



M U L T I S T A T E

[Fur coats, resort vacations and a Porsche: Lawmaker resigns after allegedly taking \\$500,000 from her charity](#)

The nonprofit founded by a Pennsylvania lawmaker was meant to help some of the neediest people in West Philadelphia, caring for and housing those struggling with addiction, poverty and mental illness.

Yet over the past decade, officials say, state Rep. Movita Johnson-Harrell (D) used more than \$500,000 from the charity's bank accounts to pay off a Porsche, multiple fur coats and pricey vacations to Mexico — not to mention, funding her two campaigns for a state seat representing a Philadelphia district.

Although the Democrat disputed some of those charges, she also [submitted her resignation Thursday](#) to step down from office, and officials [said](#) she is planning to plead guilty to some charges, which include theft, perjury and related crimes.

“Her theft knew no bounds,” Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro [said](#). “No one is above the law, no matter their position of power. And today is no different.”

Johnson-Harrell, 53, is [the 60th public official](#) in Pennsylvania to have been arrested by Shapiro's office since 2017. But the eye-popping allegations against her stand out.

Prosecutors say the lawmaker used her charity as a “cash account,” drawing in some cases from her clients' government benefits, and covered it up by lying on her personal financial records or those of her nonprofit and campaign.

“I vigorously dispute many of these allegations, which generally pertain to before I took office,” she said in [a statement to the Associated Press](#), “and I intend to accept responsibility for any actions that were inappropriate.”

A lawyer for Johnson-Harrell did not immediately respond to a request for comment from The Washington Post.

Johnson-Harrell, who said she was the first female Muslim member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, was first elected in March and rapidly emerged as an outspoken voice against gun violence. She was in part motivated by her own family's painful history: Four relatives — her father, only brother, a cousin, and her 18-year-old son — have been fatally shot.

It was the death of her brother, who went undiagnosed and untreated for bipolar disorder and PTSD, that [she said](#) first motivated her to start her charity, Motivations Education & Consultation Associates (MECA), [about](#) two decades ago.

Under her leadership as executive director, the organization “has advocated, cared for and fought to improve the quality of life for disenfranchised groups,” Johnson-Harrell said in [a University of Pennsylvania biography](#).

In 2005, she privately bought three adjacent rowhouses in the neighborhood of West Powelton, prosecutors said, before renting the property to MECA in 2013 — for the exact cost of her mortgage payments.

The three buildings were supposed to serve as a personal care home, in part funded by residents' Medicaid and Social Security disability benefits. But when state health officials threatened to shutter the space due to its squalid conditions, MECA kicked out its residents.

Even then, with the space unused, the charity kept paying rent to its executive director.

“While Johnson-Harrell was lining her pockets with MECA funds,” Shapiro said, “MECA's residents were living in squalor.”

In the meantime, Johnson-Harrell was appointed to a job overseeing victim services for Philadelphia's district attorney in November 2017, and launched an unsuccessful bid for her current seat in the Pennsylvania House.

In addition to making direct transfers to her bank account, “Johnson repeatedly wrote checks for ‘cash’ on MECA's account, in varying amounts, whenever she needed extra money,” prosecutors said in [a lengthy criminal complaint](#).

The nonprofit's coffers ended up funding a laundry list of high-ticket items: Matching fox fur coats for her and her husband. Designer clothes from Ralph Lauren and luxury online retailers. Overdue car payments on her Porsche Cayenne. Private-school tuition for her grandchildren.

And after MECA paid for trips to Mexico, Atlanta and Ocean City, spending \$16,000 on travel in 2017, prosecutors turned to the lawmaker's social media for answers. "Johnson's Facebook posts from these vacation destinations, leave no doubt that these were pleasure trips," they wrote in the complaint.

Johnson-Harrell inflated the salary of a relative who worked at MECA so that family member could purchase a West Philadelphia house that the lawmaker moved into — and for which she paid the mortgage.

In January 2018, when that house was foreclosed on and she went into default on another property, prosecutors said, MECA gave its executive director a \$70,000 "loan" — which she later used to pay off her real estate financial woes.

Last year, the sitting state representative for her district [resigned](#) following a bribery conviction. So Johnson-Harrell made another go for the job.

Much like her car, and her house, and her fur coats, though, her campaign was also bankrolled by MECA. Prosecutors say that she transferred \$12,500 directly from the charity's bank account to her campaign committee, which she told to record the money as a personal loan from her. She also allegedly funneled another \$30,000 to the charity through her personal bank account.

And while she won the seat handily with [nearly two-thirds of the vote](#), she lasted just 10 months in the Pennsylvania House.

In a letter to Pennsylvania House Speaker Mike Turzai (R) on Thursday, [according to the Philadelphia Inquirer](#), the lawmaker said she was "accepting responsibility for some missteps" she made before her election.

"I am choosing to resign to protect my district, to allow for an orderly election for my successor, and to focus on my defense to these allegations," she wrote.

[Pritzker backs former Senate Republican leader for ethics commission after mistakenly appointing recent lobbyist](#)

Gov. J.B. Pritzker on Thursday appointed former Illinois Senate Republican Leader Christine Radogno to a newly formed ethics commission — after his administration mistakenly appointed a former lobbyist to the post.

Legislators last month passed a resolution to create the Joint Commission on Ethics and Lobbying Reform to take up the many issues unearthed by federal investigations into state Rep. Luis Arroyo, state Sen. Tom Cullerton, D-Villa Park, and state Sen. Martin Sandoval, D-Chicago.

