



M U L T I S T A T E

[State ethics decision raises questions for complaint against Columbia mayor](#)

A recent agreement between a St. Louis County mayor and the Missouri Ethics Commission raises questions in a complaint against Columbia's mayor.

An attorney for the Brian Treece for Mayor campaign told ABC 17 News that a consent order between the MEC and Town and Country mayor Jon Dalton shows a conflict between state law and constitutional requirements for political candidates and lobbyists in the state. The conflict involves requirements for candidates to create campaign committees to collect and report money raised and spent on a race and a state law calling for registered lobbyists to dissolve their campaign committees.

The MEC said there was probable cause to believe Dalton violated state law when he failed to dissolve his campaign committee after registering as a lobbyist in 2017, 2018 and 2019. Dalton, who disputed that he violated any law, agreed to dissolve his committee, Town and Country Citizens to Re-elect Mayor Jon Dalton.

Columbia attorney Dan Viets filed an ethics complaint against Treece in November, citing the same conflict. Treece has worked as a lobbyist since 1996. The 2016 state law, known as Section 105.465, requires someone with a campaign committee to dissolve it when they register as a lobbyist. The money in the bank at the time either goes to a nonprofit, can be returned to the person who donated or go to a political party committee.

Treece told ABC 17 News that he met with MEC staff shortly after the passage of the law. Treece said the director told him that the law "did not apply to persons in my situation and advised me to continue my candidate committee in compliance with state law.

"I believe in the transparency that ethics laws provide and will continue to comply," Treece said.

Jeremy Root, attorney for the Treece campaign, said there were factual differences between Treece's and Dalton's campaigns. Dalton had not formally declared for a run in 2021 as mayor

with the MEC. This, Root said, makes it unclear if Dalton is even a candidate for office. Treece, on the other hand, has told the MEC that he plans to run for mayor again in 2022.

"The only interpretation that harmonizes these requirements and avoids profound constitutional conflicts is for Section 105.465 to apply only to those persons who register as lobbyists and are no longer candidates themselves," Root said. "Any other interpretation would thwart the campaign finance disclosure laws, unlawfully interfere with a person's ability to support a chosen candidate for office, and unconstitutionally foreclose registered lobbyists from becoming candidates for elected office."

Dalton first registered as a lobbyist in 1994 and has served as mayor of the 11,000-person St. Louis County town since 2005, winning election four times. Dalton did not respond to a request seeking comment about the MEC decision.

Root pointed out that the MEC order only found probable cause of a violation, and not a violation itself.

"If Mr. Dalton had chosen to contest this proposed resolution, it is unclear how the matter would have resolved," Root said.

Treece has made ethics a hallmark of his tenure as mayor in Columbia. [His campaign material](#) in 2019 highlighted his fight for "new ethics rules" for the council. He and several other council members called for Fourth Ward councilman Ian Thomas and Second Ward councilman Michael Trapp to "evaluate" their spots on the council following a criminal charge against Thomas for offering to support a neighborhood development in exchange for a donation to a nonprofit.

Thomas has pleaded not guilty.

Viets told ABC 17 News on Thursday that he would read the MEC order before commenting on it.

[First District Supervisor candidate calling for 'Good Government Reform'](#)

Over the course of her campaign for District 1 Supervisor, candidate Stephanie Shakofsky will be releasing a series of "Good Government Reform" proposals. Reform #1: Ensuring Transparency and Accountability by Lobbyists, is aimed at ensuring accountability by lobbyists and their monied interests.

“For too long our Board of Supervisors have been far too cozy with monied interests and their lobbyists,” says Shakofsky. “We the citizens of San Luis Obispo County have a right to know who is lobbying our elected officials. We are one of the few Counties that does not require lobbyists to disclose their clients, their gifts, or their campaign contributions. It’s time for some sunshine on our Board of Supervisors!”

“Our current Board of Supervisors have been heavily lobbied and influenced by big monied interests—and they have put our county in economic danger,” Shakofsky says. “My campaign is rolling out a series of good government reform initiatives that, when I’m elected, I will work to make certain these reforms become law and that we have a government that is open, transparent and works only on behalf of the people of San Luis Obispo County—not the monied special interests.”

According to Shakofsky, San Luis Obispo is one of a handful of counties in the state that does not require lobbyists to register and report their gifts, contributions, and meetings. For the full legislative language of this proposal go to StephanieForSupervisor.com.

