



ETHICS REPORTER

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Kentucky Legislative Ethics Commission
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[Top Spending During The 2026 Session](#)

Everyone made it, the 2026 session is over! We are happy to announce there are no more expense reports due until September (reporting period 5/1/2026 – 8/31/2026). Hope everyone enjoys their summer.

The \$13.77 million spent on lobbying during the 2026 General Assembly shows that businesses and organizations employing lobbyists spent almost \$13.4 million of the total with the rest spent by their lobbyists. Of that total, \$12.3 million was paid to compensate lobbyists. An additional \$439,424 was spent on lobbying related administrative costs, such as travel and other expenses. Spending on advertising was \$290,678 and \$390,366 was spent on receptions, meals and events.

Even after the numerous post-session terminations, 960 businesses and organizations are still registered to lobby, with 698 lobbyists representing their interests before the Kentucky General Assembly.

Additionally, lobbyists spent about \$348,375, mostly on office expenses (\$330,382), along with receptions, meals, and events to which groups of legislators were invited (\$17,993).

Below is the list of the top 20 spending employers during the 2026 session:

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|---|--|
| 1. KY Chamber of Commerce \$336,494 | 11. Airbnb, Inc. \$71,347 |
| 2. KY Education Association \$178,663 | 12. Fairness Campaign \$68,792 |
| 3. KY Justice Association \$87,098 | 13. LG&E and KU Energy LLC \$68,774 |
| 4. KY League of Cities, Inc. \$85,074 | 14. KY Medical Association \$67,967 |
| 5. One Louisville \$83,006 | 15. Americans for Prosperity \$66,663 |
| 6. Elevance Health & Affiliates \$79,393 | 16. KY Automobile Dealers Assn. \$61,395 |
| 7. Altria Client Services LLC \$79,357 | 17. KY Primary Care Association \$59,835 |
| 8. KY Hospital Association \$78,662 | 18. Humana Inc. \$55,454 |
| 9. KY Assn. of Electric Cooperatives, Inc. \$75,445 | 19. HCA Healthcare, Inc. \$52,216 |
| 10. KY Bankers Association \$75,336 | 20. Amazon.com Services, LLC \$52,056 |

For a complete list of lobbying spending by all businesses and organizations, and compensation paid to each of the lobbyists, see the Legislative Ethics Commission's website at:

<http://klec.ky.gov/Reports/Pages/Employers-and-Legislative-Agents.aspx>

[Advertising on Legislation during the 2026 Session](#)

The 2026 Regular Session brought with it spending on advertising supporting and opposing legislation, which is required to be reported by employers if it appears during a legislative session. A total of \$290,678 was spent by several groups registered with the Commission.

The highest reported spending was from 5 entities that reported advertising spending during the session. These groups were **KY Education Assn.** (\$150,000), **KY Chamber of Commerce** (\$97,298), **The Family Foundation** (\$13,531), **KY Retired Teachers Assn.** (\$10,000), and **KY Forum for Rights, Economics & Education** (\$4,732).

The Ky. Education Assn. spent \$30,000 in advertising against HB 500 and \$120,000 against SB 4 and SB 114. The Ky. Chamber of Commerce spent, collectively \$97K, with the majority of their advertising on housing and childcare issues along with SB 9 and SB 290, HB 5 and HB 6. The Family Foundation spent a little over \$13K to advertise about HB 22, HB 23, HB 101, HB 170, HB 198, HB 227, HB 334, HB 359, HB 421, HB 476, HB 646, HB 670, HB 829, SB 26, SB 72, SB 115 and SB 179. The Ky. Retired Teachers Assn. spent all of their advertising on teacher pensions and health insurance legislation. Lastly, KY Forum for Rights, Economics & Education spent \$4.7K to advertise about HB 464, HB 593, SB 122, and SB 290.

Friendly reminder, in 2014, bipartisan legislation enacted by the Kentucky General Assembly required employers of lobbyists to report the cost of advertising appearing during a legislative session that supports or opposes legislation, which is paid for by that employer of lobbyists or a person or organization affiliated with an employer. This includes statements disseminated to the public in print, via radio or television, on billboards, or any electronic means, including internet or telephonically, and includes direct or bulk mailings.

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

The following organization recently registered to lobby in Kentucky:
NuLu Central Station Founder, LLC

The following organizations recently terminated their status in Kentucky:

Ale-8 One Bottling Co.	Kelley's Landing
Alzheimers Association	KY Assn. of Fire Chiefs
American Adjuster Assn., Inc.	KY Pork Producers Assn.
Baptist Health Deaconess Madisonville	KY School Counselors Assn.
Bitcoin Depot	KY Science Center
Cash Express LLC	KY Soybean Association
ChanceLight, Inc.	Ledger SAS
Climavision	Lexington Children's Theatre
Columbia Art House	Muhammed Ali Center
Crown Castle	National Assn. of Public Insurance Adjusters
Crypto.com Derivatives North America	OneQuest Health
Drakes Creek Stone	Opticians Assn. of KY
DS Education Foundation, Inc.	Professional Certification Coalition
Family & Children's Place	Robinhood Markets, Inc.
Frankfort Plant Board	Soccer Holdings, LLC
Girl Scouts of Wilderness Road Council, Inc.	Thomas D. Clark Foundation, Inc.
God's Pantry Food Bank	Uniti
Harmony Fields 2017, LLC	

Ethics & Lobbying News from around the U.S.