The governor on Wednesday named his four appointees to the commission, including former state Rep. Steven Andersson. Andersson was one of a dozen Republicans who joined Democrats to vote for a budget and income tax hike in July 2017 over the objections of former Gov. Bruce Rauner.

Andersson, however, was a lobbyist until June 28. The resolution bars anyone who registered or worked as a lobbyist in the previous five years.

The governor's office said Thursday they realized their error.

"Steve Andersson is a dedicated public servant and the administration appreciates his willingness to serve. However, given the requirements of the resolution, we will be submitting a different appointee," Pritzker spokeswoman Jordan Abudayyeh said in a statement.

The governor's office later announced Radogno's appointment to the commission. Radogno also served on Pritzker's pension consolidation task force earlier this year, which ultimately led to a consolidation plan that combined roughly 650 suburban and downstate police and fire pension funds.

The ethics commission is composed of two appointees each from the four legislative leaders, two from Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White's office, two from Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul's office and four from Pritzker. That will most certainly ensure more Democrats than Republicans on the panel, although only two of the governor's appointees could be from his party.

The commission must submit recommendations by the end of March. Pritzker also appointed Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton, Illinois Revenue Director David Harris and his general counsel Ann Spillane to the commission.

Arroyo is the latest legislator to come under federal scrutiny. The allegations against the 65-year-old Northwest Side Democrat revolve around his lobbying work in Chicago as manager of Spartacus 3 LLC.

And the sometimes dual role of lawmakers as lobbyists is coming into full view in light of the allegations. Although barred by law from lobbying state government, Arroyo — who resigned after being arrested — has been registered with the city of Chicago as a lobbyist since 2017.

Pritzker last month said he's "absolutely committed" to looking into a ban on legislators also working as lobbyists. House Republican Leader Jim Durkin has been pushing a measure that would ban legislators, their spouses and immediate live-in family members from performing paid lobbying work with local government units.

Pritzker has also said the new commission should place a top priority on whether Democratic ward committeemen are "picking replacements properly."

"I made it clear from the beginning that I want to make sure that the people of the district get represented properly," the governor said last month. "There's no air of corruption around the person who gets appointed and also be elected."

Arroyo [resigned from the Illinois House on Nov. 1](#) after being charged with bribery, but he resisted calls from party leaders to step down from his post as the 36th Ward Democratic committeeman.

Eligible committeemen voted to appoint Eva-Dina Delgado to Arroyo's former seat — with 30th Ward Ald. Ariel Reboyras voting as Arroyo's proxy despite calls from state House Speaker Mike Madigan for Arroyo to butt out of the process.

The battle lines have already been drawn for that challenge.

Delgado took the oath of office last month after the committeemen's vote. And the Peoples Gas executive filed her official paperwork to take the seat with the House clerk.

[Special interests are pressuring NJ lawmakers and the public in secret. That could change.](#)

An untold number of political consultants are spending secret amounts of money to influence politicians and voters, operating what frustrated regulators have come to call "shadow lobbying."

Now New Jerseyans may learn more about exactly what special interests are behind the internet ads, television commercials and persuasion campaigns aimed at swaying decisions by lawmakers or officials.

A bill introduced Thursday by Senate President Stephen Sweeney, D-Gloucester, would clamp down on "shadow lobbying," an increasingly common practice in which public affairs or communications firms work to influence legislation or policy on behalf of a special interest, such as a utility or insurance company, and don't report it to the state.

Sweeney's bill would beef up public reports, and unmask the unknown groups that lobbying firms hire to help influence policy. It's a Russian nesting doll of sorts: A registered lobbying firm has to get a license and regularly tell the public about the work it does and money it makes. But that lobbying firm can hire other businesses to help complete its work, and that second business doesn't have to tell New Jerseyans anything about its work.

The bill would require a lobbying firm to file quarterly or annual reports with the name of the second group it hired to "provide professional services other than lobbying," what the group did, why it was hired, and what it was paid, among other information.

"Lobbying has become a lot more sophisticated than ever before," said Jeff Brindle, the executive director of the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission. "Now there's a lot of different tools in the toolbox, like hiring polling firms, research, public relations or bringing on strategists that may not contact lawmakers but help form the lobbying strategy. In my personal opinion, it's really in the public interest to disclose."

It's a phenomenon that's not limited to Trenton: The number of registered federal lobbyists has decreased since 2007, according to an analysis by the [Center for Responsive Politics](#). That could have been triggered by restrictions former President Barack Obama placed on lobbyists working for his administration, and the wave of candidates discouraging contributions from registered lobbyists.

[**Aide to Rep. Bob Brady pleads guilty in illegal lobbying probe in Missouri**](#)

Days after about payments he made on behalf of U.S. Rep. Bob Brady's 2012 campaign, one of the congressman's top political strategists has confessed to separate federal crimes involving \$1 million he was illegally paid to lobby on behalf of a Missouri charity.

Donald “D.A.” Jones, 62, of Willingboro, N.J., pleaded guilty Monday in Springfield, Mo., to conspiring to steal from an organization that receives federal funds.

As in , federal prosecutors in Missouri said Jones hid his misdeeds through sham consulting agreements and allowed his Philadelphia-based political consulting firm – D.A. Jones & Associates – to be used as a pass-through for illicitly spent money.

