

# MULTISTATE

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## Weekly Lobbying Articles

December 7, 2017

88.9 WEKU

December 6, 2017

### Did Jeff Hoover Violate Campaign Finance Laws? It's Unclear

<http://weku.fm/post/did-jeff-hoover-violate-campaign-finance-laws-its-unclear>

An ongoing investigation into sexual harassment in the Kentucky legislature still hasn't determined who paid to settle the claims and for how much. Former House Speaker Jeff Hoover and his accuser are denying the hush money came from political donors.

A lawsuit filed this week by an employee for the House Republican Caucus claims the secret settlement came from "prominent campaign donors." John Steffen heads the Kentucky Registry of Election Finance, which oversees how candidates raise and spend donations. He said that after reading the complaint it doesn't appear that Hoover broke campaign finance laws.

"Everything seemed to say that campaign donors had given him the money, not campaign funds that were used for that purpose. In that case, there wouldn't be a campaign finance issue."

Steffen says it would have been illegal for Hoover to use money contributed to his campaign, but if someone who's a typical donor was to give him money just outright, Hoover would not have violated campaign finance laws. The Legislative Ethics Commission has been asked to subpoena a copy of the settlement and determine if any part of it was paid for by political donors or lobbyists, which would be a state ethics violation.

"If it's money contributed to his campaign, then that wouldn't be something he could use the money for. But if an individual that's a typical donor to his campaign was to give him money just outright, that's outside the scope of campaign finance laws."

State officials have confirmed taxpayers did not pay the settlement. House Republican leaders hired a law firm to find out who did, but the investigation was inconclusive. Hoover and other GOP lawmakers involved in the scandal provided documents showing they took out loans from banks and family members to pay the settlement, but the amounts were redacted. Acting House Speaker David Osborne has asked the Legislative Ethics Commission to use its subpoena power to obtain a copy of the settlement and determine if any part of it was paid for by political donors or lobbyists, which could be a violation of state ethics law.

**The Morning Call**  
**December 6, 2017**

**Pennsylvania Legislature seeks to limit unions' political donations and protect themselves**

<http://www.mcall.com/news/nationworld/pennsylvania/capitol-ideas/mc-nws-union-paycheck-political-dues-20171205-story.html>

The Pennsylvania Legislature moved a step closer to preventing governments from deducting political donations from unionized workers' paychecks — and protect lawmakers' ability to mix work and politics.

On Tuesday, the Republican-controlled House approved Senate Bill 166 that prohibits state, county and local governments from using their payroll systems to let teachers, police officers, firefighters and other workers from voluntarily asking their employers to deduct money for their respective union's political action committees. The bill, which passed the GOP-controlled Senate in February, would apply to all unions after their current contracts expire.

The House still must approve the bill one more time and that vote may come Wednesday. If the bill passes the next time, it would go to Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf who appears ready to veto it.

"This legislation is anti-police officer, anti-firefighter, anti-nurse, and anti-teacher and that's why Gov. Wolf is against it," his spokesman J.J. Abbott said. "While the Republican Legislature takes unlimited gifts from lobbyists, they have the gall to undermine workers in the real world trying to provide for their families. This is shameful and Harrisburg at its worst."

Under current law, government employees can request their employer deduct from their paychecks regular union dues or an equal amount if they opt to not join the union. Workers can make a separate election to have an additional amount deducted for a union's PAC or any other cause. The state spends \$100 to run the entire electronic deduction program for all workers, according to the state Treasury's office.

The bill only targets the extra PAC money deductions, not normal union dues.

If Tuesday's debate and vote was any indication, the next House vote on the bill could be long and contentious. Republicans claimed the bill would end possible corruption by preventing taxpayers from subsidizing politics.

"It's an issue of integrity," said Rep. Daryl Metcalfe, R-Butler, adding lawmakers and judges have gone to prison in past for using taxpayer resources for campaigns.

Democrats called Republicans hypocrites for targeting only unionized middle-class workers and rejecting multiple amendments that would have limited lawmakers' or other organizations' from conducting politics with the help of tax dollars.

