

ETHICS REPORTER

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Kentucky Legislative Ethics Commission
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What is the Definition of Lobbying under the KY Code of Legislative Ethics?

Definition of Lobbying:

To "Lobby" is to promote, advocate, or oppose the passage, modification, defeat, or executive approval or veto of any legislation by direct communication with:

1. Any member of the General Assembly, or their staff; or
2. The Governor, the secretary of any cabinet listed in KRS 12.250, or their staff.

What triggers registration with the Kentucky Legislative Ethics Commission?

Legislative Agents (Lobbyists) - Individuals must register with our office when they are engaged (paid) during at least a portion of their time to lobby as one of their official responsibilities; or they are engaged in lobbying activities as a legislative liaison of an association, coalition, or public interest entity formed for the purpose of promoting or otherwise influencing legislation.

Employers – Any person or entity who engages (pays) a legislative agent to lobby on their behalf, this person or entity must register with our office.

Please contact the staff at the Commission office if you have a specific situation and to determine if you or your employer need to register.

Ethics Commission Assesses Penalties for Late Filings of Expense Reports

In 2024, the Legislative Ethics Commission collected \$8,350 in fines from lobbyists and employers for non-compliance with the Code of Legislative Ethics filing requirements. In 2025, the Commission collected \$4,700 in fines, with two reporting periods still remaining, including the one ending on August 31.

Fines are assessed when lobbyists or employers are late filing the required expense reports, or when they fail to register within seven days following the engagement of the lobbyist. Last year, 44 lobbyists and 103 employers paid fines to the Commission. So far this year, 8 lobbyists and 75 employers have paid fines.

Fines range from \$50 to \$100, and can be increased if the filer repeatedly fails to file forms timely. The number of fines assessed could be reduced if employers and lobbyists visit the Commission's website, log in online and file the reports as soon as the reporting period opens. The next reporting period will be open on Monday, September 1. The filing system is accessible on the Commission's website at <https://apps.klec.ky.gov/lec/onlinefiling.aspx>.

Expense Reports Are Due September 15, 2025!

The Code of Legislative Ethics requires all lobbyists and employers to file their updated registration statements on the 15th day of January, February, March, April, May, and September of each year. We appreciate the timeliness and diligence shown by the filers. These disclosure statements enable the public, legislators, and media to ascertain the extent of legislative lobbying in the Commonwealth, an important goal at all times.

Registration statements from lobbyists and employers for the period of May 1- August 31, 2025 will be due on Monday, September 15, 2025, per KRS 6.807(3). The easiest and quickest way for lobbyists and employers to file expense forms is to visit the Commission's website at: <https://apps.klec.ky.gov/lec/onlinefiling.aspx>. Commission staff have sent every employer and lobbyist information on how to file online, or via email or fax.

Below are the dates when forms are due and the date range each form covers. Please make a note of these dates on your calendar:

<u>Reporting Period:</u>	<u>Due:</u>
January 1 - 31	February 15 th
February 1 - 28	March 15 th
March 1 - 31	April 15 th
April 1 - 30	May 15 th
May 1 - August 31	September 15 th
Sept. 1 – December 31	January 15 th

Reminder - Be sure to report any expenditures made in conjunction with legislative conferences this summer. This would also include any sponsorships of events at these conferences. There were three legislative conferences this summer:

50th National Conference of State Legislatures Legislative Summit -- August 4-6, 2025, Boston, Massachusetts at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center.

79th Southern Legislative Conference Annual Meeting -- July 19-23, 2025, Birmingham, Alabama at the Birmingham Jefferson Convention Center.

52nd American Legislative Exchange Council Annual Meeting – July 16-18, 2025, Indianapolis, Indiana at the JW Marriott Indianapolis.

Newly-Registered and Terminated Lobbying Employers

The following businesses and organizations recently registered to lobby in Kentucky:

Balanced Budget Amendment, Inc., Consumers' Defense, Dare to Care, D.S. Education Foundation, Inc., General Matter, KY Derby Festival, Inc., KY Nonprofit Recovery Alliance, Lexington Children's Museum, Inc., Metals Innovation Initiative, Recovery Now, Total Wine & More, Via Science, Inc., and VSP Vision Inc.

The following businesses and organizations recently terminated in Kentucky:

Actors Theatre of Louisville, Giffords, KY Equal Justice Center, and Secure Democracy USA & Affiliated Organizations

Ethics & Lobbying News from around the U.S.

NC Lawmaker's Judicial Campaign Faces Complaint Over Lobbyist Donation

By: Ahmed Jallow – **Yahoo! News** - August 8, 2025

A formal complaint asks the State Board of Elections to rule on the legality of a \$6,800 donation to Rep. Sarah Stevens' judicial campaign.

Bob Hall, former director of the nonpartisan watchdog group Democracy North Carolina and a longtime campaign finance watchdog, filed a formal complaint Friday asking the State Board of Elections to rule that a \$6,800 donation from lobbyist Harold Brubaker to Rep. Sarah Stevens' judicial campaign violates state law.

The complaint, submitted Friday, followed an NC Newsline story that highlighted a contribution from Brubaker, a longtime lobbyist and former House speaker. The story reported that Brubaker contributed to Stevens' newly formed judicial campaign committee, "Stevens for Justice," on June 23 while the General Assembly was still in session.

Hall is asking the Board to declare the contribution illegal and require Stevens to forfeit the money to the state's Civil Penalty and Forfeiture Fund, which supports public education.