Between April 2011 and January of this year, Jones admitted, he used that money to advance the interests of Preferred Family Healthcare, a Missouri-based mental health services and substance abuse nonprofit funded largely through government grants and Medicaid reimbursements. He hoped to influence those with sway over matters of interest to the nonprofit through setting up meetings with and directing contributions to key lawmakers in Washington.

The lobbying work Jones performed was not itself illegal, prosecutors said, but the way he was paid broke federal rules barring charities from using government funds to make political contributions or lobby for federal grants or contracts.

To hide the work Jones was doing for Preferred Family Healthcare, executives there drew up “consulting” agreements with Jones’ consulting firm, according to the indictment in Jones’ case. He admitted Monday that he knew those contracts to be shams meant to cover the true work he was doing for the charity.

Jones’ lawyer, Alan J. Tauber, declined Tuesday to comment on his client’s guilty plea but referred to in which Jones apologized for his misdeeds.

Jones, known in Philadelphia as a quietly effective expert in get-out-the vote efforts for local political campaigns, has worked on behalf of clients across the country as well as for local candidates, including former City Controller Jonathan Saidel and Sheriff Jewell Williams in recent years.

His plea in the Missouri case came about a week after Jones admitted his role in the unrelated federal probe involving Brady, one of his oldest clients.

whether the congressman – chairman of the city’s Democratic Party – will ultimately face charges in the matter.

Jones, during a Dec. 8 court hearing in Philadelphia, admitted that he helped illegally hide a \$90,000 payment Brady’s campaign made to convince a 2012 Democratic primary challenger to drop his campaign.

Two others – including Brady’s 2012 primary rival, – have also pleaded guilty and , another longtime Brady strategist has been charged in the case.

The deals Jones struck with government lawyers in Philadelphia and in Missouri both reference his continued cooperation and possible testimony with authorities in both states. They also put off his sentencing – at which he could face up to five years in prison – until both investigations end.

Jones became at least the second person to plead guilty in the Missouri probe of Preferred Family Health, which had also operated under the name Alternative Opportunities during the period under investigation. In June, an accountant who had done work for the nonprofit admitted to stealing almost \$2 million from the charity.

The plea documents in the case suggest Jones’ admission comes at the early stages of what appears to be a wide-ranging probe of Preferred Family Healthcare and its leadership. The court filings reference five unnamed co-conspirators, all of whom were either executives or employees of the charity in Missouri or Arkansas.

Each, prosecutors say, was involved in deploying Jones to lobby for the charity on issues ranging from overtime pay regulations, efforts to secure FEMA money after a tornado in Joplin, Mo., and grants for future programs.

Jones admitted Monday that he kicked back nearly 30 percent of the \$973,807 he was paid by the nonprofit between 2011 and 2017 to two of his co-conspirators – one of whom was described in court papers as a lobbyist and former Arkansas state legislator.

Jones also said he took charity funds to lobby on behalf of a for-profit company owned by two of the unnamed Preferred Family Healthcare executives that repackaged and sold thermostats imported from China.

[Public campaigns being conducted with donations kept private](#)

Public campaigns being waged in Oklahoma City on local, state and federal issues are being financed by donors who, so far, have remained anonymous.

The campaigns for MAPS 4 and Medicaid expansion and against President Donald Trump’s impeachment have all been conducted through mechanisms that don’t require public disclosure of contributors, at least for now.

Donors to the MAPS 4 campaign will never have to be disclosed, unlike the situation in previous MAPS campaigns. State legislators changed the law in 2014 governing municipal ballot questions.

Television ads for the campaign include the disclaimer that they were purchased by Citizens for MAPS 4. But a consultant for the campaign said no group was registered with the state under that name.

“It’s a bank account,” the consultant said.

Ashley Kemp, executive director of the Oklahoma Ethics Commission, said the commission in 2014 requested some changes to the campaign reporting laws for local governments to make standards and enforcement more uniform.

“There was not a request by the Commission to eliminate public disclosure for local ballot measures,” Kemp said.

Former state Sen. AJ Griffin, the author of the bill that made the change, referred questions to former Ethics Commission Director Lee Slater, who did not return a phone call. The Legislature would have to amend state law to make campaign finances transparent again for municipal ballot questions. The Legislature, which has slashed the commission’s funding, has not left the panel enough money to enforce any municipal campaign laws.

[Wagle, other Kansas lawmakers with eye on D.C. can take lobbyist dollars during session](#)

Kansas lobbyists have a big incentive to remain in Susan Wagle’s good graces. As state Senate president, the Wichita Republican decides the fate of countless bills in which their clients have an interest.

To fight the potential for abuse, Kansas bars state lawmakers from accepting lobbyist contributions during [the legislative session](#) that begins next month. But as a [candidate for U.S. Senate](#), Wagle is under no such prohibition.

As she shapes the state Senate’s agenda in 2020, she will remain free to collect lobbyist money, a situation some see as an ethical minefield.

On Tuesday at the Topeka Country Club, The Kansas Medical Society Political Action Committee and seven lobbyists, including her son-in-law Riley Scott, will host a high-dollar fundraiser for Wagle, according to an invitation obtained by The Star. It costs \$500 to attend, \$1,000 to host.

The event offers a window into the influence Wagle has amassed over nearly 30 years in the Legislature, including seven leading the Senate, where her control over Republican committee assignments and what bills ultimately reach the floor makes her a principal player.

