



ETHICS REPORTER November 2025

Kentucky Legislative Ethics Commission
22 Mill Creek Park, Frankfort, Kentucky 40601-9230
Phone: (502) 573-2863
<https://klec.ky.gov>

Two-year registration for lobbyists and employers opens on December 1st

Employers and Legislative Agents:

All current registrations with the Kentucky Legislative Ethics Commission will expire on December 31, 2025. Below is a link to the Initial Registration Statement for a new two-year period beginning January 1, 2026 and ending on December 31, 2027.

We will begin accepting completed registrations on or after December 1, 2025.

Initial registration forms CANNOT be filed online. [Click here to get the form.](#)

FEE: A registration fee of \$250 must be paid by the employer of one or more legislative agents. This fee may be paid online via e-check, Visa, MasterCard, American Express, or Discover. If you decide to pay with a paper check, the check should be payable to the **Kentucky State Treasurer** with the employer's name on the memo line and mail it along with your completed forms to 22 Mill Creek Park, Frankfort, Ky. 40601. If you decide to pay by credit card or e-check, please access our new online payment portal located on our website at <https://klec.ky.gov>, then click "Make a Payment", then enter your employer ID (the same ID you use to file expense forms online) and follow the steps to make a payment. Once you have paid by credit card or e-check, the registration form(s) may be faxed, or scanned and e-mailed, along with the completed copy of the paid receipt.

Credit Card Fee – 2.95% per transaction
Electronic Check Fee – \$2 per transaction

NOTE: If you need to register for a little while in 2025 and do not want to pay the \$250 twice, any registrations dated December 1, 2025 or after can be used for the same \$250 registration fee and the employer will not be charged twice. We give December as a free month of registration in this situation only.

REMINDER: Date Engaged Box: If you are currently registered with us and you are renewing your registration, the date engaged box should say "Renewal". We have added this to the form for you. If you have a new registration, it must list a specific date of engagement on the form.

PLEASE REMEMBER: All forms must be completely filled out and the employer must sign the registration form of each legislative agent.

If you have questions, please call our office at (502) 573-2863, or e-mail:
Donnita.Crittenden@kylegislature.gov or Lori.Smith@kylegislature.gov.

Refreshers:

What may a legislator or his or her spouse accept from a legislative agent or an employer?

1. A certificate, plaque, or commemorative token of less than \$150 value;
2. Informational or promotional items of less than \$50 value (See OLEC 94-1);
3. A gift which is returned within 30 days or is donated to charity and not claimed on federal income tax returns (See OLEC 00-1);
4. The cost of attendance or participation, and of food and beverages consumed at certain events (*see the next question*). See KRS 6.611 (2) (b).

At what events may a legislator have food and beverages paid for by a lobbyist or employer of a lobbyist?

1. Events to which all Senate, House members, or both, are invited (See OLEC 93-10, 93-16);
2. Events to which all members of a joint committee or task force of the Senate and House are invited;
3. Events to which an LRC-approved caucus of legislators is invited;
4. Events sponsored or coordinated by a state or local government entity, including a state institution of higher education, provided that the cost is covered by the entity;
5. In-state events to which an individual legislator who has received LRC approval is invited;
6. Events sponsored or coordinated by multistate or national organizations of, or including, state governments, state legislatures, or state legislators, if approved in advance by the LRC;
7. Events sponsored by or in conjunction with a civic, charitable, governmental, trade association, or community organization. See KRS 6.611 (2) (b) 8., 11., and 12, and OLEC 96-4.

Expense Reports Are Also Due Thursday, January 15, 2026

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 September 1- December 31, 2025 will be due on Thursday, January 15, 2026, 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.

Newly-Registered and Terminated Lobbying Employers

The following businesses and organizations recently registered to lobby in Kentucky: **Amergis Healthcare Staffing, Inc., AmeriHealth Caritas Services, LLC, Arthur Street Hotel, LLC, KY Assn. for Environmental Education, Owensboro Symphony, and Owl's Head Alloys, Inc.**

The following business recently terminated their status in Kentucky: **Darwin Global, LLC.**

Ethics & Lobbying News from around the U.S.

Former Rep. Robin Smith sentenced to 8 months in federal prison for role in corruption conspiracy

By: Sofia Saric - **YAHOO.COM NEWS** - October 24, 2025

This story was originally published by the Chattanooga Times Free Press.

Former state Rep. Robin Smith, R-Hixson, was sentenced Friday to eight months in federal prison for her role in a corruption conspiracy described as a scheme to steal from Tennessee and its citizens through the General Assembly's taxpayer-funded constituent mail program.

Smith, 62, "failed the trust of the public" and has "been a failure," she said during her sentencing hearing in Nashville federal court.

"My mom and dad raised me to be much better than this," Smith said. "I ask for the forgiveness of the public."

Smith pleaded guilty in March 2022 to one count of honest services wire fraud, a charge regularly used in corruption prosecutions, and agreed to "full, complete and truthful" cooperation with the federal government.

She was fined \$7,500 and will be on supervised release for one year after incarceration. Smith cried while addressing the court Friday morning, frequently referencing her Christianity and the debt she said she owes to her family, friends, God and the public.

