http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/2022-gov-race-s460.jpg

Spending by candidates and smear groups has topped $114.6 million. Tally does not include millions of dollars spent by issue ad groups, like The Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce (WMC).

Madison - Candidate and smear group spending has already shattered the old record for spending in a Wisconsin governor's race, topping $114.6 million, according to a Wisconsin Democracy Campaign preliminary review.

The previous candidate and group spending record was $93.03 million in the 2018 Wisconsin governor's race.

Recently filed campaign finance reports by the 2022 candidates showed the seven Democratic, Republican, and independent candidates for governor spent a combined $69.41 million between Jan. 1 and Oct. 24.

Candidate spending was led by the two major party candidates for governor on the Nov. 8 ballot, with incumbent Democratic Gov. Tony Evers dropping $36.98 million and GOP candidate for governor Tim Michels spending $24.47 through Oct. 24.

The other four GOP candidates for governor were eliminated by Michels in the Aug. 9 primary and the independent candidate for governor dropped out of the race in September.

Express advocacy groups, which disclose their spending and explicitly tell people who to vote for, have spent $45.26 million on electioneering activities in the governor's race as of Thursday morning.

Topping the list of outside spenders were:

- Right Direction Wisconsin PAC , a political action committee run by the Republican Governors Association
, which has spent $9.29 million to attack Evers;

- Americans for Prosperity , a Koch-backed rightwing group, which has spent $5.37 million to support Michels;
- A Better Wisconsin Together Political Fund , a Democratic group, which has spent $5.11 million to attack Michels.

This tally does not include several million dollars in spending by phony issue ad groups, which can also raise and spend unlimited amounts of money on elections. But, unlike express advocacy groups, phony issue ad outfits do not have to report their spending because of federal court decisions and lax campaign finance laws. These groups smear or praise candidates but without explicitly telling viewers who to vote for or against.