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Weekly Lobbying Articles

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Idaho Statesman

June 12, 2017

Idaho's top election chief talks possible campaign reforms

<http://www.idahostatesman.com/latest-news/article160997524.html>

Idaho Secretary of State Lawrence Denney told lawmakers Wednesday that if a company wants to try to buy a lawmaker with campaign contributions then the public should have easy access to those records.

Denney added that he would be fine if there were no limits on campaign contributions because courts have consistently ruled the government can't restrict the public's First Amendment rights. Furthermore, the Republican election chief stressed that the system could benefit with having more transparency and possibly harsher fines for campaign violations.

Currently, Idaho limits campaign contributions for statewide candidates at \$5,000 and caps legislative candidate contributions at \$1,000. Campaign violations hover around \$250 in civil penalties.

"There's a lot less money that's coming directly to candidates. A lot more of the money is being spent by independent expenditures," Denney said. "I think that's a change that we probably need to address in the sunshine laws, because it's really not reported."

Denney made his remarks Wednesday while listing possible changes to the state's Sunshine Law — passed by overwhelming popular vote in 1974 that set many of the rules used today to govern campaign contributions and lobbyist activity disclosure — during the first meeting of the Campaign Finance Reform legislative panel.

Earlier this year, House Speaker Scott Bedke and Senate President Pro Tem Brent Hill announced they were forming a work group to find ways to increase transparency in the timing and reporting of campaign activity surrounding candidates, political action committees and lobbyists.

Bedke and Hill also instructed the 10-member group to look at requiring personal financial disclosures for state lawmakers and implementing laws that prevent elected officials from immediately moving into similar roles in the private sector, also known as "revolving-door" policies.

During Wednesday's meeting, several lawmakers on the committee bristled at Denney's remarks. Senate Minority Leader Michelle Stennett, of Ketchum, countered campaign limits are important to reduce the risk of corruption and should not be removed.

Meanwhile, House Majority Caucus Chair John Vander Woude, of Nampa, argued he had never seen campaign contributions influence a lawmaker's decision.

"It bothers me a lot that people think we can be bought," Vander Woude said.

In 2016, ethics and campaign disclosure advocates attempted to get a voter initiative on the November ballot that would have drastically changed candidate donations limits, increased penalties for campaign violations and ban certain gifts from lobbyists to lawmakers.

The initiative failed to get enough signatures, but Denney has since come out in favor of many of the reforms proposed and has urged the Idaho Legislature to take up the cause.

The legislative panel will meet again in August to review legislative proposal from Denney and discuss possible other recommendations before finalizing a report for the 2018 legislative session.

Middle East Eye June 12, 2017

US law firm drops contract to lobby for Egypt's spy service

<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/us-law-firm-drops-contract-lobby-behalf-egyptian-government-1077425280>

An American PR firm has dropped Egypt's spy service as one of its clients after just six months.

Weber Shandwick first signed the \$1.2m deal with the General Intelligence Service (GIS) - Egypt's mukhabarat - in January, with the intention of improving the country's image following an authoritarian crackdown which has seen mass arrests and accusations of human rights abuses.

According to the US Justice Department, the firm would be promoting Egypt's "strategic partnership with the United States," and emphasising the country's "leading role in managing regional risks."

Another aspect of Weber's work was to lobby the US State Department to label the Muslim Brotherhood a "terrorist" organisation, falling in line with the Egyptian government, which has been involved in suppressing the group after overthrowing the Brotherhood-backed democratically elected President Mohamed Morsi in 2013.

However, on Tuesday the company told PRWeek that after reviewing its accounts on behalf of foreign governments, it had "decided to discontinue work with the government of Egypt".

The decision for the company to drop the contract came shortly after the publication of a scathing article in the Atlantic magazine, which criticised the deal with Egypt and warned that Weber Shandwick's efforts "could undermine, rather than bolster, Egypt's standing in Washington."

"In Weber Shandwick, it would appear that the Sisi regime has found a PR firm willing to apply its considerable messaging prowess to the cause of funneling US taxpayer money and goodwill towards the increasingly brutal leadership of the world's largest Arab country," wrote Avi Ascher-Shapiro.

In a statement, Cassidy & Associates - a subsidiary of Weber Shandwick who were also hired in January - said it would continue to lobby on behalf of the Egyptian government.

"Egypt is a long-standing ally of the United States and plays a key role in the fight against terrorism," the firm said in a statement.

"Cassidy & Associates looks forward to continuing to represent the government of Egypt and highlight this important relationship with policymakers on Capitol Hill and in the administration."