Most of those amendments were introduced by Rep. Matt Bradford, D-Montgomery. One amendment would have prevented lawmakers from getting a salary and receiving reimbursements for food and lodging expenses on legislative session days if they also attend political fundraisers on that same day. Another amendment would have precluded lawmakers from accepting only food and lodging expenses, known as per diems, if they do campaign work on the same day they are in the Capitol.

The amendments, and others like them, were defeated at the urging of House Speaker Mike Turzai, R-Allegheny. Turzai ruled that the amendments were not legal because he said they violated the single-subject rule. That rule prevents one bill from having multiple topics. Turzai said the underlying Senate bill was only about electronic payroll deductions and per diems are not paid through those systems.

In response to Turzai's rulings, Bradford said Republicans were trying to hide behind a procedural rule in an effort to hide their insincerity. It doesn't make sense, Bradford said, to say workers' personal money cannot be automatically deducted for union PACs but lawmakers can be paid with taxpayer money for expense reimbursements at the same time they are seeking campaign contributions at a fundraiser.

"If reform is on agenda then let's begin with this body," Bradford said. "Let's not be hypocrites."

Other amendments also failed, including a few that would have prevented employees and lawmakers from being allowed to make direct contributions to all charities and other endeavors from their paychecks.

Senate Bill 166, sponsored by Sen. John Eichelberger, R-Blair, is the first so-called paycheck protection bill that included all types of unions. In previous years, including 2017, lawmakers have introduced anti-PAC deduction bills and other anti-union bills that targeted only teachers unions and maintenance and secretarial unions while excluding law enforcement, corrections and firefighter unions.

On Tuesday, Rep. Barry Jozwiak, R-Berks, a retired state trooper, was poised to ask the House to amend Eichelberger's bill to exclude police, corrections and fire unions. But, Jozwiak told Turzai he was withdrawing his amendment at the request of the state trooper's union and state chapter of the Fraternal Order of Police.

The state's largest teachers union slammed the bill and lawmakers who supported it.

"This isn't good government," said Dolores McCracken, president of the Pennsylvania State Education Association. "I wish that lawmakers intent on silencing working class voices would stop bullying the people who provide invaluable services to our children and our communities every day."

With Jozwiak's amendment gone, the House's final vote is expected to be closer than normal in the chamber where Republicans have 121 of the 203 seats.

**Clarion Ledger**  
**December 5, 2017**

**Jackson Mayor Lumumba pressed for legislative agenda by City Council committee**

<http://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/local/2017/12/05/jackson-mayor-lumumba-pressed-legislative-agenda-city-council-committee/919365001/>

Jackson Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba gives his thoughts on working with Gov. Phil Bryant on an alternative for the Jackson Public Schools system.

Just what are the city of Jackson's legislative priorities for the upcoming legislative session? It's hard to say at this point. And council members say time is running out.

The first legislative committee of new Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba's term is pressing the mayor and his administration to move more quickly.

"We're waiting on the meat and potatoes. This is kind of the gravy, the side dish," Ward 4 Councilman De'Keither Stamps said of Monday's agenda. "We need to know what the mayor's priorities are. We need to know these things so we can publicly endorse them."

Stamps was behind most of the nine resolutions on Monday's agenda, all aimed at federal and state cooperation with the city, but with little specifics, such as a resolution encouraging the state government to respect civil and worker rights protections enacted by the city.

Any delay in putting together a list of priorities could come at the detriment of the city, Stamps warned. The city normally has set a legislative breakfast by this point in the year, and has lined up meetings with the governor, state legislators and county officials as well, he said.

"The idea is to get everyone together before the session, the representatives, the county. We have more votes that way. I don't want to look back and say we missed that opportunity," Stamps said.

By contrast, the council held a legislative committee meeting on Nov. 21 last year, where it expressed support for several pieces of legislation including a Municipal Crime Prevention Fund, constructing a domed stadium on the Jackson State University campus, changing the state flag and rescinding the airport takeover bill.

