

ETHICS REPORTER

March 2025



Kentucky Legislative Ethics Commission
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[Staff Promotions at Commission Office](#)

The Ethics Commission has appointed **Donnita Crittenden** as Assistant Executive Director of the Commission. Mrs. Crittenden was previously the Executive Assistant and has dedicated 32 years of service to this office. She is a graduate of Kentucky State University where she received her bachelor's degree in Public Administration.

The Ethics Commission has also appointed **Lori Mucci Smither** as the Executive Assistant to the Commission. Mrs. Smither was previously the Staff Assistant for the Ethics Commission and has dedicated 17 years of service to this office. She has a degree from the University of Kentucky in four areas of Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education.

Please join us in congratulating Donnita and Lori on their promotions!

[Lobbying Report Deadline](#)

Tuesday, April 15, 2025 is the next reporting deadline for lobbying entities. All lobbyists and employers are required to file Updated Registration Statements by that date, for the period of **March 1 through March 31, 2025**. The reporting period will be open for filing these reports on April 1, 2025.

The easiest and quickest way for lobbyists and employers to file is to visit the Commission's website <https://apps.klec.ky.gov/lec/onlinefiling.aspx> and file online.

If you normally email forms to our office, have any changes to previously filed forms or need password resets, please be sure to send them to lori.smither@kylegislature.gov.

[Legislators' Financial Disclosure Forms Available Online](#)

All members of the General Assembly are required to file financial disclosure statements for the preceding calendar year. These forms have been received and are ready for viewing on our website at <https://klec.ky.gov/Reports/Pages/Legislators-and-Candidates.aspx>.

[2025 Session Lobbying Spending Down From Previous Years](#)

In comparing January and February spending in odd-year sessions, employers and lobbyists spent \$5.771 million on lobbying the legislature in 2025, which is slightly less than the \$5.987 million spent in January and February in 2023.

Employers spent almost \$5.1 million to pay compensation to their lobbyists. An additional \$179,327 was spent on lobbying related administrative costs, such as travel and other expenses. Lobbyists on their own spent \$171,798 on out-of-pocket expenses during this time period.

Employers spent \$63,326 on advertising and \$184,081 on receptions, meals and events in January and February, 2025. Lobbyists aren't required to report advertising but spent \$16,310 on receptions, meals and events for legislators and LRC staff.

There are currently 720 legislative agents (lobbyists) and 922 employers registered to lobby. The 2025 top spender, so far, is **KY Chamber of Commerce**, which spent \$94,000 in the last two months, the majority of that amount - \$89,682 - was compensation paid to their lobbyists. **Americans for Prosperity** was second, spending \$58,058 on lobbying the legislature. The rest of the top 5 are: **KY League of Cities, Inc.** (\$52,045); **KY Hospital Association** (\$50,311); and **KY Retail Federation, Inc.** (\$45,968).

The remaining companies in the top 20 spending list are: **LG&E and KU Energy LLC** (\$39,382); **Elevance Health and Affiliates DBA Anthem, Inc.** (\$38,000); **Suntory Global Spirits** (\$32,950); **Sazerac Company** (\$32,637); **KY Assn. of Electric Cooperatives, Inc.** (\$32,586); **KY Automobile Dealers Assn.** (\$31,150); **KY Bankers Association** (\$30,468); **Altria Client Services, LLC** (\$28,765); **KY Credit Union League, Inc.** (\$28,462); **American Civil Liberties Union of KY** (\$28,312); **KY Justice Association** (\$27,869); **KY Medical Association** (\$27,346); **American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network** (\$27,099); **KY Primary Care Association** (\$27,000); and **HCA Healthcare, Inc.** (\$26,108);

