



M U L T I S T A T E

## [State lawmakers acknowledge lobbyists helped craft their op-eds attacking Medicare-for-all](#)

Lobbyists either helped draft or made extensive revisions to opinion columns published by three state lawmakers in a way that warned against the dangers of Medicare-for-all and other government involvement in health care, according to emails obtained by The Washington Post.

Montana state Rep. Kathy Kelker (D) and Sen. Jen Gross (D) acknowledged in interviews that [editorials](#) they [published](#) separately about the single-payer health proposal included language provided by John MacDonald, a lobbyist and consultant in the state who disclosed in private emails that he worked for an unnamed client.

Gross said MacDonald contacted her on behalf of the Partnership for America's Health Care Future, a multimillion-dollar industry group founded in 2018 and [funded](#) by hospitals, private insurers, drug companies and other private health-care firms.

Additionally, an aide to Ohio state Sen. Steve Huffman (R) confirmed in a brief interview that the lawmaker's [op-ed criticizing Medicare-for-all](#) was written with the help of Kathleen DeLand, an Ohio-based lobbyist.

None of the lawmakers' columns discloses that they were written with the help of a lobbyist.

The emails show how, even at the state and local levels, lobbyists are trying to bend public opinion away from an idea that has seized much of the debate during the current Democratic presidential primary. Two candidates, Sens. Elizabeth Warren (Mass.) and Bernie Sanders (Vt.), have [proposed a massive redesign](#) of the health-care system that would place all Americans on a single government health insurer.

The documents were provided to The Post by the nonprofit advocacy group Medicare for All Now, which supports the single-payer system. The group obtained the documents through Freedom of Information Act requests.

The revelation comes amid a fierce debate among Democrats nationwide about the best way to address health-care concerns. Health care remains a top issue for many voters, and industry groups and moderate politicians have warned that the ideas pursued by Warren and Sanders could be viewed as too extreme and lead Democrats to lose in the 2020 election. But the ideas are also very popular among many Americans, and the health-care industry has taken notice.

The emails offer a glimpse into the industry mobilization against both single-payer and a “public option,” a government-run insurer that would compete with private plans. A change could redirect trillions of dollars in spending, with insurers, hospitals and pharmaceutical companies all directly affected.

The Partnership for America’s Health Care Future has spent more than \$1 million on television advertisements since August warning against Medicare-for-all and other changes to the health-care system, according to Advertising Analytics, a firm that tracks TV spending. The Partnership has recently expanded its operations to the state level, and [has heavily targeted voters in early primary states and battleground states](#), according to Politico.

Neither of the consultants who helped write the op-eds would confirm or deny whether they had been hired by the Partnership for America’s Health Care Future.

MacDonald, asked whether he works for the organization, responded over the phone by saying: “Not directly. ... I probably need to talk to some other folks before I provide any details to you and see if I can have somebody call you back.” MacDonald said in a subsequent interview that he could not provide additional information about his clients.

DeLand’s emails to the Ohio lawmaker’s staff include the acronym for the group in the subject line: “PAHCF op-ed - OH - Huffman[3]. docx.” DeLand did not return requests for comment about whether she had been hired by the group.

A spokesman for the Partnership for America’s Health Care Future declined to confirm or deny whether the group had hired MacDonald or DeLand. In emails to reporters, the partnership linked to op-eds written by these state lawmakers, at one point citing them as evidence that “voices throughout the nation” oppose Medicare-for-all.

“It’s no surprise that elected officials on both sides of the aisle, and many other voices throughout the nation, are expressing serious concerns about these one-size-fits-all proposals” such as Medicare-for-all, Lauren Crawford Shaver, the Partnership’s executive director, said in a statement.

Single-payer supporters say the lobbyists' role in crafting the op-eds bolsters their argument that their opponents are parroting talking points from industry groups that profit off the current health-care system.

"These secret emails blow open what I saw firsthand and revealed as a health insurance whistleblower: These companies and their lobbyists will stoop to whatever it takes, no matter how grotesque, to deny people the lifesaving coverage they need," said Wendell Potter, a former health insurance executive who is now president of [Business for Medicare for All](#). "This is just the latest reason we need to reform this broken system where greedy corporations determine who can get medical treatment in America."

The emails raise troubling ethical implications about the undisclosed involvement of private interests in lawmakers' public statements, said Larry Noble, who served as general counsel for the Campaign Legal Center and the Federal Election Commission.

"It's disturbing," Noble said. "I think there's a certain ethical obligation to be upfront about who wrote the editorial."

The emails appear to show extensive outside involvement in the Montana lawmakers' op-eds. In a Microsoft Word document, MacDonald removed three paragraphs from a draft of Kelker's op-ed that pointed out that the United States "clearly spends significantly more on health care per capita than other developed nations." He also deleted a table from the lawmaker's original draft showing that the United States has higher health-care spending per capita than France, Germany, Norway and Switzerland.