Ward 1 Councilman Ashby Foote said legislators are more prone to consider legislative items when the city shows a united front. He put most of the responsibility at the feet of the mayor, who was out of town Monday.

"The real leadership should come from the administration," Foote said. "The council should be offering guidance along the way. We've got a very short fuse on this. Typically, the Legislature wants to see things with unanimous support, all the more reason to get together and consolidate our thoughts and views."

Stamps also sparred with the city's recently hired lobbyist, Quincy Mukoro, after Mukoro said the administration is waiting on the City Council's legislative input before formally announcing its agenda.

"We have to get the mayor's legislative priorities adopted first," Stamps countered. "The lobbyist can't lobby for anything until it's put forward, and that hasn't happened yet."

Mukoro also raised some eyebrows when he revealed he has been acting as a liaison between the mayor's office and Gov. Phil Bryant's office on the Jackson Public Schools system transition.

Bryant and Lumumba crossed the political aisle to formulate an alternative collaborative plan to rescue JPS from a state takeover. The two sides have been working with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, JPS stakeholders and national and local experts as a way to keep JPS under local control.

But council members said they don't want Mukoro working on JPS matters in light of other city business.

"JPS is a big enough issue by itself," Foote said. "It could undermine our effectiveness if our lobbyist gets distracted by it."

"That's not your lane," Stamps said bluntly. "You've got a lot to work on."

Monday night, Chief Administrative Officer Robert Blaine said the administration will have a "strategic plan" around the time the legislative session begins in January.

Councilwoman Virgi Lindsay, who chairs the Legislative Committee, said she hopes to have at least a broad outline of what the mayor's priorities are by as soon as Friday.

**The State Journal  
December 4, 2017**

**Lawsuit: Political donors paid settlement for former speaker Hoover**

<http://www.state-journal.com/2017/12/04/lawsuit-political-donors-paid-settlement-for-former-speaker-hoover/>

Kentucky's former GOP House speaker had a consensual sexual relationship with a woman in his office and used money from political donors to pay for her silence, according to a lawsuit filed Monday by a Republican aide.

House Republican Caucus Communications Director Daisy Olivo filed the suit Monday in which she said she was retaliated against for reporting official misconduct.

Former Republican House Speaker Jeff Hoover resigned his leadership position last month after acknowledging he settled a sexual harassment claim from a woman in his office.

Hoover denied sexual harassment, but said he sent inappropriate but consensual text messages to the woman. In a news conference announcing his resignation, Hoover said "at no time were there ever any sexual relations of any kind."

But Olivo's lawsuit says that the woman told Olivo that she had "physical, sexual encounters" with Hoover "both during work hours, and outside of work hours." Hoover, who is married with three daughters, remains in the House. The woman wasn't identified in the suit.

State officials have confirmed taxpayers did not pay for the settlement, and House Republican leaders hired a law firm to find out who did. That investigation, released last week, said lawmakers used their own money plus loans from banks and family and friends "not involved in lobbying, government contract work or any other impermissible endeavour."

Olivo's lawsuit, however, says the money "was paid off the public record with private funds pooled from prominent campaign donors." Acting House Speaker David Osborne has asked the Legislative Ethics Commission to use its subpoena power to find out if any portion of the settlement was paid "by a political donor or lobbyist" and whether any ethics laws were broken.

Hoover, through a spokesman, did not immediately return a message seeking comment Monday. He has refused to talk about the incident, either publicly or with investigators, because he says the settlement requires him to stay silent.

The scandal comes at a time when the country is grappling with multiple instances of sexual harassment in the workplace, including high-profile cases that have toppled powerful men in politics, entertainment and media. And it has also caused a rift among Kentucky Republicans, who are in their first year of full control of state government after decades of dominance by Democrats.

Three other Republican lawmakers involved in the settlement have lost their committee chairmanships, but have not resigned their seats.

Republican Gov. Matt Bevin asked the state Republican Party on Saturday to call for the resignation of Hoover and the other three lawmakers who paid to settle the sexual harassment claim, but party leaders refused. Bevin called it “not a proud day for the Republican Party.”