New Brunswick government proposes overhaul of lobbying rules

By: Eli Ridder – **The Canadian Press** – May 12, 2026

FREDERICTON — The New Brunswick government has proposed an overhaul of its lobbying rules that would require hundreds more people to register as lobbyists and would empower the provincial ethics chief to fine rule breakers.

If passed into law, the measures would also require lobbyists to regularly record their meetings with politicians and other lobbying activities in an online searchable database run by the office of the integrity commissioner.

Justice Minister Robert McKee told reporters on Tuesday the legislation aims to "enhance transparency and accountability of our government, promote confidence and trust."

The Liberals say their bill represents the first major reform to lobbying rules in more than a decade and is sorely needed for New Brunswick to keep pace with the best practices of its provincial counterparts.

The legislation comes after the Telegraph-Journal reported earlier this year that Premier Susan Holt had attended a trio of sporting events with tickets paid for by private companies. In response to the reporting, Holt said she was planning on modernizing the rules.

Holt's attendance over the last 14 months of two NHL games and an NBA match were above board, Charles Murray, the province's integrity commissioner, told The Canadian Press on Tuesday.

Existing rules do not require those activities to be disclosed automatically. But, if the bill is adopted, Murray said, those kinds of meetings would be proactively disclosed as part of the revamped registry process.

The changes would also cause the number of registered lobbyists to grow from less than 200 to more than 2,000 because of a change in the legal definition, said Murray, who was consulted as the government prepared the legislation.

Officials say the bill closes a loophole that currently requires people to register as lobbyists only if they spend more than 20 per cent of their time lobbying. Under the changes both professional consultants who lobby government and company employees who participate in lobbying would be required to register.

Murray says the proposed changes are "robust" and create a proactive approach to keeping track of those working to influence provincial policy.

As commissioner, Murray would acquire the authority to conduct investigations into infractions and issue financial penalties to those who don't follow regulations.

Under the existing system, the province's registry lists the lobbyist and the company they work for. Now, noted Murray, the new scheme would list when, where and who the lobbyists met with.

However, those changes will take some time to get into place, even if the bill receives royal assent at the end of the spring legislature session next month.

Officials estimate building the new database and consulting with lobbyists ahead of the bill coming into force could take about a year. Then, there would be a yearlong moratorium on enforcement so lobbyists could get up to speed on the new system.

The moratorium concerns the Progressive Conservatives. "What does that mean for the premier? Does she still get to go to NBA and NHL games without New Brunswickers knowing?" said Glen Savoie, the Opposition leader.

"Because if there's a hole that needs to be filled — if there's water leaking from the ship — you would think they'd be in a little more of a hurry than what they actually are."

In response, Murray said Savoie made "a valid point" and he would've been happy to see the process start earlier but there needs to be a transition period.

Tyler Downey, a policy analyst with the Strategic Steps consulting firm, says the proposed regulations would bring New Brunswick "into the modern world" in terms of transparency in Canada.

Still, the rules could be strengthened further by adding spending limits for lobbyists hosting politicians at events, Downey said in an interview.

"If you're going to have an event, for example ... maybe you can't let that event be \$100,000, right?"

The provincial integrity commissioner would also be charged with creating a code of conduct for lobbyists. Murray said he hopes to lay the groundwork for the policy before his term ends in December.

Duff Conacher with Democracy Watch, a group that advocates for democratic reform, says the bill closes "only some loopholes" and leaves open others.

In a news release, Conacher says the bill "doesn't close the huge loopholes that allow for secret lobbying if the lobbyist is not paid, if a politician or government official invites the lobbyist to lobby them, if the lobbying is about the enforcement of a law, or if political party officials are lobbied."

No Free Lunches: At Least 11 Republican Candidates Have Pledged to Reject Lobbyist Meals and Gifts

By: Keaton Ross – **Oklahoma Watch** – April 24, 2026

The transactions range from a \$2.35 cup of coffee to \$402.55 worth of food and alcohol at an upscale Oklahoma City restaurant.

Add it all up, and lobbyists have spent more than \$414,000 on meals, beverages and gifts for lawmakers since January 2025. That number is likely to increase as the legislative session marches toward sine die and the latest lobbyist spending reports come due in early May.

Many lawmakers, who work part-time and are term-limited, said the meals help them learn about complex issues and fine-tune legislation. But the rate of spending has drawn the ire of a slew of Republican primary challengers, who are hitting the campaign trail with a message that their opponents are more beholden to lobbyists than their constituents.