The columns were published this summer in the *Missoulian*, a newspaper published in Missoula, and the *Billings Gazette*.

"I know most newspapers are going to have trouble formatting the graphic you provided and will likely ask us to hold off on that," MacDonald told Kelker in a June 12 email. "The client had trepidations that it might also come across to the 'less-discerning' reader that because foreign single-payer markets cost patients less, they are superior."

Instead, MacDonald wrote in the draft he sent back to Kelker that "extreme ends of the political spectrum" are offering health-care proposals while "what most Montanans and Americans would prefer lies somewhere in the middle." In his revisions, MacDonald also added a sentence that said, "Calls for a more government-controlled healthcare system are misguided as well."

In an interview, Kelker said it is common for state legislators to publish under their name op-eds that they did not write. "That's pretty normal," she said. "Actually, most of the time, for

legislators, at least in Montana, [they] are written by someone else. You know, a helper-person, not necessarily a lobbyist. I normally write all of the text for my op-eds.”

She added: “I suppose I’m fairly naive. ... As a legislator, you learn to sort out who is a good guy, and who is not, in terms of the lobbyists, and [MacDonald] has always been really straight. I don’t hang out or do anything with lobbyists much, but I really do trust him.”

Gross, who acknowledged writing fewer than half of her op-eds, said that when she worked at Planned Parenthood, she frequently provided “templates” for young people who needed help drafting statements, adding that this practice occurs elsewhere, as well. Gross also said she listened to MacDonald’s description of the Partnership for America’s Health Care Future and supported the group’s message.

“Formally and informally, I have held the role of community/grassroots organizer for more than a decade. Providing letter-to-the-editor op-ed drafts/templates is a common practice in organizing work,” Gross said in a text message.

Gross also pointed to low pay for Montana lawmakers and noted that they do not have staff members.

She added: “If I could do it over again, I would have spent more time on it and put it in my own words. But I was up against time constraints. ... If the angle is that a consultant wrote half of the op-ed that I had published in the Billings Gazette in July, so be it. I’m not embarrassed by that at all.”

An aide to Ohio state Sen. Huffman confirmed that their office worked with the consultant on Huffman’s op-ed criticizing Medicare-for-all as “socialized medicine” and “not a workable solution.” Asked whether that consultant had been hired by the Partnership for America’s Health Care Future, the aide responded, “I believe so.” Huffman’s office declined additional requests for comment.

John Fortney, a spokesman for the Ohio Senate Majority Caucus, later said in a statement: “The legislative process is open to input from everyone, including experts from [the] medical community. Senator Huffman is an emergency room doctor and understands the serious problems and affordability of the left’s misguided single payer agenda.”

Both Kelker and Gross said they received criticism from constituents about the views expressed in their op-eds. The day after Kelker’s op-ed ran, however, she wrote MacDonald an email that said: “At church, I received many favorable comments — mostly from Republicans!”

## [Duncan Hunter to plead guilty to campaign finance violations](#)

Embattled GOP Rep. Duncan Hunter (Calif.) confirmed Monday he plans to plead guilty to charges of campaign finance violations on Tuesday after months of maintaining his innocence.

"My trial was set for Jan. 22; that's not going to happen now. On tomorrow, on Tuesday, I'm going to change my plea to guilty. I think it's important not to have a public trial for three reasons, and those three reasons are my kids," Hunter said in [an interview with KUSI News](#).

"I think it's, it'd be really tough for them. It's hard enough being the kids of a public figure. I think it's time for them to live life outside the spotlight. But it's been a privilege to serve in Congress for 11 years, three tours in the Marine Corps and the wars. So I think we've done a lot of great things for the nation."

The San Diego Union-Tribune [first reported on Monday](#) that Hunter planned to reverse his "not guilty" plea, as his wife and former campaign treasurer Margaret Hunter [did in June](#).

The Hunters were indicted in August of 2018 on charges of misusing at least \$250,000 in campaign funds for personal expenses.

The California Republican [faces accusations of using the funds](#) to purchase trips to Italy and Hawaii, as well as pay for his family's dental work and his children's tuition, according to the Justice Department. Thousands were also spent on "fast food, movie tickets, golf outings, video games, coffee, groceries, home utilities, and expensive meals."

[Allegations also emerged](#) that Duncan Hunter used campaign funds during the course of five different affairs with congressional staffers and lobbyists.

He also allegedly falsified campaign records filed to the Federal Election Commission in an attempt to conceal the purchases, mischaracterizing the expenses as "'campaign travel,' 'dinner with volunteers/contributors,' 'toy drives,' 'teacher/parent and supporter events,' 'gift cards' for charitable donations, and 'gift basket items,' among other false descriptions," according to the Department of Justice.

Following the indictment, [Hunter was removed](#) from his committee assignments in the lower chamber.

Despite the allegations, the congressman, who was first elected in 2008, managed to win his reelection bid during the 2018 midterms.

