200
- 51 people spent \$201-\$500
- 28 people spent \$501-\$2000
- 5 people spent \$2001+