At least 11 legislative candidates have vowed not to accept any lobbyist meals, gifts or campaign contributions, according to an Oklahoma Watch review of campaign websites and social media pages. Some of them are challenging influential lawmakers in leadership positions, including Senate Budget Chairman Chuck Hall and Senate Education Committee Vice Chair Ally Seifried, who could be appointed to lead the committee if the chairman, Adam Pugh, is elected state superintendent.

“They’re either going to have to receive the message and change or they’re going to lose their jobs,” said Payton Pepin, a Republican candidate for Senate District 2 who is looking to unseat Seifried. “Or they may be able to keep doing business as usual. You never know. But I hope they get knocked on their ass.”

The success of candidates like Pepin, a construction manager from Claremore, would mark a notable shift in the Legislature. The primary election is set for June 16, with a runoff scheduled for Aug. 25 if no candidate gets a majority of votes. Lawmakers are expected to adjourn in early May, giving incumbents time to return to their districts and campaign.

Just three of 146 sitting lawmakers, Reps. Tom Gann, Rick West and Molly Jenkins, have accepted no gifts or meals from lobbyists since 2025. Another three, Reps. David Smith, Gabe Woolley and Jim Shaw, took less than \$200, according to Oklahoma Ethics Commission records. The average amount of food, beverages and gifts accepted per legislator over the 15-month period was \$2,819.

State ethics rules don’t limit the amount of food and gifts lawmakers may accept, though lobbyists are capped at spending \$750 per calendar year on individual state officers. There’s also no requirement that lobbyists, some of whom represent several clients, disclose the bill or issue they were lobbying on.

Kenny Smith, a Republican candidate for Senate District 4 looking to unseat Tom Woods, said he noticed the trend of candidates rejecting lobbyist money and decided to sign on before the April filing period.

“I’ve been a contractor all my life, so I realized if you take money from someone, you’re pretty much obligated to them,” Smith said.

Smith pointed to Senate Bill 998, a bill enacted in 2025 that authorizes utility companies to preemptively charge ratepayers for the construction costs of new natural gas facilities, as an example of policy he believes was overly influenced by special interests.

The bill narrowly advanced from the House and Senate despite unanimous opposition from the Oklahoma Corporation Commission, which warned it would burden ratepayers with no benefit. House Budget Chairman Trey Caldwell and Sen. Grant Green, co-sponsors of SB 998, said the measure was necessary to allow utilities to immediately cover costs instead of borrowing money that ratepayers would have to pay back with interest years down the line.

Caldwell and Green, who sponsored the legislation, received a combined \$5,841 in meals and gifts from lobbyists during the 2025 legislative session. Reported transactions include \$100-plus meals from lobbyists representing energy and public utility companies, including OG&E and The Sinclair Corporation.

“To bypass 100 years of OCC protocol, and pretty much charge the consumers for their construction bill, to me that is surely losing sight of who you are serving,” Smith said. “To put that additional burden on your constituents, that shows that you’re not really listening to your people. You’re really serving the large corporations.”

Multiple anti-establishment campaigns proved successful during the 2024 election cycle. Rep. Jim Shaw, a political newcomer from House District 32, upset former House Budget Chairman Kevin Wallace in a hotly contested Republican primary centered on hyperlocal issues such as the use of biosolid fertilizers. Despite a significant fundraising disadvantage, Sen. Jonathan Wingard defeated former Sen. Greg McCortney, who was on track to become President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

The House District 32 race, in particular, was historically expensive for a state House race. Shaw loaned himself \$275,000 of personal money, while Wallace received upwards of \$750,000 in contributions, much of it from sitting lawmakers, lobbyists and corporate interests. The candidates spent a combined \$1.31 million, averaging about \$216 per Republican voter in the August runoff.

Spending from independent expenditure groups, which can spend unlimited amounts and don’t have to disclose their donors, also reached record levels in 2024. Several legislative candidates saw tens of thousands of dollars spent against them in the form of attack mailers and digital advertisements.

Roberta Lewis, a Republican candidate for House District 27 who signed onto the no-lobbyist-money pledge, said it would be difficult for her to keep up in such an expensive campaign. But she said such a disadvantage can be overcome with old-fashioned tactics like door knocking.

“What I’m hearing from people is they don’t feel heard and represented, and they’re amazed someone cared enough to come knock on their door and ask them questions,” Lewis said. “I haven’t gotten any, well, how much money is in your bank account?”

If elected, Lewis said she’ll communicate with lobbyists, but believes accepting meals and gifts sends the wrong message to constituents.

“There are lobbyists that are needed for people and for industries that need someone to speak for them,” she said. “But some of the lobbyists and companies have gotten a little too big, and they’re no longer speaking for the people that are in those industries. If it takes you spending \$300 on dinner for me to actually sit down and talk to you, then maybe you have more problems.”