Among Tuesday's hosts is Jon Small, contract lobbyist for Koch Industries, Bombardier Learjet, ExxonMobil and the National Football League, among other entities. Dan Murray, who represents the Kansas Farm Bureau and the Kansas Medical Society, also works as Kansas director of the National Federation of Independent Business.

Small did not return a phone message. Murray said "unequivocally" that neither Wagle nor her staff had pressured him or the other hosts to participate. His role in the fundraiser doesn't constitute an endorsement by NFIB, he said.

Rachelle Colombo, a lobbyist for the Kansas Medical Society, said she approached Wagle about setting up the affair.

"I actually reached out to her and asked if we could host an event for her," Colombo said. "We've had a longstanding good relationship with the Senate president."

OPTICS, ETHICS AND LOBBYISTS

Other incumbent state lawmakers pursuing federal office also are free to solicit lobbyist contributions. [Sen. Barbara Bollier](#), a Mission Hills Democrat who is also running for U.S. Senate, and [Rep. Troy Waymaster](#), a Bunker Hill Republican running for Congress who currently chairs the powerful House Appropriations Committee, can both fundraise from lobbyists during session.

The [Kansas Governmental Ethics Commission](#), which oversees campaign finance for state races, has no jurisdiction over the federal contests. Statehouse lobbyists have the green light to give to these candidates through the session, which officially begins January 13.

Brendan Fischer, director of federal reform for the Washington-based Campaign Legal Center, said sitting state officeholders are in a position to pressure potential donors with business before the state to give to their campaigns.

OTHER CANDIDATES MAY FOLLOW WAGLE

Matt Beynon, Wagle's campaign spokesman, rejected Hensley's call for a self-imposed ban. He noted that Rep. Roger Marshall, another GOP candidate for Senate, faces no such restriction on [fundraising as a member of Congress](#).

"This would be no different than any fundraiser Roger Marshall would throw in Washington, D.C.," Beynon said. "Same as Bollier."

For her part, Bollier also isn't ruling out accepting lobbyist donations. Campaign spokeswoman Ashley All said only that the senator would follow all state and federal campaign finance laws. Bollier has a "consistent record of transparency and high ethics standards" throughout her career, she said.

"Barbara has built a reputation as one of the state's most independent leaders ... so this just isn't really an issue," All said. "And we'll run the campaign in accordance with all of the laws and ethical guidelines in place."

Beynon said in a follow-up phone call that "if Bollier wouldn't also do a self-imposed ban, why would Susan Wagle or any other candidate tie their hands behind their back?"

Waymaster, a candidate in [Kansas' 1st congressional district](#), has considerable influence over the state spending as one of the Legislature's budget chairpersons. He said he will comply with election laws, but also didn't rule out seeking lobbyist donations.

[Kansas Treasurer Jake LaTurner](#), running in Kansas' 2nd congressional district, will follow all state and federal laws, his campaign said.

It's not unusual for Kansas lawmakers to run federal campaigns. Three state senators ran for Congress in 2018, for example.

But Hensley, the longest-serving legislator, said he couldn't recall a previous instance where someone had run for federal office while simultaneously holding the position of Senate president or House speaker.

[Dave Lindstrom, an Overland Park businessman](#) and former Johnson County commissioner who is running against Wagle in the Republican primary, said her dual roles only feed the perception that politics is a shady business.

“The phrase of the day in Washington is ‘quid pro quo’ and is that the way we do business in Kansas? I don’t think so,” said Lindstrom, who noted that Wagle has extraordinary influence on which bills advance during the legislative session.

“Is that practice going to continue into the session this year?” he added.

LOBBYISTS AND ‘PERSONAL FRIENDS’

Lindstrom said other state officeholders running for federal office also need to act ethically and that he would be in favor of enacting tougher restrictions on donations from lobbyists at both the state and federal level.

Former Kansas Secretary of State [Kris Kobach](#), who is now running for U.S. Senate, said state law expresses a “real concern” that fundraising from lobbyists while lawmakers are in session is a problem. He said the same principle applies whether a lawmaker is running for state or federal office.

“It may not be illegal if it’s a federal office, but the same ethical concerns are there,” Kobach said.

Beynon said the lobbyists giving money to Wagle’s campaign are personal friends and ideological allies. He dismissed her GOP rivals’ criticism.

“She’s been in the Legislature for nearly three decades. She’s got a consistent track record.”

Colombo said the Kansas Medical Society’s PAC wasn’t endorsing Wagle and doesn’t endorse in state or federal races. She suggested the PAC would also assist Marshall and noted he is a KMS member.

Asked about Wagle’s opposition to Medicaid expansion, which KMS supports, Colombo said the society is “not a one-issue organization.”

Even though Wagle’s fundraiser will take place Tuesday, one of the hosts has already donated. Ron Hein, who lobbies for pharmacists, physical therapists, dentists and other clients, gave \$1,000 in August.

Beyond lobbyists, wealthy individuals with business before the state have also stepped up to give to her campaign.

Billionaire Phil Ruffin, who has been pushing the Legislature for years to allow slot machines at his [Wichita Greyhound Park](#), contributed \$5,600, the maximum donation under federal law, to Wagle's campaign.

Pizza magnate Gene Bicknell and his wife, Rita Bicknell, each contributed \$5,600 to Wagle's campaign. Bicknell, a Pittsburg native, once owned the most Pizza Hut franchises of anyone in the country.