His challenger in that race, Democrat Ammar Campa-Najjar, is running for the seat again next year.

A number of prominent Republicans are considering or have announced primary bids against Hunter, including former Rep. Darrell Issa (Calif.) and state Sen. Brian Jones.

Hunter has also for the first time failed to garner the endorsement of his county's Republican Party.

The House Ethics Committee [had previously deferred its investigation](#) into Hunter to the Department of Justice in 2017, having uncovered that the GOP lawmaker spent roughly \$600 to fly the family's pet rabbit, Eggburt, across the country.

### **Lobbyist 'shocked' by Inman's text seeking large donation**

A longtime Lansing lobbyist testified Tuesday that she interpreted a text message at the center of charges against state Rep. Larry Inman as a request for "as much money as we could give him."

"I was shocked," Lisa Canada, political director for the Michigan Regional Council of Carpenters and Millwrights, said of the June 3, 2018, message from Inman. "And I was angry."

Canada testified in Grand Rapids federal court on Tuesday, the opening day of Inman's trial. Prosecutors have charged Inman, a third-term House member, with attempted extortion, solicitation of a bribe and lying to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The charges involve a 2018 vote to repeal Michigan's prevailing wage, which set pay standards for state-funded construction projects.

But Inman's attorney, Chris Cooke, argued in court that authorities don't have the evidence to back up their allegations.

"You're not going to find it," Cooke said of purported proof Inman pursued a "quid pro quo" in exchange for his vote.

Inman ended up voting for the repeal of the prevailing wage law. Building trade unions that work on construction projects, such as the Carpenters and Millwrights, sought to protect the statute, but it is no longer law.

For much of Tuesday's five-hour proceedings, Inman remained expressionless in the courtroom. He sat back in his chair and shook his head at one point while Assistant U.S. Attorney Ronald Stella alleged Inman lied to authorities about text messages pressing for contributions.

Judge Robert Jonker predicted Tuesday that Inman's trial would last until early next week. It's a trial that will feature testimony from state lawmakers and multiple lobbyists and is expected to shed light on how policy is made in Lansing.

Prosecutors alleged Inman attempted to sell his vote for campaign contributions from the unions.

Much of the focus Tuesday was on a June 3, 2018, text message Inman sent to Canada, who was working to block the prevailing wage repeal by persuading enough majority Republican lawmakers to vote with minority Democrats.

In the message, Inman referenced other Republicans: "We only have 12 people to block it. You said all 12 will get \$30,000 each to help there (sic) campaigns ... I have heard most got \$5,000, not \$30,000."

He added, "I would suggest maxing out on all 12, or at least doubling what you have given them on Tuesday, asap, we never had this discussion."

Canada didn't respond to Inman's message but instead took it to her boss, she testified. They decided to inform the Michigan State Police, which referred the matter to the FBI.

"I felt like this was going to ruin it for us," Canada testified, referring to Inman's text message and the looming vote on prevailing wage.

Later that week, the Michigan House voted 56-53 on June 6, 2018, to repeal the law with Inman supporting repeal.

During her testimony, Canada and prosecutors connected Inman's specific reference to \$30,000 to a November 2017 dinner for a group of Republican lawmakers at a Lansing area restaurant called Capital Prime. Inman attended the event.

Three buildings trades unions were present at the event — the Michigan Laborers, the Operating Engineers and the carpenters, Canada said.

Under Michigan law, a political action committee could give only \$10,000 to a state House candidate's campaign in 2018. If the three unions' PACs each gave the maximum, that would be \$30,000.

"I would not have put it like that," Canada testified about Inman stating in the text message that 12 lawmakers would get \$30,000 for opposing prevailing wage repeal.

The FBI eventually worked with Canada and recorded a phone call she made to Inman later in June 2018. The phone call was played Tuesday in court.

During the call, Canada specifically asked Inman if he would have opposed repeal had the building trades "come up" with \$30,000.

"I can't judge it today," Inman responded at one point during the call.

During Tuesday's proceedings, the jury was selected, both sides gave opening statements and Canada began testifying. She will be cross-examined by Inman's attorney on Wednesday.

Cooke, Inman's attorney, suggested Tuesday that Inman's use of prescription pain medication could be part of his defense strategy. Multiple potential jurors who worked in the health care field were asked about their thoughts on opioid addiction.

Inman returned to the House in early September after missing session days following his May indictment and said he had completed treatment for an opioid addiction. He said he went through five weeks of detoxification and six weeks of in-patient treatment that saved his life.

Inman said he got addicted to painkillers after undergoing five separate surgeries in 2017 and 2018.

After the trial ended Tuesday afternoon, Inman stood by his attorney as he answered questions from reporters. Before departing, Inman joked about carrying his attorney's box of paperwork.