It is not uncommon for lobbying firms in Washington to be hired by foreign countries to help them secure political links in Congress or in the administration. It is rare, however, that an intelligence agency takes lobbyists and communication experts on their payroll to start its own lobbying effort.

The Egyptian mukhabarat are often accused by human rights organisations of torturing civilians and the forced disappearance of thousands of political opponents in the country. Amnesty has said the death of Giulio Regeni, the Italian researcher found dead in Cairo last year, echoes such disappearances.

Weber Shandwick has represented Microsoft and has contracts for promoting the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Cassidy & Associates has represented various healthcare firms and universities, as well as the US aviation and defence companies Boeing and General Dynamics.

The government for Guinea Bissau, which has for years been dogged with claims of corruption, dropped Cassidy as its representative in 2010, stating a poor return on their investment.

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi was the first foreign leader to congratulate US President Donald Trump on election night in November, and the American president has called his Egyptian counterpart "a great, great guy".

The general feeling is that Trump's administration will close more than an eye on human rights abuses committed by its autocratic allies and Sisi should not fear for the \$1.3bn in military aid Egypt receives from the US.

Moreover, the Egyptian government already spends another \$2m a year for the services of another lobbying firm, Glover Park Group.

**Sioux City Journal
July 11, 2017**

Ethics amendment backers to start push to get on 2018 ballot in SD

http://siouxcityjournal.com/news/state-and-regional/south-dakota/ethics-amendment-backers-to-start-push-to-get-on-ballot/article_a9b9c12d-b697-5e38-b8fb-5073dda37116.html

PIERRE, S.D. — Supporters of a constitutional amendment that would replace a voter-imposed government ethics overhaul that South Dakota lawmakers repealed this year plan to start building support to put the amendment before voters in 2018, the sponsoring group said Tuesday.

Events will be held in seven cities to train volunteers who will circulate petitions, starting Saturday in Madison, Rapid City and Sioux Falls, Represent South Dakota said in a statement. The amendment would tighten campaign finance and lobbying restrictions, create an independent ethics commission and require that laws changing the ballot question process pass a public vote, among other provisions.

"While the repeal of a law passed by the voters was troubling, seeing the continued outpouring of support from people of all political stripes has been refreshing," Darrell Solberg, a former Democratic lawmaker and co-chairman of Represent South Dakota, said in the statement.

Represent South Dakota bills itself as conservative, progressive and independent state residents working together to fight corruption. It started as a local offshoot of Represent.Us, a Massachusetts-based organization working to reduce the influence of money in politics that helped fund the 2016 South Dakota ballot measure campaign.

A little over 51 percent of voters supported that government ethics initiative last year, but Republican lawmakers scrubbed the initiative from law just months later citing constitutional concerns. Initiative supporters accused lawmakers of overturning the will of the voters.

Lawmakers passed bills intended to replace provisions of the initiative, but supporters of the ethics overhaul say that the Legislature's replacements fall short of what the voters approved.

If passed, the new constitutional amendment would largely be protected from legislative changes.

The new amendment would create a seven-member state government accountability board with broad powers to serve as a citizen ethics commission of voters. It would require lawmakers to put \$389,000 annually indexed to inflation into a fund administered by the board.

The panel would investigate allegations of corruption and violations of lobbying, campaign finance and government ethics regulations. It would also have the authority to conduct audits of disclosures including for lobbying and campaign finance and impose sanctions such as fines on public officials.

Under current law, a less powerful state watchdog board can investigate statewide officeholders and executive branch employees.

The wide-ranging new amendment would lower campaign donation limits. For example, it would decrease the contribution limit for a state representative from \$1,000 a year from individuals to \$500 per election cycle. It would also ban donations from corporations and labor unions to candidates or political parties, although they could still donate to other political committees. It also would bar gifts from lobbyists to many public officials.

Currently, there's an annual \$100 limit on gifts that legislators and other public officials can accept from lobbyists, but gifts don't include food, beverage or entertainment for immediate consumption, among other things.

The new proposed amendment also prevents the Legislature from altering or rejecting laws approved by voters without returning to the ballot. At least 10 states, but not South Dakota, have provisions to protect citizens' initiatives from state lawmakers.

"At its core, the Anti-Corruption Amendment is about returning power to the people and giving voters the final say," Represent South Dakota spokesman Doug Kronaizl said in the statement.