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

The following businesses and organizations recently registered to lobby in Kentucky: **AbbVie, Inc., AMAC Action, Inc. Cleary Construction, Enova International, Ethan Health, Global Laser Enrichment, Home School Legal Defense Assn., Howling at the Moon, LLC, KY Assn. of Master Contractors, KY Auctioneers Assn., KY Broadband and Cable Assn., KY Pork Producers Assn., Messer Construction, Perry County, KY, Pet Advocacy Network, Sanitation District No. 1, Sierra Club, Thompson Consulting Services, LLC, Tobacco-Free Kids Action Fund, Trevor Project, Inc. (The), USWM, LLC, and Wallace Family.**

The following businesses and organizations recently terminated in Kentucky: **ALS Association (The), Cordish Companies (The), Johnson & Johnson, KY Cable Telecommunications Assn., Kinship, and Velocity BioGroup.**

Ethics & Lobbying News from around the U.S.

One signature away from becoming law, lobbyists worry over reporting bill

By: MEGAN GLEASON - ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL, N.M. - MARCH 20, 2025

Some New Mexico lobbyists say a bill headed to Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's desk is a targeted, logistical nightmare, but backers say more transparency from individuals who work to influence legislators is long overdue.

Sitting on the governor's desk is legislation that would require lobbyists, or their employers, to file "lobbyist activity reports" disclosing stances on bills they're influencing, and, if positions change, to update their stances within 48 hours.

The legislation, which has failed repeatedly to pass the Legislature in the past, surprised even the bill's sponsors in its passage of both chambers.

Currently, lobbyists only need to publicly report who's employing them and money spent to benefit legislators for lobbying purposes. Bill sponsor Sen. Jeff Steinborn, D-Las Cruces, described that as negligible, "next to nothing."

So he's been working for years to pass additional reporting legislation, only to have it fail time and time again. He said transparency changes are some of the most difficult measures to pass in the Roundhouse, and this year's passage of House Bill 143 shows the uphill battle is worth it.

"It's given me a hope that we can continue to fight for big things and fight for transparency and good government," Steinborn said.

The Senate Tax, Business and Transportation Committee passed the bill over the weekend. Charlie Marquez, a contract lobbyist who doesn't support the legislation, said leadership initially said it would be rolled — at which point he left the committee — but ultimately heard it.

That was the last chance for public comment, as the bill went to the full Senate after that and then the full House again.

"Lobbyists have a lot to bring to the table, and I think they should be at the table helping craft legislation like this," said J.D. Bullington, a big-name lobbyist of 28 years representing more than 20 clients this year. Both he and Marquez said nobody asked them for input on the bill.

Steinborn said he didn't really confer with lobbyists when crafting the legislation, which he described as straightforward.

"They never liked it, and they never wanted it," he said.

Co-sponsor Rep. Sarah Silva, D-Las Cruces, said the lobbyists she reached out to either would only support the measure off the record or didn't respond.

Silva also expected more of a fight getting it through the House floor again for concurrence, a process of agreement when the other chamber makes changes to a bill. But in about a minute on Wednesday evening, the House floor agreed to send the bill to the governor.

It was different from the version the House sent over to the Senate, which Republicans amended to include restrictions on spending money on meals and beverages for legislators. The Senate stripped that out. Republicans voted against the bill in the House as well as the Senate.

Silva said the last time the Legislature passed a major transparency bill — updating the Lobbyist Regulation Act — was six years ago. Lujan Grisham signed that measure, which gives her hope now.

"I am just really excited that folks that can't make it to the Roundhouse (could) now have a better, more true picture of what happens here," she said, "because these are their bills, this is their Roundhouse, and they can't be here full time."

While the bill sponsors said they haven't heard anything from the Governor's Office, they're relieved it's at least through the Legislature. Lujan Grisham has until April 11 to sign or veto the legislation.

The bill has raised red flags for some lobbyists, who are concerned HB143 would worsen existing logistical issues and be overly burdensome. The lobbying activity for specific bills would be linked on the Legislature's website alongside the bills.

Bullington said this has the potential to create a "logistical nightmare" for the Secretary of State's Office, where reports are filed, and the Legislative Council Service, which would have to update the Legislature website to post the filings alongside bills.

