

# \$150K from IGT helped Raimondo-led group set record

**By Katherine Gregg**  
The Providence Journal

PROVIDENCE — Records show that IGT donated \$150,000 to the Democratic Governors Association in the last six months, while Rhode Island Gov. Gina Raimondo was leading the group as chairwoman and former IGT Chairman Donald Sweitzer was serving as treasurer.

The contributions came while the Raimondo administration was negotiating a 20-year, no-bid Lottery contract extension with IGT. Twin River, which has led opposition to the proposed contract extension, donated \$100,000 to the Democratic Governors Association on Feb. 28.

The association said Tuesday that it had broken its previous fundraising record during the first six months of

the year.

Among the highlights cited in the DGA statement:

"After a historic 2018 cycle, the DGA's expanding donor base fueled the new all-time high. The number of unique individual donors grew 22 percent and number of individual contributions grew by 47 percent compared to the same period in 2015. ... In addition, the DGA had a more than 28 percent growth in first time online donors, giving the organization an immediate return on its increased investment in its digital program."

"The DGA's record-breaking fundraising haul will help us build the infrastructure to win competitive gubernatorial races in 2019 and 2020," said DGA Executive Director Noam Lee.

Raimondo has not yet responded directly to inquiries on her role in the



Raimondo



Sweitzer

record-breaking six months, following her election as chairwoman of the association last December.

The day she was elected by her fellow governors, she told The Journal: "It is primarily a fundraising job."

Raimondo's State House spokesman Josh Block referred The Journal to the Washington, D.C.-based DGA, where spokesman David Turner said:

"Gov. Raimondo and the DGA are seizing on the success of 2018 when we flipped 7 governorships from red to blue. Democratic governors now represent a majority of

Americans, and that means more and more people are seeing the positive results of having a Democratic governor lead their states. Gov. Raimondo is an integral part of telling that story."

It was not immediately clear how many out-of-state trips Raimondo has taken to raise money for the DGA, since winning reelection as governor in November. Turner said Raimondo "has been transparent about when she is leaving the state on behalf of the DGA. She has previously announced four out-of-state overnight trips to Washington, D.C., Florida, California, and New York."

Travel advisories issued by her State House office staff make broad mention of DGA meetings or "fundraising during her out-of-state ventures, without further details.

On Feb. 1, for example, her

office reported she was headed to the National Governors Association's 2019 Winter Meeting in Washington, and while there would "attend political and fundraising events."

On April 2, Block advised the media: "Governor Raimondo is traveling to Florida this afternoon on DGA business and will return to Rhode Island tomorrow evening."

On April 30, he advised: "Governor Raimondo is traveling to San Francisco today on DGA business and will return to Rhode Island tomorrow night."

On May 9: "Governor Raimondo is traveling to New York City today to receive the National Mother's Day Committee's 'Outstanding Mother of the Year' award. She will remain in New York for the DGA Spring Policy Conference and will return

to Rhode Island tomorrow afternoon." On July 19: "Governor Raimondo is traveling to Nantucket tomorrow to attend a DGA retreat and will return to Rhode Island Sunday afternoon." On July 25: "Governor Raimondo is traveling to New York City today to attend a roundtable discussion with New York tech executives hosted by Tech:NYC. She also has economic development meetings and DGA meetings while in New York. The Governor will return to Rhode Island tomorrow afternoon."

By midnight Wednesday, fundraising reports are due from both the DGA and Raimondo's own home state campaign account, which at last report had \$639,199 left in the till as of March 31, after raising \$398,297 and spending \$64,689 during the first three months of the year.

## Chamber: Business is good, but challenges remain



Middletown Director of Planning Ronald Wolanski, John Nunes, owner of Newport Vineyards, and state Rep. Deb Ruggiero talk business at Newport Vineyards in Middletown to kick off Small Business Week on May 7. [MONICA HERSHBERGER PHOTO/CONTRIBUTED]

BY THE NEWPORT COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Daily News staff

NEWPORT — Community leaders visited 90 companies across Newport County, Bristol and Warren on May 7 to solicit feedback from business owners. Connect Greater Newport, the economic development division of the Newport County Chamber of Commerce, conducted the regional business walk. The following are key takeaways that the

leaders heard:

- On a positive note, 92% of respondents reported that business was "good/steady or better."
- A point of concern: 62% of businesses that require trained employees said they face workforce challenges.
- Other challenges cited by respondents included infrastructure, regulations and permitting, and cost of doing business, such as high tax rates.

Benefits of being located here are proximity to big cities and water, quality of life and clientele.

Steps that can be taken to address businesses' needs include upgrading infrastructure (broadband internet, utilities and transportation options) and create training opportunities to retain business talent.

The business walk was an excellent example of our goals: collecting data and

feedback from our existing businesses, identifying areas that are going well and where we can help to improve business climate, and acting as a resource to help business grow and expand," Erin Donovan-Boyle, the executive director of the chamber, said in a prepared statement.

More information is available at connectgreaternewport.com/businesswalk.

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