According to the lawsuit, the woman involved in the relationship with Hoover worked for Olivo in the communications office. Olivo said she reprimanded the woman several times “for, then, consensual, but inappropriate conduct with Rep. Hoover.”

It adds that Olivo said she confronted Hoover about the relationship Sept. 5. She also says she reported it to Hoover’s chief of staff, Ginger Wills, plus the attorney and human resources director for the Legislative Research Commission.

But Olivo, in the suit, said Wills viewed the woman as the aggressor in the relationship and said she had “forced the Speaker into a ‘submissive’ relationship, which was damaging Rep. Hoover’s ability to do his job.” Olivo said Wills planned to fire the woman, but Olivo objected because the relationship was consensual.

Wills did not respond to an email seeking comment.

What followed, according to Olivo, was retaliation from Wills and others that made it impossible for Olivo to do her job. She said she was stripped of her job responsibilities and said other lawmakers were trying to intimidate her.

The lawsuit names the Legislative Research Commission as defendant. Hoover is not named.

Olivo is asking in the suit for money to compensate her for a hostile work environment and to punish those she says is responsible. She also hopes to recoup her attorneys’ fees.

**WCPO Cincinnati**  
**December 1, 2017**

**Kentucky sexual harassment inquiry sent to ethics commission**

<http://www.wcpo.com/news/state/state-kentucky/kentucky-sexual-harassment-inquiry-sent-to-ethics-commission>

A taxpayer-funded investigation of a secret sexual harassment settlement signed by four GOP lawmakers in Kentucky was stymied because the lawmakers refused to talk about it or disclose documents.

A report by a Kentucky law firm confirmed that former House Speaker Jeff Hoover, his chief of staff Ginger Wills and lawmakers Jim DeCesare, Michael Meredith and Brian Linder all agreed to settle a sexual harassment claim brought by a member of the House GOP caucus staff.

Although all agreed to be interviewed, none would discuss the settlement, say how much money was paid or provide documents or emails to investigators. In Kentucky, legislative emails are privileged and can be released only if the lawmaker agrees.

In response, acting House Speaker David Osborne asked the Legislative Ethics Commission to take over the investigation. Specifically, he wants the commission to use its subpoena power to get a copy of the settlement and find out if any part of it was paid by political donors or lobbyists, which would be illegal.

“There is still information we don’t have, and we believe the Ethics Commission can and should get it to give the people of Kentucky a full and complete picture of what happened,” Osborne said in a news release.

Hoover acknowledged the settlement and resigned his leadership position last month after it was first reported by the Courier Journal. House GOP leaders have removed DeCesare, Meredith and Linder from their committee chairmanships. Republican Gov. Matt Bevin has asked for all four to resign, but none have.

Wills remains in her post as chief of staff, working with Osborne and other Republican leaders.

**Crain’s- New York Business**  
**December 2, 2017**

**Favorable treatment at issue in race for City Council speaker**

<http://www.crainsnewyork.com/article/20171202/POLITICS/171209983/favorable-treatment-and-conflict-of-interest-roar-their-head-in-race-for-city-council-speaker>

Real estate machers, industry trade groups, city contractors and unions could win a receptive ear in the City Council—thanks to the high-powered consultants retained by the politicians looking to lead the body.

The three councilmen recognized as front-runners to become council speaker—Greenwich Village's Corey Johnson, Upper Manhattan's Mark Levine and central Brooklyn's Robert Cornegy—have hired

lobbyists and consultants with deep Rolodexes to assist their bids. A similar scenario in 2013 raised suspicions that business clients of the firms representing winning candidates would then have an edge in City Hall.

Mayor Bill de Blasio, for example, allowed his campaign strategist Jonathan Rosen to sit in on administration meetings about housing policy and even declared him an "agent of the city" in a bid to keep their email exchanges private. Not surprisingly, Rosen's public-affairs firm, BerlinRosen, signed a flood of new clients after the election. Meanwhile, James Capalino's firm topped all city lobbyists in revenue and Capalino seemed to enjoy exceptional access to the mayor and his agencies after helping the mayor win.

