

# ETHICS REPORTER

September 2025



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

---

## Kentucky Lobbying Spending Dips Slightly for the First 8 Months

Kentucky businesses and organizations spent nearly \$19.6 million on lobbying in the first eight months of 2025, a decrease from the previous year's total of \$20.2 million in September, 2024.

During the first two-thirds of this year, 951 lobbying employers spent more than \$18.9 million, and another \$658,155 was spent by 708 legislative agents on lobbying-related expenses.

So far this year, the leading spender is **Kentucky Chamber of Commerce**, which spent \$338,792. Second place is **KY Hospital Association**, spending \$200,095.

The rest of the top 10 spenders and the amounts spent so far this year include: **KY League of Cities, Inc.** (\$126,465); **LG&E and KU Energy LLC** (\$124,554); **Americans for Prosperity** (\$104,792); **HCA Healthcare, Inc.** (\$104,432); **KY Primary Care Association** (\$101,442); **Humana Inc.** (\$100,917); **KY Retail Federation, Inc.** (\$100,726); and **Elevance Health and Affiliates DBA Anthem, Inc.** (\$99,539).

The remaining companies in the top 20 spenders were: **Altria Client Services LLC** (\$99,395); **Greater Louisville, Inc.** (\$93,196); **Pharmaceutical Research & Manuf. of America** (\$92,147); **KY Assn. of Electric Cooperatives, Inc.** (\$90,463); **Churchill Downs Incorporated** (\$89,149); **KY Distillers' Assn.** (\$87,640); **KY Medical Association** (\$87,605); **American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network** (\$86,566); **Suntory Global Spirits** (\$83,950); and **Airbnb, Inc.** (\$82,228);

## Refresher: What constitutes "Anything of Value"?

Legislative agents and employers cannot offer, give, or agree to give "anything of value" to a legislator, a candidate, or the spouse or child of a legislator or candidate.

### Examples of "anything of value"

- ★ money
- ★ promissory note
- ★ contract
- ★ forgiveness of indebtedness
- ★ property
- ★ promise or offer of employment
- ★ gift, including food and beverages
- ★ work of art, antique, or collectible
- ★ automobile or other means of personal transportation

## **Examples of what is not "anything of value"**

- ★ campaign contribution properly received and reported
- ★ compensation, food, beverages, entertainment, transportation, lodging, or other goods or services extended by the legislator's private employer or by a person other than a legislative agent or employer
- ★ usual and customary commercial loan made in the ordinary course of business, without regard to the recipient's status as a legislator, and by a person or institution authorized by law to engage in the business of making loans
- ★ certificate, plaque, or commemorative token of less than \$150
- ★ promotional items of less than \$50
- ★ educational items
- ★ informational items
- ★ food and beverages at events that meet certain criteria discussed on the following page
- ★ any service spontaneously extended to a legislator in an emergency situation
- ★ anything for which the recipient pays or gives full value

All expenditures by legislative agents and employers must be reported on an updated registration statement filed with the Commission listing details of the expenditure. This includes the cost of advertising that appears during a session of the General Assembly and that supports or opposes legislation.

Legislative agents and employers may sponsor meetings, receptions, and other events which a legislator may attend either individually or with other legislators.

The cost of attendance or participation and food and beverages at the event may be provided by legislative agents and employers if the event meets stringent criteria and requirements for attendance by legislators. These events must meet one of the following:

- (1) All the members of the Kentucky Senate or the House of Representatives, or both, are invited;
- (2) All members of a joint committee or task force of the Kentucky Senate and the House of Representatives are invited;
- (3) A caucus of legislators that has been approved as a caucus by the Legislative Research Commission is invited;
- (4) The event is sponsored or coordinated by a state or local government entity, including a state institution of higher education, provided that the cost thereof is covered by the state or local government entity or state institution of higher education; or
- (5) It is an in-state event to which an individual legislator is invited and for which the legislator receives prior approval from a majority of the Legislative Research Commission.

Legislative agents and employers are required to report expenditures for these events on updated registration statements, but the expenditures are not attributed to an individual legislator so long as a recognized group of legislators are invited. If an individual legislator's name is reported, the legislator must be notified 10 days prior to filing the employer or legislative agent report.

## **Newly-Registered and Terminated Lobbying Employers**

The following businesses and organizations recently registered to lobby in Kentucky:

**Ale-8-One Bottling Co., Avient Corporation, Central KY Business Park Authority, CRISP Shared Services, Inc., DCCH Centers for Children and Families, DonorsChoose, Foundation for Government Accountability, Guardant Health, Key Assets Kentucky, Legal Aid of the Bluegrass, Lion Group, Inc., Madison County, KY, NV5 Geospatial Inc., One Cross Community Health, Pathology and Cytology Laboratories, Inc., Western Governors University and Zayo Education.**

The following businesses and organizations recently terminated in Kentucky:

**Acadia Healthcare, American Assn. of Payers, Admin. & Networks, Behavioral Health Advocates, CareSource Management Services Co., CareSource Mission, Chipps, Caffrey and Dubilier, PSC, City of Pikeville, Claris Healthcare, ClassWallet, Cumberland Capital Partners, Data Records Management Services, LLC, Daviess County Fiscal Court, FC Cincinnati, FFF Enterprises, Inc., KY Assn. of Community Rehabilitation Providers, Lexia Learning Systems LLC, National Grid Renewables Development, LLC, Plasma Games, Preservation Kentucky, Inc., Reliable Partners, LLC, Secure Elections Project, Swimply, Inc., Transit Authority of River City and United Way of the Bluegrass.**

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

### **Former Tennessee House speaker sentenced to three years in federal prison**

By: Sam Stockard – **Tennessee Lookout** – September 23, 2025

Six years after being bounced from the Tennessee House speakership, former Rep. Glen Casada was sentenced Tuesday to 36 months in prison for his role in a kickback scheme.

