

**ETHICS REPORTER**

**May, 2022**

Kentucky Legislative Ethics Commission

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***Hey big spender… it’s a new record***

Rebounding from a lower spending total for the previous even-year session in 2020, employers and lobbyists registered with the Commission spent a record-setting **$11,130,780** to lobby the Kentucky General Assembly. The previous record for spending during a legislative session was set in 2018, during which $10.67 million was spent to influence legislators regarding legislative issues.

Expressed another way, if that $11.1 million was divided equally among the 138 legislators, just over $80,000 would have been spent per capita in lobbying efforts.

There are 826 businesses and organizations lobbying the General Assembly, with 647 lobbyists working for those employers.

Lobbying spending for the past four months was led by the **Kentucky Chamber of Commerce**, which spent $183,949. Coming in second was **Kentucky Hospital Association** with $149,046.

The other top 10 spenders were: **American Civil Liberties Union of Kentucky** ($128,258); **Altria Client Services LLC (Philip Morris)** ($126,793); **Pace-O-Matic of Kentucky** ($106,150); **Kentucky League of Cities, Inc.** ($102,195); **Pharmaceutical Care Management Association** ($86,168); **Greater Louisville, Inc.** ($82,290); **Kentucky Retail Federation, Inc.** ($82,118); and **Anthem Inc. and its Affiliates** ($70,597).

The rest of the top 25 spenders were: **Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation, Inc.** ($60,199); **Kentucky Petroleum Marketers Association** ($57,938); **Kentucky Association of Electric Cooperatives, Inc.** ($57,492); **Kentucky Bankers Association** ($55,780); **Kentucky Equine Education Alliance** ($55,632); **Kentucky Medical Association** ($54,044); **Kentucky Justice Association** ($52,305); **Kentucky State Building & Construction Trades Council** ($52,170); **Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of Kentucky, Inc.** ($51,235); **Kentucky Automobile Dealers Association** ($50,597); **East Kentucky Power Cooperative, Inc.** ($49,275); **HCA Healthcare, Inc.** ($48,832); **Secure Democracy USA** ($48,814); **Kentucky Education Association** ($47,508); and **Academic Partnerships, LLC** ($47,500).

The Legislative Ethics Commission’s searchable register of lobbyists and employers, as well as lobbying expenditures is online at <http://apps.klec.ky.gov/searchregister.asp>. Additionally, employers are required, during legislative sessions, to list specific bill numbers on which they lobby, and a list of those is available on the KLEC website at <https://klec.ky.gov/Reports/Pages/Employers-and-Legislative-Agents.aspx> (under “Bills Lobbied”). Amounts spent on lobbying, required to be disclosed to KLEC 6 times per year, may be found under the same link.

***Lobbyist compensation, and spending on meals, receptions and events***

During the 2022 regular session, lobbyists were paid just over $10 million in compensation for their lobbying work on behalf of employers who sought to influence the public policy of the Commonwealth.

The following 10 legislative agents were paid the most to lobby the General Assembly during that four month period:

**John McCarthy**-$350,028

**Robert Babbage**-$279,500

**Steven Huffman**-$252,000

**Sean Cutter**- $239,234

**Patrick Jennings**-$223,921

**Trey Grayson**-$217,130

**Chris Nolan**-$213,714

**Steve Robertson**-$213,259

**Ronald Pryor**-$211,999

**Kelley Abell**-$201,934

Legislative employers spent a total of $168,675 on meals, receptions, and events for legislators and legislative staff members during the 2022 legislative session and through the end of April. The top fifteen spenders in this category were:

1. **Kentucky Chamber of Commerce**-$9,262 (Capitol Annex luncheon and Annual Kentucky Chamber Day Dinner, Lexington, legislators);
2. **Kentucky Equine Education Alliance (KEEP)**-$7,896 (Capitol Annex breakfast, and reception at Castle & Key Distillery, Frankfort, legislators);
3. **Kentucky State Police Professional Association**-$5,994 (10 breakfasts for legislators in the Capitol Annex cafeteria);
4. **Kentucky Aviation Association**-$5,661 (Reception for members of the Aerospace Aviation Caucus at Berry Hill Mansion, Frankfort);
5. **Kentucky Association of Counties**-$5,530 (2 Capitol Annex luncheons and a reception, for legislators and LRC staff);
6. **Kentucky Association of School Administrators**-$5,024 (Luncheon at Frankfort VFW for legislators and LRC staff);
7. **Kentucky League of Cities**-$5,003 (Capitol Annex luncheon, and City Night at Kentucky History Center, Frankfort, for legislators and LRC staff);
8. **The College Board**-$4,985 (Capitol Annex luncheon for legislators);
9. **Kentucky Coal Association**-$4,790 (Reception at Foundry on Broadway, Frankfort, for legislators);
10. **Kentucky Oil and Gas Association**-$4,790 (Reception at Foundry on Broadway, Frankfort, for legislators);
11. **Kentucky Association of Nurse Anesthetists**-$4,682 (Capitol Annex luncheon, and reception at Goodwood Brewing, Frankfort, legislators and LRC staff);
12. **AT&T**-$4,100 (2 Capitol Annex luncheons, Annual Kentucky Chamber Day Dinner, Lexington, West Kentucky Thank You Night, KSU, Frankfort Area Chamber Day at the Capitol-legislators; and Breakfast, CVG Airport Marriot, Northern Kentucky Caucus);
13. **Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport**-$3,650 (Capitol Annex luncheon, Annual Kentucky Chamber Day Dinner, Lexington, legislators, and Breakfast, CVG Airport Marriot, Northern Kentucky Caucus);
14. **Keeneland Association**-$3,371 (Luncheon and races at Keeneland, Lexington, Members of Licensing and Occupations Committee); and
15. **Kentucky Health Departments Association**-$3,325 (Capitol Annex luncheon, legislators and LRC staff).

***Advertising on Legislation for the 2022 Session***

The 2022 Regular Session brought with it spending on advertising supporting and opposing legislation, which is required to be reported by registered lobbying employers if it appears during a legislative session, of $270,291. Several businesses and organizations registered with the Commission had significant advertising spending.

The top 10 employers’ spending on advertising during the session were:

1. **Pharmaceutical Care Management Association (PCMA)**: $52,634 on statewide internet, television and newspaper advertising on HB 457;
2. **Secure Democracy USA:** $40,814 on polling Kentucky voters on voter eligibility for persons with prior felony convictions, and statewide polling in support of SB 223;
3. **Kentucky Retired Teachers Association:** $38,950 on website, email, social media, and text alerts regarding teacher pension and health insurance legislation;
4. **Kentucky Petroleum Marketers Association:** $32,342 on statewide internet ads and costs for infrastructure funding and road fund revenues/HB 8;
5. **Kentucky Hospital Association:** $23,000 on public relations advertising on HB 505 and 777;
6. **Kentucky Marina Association:** $20,800 on calls and digital advertising on HB 8;
7. **Kentucky Association of Regional MH-MR Programs:** $15,000 on internet, social media, newspaper and phone advertising on HB 349;
8. **Kentucky Center for Economic Policy:** $13,143 on patch through calls on HB 7, and advertising on Facebook on tax cut issues, HB 4, HB 7, HB 8, HB 313, and SB 313;
9. **American Civil Liberties Union of Kentucky (ACLU):** $9,262 on Facebook training, social media marketing, advertising and videos regarding abortion, reform, LGBTQ issues and SB 83 and HB 23; and
10. **Convention of States Action:** $5,735 on social media, texting, digital banners, online, radio, television, email, and newsletter advertising on SJR 56 and HJR 4.

***Commission Office Procedures and Contacts***

#### Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and following guidance from federal, state, and local officials, the Commission halted in-person services at its Frankfort office as of Tuesday, March 17, 2020.