In 2016, Wagle led the successful push to override former Gov. Sam Brownback's veto of legislation that [enabled Bicknell to appeal a \\$42 million tax bill](#) from the state. A judge ordered Kansas in March [to return the amount to him](#).

Bicknell declined to comment on his decision to donate to Wagle's campaign.

There are other signs that Wagle's roles as state senate president and U.S. Senate candidate could be commingled.

Wagle's chief of staff, Harrison Hems, left in October, saying he was [uncomfortable with requests](#) that he do work on behalf of her Senate campaign. He objected to helping a federal campaign while being paid with state tax dollars.

"I'm getting paid by the state taxpayer, I should be doing state work and not campaign work that doesn't have to do with the state level," Hems said at the time.

Beynon said the campaign is not coordinating with the legislative office.

"We know the people in the legislative office, but we're not in any way coordinating or dictating to them. We're two independent entities," Beynon said.

[Kansas Lawmakers Seeking Federal Offices Free To Raise Money](#)

Kansas lawmakers who are running for federal office are free to accept campaign contributions from lobbyists despite a state rule limiting such contributions during the legislative session.

The state limit on lawmakers accepting lobbyist contributions during the session doesn't apply to federal elections.

So state Senate President Susan Wagle, state Sen. Barbara Bollier and state Rep. Troy Waymaster are all free to raise money for their Congressional campaigns. Wagle, a Republican, and Bollier, a Democrat, are both running for U.S. Senate. Waymaster is a Republican running for Congress who also currently leads the House Appropriations Committee,

Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley, a Topeka Democrat, said the lawmakers running for federal office should voluntarily refrain from raising lobbyist cash during the session.

Wagle's campaign spokesman, Matt Beynon, rejected Hensley's call for a self-imposed ban. He said one of Wagle's opponents in the Senate race, U.S. Rep. Roger Marshall, faces no such fundraising restrictions as a member of Congress.

Bollier's spokeswoman Ashley All said Bollier also won't rule out accepting lobbyist donations, and she will follow all state and federal campaign finance laws.

Waymaster also didn't rule out accepting lobbyist contributions.

[R.I. Elections Board advances plan to use campaign funds for child care](#)

State lawmakers were unwilling to go this far, but the Rhode Board of Elections has taken a first step toward allowing candidates — and officeholders — to use campaign donations to pay child-care expenses that “would not have otherwise been incurred.”

The board voted to put the proposal, endorsed by Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea, out for public comment, under the express belief that it does not need legislation to add child care to the list of permitted uses of donations by lobbyists, special-interest PACs and others to campaign accounts.

Lawyer Raymond Marcaccio told the board the proposed language is similar to that used by the Federal Election Commission in response to inquiries about permitted uses of federal campaign dollars.

The R.I. Senate in June approved legislation (2019-H 0323) sponsored by Sen. Gayle L. Goldin to allow candidates for office to use campaign funds for child care while they are participating in elections activities, as federal candidates now can.

At the time, Goldin, D-Providence, said: “Rhode Island is better served when our elected officials truly reflect the people they represent, and that includes parents of young children.

“Child care expenses are a roadblock that excludes people from running for local or state office if their family isn’t wealthy enough to afford them. The FEC recognized that those costs arise because of a candidate’s campaign and should be allowed, so our state should follow suit. Doing so would remove a barrier that keeps qualified people from choosing to run.

“You shouldn’t have to be wealthy to run for office,” said Goldin, whose own children are now teenagers who do not require child care.

The legislation did not, however, make it through the House.

Marcaccio drew these distinctions for the elections board on Monday: “If you have a child-care expenditure, for example ... day care that you would have had whether or not you were running for office, that would not qualify. But if you are someone who would ... only have it because you were running for office or holding office, then it would.” At the federal level, he said, that could include the airfare or train ticket for a child to accompany their parent on an overnight campaign stop.

“I know that this is something that our secretary of state [Nellie Gorbea] has asked us to review and I think it is something that certainly is reasonable,” said Diane Mederos, the chairwoman of the state elections board.

“It’s obvious that this is necessary,” agreed Commissioner Stephen Erickson. “This is already federal regulation. It’s clear that we want as many people as possible to be able to run for office. Child-care expenditures can be an impediment to somebody holding office or running for office, and so this seem eminently reasonable.”

[As Albany Talks of Reform, Campaign Fundraising Chugs Along](#)

Gov. Andrew Cuomo turned 62 years old last week and celebrated his birthday as he has most of his nine years in office: by holding a fundraiser for his campaign committee.

High-dollar fundraisers are de rigeur for the Democratic governor, who spent almost \$35 million in the course of his last re-election campaign and had more than \$8 million in his war chest—more than any other candidate in the state—as of July.

But Mr. Cuomo’s soiree came after he praised the [recommendations of a commission](#), set to become law in two weeks, that would halve the size of the contributions gubernatorial

candidates can raise. The commission also recommended multiplying campaign donations of \$250 or less with taxpayer funds.

Mr. Cuomo told reporters in Buffalo last Tuesday that the recommendations were “the most aggressive, positive reform of money in politics” in his lifetime. The next night near Central Park, Mr. Cuomo avoided protesters and the press by entering his birthday party at the Essex House through a back door.