And after becoming City Council speaker, Melissa Mark-Viverito oversaw the allocation of city funds to private clients of the MirRam Group and Pitta Bishop & Del Giorno, lobbying and consulting firms that helped her capture the chamber's highest perch four years ago.

"There are too many politicians who pay back their consultants by giving them favorable status, either with funding or legislation," declared Queens state Sen. Tony Avella, a former councilman. "I think it's always been a problem, and I certainly saw it under the previous council. But under the de Blasio administration it's gotten much worse."

Here is a look at the business clients of the firms representing the contenders to succeed MarkViverito as speaker in January.

Three firms have been retained by Levine to guide him to the council's helm. Handling "strategic communications" is Kirtzman Strategies, led by former journalist Andrew Kirtzman. Unlike most of the companies involved in the speaker's race, Kirtzman Strategies is not a lobbying firm, and so does not have to disclose its clients to the city or to the state's Joint Committee on Public Ethics. Kirtzman declined to furnish Crain's with a complete list of individuals and entities that have paid for his services in the past year, though he did provide a partial list that largely mirrored those clients listed on his website. It includes several organizations linked to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the education reform movement, reflecting Kirtzman's background as an adviser on school matters to the Bloomberg and Obama administrations.

Levine has also hired another consultant not registered as a lobbyist and not required to divulge clients: Rachel Mann of RKM Strategic Consulting. Mann is a veteran of the controversial consulting firm Advance Group, and her site identifies several of her former clients. Among them are Communication Workers of America 1180 (which represents supervisors in city agencies), 1199SEIU (representing health care workers) and several building-trades unions. CWA Local 1180 will doubtless seek further city resources for its members in the next four years, while 1199SEIU will likely not only attempt to win funds for the city's massive hospital networks but to also advance a number of pro-worker causes. Construction unions, meanwhile, have aggressively pushed the council to instate new safety regulations that critics claim handicap nonunion contractors.

But perhaps Levine's most notable hire is the law firm Pitta LLP, which he paid \$6,000 in October, according to New York City Campaign Finance Board records. Pitta LLP is an appendage of the lobbying giant Pitta Bishop & Del Giorno, which has had more business before the council than any other firm

involved in the speaker's race—in part because it helped lift Mark-Viverito into the council leadership almost four years ago.

Despite news reports earlier this year announcing that the firm would run Levine's bid, it told Crain's it was only doing legal-compliance work, and not using its numerous connections in government, unions and the private sector to wrangle support for him.

Pitta Bishop & Del Giorno bills itself as an advocate for labor, and city records show it has lobbied the council on behalf of an array of unions including public employee powerhouses the Correction Officers Benevolent Association, the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators, Teamsters Local 237 (representing employees of the New York City Housing Authority), the Uniformed Sanitationmen's Association, the Detectives Endowment Association, the Correction Captains' Association and several affiliates of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (representing clerical workers). All of these unions will seek to negotiate new contracts with de Blasio in his second term as well as seek additional resources for their agencies, including head count increases.

Pitta Bishop & Del Giorno also has lobbied the council on behalf of Transport Workers Union Local 100, which represents subway workers and has sided with Gov. Andrew Cuomo in his push to get de Blasio to contribute more city funds to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

Pitta Bishop & Del Giorno has also represented several significant private-sector unions in matters before the council. Among these are the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades and the United Association of Plumbers and Gasfitters Local 1, two building-trades groups that have favored tougher safety regulations and initiatives to retrofit buildings for greater energy efficiency. The firm has also served the International Union of Operating Engineers which, among other things, has sought to limit the introduction of new crane technologies.

Additionally, Pitta Bishop & Del Giorno has lobbied the council for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 3, which is on strike in a bitter labor dispute with Charter Communications, owner of Spectrum. The next council will have to approve a new franchise agreement with the cable and internet giant. Pitta Bishop has also worked for the Hotel Trades Council, though that union has backed Johnson's candidacy.