Shakofsky is a farmer and a hydrologist. She owns and manages an old-vine Zinfandel vineyard on the westside of Paso Robles. Stephanie started her career as a hydrologist at the U.S. Geological Survey, where she researched the movement of nuclear contamination through soil and groundwater. She is a recognized expert in the reuse of contaminated property and has served on numerous boards and commissions over the years. Stephanie studied geology at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and received a master’s degree from San Jose State in hydrogeology.

First District Supervisor includes the City of Paso Robles as well as the communities of Templeton, Heritage Ranch, San Miguel, Shandon, Adelaida, and Oak Shores. The office is currently held by John Peschong. He will be running for re-election.

[New Mexico gets new arbiter on government ethics, corruption](#)

New Mexico state government has a new arbiter to decide on ethical lapses and potential corruption involving public employees, contractors, lobbyists and political candidates.

The state Ethics Commission opened Thursday to field complaints regarding campaign finances, government contracting, gifts from lobbyists and more — at a time when there are spending surges on public infrastructure and efforts to influencing elections in New Mexico.

No complaints arrived by the end of Thursday for the seven-member commission appointed by legislative leaders and Democratic Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham. The panel has received one

request for advice on ethics matters — another core responsibility — though staff won't yet reveal the question or say who is asking. Any response will be made public, according to staff.

Voters approved the creation of the Ethics Commission in November 2018, passing a constitutional amendment in the wake of a string of corruption scandals that led to jail time for former Republican Secretary of State Dianna Duran and former state Sen. Phil Griego.

Duran was convicted on embezzlement charges for using campaign funds to fuel a gambling addiction, while a jury found Griego guilty of charges including fraud, bribery and embezzlement after using his position to profit from the sale of a state-owned building. Former taxation department secretary Demesia Padilla is fighting a criminal charge of engaging in an official act for personal gain.

The constitutional amendment left it to lawmakers to determine the commission's composition, detailed investigative powers and guidelines on when to conceal or reveal accusations.

The commission must refer criminal matters when detected to state or local prosecutors. It can petition the judiciary for a subpoena to obtain documents or compel witnesses to testify. A judge eventually will be assigned by the chief justice of the state Supreme Court.

Complaints are initially treated as confidential and can be made public with a determination of probable cause and full notification of a public hearing, according to the commission website and state law.

Ethics Commissioner Garrey Carruthers, a former governor, said he expects initial complaints will be filed by state employees who spot improprieties.

“In time, citizens will find this an avenue to express their concerns,” he said.

Commission Executive Director Jeremy Farris, a former general counsel to the Department of Finance and Administration, said the new ethics panel still shares responsibilities with the General Services Department regarding government purchasing and contracts.

The secretary of state's office is still obligated to seek voluntary compliance on apparent violations of campaign finance, lobbying and government conduct laws. Left unresolved, those matters pass to the commission for investigation.

The commission is developing a web-based case management system, similar to online systems for state courts and utility regulators. Its website provides detailed guidance on how to file a complaint, or respond to one.

Stuart Bluestone, a Santa Fe-based attorney, emphasized the commission's role in educating officials and the public about permissible conduct.

The commission meets in February for the first time since accepting complaints and requests for advisory opinions.

Florida nonprofit expects big year serving as inn for 'citizen lobbyists'

It can cost millions to lobby lawmakers, but for three years a Tallahassee-based nonprofit has tried to help give a voice to those who can't afford the big-dollar business.

Karen Woodall is the executive director of Florida People's Advocacy Center. She expects the 2020 legislative session to be her busiest to date.

For a small fee, what she calls "citizen lobbyists" can use her group's facility, which sits about a mile from the capitol building.

"People who are under served, who are living in communities in poverty," she said. "We wanted a building that could house them, provide training, that could provide a safe space for them to coordinate and strategize."

Inside the more than 40 room structure — conference rooms, office equipment, work spaces, kitchens, even sleeping areas for overnight stays.

Woodall says she mostly serves those working on social and economic justice issues — like civil rights, immigrant or women's groups. She hopes giving them an affordable spot to work and stay will better provide exposure to lawmakers and bring about change.

"They're establishing relationships with their legislators," Woodall said. "Which, at the end of the day, is what makes this process work."

Brad Ashwell, the state director for voting rights group, All Voting is Local, has been using the FPAC building as office space since October. He called it near a perfect work environment.

“It feels like home now,” he said. “I’m still getting the office decorated little by little.”

Besides being a convenient spot to easily coordinate with similar groups set up down the hall, the facility’s affordability cuts down on overhead allowing dollars to be spent elsewhere.