In the wake of the federal indictment, Michigan House Republicans have kicked Inman out of their caucus meetings, and he's faced calls to resign from both sides of the aisle. But there hasn't been a vote to expel him from the House. He's continued serving in hopes that his trial will clear his name.

Organizers had gathered nearly 14,000 signatures in a bid to recall Inman, but the state Elections Bureau threw out the signatures because of a missing word in the petition.

The Inman Recall Committee asked the Michigan Court of Appeals Monday to grant the group emergency relief so it could proceed with plans for a recall election. The committee asked the court to require the state Bureau of Elections to begin validating signatures ahead of a Jan. 10 deadline to ensure the recall election would be on the March 2020 ballot.

Federal prosecutors revealed in court Tuesday that they plan to call two current state lawmakers — Speaker Lee Chatfield, R-Levering, and Rep. Joe Bellino, R-Monroe — as well as former Rep. Robert VerHeulen, R-Walker, and Dan Pero, former chief of staff to former Speaker Tom Leonard, as witnesses.

### **[2017 Atlanta mayoral candidates subpoenaed by state ethics commission](#)**

The two candidates in the 2017 Atlanta mayoral runoff allegedly accepted a combined \$550,000 in impermissible campaign contributions, according to documents obtained by The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Both appear to have been served subpoenas from the Georgia state ethics commission.

The commission on Monday notified Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms' campaign of allegations that it accepted \$382,773 in contributions that exceeded maximum limits established by law

The commission is also alleging that Mary Norwood, Bottoms' opponent in the runoff, accepted \$168,975 in contributions that exceeded the limits.

The documents outlining the violations do not name the donors whose contributions allegedly exceeded the limits — which in 2017 were \$2,600 for a general election and \$1,400 for a runoff.

The ethics commission — whose formal name is the Georgia Government Transparency Campaign Finance Commission — issued Norwood's campaign a subpoena on Tuesday seeking campaign's bank records of any accounts that were under her control or did business with her campaign.

The AJC obtained a copy of the Norwood subpoena independent of the ethics commission. The AJC requested the Bottoms' subpoena from the ethics commission, but Executive Director David H. Emadi said it was not subject to Georgia's Open Records Act.

Bryan Tyson, a local election law attorney, told Channel 2 Action News that the campaigns could face fines if the alleged campaign finance violations are proven.

With 10 viable candidates, [Atlanta's 2017 mayoral race](#) was one of the most expensive in the city's history.

Just days before the general election, six of the candidates had raised more than \$1 million, with several drawing deeply from their own bank accounts to make personal loans to their campaigns. Bottoms loaned her campaign \$240,000 in personal funds.

In total, Bottoms raised \$2.7 million for her campaign compared to Norwood's \$2.1 million.

### *A bitter contest*

The mayoral runoff between Norwood and Bottoms was a [bitter contest](#) that highlighted the city's racial divide, and included pledges from both candidates to clean up corruption at City Hall.

The aftermath of the race featured allegations of voter fraud. Norwood lost the election by fewer than 1,000 votes.

The fallout from the race has been ongoing for the past two years.

Norwood, who served on the city council alongside Bottoms, also lost her 2009 mayoral bid to Kasim Reed by fewer than 1,000 votes. Norwood said Tuesday that her campaigns have been investigated four times — and exonerated in every instance.

"I look forward to the same outcome," she said.

Norwood said that her finance team is taking the request seriously, and that she planned to provide a comprehensive response to the commission.

Bottoms told Channel 2 in a text message that her campaign had not yet received a subpoena from the Ethics Commission.

"We are confident we are in full compliance with all Ethics rules and will provide requested documents to substantiate our compliance as appropriately requested."

An AJC [analysis](#) of 2017 mayoral campaign fundraising reports found that Bottoms was the biggest offender when it came to not supplying required donor information on campaign finance reports, such as where her donors work — which is critical when identifying city vendors contributing to candidates. The AJC found employer information was missing for about 20 percent of Bottoms' donors.

The ethics commission is scheduled to hear an audit report on the mayor's race during a meeting on Wednesday.

Bottoms' campaign finance consultant, Rick Thompson, sits on the ethics commission and, in that capacity, rules on complaints against campaigns and lobbyists. Thompson said he would recuse himself from the mayoral complaints, and had no input on the investigation.

Ultimately, one person appears to have been behind both complaints that led to the ethic commission's allegations.

Charlie Stadlander, a senior advisor to the Bottoms' campaign, filed an ethics complaint against Norwood on Dec. 4 — a day before the runoff. Stadlander had previously worked for Norwood. He said Norwood improperly transferred funds between accounts and misused city resources to help her campaign.

Stadlander later sought to have the complaint dismissed after he learned that the attorney who the Bottoms' campaign had assist him with the complaint, Jeremy Berry, was the city attorney at time.

In his role as city attorney, Berry represented Norwood in her capacity as a council member and so drafting the complaint was a conflict of interest and inappropriate use of city resources, Stadlander said.