"There isn't a day that goes by where that reality doesn't confront me in a real way," she said.

Smith, ex-Speaker Glen Casada, R-Franklin, and his one-time chief of staff, Cade Cothren, all played a part in a scheme to illegally profit off the General Assembly's taxpayer-funded constituent mail program from October 2019 to early January 2021.

As part of Smith's plea deal, she testified against Casada and Cothren during their May federal trial. It was the right thing to do, and she was simultaneously hoping for leniency in her sentence, she said at the time.

A Nashville jury ultimately found Casada guilty of 17 counts and Cothren guilty of all 19 counts of bribery, conspiracy, fraud, money laundering and theft, according to federal court records. Both men were sentenced in September.

Casada is expected to serve 36 months in federal prison, one year of probation and pay a \$30,000 fine, court records show. Cothren was sentenced to 30 months in prison, one year of probation and a \$25,000 fine.

Casada, Cothren and Smith allegedly all helped to create a fake company called Phoenix Solutions, which designed and sent mailers to constituents on behalf of politicians through the use of taxpayer funds.

The group intended to do the work they were hired to do, Smith testified, but they also intended to profit.

The group received nearly \$52,000 from the state in payments related to the postage and printing allowance over the course of 2020, according to a trial brief, which stated that Cothren paid Casada and Smith more than \$35,000 in bribes and kickbacks during that time.

The scheme allegedly went on into early January 2021.

FBI agents raided Smith's home that same month.

District Judge Eli J. Richardson said at sentencing that Smith was more involved than Casada in really propping up Phoenix Solutions, pressuring public officials and "spinning a web of fabrications."

"We have these public officials," he said. "We elect them to do the right thing."

Former Tennessee rep says identities had to be "masked" in kickback scheme

And then, in this case, they turn around, lie and deceive, according to Richardson.

"It's pretty callous stuff, and it's not a great look," he said.

Smith led the Hamilton County Republican Party from 1998 until 2002 and was unanimously elected to lead the state GOP in 2007.

She was elected in 2018 to represent state House District 26, which includes parts of central Chattanooga and extends north along Chickamauga Lake, encompassing, among other communities, Hixson, Lakesite, Middle Valley and Sale Creek.

Smith resigned from her seat in March 2022 amid her plea deal.

Her life has been defined by doing good things for others besides this one "stain on her life," her attorney William David Bridgers said.

She's dedicated time to nonprofits and the public, has a strong presence within her religious community and cares for her sick mother, he said.

Their crimes began after Cothren resigned in 2019. He allegedly sent sexually explicit and racist text messages and admitted to using cocaine in a legislative office on one occasion, according to reporting by the Associated Press. Casada, who allegedly received some of those messages and sent his own lewd remarks, resigned shortly after.

Smith was part of this scheme to help both men rehabilitate their lives after their "really bad scandal" rather than to scam legislators, Bridgers said.

She knew her actions were morally wrong but didn't know she committed a crime until the FBI came knocking at her door, he said. She quickly began cooperating with the federal government once she realized the gravity of her actions.

"She had sinned against her God," Bridgers said. "She had sinned against her family. She had sinned against her government."

Richardson, apparently in response to Bridger's arguments, said Smith wouldn't have taken 25% of the profits if she only wanted to help Casada and Cothren.

"The one way I don't help out other people is by taking a cut of what they have," Richardson said.

Maui Ethics Board Is Reconsidering New Confidentiality Rule

The board may revise the language in the added provision after further discussion.

By Nathan Eagle - **HONOLULU CIVIL BEAT** - October 24, 2025

The Maui Board of Ethics will not enforce a new rule that forces citizens to keep details about their pending ethics complaints confidential after considering public input this week, county officials confirmed Friday.

The reversal came after the board unanimously approved 44 new rule changes Wednesday, including a provision that some members of the public called a "gag order," as Civil Beat reported.

That provision bound the complainant to a confidentiality requirement forbidding that person or citizens group from disclosing the pending complaint's existence or sharing details of it publicly. If the ethics board or staff found that confidentiality was violated, they could use that as grounds to dismiss the complaint without further investigation.

"While the rules will expand the capabilities of the BOE, Chair Steve Sturdevant noted after the meeting that, given public testimony on Section 04-101-39(a) (regarding confidentiality of complaints), the newly added language in that section will not be enforced pending future discussion and potential consideration for revision by the BOE," Lauren Akitake, the board's executive director and legal counsel, said Friday in a statement. "He also clarified that complaints filed under the old rules will continue to proceed under those rules."

Several residents testified against that particular rule change prior to the board's vote. Bruce Douglas described it as a "gag order on citizens or citizen groups" to bring their complaint forward.

Maui lawyer Akitake joined the board in July as its first executive director, a position driven by voters last election through a charter amendment to give the board greater independence. The board also now has its own investigator and administrative assistant.

Most of the new rule changes are geared toward making the board operate more efficiently and impartially. The board's new staff, for instance, will now vet all the ethics complaints and financial disclosures for county employees that come in, saving the board significant time by only sending those on that they deem questionable or find probable cause for action.