"This statute applies whether or not the General Assembly is in regular session," Hall wrote. "It was also upheld by the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals as a reasonable restriction to address possible corruption."

North Carolina law prohibits registered lobbyists from contributing to sitting legislators' campaign regardless of the office the legislator is seeking, and also bars lawmakers from soliciting or accepting such donations.

"Rather than focus on the office being sought, the statute focuses on the person's status when the contribution is made — is that person a legislator or not?" Hall wrote. "Put simply, it prohibits any state-regulated contribution from a lobbyist to any candidate campaign committee when the candidate is a member of the General Assembly."

Stevens, a Republican from Surry County who chairs the House Election Law and Campaign Finance Reform Committee, converted her legislative committee into a Supreme Court campaign earlier this year. Her race is expected to be among the most closely watched in 2026.

Neither Stevens nor Brubaker have disputed that the contribution occurred. In comments to NC Newsline prior to the complaint, both maintained the donation was legal because it was designated for a judicial campaign, not a legislative one.

But Hall's complaint argues that interpretation misreads the law. It also cites a separate \$1,500 contribution made in June by lobbyist Andy Munn to Stevens' judicial campaign, calling for similar forfeiture.

Hall acknowledged in his letter that both Stevens and Brubaker likely believed the contribution was allowed. "They did not intend to break state law," he wrote. "However, I believe the contribution should be declared illegal and forfeited, as well as any others from registered lobbyists from early May into August."

The complaint underscores confusion that may stem from a wave of lobbyist donations made to then Speaker Tim Moore's congressional campaign last year. Those contributions were not subject to state restrictions because they went to a federal race. Brubaker, for example, donated the federal maximum of \$6,600 to Moore's 2024 campaign.

The State Board of Elections has not yet announced whether it will investigate Hall's complaint. All campaign finance investigations are confidential, according to the Board of Election's website.

Oregon Government Ethics Commission Opens Third Investigation in 2025 For State Lawmaker

By: Dianne Lugo - **Salem Statesman Journal** - August 8, 2025

The Oregon Government Ethics Commission on Aug. 8 launched an investigation into whether state Rep. Greg Smith, R-Heppner, violated state law regarding the reporting of income sources, marking the third probe into potential violations by Smith in recent months.

The commission voted unanimously to open an investigation into whether Smith violated state laws when he failed to disclose income from the Morrow Development Corporation in his 2024 and 2025 Statements of Economic Interest.

Smith did not appear or speak during the meeting and did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

He has been a representative of Oregon's House District 57 since 2001. The district includes Umatilla, Morrow, Gilliam, Sherman, Wheeler, Wasco, Jefferson, Marion and Clackamas counties.

State Rep. Greg Smith failed to disclose client, preliminary review says

Public officials must list in their annual disclosure statements the name, principal address and a brief description of any source of income that accounts for 10% or more of their household's total annual income. As of 2024, they are also required to list additional information about sources of income for listed businesses.

They are required to list clients who contribute 10% or more of the business's gross annual income and have a legislative or administrative interest in the public body that the public official serves.

A complaint alleged that Smith's income from the Morrow Development Corporation meets the criteria and should have been reported. According to the preliminary review report, Smith confirmed MDC does contribute more than 10% of income for Gregory Smith & Company, LLC, which is focused on business development.

The report added that because the Morrow Development Corporation is registered to do and does business in Oregon, it appears to have a legislative or administrative interest in the Legislature.

The investigator said Smith contended, however, that he had called OGEC for advice this year regarding whether he needed to report the income from MDC. The investigator said the call included "a couple" of different topics related to the SEI filing and that she could not recall if Smith inquired specifically about MDC.

"Still, due to the failure to disclose Morrow Development Corporation on both his 2024 and 2025 SCI, there is a substantial objective basis to believe that Representative Smith failed to report a client that constitutes 10% or more of his business's income and has a legislative or administrative interest," investigator Casey Fenstermaker said.

Both filings have been amended to include MDC as of Aug. 8.

OGEC opened investigations into state Rep. Greg Smith earlier in 2025

The Aug. 8 vote is not the first time the ethics commission has taken action related to Smith in 2025. On June 13, the commission opened an investigation into Smith's role as executive director of the Columbia Development Authority.

Commissioners are investigating whether Smith improperly used his position when he received a pay raise from \$129,000 to \$195,000 and failed to disclose an apparent conflict of interest in the process.

The pay raise was later reversed, according to reporting from the Malheur Enterprise.

Smith also received a letter of education in lieu of a financial penalty in March for another investigation the commission had opened on Jan. 24.

The commission investigated Smith's failure to list Harney County as a source of income for his business, even though Harney County contributed more than 10% of the business' gross annual income and has a legislative or administrative interest in his decisions or votes as a representative.

The actions described constitute one violation of state ethics law, the commission's final order said.

In addition to the ethics cases, Smith is also a defendant in a \$6.9 million lawsuit filed in July by Oregon Attorney General Dan Rayfield against a group of Morrow County officials.

The lawsuit alleges eight officials, including Smith, abused their positions as board members of a nonprofit named Inland Development Corp. when it sold a for-profit subsidiary, Windwave Communications, to themselves.

The lawsuit claims Windwave was valued at \$9.5 million but was purchased for \$2.6 million.

"These were people in power who knew that Windwave was about to explode in value—and instead of protecting the public's interest, they cashed in," said Rayfield in a July 15 press release.