

ETHICS REPORTER

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Kentucky Legislative Ethics Commission
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Kentucky lobbying sets a new record for even-year spending

According to the most recent lobbyist and employer reports, legislative lobbying spending for the first 8 months of 2024 was just shy of \$20.2 million.

Businesses and organizations kept up the trend of increased lobbying spending by passing the odd-year record \$18.1 million spent in the same period in 2023. The previous even-year record for this 8-month period was \$17.8 million in 2022.

During the first two-thirds of 2024, 885 lobbying employers paid 685 lobbyists \$17.9 million, and an additional \$681,595 was spent on lobbying-related administrative costs, such as travel and other expenses. Lobbyists on their own spent \$634,638 in out of pocket expenses during this time period.

Below is the list of the top spending 20 employers during this time period:

1. KY Chamber of Commerce \$326,900
2. KY Hospital Association \$208,687
3. LG&E and KU Energy LLC \$181,184
4. American Civil Liberties Union of KY \$162,141
5. Altria Client Services LLC \$146,208
6. Duke Energy \$141,461
7. KY League of Cities, Inc. \$139,827
8. KY Assn. of Electric Cooperatives, Inc. \$139,204
9. Greater Louisville, Inc. \$134,345
10. Pharmaceutical Care Management Assn. \$126,694
11. KY Retail Federation, Inc. \$118,374
12. KY Primary Care Association \$116,217
13. East KY Power Cooperative Inc. \$113,384
14. KY Distillers' Assn. \$111,653
15. Elevance Health & Aff. DBA Anthem, Inc. \$99,092
16. Humana Inc. \$98,167
17. HCA Healthcare, Inc. \$97,600
18. KY Medical Association \$94,450
19. Churchill Downs Incorporated \$88,807
20. Frankfort Plant Board \$84,033

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

The following businesses and organizations recently registered to lobby in Kentucky: **BetMGM, LLC, Botanicals for Better Health & Wellness, DraftKings, Inc., FanDuel, Inc., FBG Enterprise Opco, LLC., FFF Enterprises, Inc., TikTok Inc., Simple Solutions Behavioral Health and Strawser Construction Inc.**

Recently terminated employers in Kentucky: **American Kidney Fund, Inc., American Resources Corporation, Asurion LLC, Autonomous Vehicle Industry Assn., Bail Project (The), Ban Conversion Therapy Kentucky, Inc., Behavioral Health Group, Catholic Action Center, CBD American Shaman, Children's Home of Northern KY, Christ Hospital (The), City of Ashland, KY, City of Madisonville, KY, Connected Nation Development Corporation, DASMI, LLC, Edgewater Recovery, Enervenue, Franklin County, GreenGo Energy US, Inc., Inseparable Action, Inc., KCA Labs, KY Properties II, LLC, Legal Aid of the Bluegrass, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS), Liberty Initiative Fund, Morehead State University, Navient, Orexo US, Inc., Organon LLC, Phoenix Multisport, Inc., Recording Industry Assn. of America, Inc.(RIAA), Satoshi Action Fund, Sound Money Defense League, Unbridled Films, LLC, ViiNetwork, Inc., Westcare Foundation and West KY Regional Riverport Authority.**

[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 on the LRC Capitol Connection page at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nrqWW7sJDK4>. The video walks through the online filing process in step-by-step detail. Please call us with any questions!

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

[Disgraced former Rep. George Santos pleads guilty to federal charges](#)

<https://www.cnn.com/profiles/mark-morales>By [Mark Morales](#), [Jack Forrest](#) and [Devan Cole](#), CNN, August 19, 2024

Former Republican Rep. George Santos pleaded guilty on Monday to aggravated identity theft and wire fraud charges stemming from fraudulent activity during his 2022 midterm campaign.

The guilty plea comes just weeks before the ex-congressman was set to stand trial on nearly two dozen federal charges, including allegations of fraud related to Covid-19 unemployment benefits, misusing campaign funds and lying about his personal finances on House disclosure reports, all of which he had to admit to in an allocution statement Monday.

Santos will serve a minimum of two years in prison as part of the stipulated agreement and pay restitution of \$373,000. His sentencing hearing is set for February 2025.

“I deeply regret my conduct,” Santos said in court Monday. “I accept full responsibility for my actions.”

Speaking to reporters outside the courthouse, the former congressman said he had “allowed ambition to cloud my judgment.”

“Pleading guilty is a step I never imagined I’d take, but it’s the right thing to do,” Santos said. “It is my own recognition of the lies I told myself.”

Prosecutors said they were prepared to show during trial over 500 exhibits of evidence, including cell phone evidence, information downloaded from Santos’ iCloud account and financial records.

The plea to charges of committing wire fraud and aggravated identity theft marks an end to the nearly two-year saga that saw Santos lie about his resume as he sought election to New York’s 3rd Congressional District. He won the seat but was ultimately charged with 23 federal counts and was dramatically expelled from Congress last year.