Secretary of State Shantel Krebs has approved the amendment petition for signature gathering. The campaign events will be used to teach volunteers how to safely and effectively circulate petitions in their areas, according to group. Supporters would have to submit nearly 28,000 valid signatures to the secretary of state by November 2017 for the amendment to appear on the 2018 ballot.

A different group is proposing a separate constitutional amendment that would also make it harder for the Legislature to tamper with voter initiatives. Lobbyist fundraiser invite raises questions

WRAL
July 10, 2017

Lobbyist fundraiser invite raises questions

<http://www.wral.com/lobbyist-fundraiser-invite-raises-questions/16811516/>

RALEIGH, N.C. — Current lobbyist and former state Rep. Mike Hager is "co-hosting" a fundraiser for Lt. Gov. Dan Forest, but says he hasn't broken the state law against political contributions by lobbyists.

Good-government advocates say it's confusing and gives the appearance of impropriety.

Hager, a Rutherford County Republican who served as House majority leader before resigning his seat last August, opened his lobbying firm, Hager Strategic Solutions, in February, after the six-month cooling-off period required by state law.

On Sunday, Hager posted on Facebook a flier for a private fundraiser for Forest, a Republican widely expected to consider a run for governor in 2020. As most fundraiser invitations do, this one includes a list of donors — "sponsors" and "hosts" and "co-hosts" and "patrons," depending on how much they've contributed.

Hager is listed as a "co-host" of the event, which, according to the flier, requires a \$1,000 contribution.

"Please join me at the event below and you will understand my admiration for our Lt. Gov.," Hager commented.

North Carolina law prohibits lobbyists from donating to political campaigns, a change that was made in 2007 in the wake of a scandal involving former House Speaker Jim Black.

Hager, whose lobbyist registration was active as of Monday, denied having made a contribution.

"I can't give any money to it. I'm going to congratulate him on his great success," he told WRAL News.

Asked whether his listing as a co-host might give people the impression that he had contributed, Hager shrugged it off.

"I've never worried a whole lot about what people think," he responded. "It's the actuality of the law that we're complying with. That's the only issue I have."

A 2008 opinion by the State Board of Elections seems to back that up.

In the opinion, requested by the North Carolina Professional Lobbyists Association, then-elections director Gary Bartlett clarified that lobbyists can solicit campaign contributions from other people as long as the legislature is not in session.

During session, solicitation is banned. However, lawmakers recessed on June 30 for more than 10 days, so the ban is not currently in effect.

"Hosting" a fundraiser is allowed, according to the Board of Elections, as long as no contribution is made, nothing of cash value is provided and the event doesn't take place at the lobbyist's home or office.

North Carolina Coalition for Lobbying and Government Reform director Jane Pinsky says that needs to change.

"Although the law prohibits Hager from making any contribution, this invitation would make anyone think he had contributed \$1,000 to the campaign," Pinsky said. "We need a firewall between lobbyists and the people they lobby when it comes to campaign contributions. Our current law needs to be

reinforced so that lobbyists may not serve as hosts for fundraisers or put their names on invitations, even if they are not contributing money.

"North Carolinians need to know that decisions legislators and other elected officials make are not influenced by money raised for them by lobbyists," she added.

WRAL News asked the Forest campaign whether it had concerns it might be perceived as accepting an improper contribution. The campaign has not yet responded

TribLIVE
June 9, 2017

Convicted ex-lawmakers enjoy access as lobbyists

<http://triblive.com/state/pennsylvania/12402959-74/convicted-ex-lawmakers-enjoy-access-as-lobbyists>

Webster's dictionary defines "prowess" as having knowledge or expertise about a particular activity or field.

So it's no surprise that former Pennsylvania House speaker Bill DeWeese, known for his flamboyant vocabulary, chose the word when naming the one-man lobbying shop he launched this year in Harrisburg.

The former Greene County Democrat served 36 years in the state House before his 2012 felony conviction for using state resources for political gain. He now enjoys prowling the halls of Harrisburg on behalf of union clients.

"As a former member who served over three and a half decades — about two-thirds of that time as the Democratic leader — I do find it a fun and jovial challenge to make strenuous entreaties to an overwhelmingly robust Republican majority in both chambers," DeWeese said.

Numerous former lawmakers, legislative staff and cabinet officials in Washington, D.C., and state capitals across the country have turned to lobbying. Pennsylvania requires a one-year waiting period before lawmakers and agency officials can begin lobbying former colleagues.

DeWeese is among a small group of Pennsylvania lawmakers-turned-lobbyists who spent the waiting period behind bars. Others include former House Speaker John Perzel, R-Philadelphia, House Democratic Whip Mike Veon of Beaver County and Senate Majority Leader Joe Loeper of Delaware County — all of whom left office for prison after being convicted of abuses of power.