“We’re heading into a busy election year,” Ashwell said. “I don’t care what issue groups are working on, they’re going to be busy the next few months. All that money can go towards more important things.”

Florida is fewer than two weeks away from the start of its next legislative session. Lawmakers will return to the capital on Jan. 14 and are expected to wrap up in March.

“Money is there, always,” Woodall said. “We’re not trying to battle that. We can’t. It’s about reminding legislators they’re there to represent everybody.”

Senator hopes to unravel mysteries of lobbyists

"Transparency" in New Mexico is sort of like the weather. Many politicians talk about the virtues of an open government, but they don't do anything to change the gray, cloudy system.

Soon we'll see how many want to splash a little sunshine into sequestered rooms where lobbyists go about the business of advocating for a company or cause.

State Sen. Jeff Steinborn, D-Las Cruces, is back with another attempt to require lobbyists to disclose their rooting interests.

His proposal, Senate Bill 53, is simple enough. The measure would require lobbyists or their employer to file a report after each legislative session listing the bills they supported or opposed.

There's nothing radical about this idea. Other states have laws similar to the one Steinborn is proposing.

Lobbyists do only a small part of their work in public meetings at the Capitol. Many also buy dinner or drinks for legislators at nightspots. Legislation is discussed in these private settings. What's said leaves the public guessing.

As it stands, lobbyists in New Mexico only have to list their employers and report some of their expenditures.

Rep. Day Hochman-Vigil, D-Albuquerque, last year proposed legislation similar to Steinborn's. Her bill didn't generate opposition in the House of Representatives, but it grew into something so big and sweeping that a committee of state senators buried it.

After Hochman-Vigil outlined her straightforward bill on the floor of the House, Minority Leader Jim Townsend, R-Artesia, wanted to expand it.

He pushed through an amendment that would have turned lobbyists into bystanders for a key part of each year.

His proposal would have prohibited lobbyists or their employers from making any expenditure or political contribution to a state legislator from Jan. 1 until the close of each legislative session. Regular sessions end either in mid-February or mid-March.

Townsend's amendment would have prohibited dinners in which legislators were feted and lobbyists picked up the tab. It would have barred lobbyists from depositing gifts in lawmakers' offices or handing them a campaign donation during the session.

The House approved the bill and Townsend's amendment on a vote of 62-0.

Insiders said the decision meant little. The bill was going nowhere except a legislative graveyard.

They were right. It died in the Senate Rules Committee. Then legislators and lobbyists continued business as usual.

State government calls Jan. 1 until the end of a legislative session "the prohibited period." All that means is legislators, statewide officeholders and candidates for these offices can't "knowingly solicit" contributions.

Adverbs are a plague on our mother tongue, but a valuable device for legislators. A ban on "knowingly" seeking donations is a nice semantic hedge for those who want to keep cash flowing to campaign accounts.

Lawmakers can't ask for money, but they can take it.

Rep. Matthew McQueen, D-Galisteo, has sponsored bills to close this giant loophole. His proposal last year cleared the House of Representatives 56-0.

But the Senate Rules Committee again demonstrated its power. It removed the bill's ban on accepting contributions during the prohibited period. Gutted beyond recognition, McQueen's bill also landed in the committee cemetery.

Against this backdrop of failure, Steinborn faces an additional challenge. This year's legislative session is only 30 days.

With so little time to do the people's work, many lawmakers will say they have to focus attention on budgetary matters.

This means Steinborn's bill might be bottled up in a committee, even if the governor decides it's worthy of being placed on the legislative agenda.

It shouldn't be a battle to enact a law that requires lobbyists to reveal their stand on legislation.

But people inside the system don't always see it that way. Legislators who have a personal conflict regarding a bill might still vote on it.

For example, Rep. Antonio "Moe" Maestas, D-Albuquerque, once voted for a lottery bill without mentioning that his wife, lobbyist Vanessa Alarid, was advocating for the measure on behalf of a vendor.

I criticized Maestas in a column for failing to explain his family's financial interest in the bill. He then began announcing publicly that his wife was a lobbyist for the measure.

But Maestas continued voting on the bill. If he had excused himself, he said, more companies might hire his wife as a lobbyist to nullify his vote.

Spend enough time in the halls of power, and you'll hear it all. Up is down, and conflicts must be ignored to prevent conflicts.