He was greeted by 350 people, a spokesman said, including his mother and daughters, labor leaders, current and former aides and Albany lobbyists. Attendees paid up to \$25,000 per table. Comedian Amy Schumer warmed up the crowd.

“If everyone’s here, then who’s shopping at Men’s Wearhouse?” Ms. Schumer joked to the crowd, according to five attendees.

The public financing system and its lower contribution caps don’t kick in until November of 2022, which means these events will continue. Blair Horner, executive director of the New York Public Interest Research Group, has advocated for even stricter limits on campaign finance. He said the commission didn’t go far enough.

“Albany will continue to raise money from special interest groups hand over fist for the next two years,” Mr. Horner said.

Mr. Cuomo is holding another fundraising event on Dec. 17. Democrats who control the state Senate and Assembly are also raising funds this month for their campaign committees. Richard Azzopardi, a senior adviser to the governor, said “we follow all laws while leading the fight to change them.”

Outside Essex House, about 100 people called on Mr. Cuomo to raise taxes on the rich to pay for increased school funding, public housing and green infrastructure. They attempted to deliver a sheet cake, with #MakeBillionairesPay written in pink frosting, and accused the governor of catering to wealthy donors.

Mr. Azzopardi said New Yorkers had rejected their platform when Mr. Cuomo won a large Democratic primary victory last year over actress Cynthia Nixon.

In his birthday speech at Essex House, Mr. Cuomo spoke for almost 20 minutes about how his father’s 1994 electoral loss shaped his thinking. He listed accomplishments including tightening gun-control laws, reducing the use of cash bail and rebuilding infrastructure.

He didn't mention campaign-finance reform.

[Florida lawmakers begin to shape new ethics standards for state officials](#)

House panel on Monday approved fines and other penalties for a voter-approved constitutional amendment that advocates say would impose the nation's toughest ethical standards on public officials.

The Public Integrity & Ethics Committee unanimously approved the measure ([PCB PIE 20-01](#)) with no debate.

[Amendment 12](#), passed last year, prohibits a public officer from getting paid to lobby while serving in office and bans legislators and state-wide elected officials from lobbying the boards or commissions they served on for six years after they leave office.

Committee members accepted, without discussion, a series of sanctions that include a civil fine of up to \$10,000 and removal from office for an elected or appointed official who violates standards approved by the [Florida Commission on Ethics](#) in September.

The amendment was drafted in response to a 2010 grand jury report that found Florida ethics standards inadequate because they required prosecutors to prove an official had "corrupt intent" in bribery and bid-rigging cases.

Lawmakers adopted the Ethics Commission's new standard of a "wrongful intent" to produce a "disproportionate benefit" for an office holder as part of the implementing bill for Amendment 12.

The stand-alone amendment was written by the [2017-18 Constitution Revision Commission](#) and endorsed by [Common Cause Florida](#) and [Integrity Florida](#).

It aimed to end the practice of state legislators taking money to lobby contracts before local government bodies that depend on the same lawmaker for state appropriations.

Proponents, like former Senate President Don Gaetz, argued someone can be a paid lobbyist or an elected official but can't be both.

The initiative received more than six million votes in the 2018 statewide general election — nearly two million more than either Gov. Ron DeSantis or U.S. Sen. Rick Scott.

[Sexual Harassment Case Against Madigan Campaign Ends with \\$275k Settlement](#)

[Alaina Hampton](#) just wanted to be a Democratic political worker, but a lieutenant to Illinois House Speaker Mike Madigan wanted more from her. Madigan, by his own admission, did too little to stop him.

Under a settlement agreement reached in November, Madigan’s campaign paid Hampton [\\$275,000](#) to settle her federal lawsuit, which claimed nothing was done about the sexual harassment by her former boss. Of that sum, \$200,000 goes to her lawyers. Madigan paid his lawyers \$600,000, which is almost exactly what he’s taken into his political fund from unions and businesses since the end of September. Leading the way in those contributions was the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, which contributed more than \$71,000 to Friends of Michael J. Madigan, according to the Chicago Sun-Times.

Madigan received a little more than [\\$1 million](#) in the quarter before that.

Hampton received [more than 70 suggestive text messages](#) in less than five months from Madigan’s former state and political aide Kevin Quinn, remarking that she was “smoking hot” in a bikini, that he couldn’t stop thinking about her and repeatedly asking if the two might date if he weren’t older and her boss. Hampton repeatedly rebuffed Quinn’s unwanted advances.

The harassment scandal and Hampton’s lawsuit in total cost the speaker \$875,000.

The ultimate cost to Madigan remains to be seen as federal investigators probe more than [\\$30,000](#) in payments that a former Madigan confidant funneled through ComEd lobbyists to Quinn after he was fired.

After more harassment allegations came out involving other Madigan staff, the speaker promised to do better in a [Tribune op-ed](#) published in September 2018. That was the same month ComEd made those payments to Quinn.

Months before quitting the Democratic organization, Hampton told Quinn’s brother, Ald. Marty Quinn of Chicago’s 13th Ward, about the [70 text messages](#) in February 2017. Madigan has long been a Democratic committeeman in Marty Quinn’s ward.

Nothing happened.

In November 2017, she wrote Madigan about the harassment. Again, nothing happened.

So in February 2018, she went to the Chicago Tribune with her story and copies of the text messages. Madigan fired Kevin Quinn hours later. More women came forward about sexual harassment on Madigan's watch, forcing his chief of staff, [Tim Mapes](#), to quit his \$208,000-a-year job. Madigan cut ties to [two other staffers](#) accused of harassment last year.