The secretary of state's filing system is also incredibly difficult to navigate, according to Marquez, who said it took two months for him to get through the registration process this year because of a glitch in the system.

Both lobbyists said they might support less burdensome filing requirements. Marquez said reporting should only be required once every 30 days in a session, and Bullington suggested filing one report at the end of the session.

Steinborn said the filing will become second nature, and the bill doesn't go into effect, if signed, until 2027 so the Secretary of State's Office can work out all the technical kinks.

"So no, it's not overly burdensome, or maybe even burdensome," he said.

A legislative analysis of the bill describes it as a modernization effort that follows nationwide trends.

Dick Mason, an unpaid lobbyist for the League of Women Voters, echoed the sentiment and said even still, many other states will have better transparency measures than New Mexico.

"It's not a question of trust (for lobbyists). It's a question of putting the information out there," Mason said.

Still, the measure could act as an impetus for now-disconcerted contracted lobbyists to form an organization of their own to lobby on their positions.

"I think there's going to be more conversations about the professional lobbyists organizing a little more formally to better represent our profession," Bullington said.

No More Free Meals? House Approves Bill Restricting Certain Lobbyist Spending

By: Dan Boyd – JOURNAL CAPITOL BUREAU – March 4, 2025

SANTA FE — In a surprise twist, a bill expanding lobbyist reporting requirements at the Roundhouse was broadened Tuesday before passing the state House.

The approved change to the bill would also prohibit lobbyists from spending large amounts on food, beverages or entertainment for state-elected officials — including lawmakers — during and just before legislative sessions.

House Minority Whip Alan Martinez, R-Bernalillo, said the change would mean no more free meals in Santa Fe for lawmakers, which is a common occurrence during sessions.

"It would require us to pay our own way," he said during Tuesday's debate.

But other GOP-backed amendments, such as new restrictions on political contributions by non-profit employees, were voted down by majority Democrats.

Rep. Sarah Silva, D-Las Cruces, the sponsor of the initial lobbyist disclosure bill, House Bill 143, said the measure is intended to provide more public information about lobbyists' activities at the Capitol.

Specifically, it would require lobbyists to disclose which bills they worked on during legislative sessions — and their stance on those bills.

"Really what we want to have is a full picture of the lifespan of a bill," Silva said.

But the first-term lawmaker appeared skeptical about some of the proposed bill amendments, saying she had not previously seen Republican support for transparency measures.

That prompted a sharp response from Martinez, who said he was personally offended by the remark.

After three hours of debate, the revised bill passed the House on a 36-26 vote.

Most Democrats voted in favor, though four cast "no" votes, while all but one Republican voted against the legislation.

That lone Republican, Rep. Luis Terrazas of Silver City, tried unsuccessfully to extend lobbyist reporting requirements to advocates who pay or otherwise compensate others to testify for or against bills at the Roundhouse.

“If we’re going to open the curtain, let’s pull open the whole curtain,” Terrazas said.

Spending by registered New Mexico lobbyists has increased in recent years, even as the state has ranked toward the bottom in national rankings of state-by-state lobbyist disclosure laws.

During a three-month period last year that encompassed the 30-day legislative session, lobbyists spent \$293,608 on meals, beverages, advertising, emails, gifts, awards, and supplies for legislators and their staff, according to the State Ethics Commission.

However, previous attempts to require more lobbyist disclosure have stalled at the Roundhouse.

Amelia Bierle, the State Ethics Commission’s deputy director, said Tuesday the agency was still reviewing the amendment adopted by the House.

But she said the agency was in general “always supportive of more transparency in the legislative process.”

Currently, New Mexico’s more than 600 registered lobbyists must report spending that exceeds \$500 during the session. Other reports are due periodically throughout the year.

If approved, the proposed legislation would take effect in 2027. It now advances to the Senate with just over two weeks left in this year’s 60-day session.