As of **July 1, 2021**, the Commission office re-opened its office to the public. We request that you refrain from visiting our office if you are feeling ill, exhibiting symptoms, or have tested positive for COVID. We would also encourage you to wear a mask if this would make you more comfortable while visiting. We are also happy to speak to you over the phone or via Zoom, at any time.

We encourage you to continue to contact us via the means listed below, and by filing electronically or by scanning paperwork and emailing it to us. If you need to send the Commission copies of paperwork, it is most efficient to scan and email it to the email addresses as listed on the staff page, or fax to the number below.

Legislators, staff, lobbyists, employers, and the public may continue to contact the office by phone at (502) 573-2863, by fax at (502) 573-2929, and via the email addresses listed on the staff page: <https://klec.ky.gov/About-KLEC/Pages/Commission-Staff.aspx>

You may reach Laura Hendrix, Executive Director, at (502) 573-2910, Emily Dennis, Counsel, at (502) 573-2911, and Lori Smither, Staff Assistant, at (502) 564-9084. You may reach Donnita Crittenden, Executive Assistant, at the main Commission number (502) 573-2863.

Continued thanks to the many lobbying entities who have honored our request to begin filing online, and those who have utilized this service for many years. If a lobbyist or employer is currently filing disclosures by paper and would like to file online, please email us and we can contact you with an ID and password.

If an entity needs to register as a lobbyist or employer, please email the required scanned paperwork to Donnita Crittenden or Lori Smither at the staff emails in the link above or fax them to (502) 573-2929. Blank forms may be found here <https://klec.ky.gov/Forms/Pages/Get-Blank-Forms.aspx>

All provisions of the Code of Legislative Ethics are in force during this time. If there is a need for an opinion about the application of the Code to any particular ethical issue that may arise, please continue to contact us and we will answer your questions.

***Next Lobbying Reporting Deadline***

The next registration statements from lobbyists and employers for the period of May 1-August 31, 2022 will be due on **September 15, 2022**, per KRS 6.807(3).

***New and Terminated Employers***

The end of the 2022 legislative session also brought several terminations of lobbying activity reported to the Commission. Terminated employers include: **23andMe; AdventFS; American Kidney Fund, Inc.; Ancestry; Bamboo Health FKA Appriss Health; Broadus Capital; Consumer Energy Alliance; Finseca; Frankfort Independent Schools; Hewlett-Packard Enterprise Company; KY Animal Action; National Association of Social Workers KY Chapter; Ovid Ventures; Owl’s Head Alloys, Inc.; Purdue Pharma LP; RB Seelbach LLC; Recording Industry Association of America, Inc.; and Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill.**

New Employers registering after April 22, 2022 were **Coalition for Genetic Data Protection, Kentucky Hemp Works** and **Students for Life Action**.

***Training for Lobbyists and Employers on video***

The Legislative Ethics Commission has a training video from one of our in-person lobbyist and employer trainings on the LRC Capitol Connection YouTube page, for viewing at any time. The link is on our website, and also on the LRC Capitol Connection page at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojKIWUNV8po&feature=youtu.be>. The video walks through the online filing process in step-by-step detail. Please call us with any questions!

#### ***Overview of Legislative Ethics Code online***

#### The Legislative Ethics Commission has a PowerPoint overview of the Legislative Ethics Code available for reference. The link is on our website, and also on the LRC Capitol Connection page at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I4FJvhrSoao>. Feel free to watch!

***Financial disclosures for candidates and legislators on KLEC site***

The Commission has the statutorily required financial disclosures for legislative candidates and current legislators available on the Commission’s website at <https://klec.ky.gov/Reports/Pages/Legislators-and-Candidates.aspx>.