Seven months later, Stadlander helped Norwood's campaign treasurer and his long-time friend, Jamie Ensley, draft a complaint against Bottoms.

"I would have never have filed that complaint had it not been for Charlie," Ensley told the AJC.

Stadlander said he eventually concluded both campaigns were corrupt. But he still considered Norwood a friend.

“The feeling I have right now is disappointment,” he said. “In my opinion, they are equally responsible for a breach of trust to the public.”

### **[Faulconer taps lobbyist Rebecca Rybczyk to replace lobbyist Greg Block](#)**

With the final year of Kevin Faulconer's term dawning, the revolving door at the San Diego mayor's office continues to twirl. As [previously noted](#), six-figure public relations guru Greg Block, who most famously grappled with spinning the mayor's 2017 homeless hepatitis B meltdown, departed earlier this year to sign on with ThreeSixty Public Strategies.

Run by Block's wife Rachel Laing, the influence-peddling outfit reported in October that it had been paid \$18,000 by e-bike purveyor Wheels Labs Inc. of West Hollywood to push "a shared mobility service in the city of San Diego." ThreeSixty's website boasts that while working for Faulconer, Block was "responsible for developing the city's first set of regulations of the shared dockless mobility industry."

Block's replacement, Rebecca Rybczyk, has already reported for work in the mayor's office, city records show. Unsurprisingly to those who have called out the process of raw political patronage that Faulconer has relied on to fill the ranks of city staffers, the new hire is fresh out of Southwest Strategies, a local lobbying shop and significant source of financial support to a bevy of city campaigns, including the mayor's.

Southwest's latest lobbyist disclosure report, filed with the city clerk October 11, runs an impressive 29 pages, and includes clients with some of the hottest issues pending before the mayor, including Cisterra Development, famous for muscling the Preserve at Torrey Highlands through city hall earlier this year.

The project's handling has since [drawn a lawsuit](#) from environmentalists and North City neighbors. Cisterra paid Southwest \$8000 to lobby the project in the third quarter of this year, says the disclosure report.

Additionally, \$17,000 was paid to Southwest in the quarter by the Port of San Diego Ship Repair Association, funded by the same multi-national military contractors which paid the lobbying and campaign consulting company to [crush the Barrio Logan community plan](#) in 2014.

Another Southwest client, Stockdale Capital Partners of Los Angeles, forked over \$11,000 to ease the developer's plans to shutter downtown's Horton Plaza shopping mall in favor of a yet to-be built tech center. Southwest chief Chris Wahl lobbied ten city officials on Stockdale's behalf, the disclosure shows, including Falconer and his chief operating officer Kris Michell.

"Rebecca joins Southwest Strategies after serving as Deputy Press Secretary in Congress where she held a dynamic role in the daily operations of active communications and legislative teams, transforming complex policy items into easy-to-understand messages tailored for a variety of audiences," said a February 2019 news release from Southwest announcing Rybczyk's arrival at the company.

While at Southwest, Rybczyk – who formerly worked for Republican congressman Mike Johnson of Shreveport, Louisiana's Fourth District - was charged with providing "strategic insight on public outreach and media relations for a variety of land use, transportation, water and energy clients," per her page on LinkedIn.

Johnson's most recent moment of national notoriety came when he was invited to sit in the booth with President Donald Trump at last month's Louisiana State University versus Alabama football showdown last month before a giant Trump MAGA rally in Bossier City.

"I told the President Saturday night in the skybox at the LSU/Bama game, I said, 'Mr. President, the only problem we have in Louisiana is we don't have enough venues large enough to accommodate all your supporters,' and he loved that," a local TV station quoted Johnson as saying.

### **[House speaker pressured to answer questions about secret pay to fired aide](#)**

A fellow Chicago Democrat and others are demanding House Speaker Michael Madigan explain secret payments to a disgraced former political captain or give up his position at the helm of Illinois' Democratic Party.

State Sen. Iris Martinez, D-Chicago, said the speaker's "cronies" paid off Kevin Quinn after he was fired following allegations of sexual harassment by a campaign worker while the Speaker publicly promised to take charge of the issue of harassment within the party.

"Women are the foundation of the Democrat Party. Speaker Madigan doesn't get this simple fact," Martinez said. "I urge my colleagues in the party and the legislature to join my demand for answers. Speaker Madigan must state what he knew, and when he knew it."

She said Madigan's promises to do better were merely "political cover."

Her demand came after The Chicago Tribune reported that long-time Madigan friend Michael McClain, a former state lawmaker-turned lobbyist for powerful entities such as ComEd, had

arranged payments to Quinn in the days after he was expelled from his positions within the state's Democratic Party and public payrolls after he was accused of harassing former campaign worker Alaina Hampton. The Tribune obtained emails from McClain to others who sent a total of \$30,000 in checks to Quinn in exchange for contract work that required little or no effort. In the emails, McClain told the lobbyists writing the checks and Quinn that the matter was confidential.

