



## ETHICS REPORTER

June 2026

Kentucky Legislative Ethics Commission  
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<https://klec.ky.gov>

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### [KY Ethics Code Applies Even If You Attend a Summer Conference](#)

Kentucky's Code of Legislative Ethics, applies to legislators, employers of lobbyists and lobbyists who attend legislative conferences in state or in other states. With the **Southern Legislative Conference (SLC)** being held in Lexington in July, there are several reporting requirements which might apply this year.

Kentucky lobbyists and their employers are required to report the value of food, beverages, and facilities contributed to **SLC** events to which Kentucky legislators are invited. Lobbyists and employers are also required to report other expenses incurred in conjunction with **SLC**, if the expenses are directly associated with the employer's or lobbyist's lobbying activities. These include expenses for educational and promotional items, and conference registration and travel expenses.

Ethics code amendments adopted by the 2014 General Assembly prohibit lobbyists and employers from buying food and beverages for individual legislators, and prohibit lobbyists and employers from providing out-of-state transportation or lodging for legislators.

Legislators interested in attending an out-of-state meeting are required to obtain approval for that travel from the presiding officer of the chamber in which they serve.

#### **Legislative conferences this summer include:**

- **National Conference of State Legislatures** Legislative Summit -- July 27-29, 2026, Chicago, Illinois at the McCormick Place Chicago West Building, with speakers including Cliff Hayes, State Delegate from the Virginia General Assembly, Timothy Galluzi, Chief Information Officer from the Nevada Governor's Technology Office and Craig J. Coughlin, Speaker from the New Jersey General Assembly.
- **Southern Legislative Conference** Annual Meeting -- July 11-15, 2026, Lexington, Kentucky at the Central Bank Center in downtown Lexington, with the primary host and speaker being Kentucky Pro Tempore David Meade. Rep. Meade is also the Chair of the Council of State Governments South.
- **American Legislative Exchange Council** Annual Meeting – July 22-24, 2026, Orlando, at the JW Marriott Orlando, Grande Lakes, with speakers including Rep. Demi Busatta Cabrera, from the Florida General Assembly, Lee Schalk, the ALEC Senior Vice-President of Policy, Jonathan Williams, the ALEC Senior Vice-President and Chief Economist and Dr. Arthur B. Laffer & Stephen Moore, Co-Authors of the *Rich States, Poor States report*.

If you have any questions or specific scenarios you'd like to run by our staff, feel free to contact the Commission office at 502-573-2863.

## [Refresher – Lobbyists Cannot Contribute to Legislators Seeking Other Offices](#)

This notice from the Legislative Ethics Commission advises that each of Kentucky's 707 registered legislative agents (lobbyists) is prohibited from making a campaign contribution to a member of the General Assembly who is a candidate for any state office, including a member who is on a slate of candidates.

Each lobbyist is also prohibited from serving as a campaign treasurer, or directly soliciting, controlling, or delivering a campaign contribution for a legislator.

The Legislative Ethics Commission issued a formal opinion (OLEC 95-8) on this question in 1995, and this advisory notice relies on that opinion. In that opinion, the Commission cited the statute (KRS 6.811) in the Code of Legislative Ethics, which specifies that "a legislative agent shall not make a campaign contribution to a legislator . . ."

Based on that statute, the Commission advised that a legislative agent is prohibited by the ethics code from making a campaign contribution to a member of the General Assembly seeking a statewide office. The opinion also states that the code of ethics does not apply to candidates for statewide office who are not members of the General Assembly.

In 2014, the General Assembly amended KRS 6.811 to add language prohibiting a lobbyist from directly soliciting, controlling, or delivering a campaign contribution to a legislator or a candidate for election to the General Assembly.

Likewise, KRS 6.767 in the ethics code states that a member of the General Assembly shall not accept a campaign contribution from a legislative agent, and that prohibition applies whether the legislator is seeking re-election to the General Assembly, or election to another state office.

## [Newly-Registered and Terminated Lobbying Employers](#)

The following organization recently registered to lobby in Kentucky:

**Future of Life Institute**

**Industrial Equity Partners LLC**

**Institute for Justice**

**Island Technology, Inc.**

**Risepoint, LLC**

The following organizations recently terminated their status in Kentucky:

**First Southern Funding, LLC**

**International Motors, LLC**

**Nelson Co. Fiscal Court**

**Universal Guaranty Life Insurance Co.**

## [Ethics & Lobbying News from around the U.S.](#)

### **Maryland Lawmaker Helped Launch State Fund That Bankrolls His Nonprofit**

By: Patrick Hauf – [FoxBaltimore.com](#) – June 17, 2026

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (WBFF) — A Maryland lawmaker helped establish an energy fund that later sent about \$19 million in state tax dollars to his nonprofit, raising concerns from some experts and a fellow lawmaker about government ethics and conflicts of interest.

Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) records reviewed by *Spotlight on Maryland* show Civic Works, the Baltimore nonprofit led by Del. Dana Stein, received \$18.8 million through the Strategic Energy Investment Fund, or SEIF, between 2009 and 2025.

Stein, a Baltimore County Democrat who took office in 2007, cosponsored a 2008 bill that established SEIF. The fund supports energy-efficiency, solar and other clean-energy programs and is financed through carbon-emissions fees and penalties paid by energy companies under Maryland law.

Civic Works provides a variety of taxpayer-funded programs focused on energy, farming, employment and housing.

*Spotlight on Maryland* reviewed documentation showing when Stein decided to recuse himself from voting on legislation due to a potential financial impact on his nonprofit, where he's worked as executive director before and since his election. None of the recusals regarded SEIF.

Erica Harris, a professor at Florida International University whose work focuses on nonprofit accounting and governance, said public officials should seek to avoid even the appearance of conflicts of interest.

"I probably would have expected him to recuse himself from a vote that would relate to funding that his organization would receive," she told *Spotlight on Maryland*. "I couldn't say exactly if his organization wasn't vetted properly, but it certainly seems to be a conflict of interest."

Brian Chisholm, an Anne Arundel County Republican in the Maryland House of Delegates, also questioned the relationship between Stein's legislative role and Civic Works' funding.

"I think it's just inherent that it is a conflict of interest," he told *Spotlight on Maryland*. "A sixth grader can look at this and say, well, here's a delegate that has a lot of power over this type of funding that is, in turn, getting paid a lot of money to his organization from this funding. And it just doesn't look right to the average ratepayer."

#### **Stein responds**

Stein, in an email statement to *Spotlight on Maryland*, said he was advised his role in establishing SEIF was "in accordance with ethics rules," while also emphasizing that his financial disclosures note Civic Works receives funding through MEA and other state agencies.

"The standard for recusal from legislation is if a bill would result in a financial impact that would flow directly and without any intervening actions (one example of an intervening action is having to participate

in and be selected during a competitive grant application process) to Civic Works as a result of the passage of the bill,” Stein, who makes more than \$230,000 at Civic Works, wrote in the statement. “Under this standard, there was no reason for me to recuse myself from voting on House Bill 368 in 2008, which set up the SEIF, as well as any other legislation related to SEIF, since Civic Works has received SEIF funding only through a competitive grant application process.”

“I have never been involved in applications for SEIF funding, in negotiations for SEIF funding, in any way advocated for Civic Works to receive SEIF funding, or in any way influenced any decision to award funding to Civic Works,” Stein added. “There is no ethics requirement that a legislator recuse themselves from voting on a State operating or capital budget that contains funding that their employer may apply for; to suggest otherwise is incorrect.”

A spokeswoman for Civic Works, in an emailed statement to *Spotlight on Maryland*, said that SEIF funding was used to provide more than 6,000 households with energy-efficiency and solar services, resulting in more than \$1.5 million in annual savings on utility bills.

“There is no conflict of interest or appearance of a conflict of interest,” the spokeswoman wrote. “Civic Works has maintained a clear division between Dana Stein’s employment at Civic Works and his part-time legislative role. Civic Works excludes Dana Stein from the organization’s government grant application and award process. He has not been involved in Civic Works’ SEIF-funded grants, which are awarded through statewide competitive application processes.”

### **‘Clear as mud’**

Chisholm criticized Maryland’s ethics rules in the State House and said nonprofits run by lawmakers should not be allowed to receive taxpayer dollars.

“I think that our ethics rules are clear as mud—nobody understands what they are,” Chisholm said. “[Stein] is influencing the money to get there, whether it’s through different reports or whatever. But the money is showing up at Civic Works, and he’s got something to do with it, because he sits in a legislature on one of the most powerful energy committees there is in Annapolis.”

MEA did not respond to questions about whether it is a conflict of interest for Civic Works to receive SEIF funds while its executive director works as a state lawmaker.

A spokeswoman for Maryland Gov. Wes Moore said the state has a fair grantmaking process for how it allocates taxpayer dollars.