But for all Pitta Bishop & Del Giorno's labor credentials, the city's lobbying database—and the firm's 2016 filings with the state's Joint Commission on Public Ethics—show it also works for those on the opposite side of the bargaining table.

As recently as last year it represented Charter Communications. It also has lobbied the council in the past year on behalf of such industry groups as the Associated Brick Mason Contractors of Greater New York, the Building Industry Association and the Metropolitan Truckers Association, as well as several individual heavy construction and contracting firms, which have often opposed the same regulations the unions support.

The City Council exercises tremendous sway over city zoning matters, and in 2017 Pitta Bishop & Del Giorno lobbied it on behalf of several real estate powerhouses. These include Glenwood Management, Tishman Speyer, the Witkoff Group and RY Management. JCOPE records show it also recently worked for the Red Apple Group and Time Equities.

State records show it also works for New York Wheel LLC, the company behind the troubled, subsidized plan to construct a Ferris wheel and retail project on Staten Island's North Shore, as well as for the Tribeca Film Festival and New York Fashion Week operator Spring Studios.

In keeping with his support from the Hotel and Motel Trades Council, Johnson—who has been viewed as Levine's main rival for the speakership—has hired the lobbying and consulting firm Metropolitan Public Strategies, founded by the union's former political director, Neal Kwatra.

Kwatra's firm also represents the Hotel Association of New York City, a trade group of the proprietors that employ the Hotel Trade Council's members. Business and labor in the industry have worked together in pushing the city to crack down on Airbnb, the transient rental of apartments and the construction of nonunion hotels. HTC has also successfully pushed to limit the construction of hotels in industrial zones and the conversion of hotels into condominiums.

JCOPE records show the company worked to promote the statewide expansion of e-hail app Uber and handled the United for Affordable NYC initiative, which supported the mayor's housing plan. It also ran the Mario Cuomo Campaign for Economic Justice, Gov. Andrew Cuomo's public relations effort to establish a \$15-an-hour minimum wage.

Brooklyn's Cornegy has retained Mercury Public Affairs, which has the largest footprint of any firm representing a speaker candidate. The lobbying and consulting giant has offices in several American urban centers, as well as in Mexico City and London. Veteran advisers to former Republican Sen. Al D'Amato and ex-Gov. George Pataki founded the company, though it has recently acquired talent from the Obama administration and has worked for the Rev. Al Sharpton.

Mercury's hiring is not surprising, as Cornegy is the most conservative candidate for the speakership. He is also the leading African-American contender.

Mercury recently was featured in news reports regarding the indictment of Paul Manafort, as one of two lobbying firms the former Trump campaign chairman solicited to represent the Ukrainian government. City lobbying records show that in 2017 it has pushed the interests of just two companies in the council: Charter Communications and INDA, Association of the Nonwoven Fabrics Industry. Charter is seeking to protect its franchise agreements with the city amid the IBEW strike, while INDA has fought to block Intro-666, which would ban sales in the five boroughs of several types of wipes made from nonwoven materials and marketed as "flushable." A slew of its other clients have lobbied the agencies of the executive branch on procurement matters.

JCOPE records show Mercury has, as recently as 2016, represented clients that could have business come before the city. Among them are Cablevision Systems Corp., which now operates under the brand name Optimum and has two municipal franchises for cable and internet. It also recently represented Viewu LLC, the company with the contract to manufacture body cameras for the NYPD, and the Dart Container Corp., which has battled the city's efforts to ban plasticfoam food containers. It has also counted among its clients New Yorkers for Clean Livable and Safe Streets, which lobbied aggressively to ban horse-drawn carriages from Central Park, and StudentsFirstNY, which advocates for charter schools.

Because the next speaker will have to allocate funding to combat the opioid epidemic, it is noteworthy that JCOPE filings show that in 2016 Mercury represented both Purdue Pharma— makers of the controversial painkiller Oxycontin—and the Addiction Treatment Providers Association.

The lobbying and consulting firms did not respond to inquiries, declined to comment or insisted that their candidate for speaker would not be more inclined to favor their clients in matters before the council.