The allegations swirling around Madigan in 2018 led numerous [pundits to speculate](#) that the #MeToo movement might halt the career of the man who is the nation's [longest-serving](#) and most-powerful House speaker. He's been speaker for all but two years since 1983.

Hampton [told the Sun-Times](#) on Dec. 3 that she was satisfied with the settlement and that she's glad it's over.

"I'm not a money person, and no amount of money is going to give me those three years of my life back," she said.

But Madigan's trials appear far from over.

While it may not be #MeToo alone that takes down the speaker, corruption connected to the sexual harassment could be a significant part of it. Federal agents have [raided homes](#) and offices of six people with ties to Madigan, including the home of [Kevin Quinn](#). An FBI informant was wearing a wire during a conversation at Madigan's law office.

Illinois' culture of corruption costs the state at least [\\$550 million](#) a year in lost economic opportunity, and that's just the illegal acts. Legal corruption, including cronyism, costs the state much more and is part of the reason Illinois ranks as [second-most](#) corrupt state in the nation.

The Illinois Policy Institute supports the following anti-corruption reform measures, many of which were recommended in a 2009 state [report](#) released following the indictment of former Gov. Rod Blagojevich:

1. Adopting [revolving door](#) restrictions on state lawmakers becoming lobbyists.
2. Empowering the Illinois legislative inspector general to investigate lawmaker corruption. As is, this [muzzled](#) watchdog office must seek approval from a panel of state lawmakers before opening investigations, issuing subpoenas and even publishing summary reports.
3. Mandating state lawmakers recuse themselves from votes in which they have a conflict of interest. There is no current state law or even parliamentary rule requiring Illinois

lawmakers to disclose a conflict of interest or to excuse themselves from voting on issues where they have personal or private financial interests.

4. Reforming the Illinois [House rules](#), which grant more concentrated power to the House speaker than any other legislative rules in the country.
5. Using [objective scoring criteria](#) for capital projects, akin to Virginia's [Smart Scale](#) model. This ensures infrastructure dollars are directed by need rather than [clout](#).
6. Passing a [bipartisan constitutional amendment](#) to end politically drawn legislative maps in Illinois.

Illinois is in a corruption crisis that promises to [take down](#) more elected leaders. State lawmakers can take action to clean up the mess, or they can wait for the FBI to do it for them.

[Jury acquits Larry Inman of lying to FBI; mistrial on other counts](#)

Michigan state Rep. Larry Inman walked out of a federal courthouse and into fresh snow here on Tuesday night as a free man.

But his long, strange legal saga may not be over yet.

A jury of 12 residents found Inman not guilty of lying to the FBI during an August 2018 interview. And U.S. District Court Judge Robert Jonker declared a mistrial on extortion and bribery charges after the jury failed to reach consensus on those counts during 12 hours of deliberation over two days.

"I feel very good," Inman, a Traverse City-area Republican, told reporters outside the Gerald R. Ford federal building in downtown Grand Rapids. "I'm relieved that hopefully this is over and I can get back to my life."

But the mistrial on two counts means Inman remains accused of attempting to sell his June 2018 vote on a controversial prevailing wage repeal initiative to a union group that opposed the measure in exchange for campaign contributions. And conditions of his initial release on bond, including travel restrictions, remain in place.

Federal prosecutors immediately asked Jonker to set a date for a potential second trial on the extortion and bribery charges, which carry maximum penalties of 20 and 10 years in prison, respectively. Assistant U.S. Attorney Chris O'Connor declined to comment on the case Tuesday as he left the courtroom.

The jury read its verdict on the lying charge about 6:10 p.m. after Jonker had asked them to deliberate an additional 45 minutes in an attempt to try and break a deadlock on the other counts in a case they began considering Monday afternoon.

Inman spent the suspenseful interim in the hallway directly outside the sixth-floor courtroom, talking to his attorney and periodically peaking back inside for signs of the jury's imminent return. He later nodded to the jury after his acquittal on the lying charge, which had carried a maximum penalty of five years behind bars.

"There's certainly lots of dispute about what to make of the factual record" in the case and "inferences" that can be drawn from the evidence, Jonker told attorneys when the jury first alerted him to their deadlock.

Deliberations were "intense," juror Timothy Hegedus told Bridge Magazine as he left the courthouse late Tuesday. "It was aggressive at some points, but it was more intense than I was anticipating," he said.

Hegedus, a 24-year-old student at Grand Valley State University, declined to discuss his position on the extortion and bribery charges but said he did not think there was enough evidence to convict Inman of lying to the FBI.

"It was just one person's word versus the other," he said, describing conflicting testimony from Inman and Special Agent Jeremy Ashcroft about an initial FBI interview. "There was no written record of the FBI interrogation. There was nothing to proof check."

Inman, who sought treatment for an opioid addiction after he was indicted in mid-May, told reporters he is looking forward to returning to the Michigan Legislature after missing session during the week-long trial.

He said he intends to ask House Speaker Lee Chatfield to restore access to his office in Lansing and reassign him to committees. In testimony last week, Chatfield said he removed Inman from the House Appropriations Committee, which decides state budgets, "to ensure the public would have trust in how we were spending the money."

"I'm an innocent man," Inman said Tuesday night. "I told the truth, and I want to go back and represent the residents of Grand Traverse County, because that's what I was elected to do."