U.S. District Judge Eli Richardson meted out the punishment to Casada on 14 counts of fraud, bribery, theft, conspiracy and money laundering in connection with a shell company called Phoenix Solutions run by his former chief of staff, Cade Cothren, who was sentenced to 30 months last week.

Casada also must pay a \$30,000 fine and remain on probation for one year once he serves his time. Defense attorneys said they will appeal the case to a higher court.

Federal prosecutors asked for a five-year sentencing and \$50,000 fine, pointing out that when FBI agents confronted Casada, he lied about his involvement.

Attorneys for Casada and Cothren requested a mistrial during their four-week trial that stretched from mid-April into May after prosecutors inadvertently played an unredacted recording of an FBI interview with Casada that incriminated Cothren. They also sought a new trial just before sentencing, but Richardson denied the request.

Casada and Cothren were convicted of setting up the secret company that tapped into the state's postage and printing program that provides House members \$3,000 a year for constituent mailers. Casada and former Rep. Robin Smith, who pleaded guilty and testified against the pair, steered

lawmakers' business to Phoenix Solutions, which was secretly run by Cothren with the front name of "Matthew Phoenix."

Casada's attorneys argued Tuesday that he was merely trying to start a new business, Right Way Consulting, that caught the eye of federal investigators.

Richardson acquitted Casada and Cothren of three counts of fraudulently obtaining state property because the prosecution was unable to prove they were agents of the state.

Cothren resigned from his chief of staff post in early 2019 amid a racist and sexist texting scandal. Casada stepped down from the speaker's post following a no-confidence vote spurred by heavy-handed leadership and the scandal surrounding Cothren.

He remained in the General Assembly for one more term, though, when he got involved with Cothren and Smith in the Phoenix Solutions scheme. The trio tried to conceal Cothren's identity because of his resignation and direct business to Phoenix Solutions. In turn, they received money from the business in the form of kickbacks, according to federal prosecutors.

Casada, a Republican, was first elected to the Tennessee Legislature in a 2001 special election after serving as a Williamson County commissioner. He rose through the ranks of House Leadership, serving as House Majority Leader — a role in which he raised money for and supported GOP candidates across the state — before his election as House Speaker in January 2019. After a no-confidence vote from the House Republican Caucus, he stepped down as speaker in August 2019, giving him the shortest tenure of a Tennessee House Speaker.

Casada's legal team requested that Federal Judge Eli Richardson allow Casada to remain free on bond while his case goes to appeal. Failing approval from Richardson, Casada is slated to report to prison November 21.

## **Ethics Agency Fines Former Texas Lawmaker \$105K For Violating Revolving Door Law**

By: Taylor Goldenstein – [MSN.COM](https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/story/ethics-agency-fines-former-texas-lawmaker-105k-for-violating-revolving-door-law) – September 18, 2025

A former Texas lawmaker who went on to work as a lobbyist was fined \$105,500 by the state's ethics commission this week for skirting a revolving door law that he helped write.

The fine against Chris Paddie, a Republican from East Texas, is the highest imposed by the agency in 15 years, records show. It's also the most high-profile enforcement of the 2019 law that was meant to stop outgoing state lawmakers from using their leftover campaign accounts to help launch lobbying careers.

The Texas Ethics Commission deliberated on the matter in closed session on Wednesday, and afterward, Chair Chris Flood announced publicly that the panel had found that Paddie violated the election code. The agency did not respond to a request for comment.

In a brief statement to Hearst Newspapers on Thursday, Paddie's lawyer Ross Fischer said he and his client disagree with the commission's decision, and "we will pursue our appellate remedies in district court."

Paddie co-authored the revolving door law in 2019, which bars state legislators from becoming lobbyists within two years of donating campaign funds to other politicians.

Paddie retired in 2022 after chairing a powerful House committee that was tasked with holding energy firms accountable for failures during the state's deadly 2021 winter storm. He later registered as a lobbyist and took on several of those same companies as clients, a move that drew criticism at the time from Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick.

Paddie's campaign donated about \$50,000 to lawmakers before leaving office, but he said he was n't in violation of the law because he had reimbursed his campaign account in late 2022 using his personal money.

A year later, the ethics commission issued a legal opinion finding that a person cannot "cure a past violation" or reduce the waiting period by reimbursing the person's campaign with personal funds.

Fischer opposed the opinion at the time, arguing that Paddie made a sensible calculation, considering other types of ethics violations can be fixed by substituting campaign donations with personal funds.

But, in light of the opinion, he said Paddie decided to terminate his lobby registration and stop lobbying.

The commission's latest decision stems from a sworn complaint filed against Paddie in January 2023, when Paddie represented 11 clients that he expected to pay him up to \$677,294 to influence lawmakers on their top issues, state data show. His top-paying clients included energy firm Vistra Corp. and identity verification company Incode Technologies, Inc.

The existence of a sworn complaint is typically confidential, but Paddie acknowledged it in a lawsuit he filed in July in Harrison County against the commission that alleges the agency acted improperly. It did not say who filed the sworn complaint. The parties came to a temporary agreement on the suit in late July.

It's also unclear how the agency calculated the fine. Under state law, the agency can impose a fine of no more than \$5,000 or triple the "amount at issue" for a violation of law, whichever is greater. The commission did not say Wednesday how it was defining the "amount at issue."

The last time the Texas Ethics Commission imposed a fine this large was in 2010 for \$100,000 against Texas Court of Criminal Appeals Judge Sharon Keller for failing to disclose millions in income and property on annual financial statements.