Madigan has denied wrongdoing or knowledge of the payments.

Martinez has clashed with Madigan before, running against his preferred candidate for a position in Chicago and objecting to a promise to challenge an appointment to fill state Rep. Luis Arroyo's seat after he resigned amid a bribery investigation.

Madigan's office declined to comment on Martinez's letter.

The speaker sponsored legislation that changed ethics requirements regarding harassment in the workplace, but Madigan has been criticized for not going far enough to remove protections for harassers that have a chilling effect on victims coming forward.

A day before Martinez' call for more information, state Rep. Margo McDermed publicly chastised Madigan for allowing such payments to occur on his watch.

"This confirms that the Speaker's response to the harassment of his employees was nothing more than window dressing while he continued to put political victories and fundraising ahead of his staff and the people of Illinois," she said. "As a female legislator, I find this insulting and hope my Democrat colleagues start to confront this disgraceful behavior in their caucus."

State Rep. Kelly Cassidy, a Chicago Democrat who had raised questions about retaliation herself from Madigan's political apparatus, called news of the payments "frustrating" in a Chicago Tribune report.

Cassidy was a voice of support for Hampton before many others in her party were.

News broke over the holiday weekend that Hampton settled a lawsuit she had filed against four of Madigan's political organizations for \$275,000.

[State rep accused of bribery, extortion tied vote to campaign funding, lobbyists say](#)

After union leaders and lobbyists accused state Rep. Larry Inman of trying to sell a vote, his attorney said witnesses misconstrued his requests for campaign funds.

Outside of the federal courthouse, the attorney said Inman – charged with bribery, attempted extortion and lying to the FBI – is innocent.

“I don’t think Representative Inman acted unethically at all,” attorney Christopher Cooke said Wednesday, Dec. 4, after the second day of a jury trial in U.S. District Court in Grand Rapids.

Prosecution witnesses, however, said Inman, R-Williamsburg, acted inappropriately if not illegally when he allegedly sought campaign funds to vote against a repeal of the state’s prevailing-wage law.

The issue would have gone to voters if the state House of Representatives or Senate had not approved the initiative.

On Thursday, Speaker of the House Lee Chatfield, R-Levering, is expected to be the day’s first witness.

District Judge Robert Jonker earlier rejected Chatfield’s attempt to avoid testifying.

Lisa Canada, political and legislative director of the Regional Council of Carpenters and Millwrights union, or MRCC, contacted authorities after Inman sent her a text requesting \$30,000 each for himself and a dozen other Republicans to vote against repeal.

The prevailing-wage law required workers on public projects to earn union-level pay. Inman voted with the majority in approving the repeal, 56 to 53, on June 6, 2018.

Two days before the vote, Inman sent texts to Canada and a lobbyist, Jim Kirsch. Inman said he desperately needed campaign funds because he would face a primary election if he voted against party leadership that favored repeal.

Inman’s texts were “unethical,” Canada said.

“I think what this says is, ‘I want \$30,000 or you won’t get my vote,’” she told Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher O’Connor.

Kirsch, a lobbyist for Kelley Cawthorne in Lansing, hired by MRCC, said Inman was opposed to repeal until a couple of days before the vote.

He said Inman sent a text suggesting that he and other legislators get “maxed out” by trade unions’ political action committees (PAC). PACs can donate up to \$10,000.

Inman ended the texts by saying that “we never had this discussion.”

“I interpreted it as inappropriate text because I’m talking about a vote in the Legislature and the text is talking about PAC contributions, and that is inappropriate,” Kirsch said.

Canada and Kirsch did not reply to the texts but she later talked to Inman in a call recorded by the FBI.

Lobbyist Noah Smith, a partner in Capitol Services, was also hired by MRCC. He testified that he earlier told an FBI agent that Inman was “weird, coy and non-committal,” and “scatter-brained.”

Inman says he was struggling with opioid and alcohol abuse at the time.

Smith also said that Inman discussed obtaining \$30,000 from trade groups while they were at a Lansing coffee shop.

David Fashbaugh, business manager for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in Traverse City, offered Inman information about the importance of the prevailing-wage law for workers, he said.

He said that Inman texted he would need “a ton of campaign money,” Fashbaugh testified.

### **[Gov. J.B. Pritzker signs law requiring additional disclosure from lobbyists](#)**

Lobbyists will have to disclose additional information to the public under a measure Gov. J.B. Pritzker signed into law Wednesday.

When the General Assembly approved the measure last month, lawmakers on both sides of the aisle described it as a small step toward fixing state government ethics laws amid an ongoing federal corruption probe that has ensnared Democratic politicians from Chicago City Hall to the Capitol in Springfield.

The law, effective immediately, also requires the secretary of state to create a combined online database for information on lobbyists, campaign contributions and public officials' annual statements of economic interest.