The case focused on two nearly identical text messages Inman sent to a Michigan Regional Carpenters and Millwrights official and lobbyist three days before the vote to repeal prevailing

wage, which had guaranteed union-level wages and benefits for workers on state-funded construction projects like schools and government buildings.

"We all need some more help!" Inman texted, seeming to urge campaign contributions for Republican legislators like himself who were considering whether to break with GOP leaders to block the prevailing wage initiative and send it to the general election ballot for voters to decide. "People will not go down for \$5,000, not that we dont appreciate it."

The Grand Rapids trial tested the legal limits of [campaign contribution solicitations](#) by lawmakers, which are not criminal unless the donations are sought in exchange for an official act, such as a vote. Testimony also shined a light on the [boozy underbelly of Lansing politics](#) -- including "educational" dinners paid for by special interest groups and campaign checks hand-delivered by lobbyists -- that state lawmakers navigate but the public rarely sees.

Jonker called it a "tough case" and applauded attorneys on both sides for attempting to define the difference between illegal solicitations of political action committees and "business as usual" in Lansing, "however unseemly it might seem."

In his 12 years on the federal bench, Jonker said he had presided over only one other hung jury.

During the trial, jurors heard competing and conflicting descriptions of Inman, a 65-year-old lawmaker known beyond politics for his fascination with Amelia Earhart and collection of memorabilia related to the long-lost aviation pioneer.

Federal prosecutors portrayed Inman as a craven politician focused more on campaign finances for re-election than public policy in Lansing. But Inman's defense attorney described him as a dedicated public servant trying to navigate a flawed system while struggling with an opioid addiction that clouded his judgment and ability to clearly communicate.

Throughout the trial, prosecutors used a large projector to show jurors text messages Inman sent to colleagues, staff and unions, including the two critical messages to the Michigan Regional Council of Carpenters and Millwrights that appeared to show Inman recommending \$30,000 in campaign contributions.

Lisa Canada, a union official who received one of the texts, did not line up more campaign contributions for Inman. Instead, she shared his message with Michigan State Police two days before the vote, prompting a federal investigation. In testimony last week, Canada said she was "shocked" when she received the text and "angry" because she assumed that turning it into law enforcement would kill the union's chance to protect prevailing wage.

Inman first discussed campaign contributions with Canada after a November 2017 presentation on prevailing wage at the Capital Prime steakhouse in Lansing, she said. Canada acknowledged she likely told the lawmaker the carpenters PAC would "max out" by donating \$10,000 to his campaign but testified that she did not discuss the possibility of similar contributions from two other trade unions at the dinner.

Lobbyist Noah Smith testified that Inman mentioned \$30,000 during a March 2018 meeting at a coffee shop across the street from his House office. But jurors never saw the email in which Smith relayed that conversation to Canada. Or how Canada responded: "Can't speak for the others," she told Smith, apparently referencing the Operating Engineers and Michigan Laborers unions. "Not sure about 30 to be honest but they both told me that they were sending him a contribution equal to ours. I guess they didn't. Ugh..."

Inman took a risk by declining a plea deal ahead of trial. And he took another risk when he opted to take the stand Friday and Monday to testify in his own defense. The three-term lawmaker, who won re-election by fewer than 400 votes last fall, described his long running reliance on painkillers prescribed after a series of surgeries for foot, abdominal and back issues.

And he told jurors he did not remember sending the text messages to the carpenters union, saying he was surprised to later find them on his phone. The campaign cash solicitations "didn't even sound like me" and were full of "ranting and raving," Inman testified.

In closing arguments Monday, lead prosecutor Chris O'Connor accused Inman of "repeatedly lying" about the text messages. Special Agent Ashcroft testified that Inman denied sending them during his initial interview with the FBI. But less than two months earlier, in a June 2018 phone call recorded by the FBI and played for jurors, Inman appeared to openly discuss the message to Canada and told her he regretted sending it.

"The only way you find him not guilty of all these offenses is if you believe him," O'Connor told jurors Monday.

Defense attorney Chris Cooke spent the closing days of the trial toting a Nike shoebox full of prescription painkillers he said Inman had been hoarding for years. The lawmaker said he was taking Norco "by the handful" at one point, according to a staffer, who testified that Inman's addiction appeared to reach its peak a half year after the prevailing wage vote.

When he finally checked into rehab last year following his mid-May indictment, Inman told doctors he was seeking help because of his legal issues, a point prosecutors used to paint his

addiction as an after-the-fact excuse. But Inman said the charges forced him to confront his addiction.

“It takes a tragic event for an addict to face what they’ve been doing,” Inman testified Monday. “I recognized I had a significant problem.”

Cooke used his closing arguments to rip what he called a "failed" case by the prosecution, arguing it amounted to little more than two text messages that could be misinterpreted. Other text message evidence and testimony were merely "supposition," he said.

"If my client was an extortionist, if he was trying to solicit a bribe and this was his big opportunity to cash in on the prevailing wage vote, wouldn't there be a lot more information on his phone than that?" Cooke said Monday. "I submit to you, there is simply no evidence of any quid pro quo."

Speaking with reporters Tuesday night, Cooke said he hopes federal prosecutors will not cause Inman "any more pain" by pursuing a second trial on the extortion and bribery charges.

"It's been a nightmare for him," Cooke said. "He stood in there and told his story."