***Ethics & Lobbying News from around the U.S.***

***After years in committee limbo, a statewide ethics code is finally adopted in Vermont***

**VERMONT**–***VTdigger.org***– by Sarah Mearhoff— May 4, 2022

Gov. Phil Scott signed into law Vermont’s first-ever statewide code of ethics for public officials on Tuesday, putting to rest a yearslong debate in the Statehouse and bringing Vermont in line with a majority of other states.

S. 171 establishes a baseline code of ethics for public officials in the legislative, executive and judiciary branches of state government. It sets boundaries around conflicts of interest, preferential treatment, gifts, outside employment, the use of state employment for personal gain and more. It also protects whistleblowers from retaliation.

Upon signing the bill, Scott said in a statement Tuesday that it “takes a positive step towards ensuring public trust in their elected officials.”Bottom of Form

Christina Sivret, executive director of the Vermont Ethics Commission, said Wednesday that she was “both thrilled and relieved” to see the bill signed into law.

“It was a really bumpy ride for a while, so we didn't know what the end result was going to be,” Sivret told VTDigger.

Different iterations of ethics codes have been trapped in committee limbo for years. After years of mounting pressure from good government advocates and the ethics commission, the Senate Government Operations Committee finally supported S.171 this year.

Once it cleared that committee, the bill flew through the rest of the legislative process with relative ease. Lawmakers in both the Senate and House passed the bill via voice vote, so there is no record of how individual lawmakers voted.

Though it’s a step forward for Vermont, S.171 is unremarkable compared to the rest of the nation. Before it passed, Vermont was one of only five states without statewide codes of ethics for officials.

In February, as the Senate Government Operations Committee wrung its hands over the bill, Jason Grammit, executive director of Rhode Island’s Ethics Commission, testified to lawmakers that Vermont’s proposal was “modest.”

Sivret agreed that S.171 is a “first step” and there’s “room for growth” down the line, especially with regard to the commission’s role.

Vermont’s ethics commission was established in 2017, but the body holds no investigatory or enforcement power.

“We see it as a first step, and it is in many ways modest compared to what other states have,” Sivret said of the new law. “But on the other hand, those states have had codes of ethics in place for a long time, and so they’ve certainly grown and changed over the years.”

***New Mexico lawmaker settles ethics complaint over conduct at DWI stop***

**NEW MEXICO**–***Las Cruces Sun-News***– by Algernon D’Ammassa— April 29, 2022

When state Rep. Georgene Louis was pulled over by Santa Fe police shortly after midnight on Feb. 14, an officer said her eyes were "glassy" and that he detected a smell of alcohol.

As seen on the officer's body camera footage, Louis then said, "I haven't had much sleep because — I'm not trying to, like, say anything, but, like, I'm a legislator so we haven't had much sleep."

"To me, you're just another citizen, another driver on the road," the officer responded.

New Mexico's State Ethics Commission claims Louis broke the law by making reference to her office and then showing her legislative license plate to the officer investigating whether she was driving while intoxicated.

On Thursday, the bipartisan agency announced Louis had paid $250, equivalent to a civil fine, in order to prevent answering the charge in court.

At the time of her traffic stop, the New Mexico Legislature was in the midst of a 30-day legislative session with hundreds of bills making their way through committees and lawmakers often meeting into the night. New Mexico's part-time, unsalaried legislature meets once a year in regular session, alternating between 30 days and 60 days.

Louis, who has served in the state House of Representatives since 2013, chairs the House Government, Elections and Indian Affairs Committee. Immediately following her arrest, a scheduled meeting of her committee was canceled, delaying action on pending legislation.

On April 4, the commission issued a notice to Louis that her references to her public office violated New Mexico's Governmental Conduct Act, which forbids legislators or public officers from using "the powers and resources of public office ... to obtain personal benefits or pursue private interests."

The commission's executive director, Jeremy Farris, informed Louis by letter that her reference to her office, coming after the officer questioned her about her drinking, implied that she was seeking "to obtain preferential treatment from a police officer."