But Avella argued that these commitments are insufficient. He has pushed legislation that would ban consulting firms from lobbying the officials they elect, and obligate all firms working for politicians to divulge a complete list of their clients.

"You have your consultant or lobbyist get you that position, then they come to you for funding or for legislation," the senator said. "That's a clear conflict of interest. That shouldn't be the case. They should have the same influence as any other New Yorker."

**The Baltimore Sun  
December 7, 2017**

**Newly unsealed documents detail FBI investigation of state Sen. Nathaniel Oaks**

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/crime/bs-md-ci-oaks-affidavits-20171206-story.html>

New court documents unsealed late Wednesday in the corruption case against Democratic state Sen. Nathaniel Oaks say the legislator has been under investigation by the FBI since 2014.

An FBI agent wrote in a January affidavit unsealed this week that Oaks, 71, was added as a subject of an ongoing federal public corruption investigation in August 2014 "based on historical reporting that Oaks was associated with individuals who were involved in illegal activities, and that Oaks had inappropriately accepted money and other things of value from businesspersons and lobbyists in his capacity as a state delegate."

While the full scope of the investigation remains unknown, the documents identify for the first time one person who allegedly conspired with Oaks: a Maryland businessman named Bruce Crockett, described as a long-time associate of Oaks.

"It takes money," Crockett said when asked in a recorded meeting with an FBI cooperator about how to go about dealing with Baltimore politicians such as Oaks. "They're all about cash, man ... I've done it too many times."

Oaks has been charged with bribery, wire fraud and obstruction of justice, and has pleaded not guilty. He is preparing to serve in the upcoming Maryland General Assembly legislative session, with his trial slated for mid-April.

His attorney could not immediately be reached for comment Thursday.

Crockett, whose public records show he owned a Baltimore County auto body shop and a management company, died in a motorcycle crash in July, Baltimore County police reported at the time. He was 59.

The documents add new intrigue to a case in which the government has said multiple targets have become cooperators. Oaks himself allegedly agreed to cooperate in January after the FBI said he was recorded accepting \$15,300 in cash bribes, but reneged on the agreement and tipped off the target of the investigation.

The Southwest Baltimore resident is free pending a trial. He continues to serve as a legislator, attending political events and community meetings. Last month, he was listed as a host among a slew of other elected Democratic officials at a fundraiser for State's Attorney Marilyn Mosby, Baltimore's elected top prosecutor.

Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller, a Democrat, released a statement saying the Senate "will allow the criminal process to occur without any interference."

"I can assure the public that once the criminal process is resolved that the Joint Committee on Legislative Ethics will also have their own investigation, with a full report and recommendations from the legislature," Miller said.

Disciplinary actions against a senator can range from a letter of admonition to expulsion, but those actions can occur only after an ethics committee investigation. In Oaks' case, that process is in effect frozen by the criminal proceedings.

Oaks, whose political base is Edmondson Village, was first elected to the House of Delegates in 1983, and lost his seat in 1989 after being convicted of theft and misconduct in office for stealing thousands from his election fund. He won back his seat in 1994, and in 2017 was appointed to the state Senate to take the place of Lisa Gladden, who stepped down due to health issues.

According to an affidavit filed by FBI Agent Steven Quisenberry, a cooperator who was the subject of another FBI investigation met with Crockett in May 2015 and asked if Crockett would facilitate a meeting with Oaks. The cooperator said they represented an out-of-town businessperson interested in obtaining contracts from Baltimore through a minority-owned business. The company was operated by another cooperating defendant assisting the FBI with the investigation, authorities said in the documents.

Crockett said Oaks was looking for tickets to Baltimore Ravens games — "cheap seats, not good seats, just enough to get in," Crockett said, according to the FBI.

Crockett recounted two specific occasions where Oaks allegedly took money for helping businesses — a \$4,000 payment from a contractor for help getting a significant payment owed to the contractor released by the city, and \$2,000 to set up meetings. He told the cooperator that Oaks had been disappointed by the amount of the payment.