That distinction draws wincing in some circles.

Barry Kauffman, the former executive director of Pennsylvania Common Cause, said he attempted to persuade lawmakers to ban former public officials convicted of felonies from lobbying state officials — first after Loeper returned as a lobbyist and then a decade ago when the last major series of legislative indictments came down against leaders including DeWeese, Veon and Perzel.

"I worked to achieve an amendment to the lobbyist disclosure law so a person could not be a lobbyist for pay and take advantage of the system they had abused, if they had been convicted of misfeasance, malfeasance or abuse of power," Kauffman said. "But it never gained much traction."

Bryn Mawr lawyer Mark Schwartz, a onetime aide to late House Speaker K. Leroy Irvis, urged lawmakers to act in a 2014 letter to former Gov. Tom Corbett and legislative leaders. He said permitting lawmakers convicted of abuses of power to become lobbyists promotes a culture of corruption.

"I really think the reason Pennsylvania is so corrupt is these guys get a pay increase by becoming lobbyists. It's like no big deal. It's a rite of passage. You start as a reformer, you get co-opted by the money and perks, you get caught, and then come back as a lobbyist," Schwartz said. "I resigned from the Trial Lawyers Association when they hired Joe Loeper as a lobbyist."

Loeper, a Delaware County Republican, served in the Senate from 1979 through 2000, when he was sentenced to six months in prison for federal income tax fraud. Prosecutors said he attempted to hide some \$300,000 in outside income.

The 73-year-old popular former lawmaker created a template others could hope to follow when he returned to Harrisburg as a lobbyist and promptly attracted a slew of clients, including charter schools, universities and energy and insurance companies, among others.

Loeper did not return a call for comment, nor did Perzel — who now lobbies for charter schools — or Veon, who represents the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

DeWeese serves as a lobbyist for the United Food and Commercial Workers union that represents thousands of employees of the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board. He estimates he spends 45 to 50 weeks a year in the Capitol, staying busy during Republican-led efforts to dismantle the state-controlled wine and spirits system.

Randy Haynie, of Louisiana-based Haynie & Associates and president of the National Association of State Lobbyists, said he is not familiar with any Pennsylvania lawmakers who turned to lobbying after prison. But that in and of itself should not disqualify someone from the trade, he said.

"I think everybody has a right to go on and make a living, no matter what's happened in their past, if they are doing it properly, legally, ethically and doing a good job. They have to have a profession," Haynie said.

The numbers alone suggest that lobbying is a profession in which former lawmakers can thrive.

While former lawmakers with criminal records may comprise only a tiny minority of the profession, Haynie estimated that about 20 percent of the governmental affairs professionals, as lobbyists prefer to be called, in Washington, D.C., are former members of Congress, while about 15 percent of those who lobby statehouses around the country are former lawmakers or executive-level staffers.

Insiders say former lawmakers and high-level staffers have the advantage of knowing the lay of the land.

David Hess, a former top environmental official under governors Tom Ridge and Mark Schweiker, said it's hard to break into lobbying without the right experience.

"The General Assembly could be a foreign country if you don't know the customs, the language, the idiosyncrasies," said Hess, who lobbies on environmental issues at Crisci Associates in Harrisburg. "You can certainly teach that to someone, but you'd be much further ahead to hire someone who's had some experience in those customs."

The demand for such expertise has mushroomed in recent decades as every sector from business and industry to energy and higher education strives to gain traction and reap rewards from government.

"Today, everybody has somebody other than their elected officials watching every word put on every sheet of paper," Haynie said. "Legislators today have more information to make a decision than they ever have had. Now multiple people are giving information to legislators. Legislators are getting more information on both sides of a bill."

Mike Manzo, who was DeWeese's chief of staff before pleading guilty and becoming a pivotal witness in the state's "Bonusgate" prosecution, said hiring former lawmakers and staff is an advantage for clients seeking influence in the legislative process.

"If you're looking for someone to champion your issue in the halls of state government, you want someone who worked in the halls of state government," Manzo said.

While DeWeese, Veon and Perzel boast only a handful of clients, Manzo has flourished in his new profession. He is a registered lobbyist and vice president of strategic engagement at Triad Strategies, one of Harrisburg's most-active government affairs firms.

Manzo said his advantage comes from "having grown up inside the building" and learning how to successfully navigate the convoluted processes and work the levers of the capitol machinery.

"I've seen all the points you have to touch to be successful," he said.