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The Democratic and Republican leaders in the House and Senate each previously announced two picks from their respective caucuses. The remaining four members are appointed by Secretary of State Jesse White and Attorney General Kwame Raoul.

The bill signing came the same day a group of Republican representatives called on Pritzker to convene a special legislative session to address ethics issues.

Pritzker said at an unrelated bill-signing ceremony in Chicago that the idea of "a quickie special session ... doesn't make a lot of sense."

"That ethics commission, deliberately created with Republicans and Democrats, is designed to look at each of the issues that, in fact, those same state representatives would like to have reviewed and make sure that they're done in the right way," Pritzker said.

### **[House speaker casts doubt on Inman's explanations in bribery trial](#)**

House Speaker Lee Chatfield cast doubt Thursday on explanations state Rep. Larry Inman gave lobbyists about a vote that eventually spurred criminal charges against the Williamsburg Republican lawmaker.

Chatfield, R-Levering, testified in federal court that House GOP leadership didn't threaten to revoke Inman's committee assignments and that Rep. Joe Bellino, R-Monroe, was always considered a no vote on the proposed repeal of the state's prevailing wage law.

Inman texted a lobbyist before the vote that Chatfield "will pull assignments for next term on this vote" if he voted against the repeal. After the vote, Inman texted that he switched from a no to a yes on prevailing wage repeal to allow Bellino to vote against repeal and to "save" Bellino's seat in a Democratic-leaning district.

The prevailing wage law set pay standards for certain state-funded construction projects and had the backing of Democratic lawmakers and labor unions.

"Rep. Bellino was always in the no column," Chatfield testified Thursday.

Prosecutors allege that Inman switched his position because he didn't receive campaign contributions from labor unions who opposed prevailing wage repeal. In May, authorities charged Inman, a third-term House member, with solicitation of a bribe, extortion and lying to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Inman has said he's innocent and wants to clear his name.

The charges stemmed from the 2018 vote to repeal prevailing wage law.

Prosecutors have alleged that Inman attempted to sell his vote on repeal to unions in exchange for campaign contributions. In court, prosecutors have been relying heavily on text messages Inman sent to lobbyists for the Michigan Regional Council of Carpenters and Millwrights, which was working to get majority Republicans to join Democrats in opposition to repeal.

In one message to the union's political director, Inman referenced other Republicans: "We only have 12 people to block it. You said all 12 will get \$30,000 each to help there (sic) campaigns ... I have heard most got \$5,000, not \$30,000."

He added, "I would suggest maxing out on all 12, or at least doubling what you have given them on Tuesday, asap, we never had this discussion."

Chatfield was speaker pro tem at the time of the prevailing wage vote and communicated with Inman on the day of the vote, June 6, 2018.

Chatfield said Thursday — the third day of Inman's trial in federal court in Grand Rapids — that Inman's text messages with union lobbyists broke a "commonly" understood rule that lawmakers not directly link fundraising to legislation.

"They should all be very aware," the House speaker said of the rule after referencing training sessions done for lawmakers on the subject.

Bellino and Dan Pero, who served as chief of staff for former Speaker Tom Leonard, R-DeWitt, also testified Thursday. Leonard was speaker at the time of the prevailing wage vote in 2018.

Inman's attorney, Chris Cooke, has focused many of his questions on Inman's mental state, noting that he had five surgeries over 28 months. Inman has said [his use of prescription pain medication reduced his cognitive ability](#).

Bellino said Inman acted differently than other lawmakers and would stare out the window and not look at colleagues while speaking in closed-door caucus meetings.

"He tended to worship a dead aviator," Bellino added, referring to Inman's well-known hobby of studying pilot Amelia Earhart and collecting memorabilia related to her.

Inman had a reputation for being "wacky" and "goofy," said Pero, who also was a former chief of staff to former Republican Gov. John Engler.

But multiple witnesses have testified that Inman understood the decisions he was making. Pero described him as well versed on issues.

Inman, who didn't receive maximum contributions from the carpenters union, eventually voted in favor of repealing the state's prevailing wage. In a message to Chatfield released by prosecutors, Inman predicted Democrats would come after him over his vote.

"A storm is ensuing this November regardless, Larry," Chatfield responded in a text message. "Thank you for standing with the base and freedom."

The first two days of Inman's trial focused on testimony from lobbyists who alleged that Inman's text message tying the vote to campaign contributions were "inappropriate."

Chatfield has already called for Inman to resign over his actions and excluded him from Republican caucus discussions of legislation.

### **[Illinois Republicans call for special December session to address corruption](#)**

A group of Illinois Republicans asked Gov. J.B. Pritzker to call lawmakers back to Springfield this month to address corruption concerns amid federal probes into lawmakers and lobbyists.

State Reps. Blaine Wilhour, Allen Skillicorn, Dan Caulkins, Brad Halbrook and Andrew Miller called for the governor to force lawmakers to return for a special session with the sole purpose of addressing political corruption.