Prosecutors, in two batches of charges last year, alleged Santos committed fraud related to Covid-19 unemployment benefits, misused campaign funds and lied about his personal finances on House disclosure reports. Santos pleaded not guilty in May 2023 to 13 federal charges, including seven counts of wire fraud, three counts of money laundering, one count of theft of public funds and two counts of making materially false statements to the US House of Representatives.

And in October, he pleaded not guilty to another 10 federal charges, which included allegations that he stole donors’ identities and ran up thousands of dollars in fraudulent charges on their credit cards, embezzled cash from his company, and conspired with his former campaign treasurer to falsify donation totals to hit fundraising targets, among other offenses.

Santos, 36, insisted after the second wave of charges that he would not accept a plea deal and that he would seek reelection for his seat, telling reporters in October, “The No. 1 question you all ask me is, ‘Are you going to take a plea deal?’ No. The answer is, I will not take a plea deal.”

Santos’ campaign fundraiser, Sam Miele, pleaded guilty to a federal wire fraud charge as part of a plea deal in November. His former campaign treasurer, Nancy Marks, pleaded guilty in October to conspiracy to defraud the United States by committing one or more federal offenses.

Expelled by House in rare move

Santos, who represented parts of Long Island and Queens during his brief tenure in Congress, sparked shock and controversy on Capitol Hill over revelations that he fabricated large parts of his life story, including significant elements of his resume and biography.

Against the threat of expulsion from Congress, Santos remained defiant. He argued that he was being bullied and that it would set a dangerous precedent if the House expelled him since he had not been convicted in a court of law.

But calls for Santos' expulsion from the chamber grew to a fever pitch after the House Ethics Committee released a major report that uncovered additional "uncharged and unlawful conduct" by Santos beyond the criminal allegations already pending against him.

In a resounding 311-114 vote in December, with 105 Republicans voting with the overwhelming majority of Democrats in favor of his expulsion, the House used its most severe form of punishment for a member and expelled Santos. He became only the sixth lawmaker ever to be thrown from the chamber.

Santos briefly attempted a congressional comeback, announcing in March that he would leave the Republican Party to run as an independent in New York's 1st District. But he dropped his bid in April, saying at the time that he didn't want to split the ticket with incumbent GOP Rep. Nick LaLota and "be responsible for handing the House to Dems."

This story has been updated with additional developments.

CNN's Piper Hudspeth Blackburn, Clare Foran, [Manu Raju](#), [Sam Fossum](#) and Haley Talbot contributed to this report.

Ethics probe into Matt Gaetz now reviewing allegations of sexual misconduct and illicit drug use

BY KEVIN FREKING, June 18, 2024

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House Ethics Committee on Tuesday gave an unusual public update into its long-running investigation of Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., saying its review now includes whether Gaetz engaged in sexual misconduct and illicit drug use, accepted improper gifts and sought to obstruct government investigations of his conduct.

The committee also announced that it was no longer reviewing four other allegations involving the congressman, including that he shared inappropriate images or videos with colleagues on the House floor or that he accepted a bribe or converted campaign funds to personal use.

Gaetz has categorically denied all the allegations before the committee.

In a tweet Monday pre-empting the committee's announcement, Gaetz noted that the ethics panel closed four probes and said those investigations had "emerged from lies intended solely to smear me."

"Instead of working with me to ban Congressional stock trading, the Ethics Committee is now opening new frivolous investigations. They are doing this to avoid the obvious fact that every investigation into me ends the same way: my exoneration," Gaetz said on the social platform X.

Gaetz led the effort to oust then-Speaker Kevin McCarthy from office last fall. Seven Republicans joined him in deposing McCarthy, along with 208 Democrats. Many House Republicans remain angry with Gaetz, arguing that McCarthy's ouster was a selfish and destructive act that hurt the party.

Gaetz blamed McCarthy for the Ethics Committee's review, even though the investigation began before Republicans took the majority in the House.

"This is Soviet. Kevin McCarthy showed them the man, and they are now trying to find the crime," Gaetz wrote on X. "I work for Northwest Floridians who won't be swayed by this nonsense and McCarthy and his goons know it."

The committee began its review of Gaetz in April 2021, deferred its work in response to a Justice Department request, and renewed its work in May of last year after the DOJ dropped its request that lawmaker hold off an investigating. That was shortly after Gaetz announced that the Justice Department had ended a sex trafficking investigation without bringing charges against him.

The ethics committee said that despite the difficulty of obtaining relevant information from Gaetz and others, it has spoken with more than a dozen witnesses, issued 25 subpoenas and reviewed thousands of pages of documents.

One thing under investigation is whether Gaetz "dispensed special privileges and favors to individuals with whom he had a personal relationship," the committee said.

The ethics committee cautioned that the existence of an investigation does not itself indicate that any violation of law or House rules occurred. The statement said that no other public comment will be made on the matter.