The cooperator got a meeting the following month, with Crockett and Oaks, the FBI said. The cooperator said his minority business certification had lapsed, and the renewal application would have to be expedited to meet the bid deadline for a bridge contract. Oaks said he wanted three Ravens season tickets.

During a recorded call the next week, Oaks said he wanted the name and number of the person the cooperator had been dealing with at the city's Minority and Women's Business Opportunity Office. Crockett called the cooperator in July, and said Oaks wanted everything to go through Crockett. He didn't want anything in text message.

"You gotta give it to him, he's been doing this a long time," Crockett said, according to the FBI.

In September 2015, the cooperator introduced Oaks to the out-of-town businessperson at a Ruth's Chris Steakhouse in Pikesville at a recorded meeting. Oaks offered to assist the businessperson with development in Maryland, and in the months to follow they discussed a Department of Housing and Urban Development project in the city.

In April 2016, the source met with Oaks and gave him a draft letter of support for the real estate project, addressed to HUD's Chicago office and containing various false statements about the project. Oaks had his assistant type it out on his House of Delegates letterhead and faxed it to a number he believed was associated with HUD.

When asked how he would like to be compensated, the FBI says Oaks put a Tootsie Pop in his mouth. The cooperator held up five fingers to signify a \$5,000 payment, and Oaks shook his head and made an upward motion with his thumb.

Oaks accepted three cash payments of \$5,000 in meetings recorded by the FBI, including one after filing paperwork for a bill to create a \$250,000 state debt for bonds for the project.

Oaks went to a high-end shoe store in Harbor East the same day he received one of the cash payments.

"One of those shoes, you paid for," he told the cooperator in one call.

**Spectrum News**  
**December 7, 2017**

**Law which prohibits legislators accepting "anything of value" from lobbyists has been ruled unconstitutional by U.S. district court judge**

<http://mycn2.com/politics/law-which-prohibits-legislators-accepting-anything-of-value-from-lobbyists-has-been-ruled-unconstititutional-by-us-district-court-judge>

Kentucky's ethics laws, passed in 2014, which states a member of the legislature can take nothing of value from a lobbyist, has been struck down as unconstitutional.

U.S. District Judge William Bertelsman, who ruled in June 2017 that the laws were too vague to be enforced and violated lobbyists' freedom of speech, issued a final order this past Friday which included an injunction telling the Kentucky Ethics Commission that they couldn't enforce the unconstitutional rules.

Sen. John Schickel, R-Union, and two Libertarian candidates decided to sue in 2015 to overturn state laws prohibiting gifts from lobbyists to legislators.

The strict laws came about as a result of Operation BOPTR0T in 1992 in which an FBI investigation exposed 15 legislators who had sold their votes, including House Speaker Don Blandford who did prison time for his actions.

The current laws prohibit lobbyists from giving legislators "anything of value" along with prohibiting Frankfort lobbyists' from donating campaign money to legislators or legislative candidates.

Schickel was of the belief that the regulations violated certain individual's rights and was not fair.

“I think Judge Bertelsman has got it exactly right,” Schickel said. “On its face, these laws, as he said, chill free speech and limit interaction of legislators with their constituents.”

Schickel wants to make it clear that he is in favor of punishing any legislator who does anything illegal, such as vote buying, when it comes to working with lobbyists.

“Anyone that takes a bribe or does anything illegal should be sent to prison, I really believe that,” Schickel said. “But, you know, that’s not really what this is about. This is about a bunch of complicated rules and regulations. If they prevented corruption, we wouldn’t be having the problems that we’re having now.”

Schickel admits that most of the general public probably has very little interest in the issue, but the northern Kentucky Senator believes that the ruling truly rights a wrong.

“This is about freedom of speech, this is about freedom of association” Schickel said. “Just because a law has the word ethics in it, doesn’t make it right,” Schickel said.

Schickel said that he’s confident that Judge Bertelsman’s ruling will stand even if the Kentucky Ethics Commission appeals the decision to the Kentucky Court of Appeals.