“The people in our districts and all over the state of Illinois are demanding action,” said Wilhour, R-Beecher City. “They see this crisis of corruption unfolding before their eyes and they don’t accept it.”

Pritzker later Wednesday afternoon signed measures aimed at strengthening ethics laws in the General Assembly. One bill will require more detail about lawmakers' monetary interest disclosures when they begin a new term. Another creates the Joint Commission on Ethics and Lobbying Reform, a task force that will provide recommendations to the governor and General Assembly on how to further strengthen ethics laws by March 31.

The governor can call state lawmakers back into session, but it’s often done with a touch of political calculus because doing so triggers considerable costs to taxpayers in the form of employee hours and per diems for lawmakers. The last special session was called during the two-year budget standoff between then-Gov. Bruce Rauner and Democratic lawmakers, costing taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars and getting little done to break the impasse.

Wilhour said Republicans would be open to devoting time during next month’s scheduled session to address ethics reform as long as there’s a “commitment and sense of urgency.”

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has descended upon the state legislature. Federal investigators have been scrutinizing Exelon and ComEd's lobbying practices after several lobbyists allegedly funneled money to a former top aide of House Speaker Michael Madigan. The aide, Kevin Quinn, was fired after he was accused of sexual harassment by a campaign worker who last week won a \$250,000 settlement after filing suit.

State Rep. Luis Arroyo, D-Chicago, resigned Nov. 1 after he was arrested on a federal bribery charge. Federal investigators said Arroyo tried to bribe an unnamed state senator. Arroyo has pleaded not guilty.

State Sen. Martin Sandoval, D-Chicago, announced last week that he will resign as he also is under federal investigation after agents raided his home and offices.

Earlier in the summer, federal prosecutors indicted state Sen. Tom Cullerton, D-Villa Park, for embezzling from a labor union. He has pleaded not guilty and remains in office.

Amid the corruption probes, Senate President John Cullerton announced last month that he was resigning from office just one year into his current term.

### **Los Angeles bans developers from donating to city officials, candidates**

The Los Angeles City Council voted Wednesday, Dec. 4 to prevent developers who have project applications pending at City Hall from making campaign donations to elected officials or candidates for municipal office, although some members expressed concern over the effectiveness of ordinance.

City Councilman David Ryu introduced the proposal to ban developer contributions, which he said can interfere with the ethical commitments candidates make when running for office.

“Doing nothing will cost us the trust of Angelenos,” Ryu said. “Trust is the basis of our power, and in any government by the people and for the people, the public’s trust must always be held as our highest goal.”

Some council members said they were concerned the ordinance wouldn’t restrict contributions to independent campaign committees, which can be clandestine and more difficult to track.

“I don’t think this is a particularly groundbreaking or particularly important piece of legislation today,” Councilman Mike Bonin said. “When it comes to campaign finance reform, all we’re doing is feeding a vitamin C tablet to someone with pneumonia until we do full public financing (of campaigns).”

Councilman Mitch O’Farrell said the measure “will just increase the play for independent expenditures,” adding that his staff scrutinized contributions to his own campaign in 2017 and returned checks to developers with pending projects.

“It takes a lot of work, but a campaign can do that,” O’Farrell said. “I don’t know if we need an electronic filing system for us to take on that responsibility now.”

The changes are an effort to create an enforcement policy on developer contributions before the 2022 general election. Fundraising for that Los Angeles city election starts in March.

In November, the council’s Rules, Elections and Intergovernmental Committee discussed three proposed laws for restricting developer donations. The measure approved by the council Wednesday will bar political donations by developers who have projects pending with the city,

continuing for a full year after a final decision is made on the project. The city will create a database of developers who are restricted from making donations.

The council also voted to have the committee reexamine possible restrictions on behested payments — which are donations solicited by candidates or elected officials for various charities or causes. The city Ethics Commission has proposed guidelines that would restrict such payments from developers, lobbyists, lobbying firms, bidders, contractors or people who attempted to influence the elected official in the previous 12 months.

According to the Ethics Commission, eight of the 10 donors with the most behested payments over the past five years had done business with the city within that period.

The behested payment ban would include several exceptions, including payments that are solicited because of a state of emergency.

Los Angeles is the first jurisdiction in the country to ban developer political donations, according to Ethics Commission staff.

Efforts to update the city's campaign-finance laws began after a November 2018 FBI search of Councilman Jose Huizar's home and offices. He was also named in a search warrant outlining the FBI's probe of possible bribery, extortion, money laundering and other crimes as part of a corruption investigation at City Hall focusing on huge real estate investments from Chinese companies. No one has been arrested or charged as a result of the investigation.

City law limits contributions from non-individuals, with the charter setting limits on such donations, adjusted annually to reflect changes in the Consumer Price Index. The current maximum is \$226,500 for City Council candidates.