Farris said the commission would file a civil complaint in New Mexico's 2nd Judicial District unless Louis agreed to pay the state $250, equivalent to the penalty for violating the Act.

Farris noted that New Mexico officials have previously made reference to their status as elected officers during law enforcement encounters. He also cited similar violations in the past involving federal officers under similar U.S. statutes.

In May 2018, state Rep. Monica Youngblood, representing a different Albuquerque district, was arrested at a DWI checkpoint. The state Attorney General's Office subsequently filed a complaint with the legislative ethics committee under the act for identifying herself as a legislator and telling police, "I literally fight for you guys." Youngblood was convicted of aggravated DWI and lost her re-election bid later that year.

"The Governmental Conduct Act prohibits such use of the powers and resources of public office," Farris said in a statement, which did not explicitly name the Youngblood case. "The State Ethics Commission will make every effort to enforce that prohibition."

Louis has apologized for the February incident and said she would not seek a sixth term in office, but ignored calls to resign. The presentation of her credentials as a legislator came to light after the *Albuquerque Journal* published the body camera video on YouTube.

As of Friday afternoon, Louis had not commented publicly about the allegation or her decision to pay the settlement, and was not immediately reached by the *Las Cruces Sun-News*.

***Gas giants have been ghostwriting letters of support from elected officials***

***Huffington Post***– by Chris D’Angelo— May 2, 2022

For the past several months, local officials in Virginia and North Carolina have been peppering federal regulators with glowing letters in support of gas projects in their states. Internal emails reviewed by HuffPost show that these letters all had something in common: They were ghostwritten by lobbyists and consultants of the two major pipeline firms behind those projects.

The communications show how Williams Companies Inc. and TC Energy Corporation worked to boost political support for a number of natural gas infrastructure projects currently under federal review to fill a void left behind by Dominion Energy and Duke Energy’s canceled Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

Industry watchdog group Energy and Policy Institute obtained the documents through a series of public records requests that it and others filed. It shared them exclusively with HuffPost.

On Jan. 10, Robert Crockett, the president of Advantus Strategies and a lobbyist for the Oklahoma-based Williams Companies, emailed Wayne Carter, the administrator of Mecklenburg County, Virginia, a draft letter of support for Williams’ Southside Reliability Enhancement Project. The proposed expansion of the company’s existing Transco natural gas pipeline would allow for more natural gas to be transported into North Carolina. The project includes the construction of a new, electric compressor station in Mecklenburg County.

“Attached is a draft letter expressing support to the Williams project that we have reviewed with you and your board previously,” Crockett wrote. “Please feel free to modify.”

Carter put his signature on the letter and sent it back to Crockett a couple of hours later with only minor tweaks.

“Thank you Wayne!” Jay McChesney, a community and project outreach specialist at Williams, responded. “If you wouldn’t mind putting this in the mail and sending to FERC [the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission] that would be much appreciated…Thank you again for your support of our project.”

The letter, which Carter submitted to the regulatory agency later that day on behalf of the county board of supervisors, notes that the project “will be done in a manner that is protective of the environment while providing much-needed benefits to our rural county” and applauds Williams for being “transparent and forthright as an existing corporate citizen in the state.”

“We strongly encourage the FERC to approve this proposed project,” the letter reads.

At least three state legislators — state Sen. Frank Ruff and state Delegates Tommy Wright Jr. and Les Adams — submitted letters to FERC that contain language identical to or closely mirroring the language in Carter’s letter, indicating the extent to which the company worked behind the scenes.

Ruff and Wright also submitted nearly identical letters to FERC in March in support of Williams’ separate Commonwealth Energy Connector Project, another Transco expansion aimed at increasing natural gas supply to southeastern Virginia.

The Transco pipeline runs more than 10,000 miles from Texas to New York, transporting approximately 15% of the nation’s natural gas, according to the company’s website.

Neither Carter nor 10 elected officials who wrote to FERC to throw their support behind the gas projects responded to HuffPost’s request for comment.