“Maryland holds all grant recipients to the same rigorous standards, regardless of any organizational leadership’s outside affiliations and in accordance with state ethics law,” Moore’s spokeswoman emailed *Spotlight on Maryland*. “State agencies award and monitor funding based on program eligibility, performance, impact and compliance — and those accountability standards apply uniformly across every recipient of state dollars.”

David McGarry, a research director at the Taxpayers Protection Alliance, said Maryland taxpayers should question whether Stein is working in their interests or his own.

"There is clearly something here that smells fishy," McGarry told *Spotlight on Maryland*. "I think at a certain point voters have to ask themselves whether the kind of person who has set up a fund that directly benefits that individual is the kind of person you really want in government."

Records reviewed by *Spotlight on Maryland* show Civic Works began receiving SEIF-funded grants in 2009, the first-year recipient information was available. Civic Works received dozens of grants from the program detailed in annual MEA reports through 2025.

The largest awards have come in recent years. Records show Civic Works received approximately \$4.5 million through SEIF-funded programs in 2024 and another \$3.2 million in 2025.

The questions surrounding SEIF funding come as Civic Works faces increased scrutiny over its broader funding and oversight practices.

A previous *Spotlight on Maryland* investigation found Civic Works received approximately \$145 million in combined federal, state and Baltimore City government funding between 2016 and 2025. Federal audits identified repeat concerns at the nonprofit involving financial reporting, grant compliance and internal controls during that period.

The most recent audit, covering fiscal year 2025, reported a repeat significant deficiency in financial reporting. The 2024 audit identified both a significant deficiency and a material weakness, a more severe audit finding. Audits for both years determined Civic Works is not a low-risk auditee.

IRS filings at Civic Works reveal Stein's compensation increased from approximately \$96,000 in 2014 to roughly \$231,000 in 2024. Civic Works doubled its spending on salaries from 2020 to 2024.

## **New York Lobbying Spending Sets Fourth Straight Record**

By: Grace Jiang – [MSN.com](https://www.msn.com) – June 3, 2026

ALBANY - For the fourth year in a row, spending to influence state government officials and lawmakers set a record last year, with lobbyists and their clients reporting more than \$384.8 million expended.

The new record, according to a report from state Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government, came with a messier figure attached: \$23.47 million in discrepancies between what clients said they paid and what their lobbyists reported earning. The agency resolved most of those gaps one filing at a time and is pressing the state for money to automate the work.

The increase in spending itself was modest, with a less than 1% increase from the previous year. The longer arc is the story: spending has set a record four years running, with efforts to influence gambling and housing leading the latest surge.

The Coalition for New York's Future was the single largest spender, followed by two gaming-linked clients, Genting New York and Queens Future. Hospital and beverage-industry groups rounded out the top tier.

"Lobbying spending reached a new record level in 2025 led by spending on gaming and housing," said Seymour W. James, the commission's chairman. He said the growth makes accurate reporting "more important now than ever."

Created in 2022 to replace the scandal-plagued Joint Commission on Public Ethics, the new commission polices lobbying and ethics across a state workforce of more than 330,000. A central task is reconciling what lobbyists report earning against what their clients report paying, a cross-check meant to give the public an accurate picture on who funds influence campaigns at the Capitol.

That reconciliation is where the \$23.47 million in differences turned up, and the commission's staff cleared more than 92% of it, often by calling filers individually to correct the record.

The single largest gap, just under \$1 million, involved a 1199SEIU health care entity and the lobbying firm Cordo & Company. The agency also flagged upwards of \$860,000 in unreported lobbying expenses and identified a handful of lobbyists who had never registered.

The commission framed its budget request for more resources as a public-access issue. Its lobbying database draws more than 11 million visits a year, the agency said, yet still forces users to open filings one at a time.

It asked lawmakers for \$750,000 to build a system that would catch errors as reports come in and let the public track spending trends across the state. The allocation request was not approved.

"The people of New York are entitled to have a clear, accurate, and timely view of the efforts being made to influence government decision-making," said Sanford Berland, the commission's executive director. Filings, he added, must be "complete, accurate, and filed when due."

The commission's work extends beyond lobbying dollars. Last year, it processed nearly 200 ethics and lobbying matters and elevated 16 to formal investigations. It also closed a long-running case tied to former state Sen. Jeffrey Klein without issuing a finding against him.

The report carried good news for the commission. It resolved the overwhelming majority of disputed dollars, ethics training reached more than 267,000 state employees, and inquiries to the agency declined, a drop that officials attributed to better training and resources.

A reporting difference, moreover, does not by itself signal wrongdoing. The totals are self-reported, and many gaps come from clerical errors or timing rather than concealment.