Ruff did address HuffPost’s specific questions but said via email that “Williams has been a good corporate citizen that has been involved in the region for over fifty years.”

“They serve businesses that hire my constituents,” Ruff said. “If I did not agree with their value to the region, I would not have endorsed their efforts. I believe others would agree with that.”

Williams Companies did not respond.

Around the same time Williams was pulling political strings in Virginia, Wayne King, a lobbyist, was working to boost support for the project in the Tar Heel State. In January, King’s emails to the offices of North Carolina House Speaker Tim Moore and Mooresville Mayor Miles Atkins, emphasized the need for stakeholders to weigh in.

“For your convenience, I’ve attached a number of talking points,” King wrote in one exchange.

Several of those talking points are included verbatim in the letters Moore and Atkins submitted to FERC, including how Williams is “a responsible corporate citizen, environmental steward, and reliable service provider” and how the project will “stimulate economic development in eastern North Carolina by providing increased access to clean, reliable, and affordable natural gas.”

North Carolina state Sen. Bob Steinburg’s letter to federal regulators also features some of the company’s talking points, including a statement about Williams demonstrating its “commitment to environmental stewardship.”

Columbia Gas Transmission, a wholly owned subsidiary of TC Energy, took similar action to garner support for two related projects it is pursuing in Virginia: the Virginia Reliability Project and Virginia Electrification Project. The projects would replace approximately 50 miles of existing pipeline near Petersburg and upgrade compressor stations in the system to boost natural gas capacity in Virginia’s Hampton Roads region.

Emails show TC Energy distributed model letters that the mayors of Virginia Beach and Chesapeake submitted in support of the company’s Virginia Reliability Project.

“Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with Aaron Thompson and me regarding TC Energy’s Virginia Reliability Project,” Esmel Meeks, a consultant for TC Energy, wrote to Virginia Beach Mayor Robert Dyer in late February. (Thompson is a government and community relations adviser at TC Energy).

“We appreciate your willingness to draft a letter of support to FERC and I am writing to follow up. We are in the process of submitting letters and I have attached a draft letter for your review.”

The letter that Dyer submitted to FERC three days later is a carbon copy of the draft that Meeks provided and that was released as part of a public records request.

Earlier that same month, Meeks provided a similar draft letter to the office of Chesapeake Mayor Rick West. Sandy Madison, one of the city’s deputy clerks, promptly informed Meeks that she’d printed the letter for the mayor to sign. “Please tidy this letter up and print on Mayor letterhead,” Madison later wrote to a colleague.

West’s letter applauding the project and the company was submitted to FERC on Feb. 8.

“Please know that the people and communities who would be most impacted by VRP are enthusiastic about its benefits,” it reads. “As mayor, I am proud to support it.”

Lynn Godfrey, community outreach coordinator for the Virginia chapter of the Sierra Club, said the communications “tell you the whole story” about industry political influence in the Commonwealth. A native of Hampton Roads, she took particular issue with West’s assertion that the “most impacted” communities are in favor. Many communities are only just learning about the projects, she said.

“These pipelines are coming through communities that are already cumulatively impacted by all types of pollutants,” she said. “People don’t want this poison in their neighborhood.”

TC Energy did not respond to HuffPost’s questions about its role in the letter-writing. Instead, it said the project will help meet the growing economic needs of the Hampton Roads area.

“Local officials, community leaders, businesses, and citizens in the area recognize this project meets their needs and is important for the future of the region, and that is why a broad bipartisan spectrum enthusiastically support the Virginia Reliability Project,” the company said in an emailed statement.

In its application for Virginia Reliability Project, TC Energy said the project would help Virginia Natural Gas, a distribution company, meet growing gas demand not only from residents and businesses but more than a dozen military installations and the shipbuilding industry. Virginia Natural Gas is a subsidiary of Southern Company Gas, one of the original partners in the defunct Atlantic Coast Pipeline. The planned pipeline would have stretched 600 miles through West Virginia, Virginia and North Carolina and was met with fierce opposition from Indigenous and other local communities.

In addition to the internal communications, a HuffPost review of the FERC docket found that four state legislators in Virginia — Delegates Emily Brewer and John McGuire III and Sens. Bryce Reeves and Mark Peake — had submitted nearly identical letters in support of TC Energy’s Virginia Electrification Project.

The project “will produce environmental benefits as it lowers emissions through the electrification of equipment, all while enhancing capacity,” they wrote.

HuffPost is unable to confirm what role, if any, TC Energy played in crafting those letters; however, they are part of a clear trend.

Godfrey said that if there is a need for more energy in the Hampton Roads area, it should be satisfied by renewables rather than gas projects that won’t come online for another 2-3 years.

“The opposition is mounting,” she said. “All of these things are converging for another big fight.”

***Congressman probing Commanders cancels fundraiser over ethics question***

**WASHINGTON DC-*Politico-* by Daniel Lippman- May 10, 2022**

Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi has been investigating the Washington Commanders from his perch as chair of a House oversight subcommittee. He’s also raising money for his reelection.

Those two facts collided on Monday.

Krishnamoorthi abruptly canceled a fundraiser scheduled for Tuesday night after POLITICO approached his office with questions about the event. The issue: whether it was inappropriate for a pair of lobbyists, Mike Manatos and Tom Manatos, to explicitly invite donors to the event to discuss with the congressman the probe of the football team and its owner, Dan Snyder.

Linking pleas for campaign dollars to specific legislative actions is a no-no, and Krishnamoorthi’s camp quickly acknowledged as much.

“The Congressman is grateful that his efforts to stand up to some of the most powerful interests in Washington, from Big Tobacco to organizations like the Commanders, has generated enthusiasm from the public and some of his supporters,” a spokesperson for his campaign said in a statement. “However, we did not authorize any correspondence or outreach conducted for this general meet and greet event for Raja’s re-election campaign.”

“Out of an abundance of caution,” the statement added, “this event has been canceled.”

The brothers Manatos grew up in Washington and are longtime adversaries of Snyder. In mid-April, they sent an email to friends inviting them to the fundraiser, along with this message: “The one person in Washington who may have found a path to getting rid of Snyder [as the team’s owner] is my good friend and Chairman of the House Oversight Subcommittee, Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi.”

“Tom and I hope you can join us on May 10 as a small group of us meets with Raja to discuss his efforts,” Mike Manatos wrote in the email, later adding: “Attached is an invitation with the details.”

They also mentioned how the congressman had sent a 20-page letter to the Federal Trade Commission accusing the team of engaging in “a troubling, long-running, and potentially unlawful pattern of financial conduct that victimized thousands of team fans and the National Football League (NFL).”

After POLITICO asked Krishnamoorthi for comment on Monday afternoon, he canceled the fundraiser. Mike Manatos, who is president of the lobbying firm Manatos & Manatos, said in a statement that outreach for the event, which was going to include supporters representing various Washington interests, was done entirely on his own and not coordinated with Krishnamoorthi or his staff.

“In the 85 years and 3 generations that my family has been working with the federal government, when we find a Senator or Member who is doing work that we think is in the best interest of our country and our community, we are happy to try to help that policymaker remain in office,” he said. “And the only way that non-constituents can do so is by contributing to and raising funds to help them get re-elected.”

His brother Tom, the head of federal affairs at Block (formerly Square) and the founder of Tom Manatos Jobs, a top political jobs list, five years ago launched the website FireDanSnyder.org, among other efforts targeting the team and its owner. He declined to comment.

A former longtime team employee claimed in March that the team undercounted revenue from tickets (which would have hurt other NFL teams as some profits are shared) and did not give some fans proper refunds. The Commanders strongly denied any financial impropriety saying in a lengthy letter to the FTC that the employee was not involved in the accounting work at issue.