[FBI raids home, office of lobbyist Michael Esposito](#)

FBI agents investigating a lobbyist who has [claimed to have close ties to President Trump and his family](#) searched the man's Northern Virginia home and D.C. office early Thursday looking for evidence of possible fraud, according to people familiar with the matter.

Michael Esposito's business has boomed in the Trump era, but Trump, White House officials and senior Republicans have said he greatly exaggerated his claims of access to the president and his inner circle.

Following a [Washington Post story in November](#) on Esposito's business, the FBI is investigating to determine whether Esposito may have defrauded his clients or engaged in any other type of financial fraud, the people said.

Esposito did not respond to phone messages or emails requesting comment, and no one answered the door at his home in Sterling on Friday morning.

Neighbors said about half a dozen cars arrived at his home at about 7 a.m. Thursday and didn't leave for several hours. People wearing FBI jackets and suits came in and out of Esposito's home.

"They're really nice people," neighbor Richard Tate, who lives across the street, said of the Esposito family on Friday. "So I was surprised."

On Friday, there were Rolls-Royce and Lincoln SUVs parked in front of Esposito's house. On social media, Esposito has posted photos of himself in other luxury cars and wrote of the pleasure he takes in buying and selling Ferraris, Bentleys and Rolls-Royces.

An FBI spokesperson declined to comment.

Colin Whittington, a spokesman for the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office, said it assisted with an FBI operation in Sterling on Thursday morning but referred questions to the FBI.

Esposito's firm, Federal Advocates, has offices at 1666 K St. NW, which were also subject to search, according to the people familiar with the matter, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss an ongoing investigation.

D.C. police spokesman Sean Hickman said the District's police force did not participate in the FBI operation at Esposito's office.

A person who answered the phone at Federal Advocates said the office was closed for the holidays and declined to say whether he was aware of the raid.

After the 2016 election, Esposito sought to join the crop of loyalists who follow every new administration in trying to climb to the top of the Washington influence machine. His ascent was particularly notable, however, because his connections to Trump's world don't hold up to scrutiny — and because he had previously represented himself as a Democrat.

After the Post's [story](#) in November, Trump bluntly disputed Esposito's claims to have a "strong personal and professional relationship with President Trump."

Trump tweeted: "I don't know, to the best of my knowledge, a man named Michael Esposito. . . . I don't like him using my name to build his consulting company, or whatever. Please advise his clients and Administration officials accordingly."

Federal Advocates collected \$4.66 million from lobbying clients in 2018, up from \$3.25 million in 2017 and \$907,000 in 2016, according to the nonprofit Center for Responsive Politics. The explosive growth led Bloomberg Government news service to dub Federal Advocates the top-performing lobbying firm in 2017.

One client announced Friday that it had terminated its contract with Federal Advocates: the Premium Cigar Association, which paid the firm \$90,000 during the first nine months of 2019.

Before the raid, some of Esposito's clients said they were reconsidering their relationship with him, while others have stuck with him.

Polk County, Iowa, Esposito's top-paying municipal client, is seeking new bids for a federal lobbyist for the first time since Federal Advocates landed the contract a decade ago. The contract, which expired at the end of the year, has been renewed annually in the past. The county paid the firm \$60,000 a month.

"No county our size pays that much," said Matt McCoy, a county supervisor who said Esposito has boasted to him about his close ties to the Trump administration. "I think they were clearly lying to us and misrepresenting things, which puts us in a terrible position."

Another Polk County supervisor, Robert Brownell, said that the firm had effectively lobbied on the county's behalf but that "compared to what other counties our size are paying, the contract is out of whack."

Representatives of the National Cannabis Industry Association and CannDESCENT, a California-based company that sells luxury cannabis products, said they would reconsider

contracting with Federal Advocates. “I can’t ignore the reporting that came out for sure,” said Cannadescent’s chief executive Adrian Sedlin. “I want to hear his point of view.”

Other major clients, including Chinese tech giant Huawei — which signed Federal Advocates to one of the largest lobbying contracts in Washington this year — said before news of the raid that they planned to remain clients of the firm. Federal Advocates collected \$1.65 million from Huawei in a three-month period this year, according to lobbying records.

“We obviously vetted him and chose to work with him,” said Huawei spokesman Rob Manfredo. “I haven’t heard any reason that we wouldn’t.”

[Watchdog agency questions lobbying loophole for former legislators](#)

The executive director of the state’s political watchdog agency is raising concerns about the “growing use” of former legislators who are paid to win access to contacts at the Capitol without registering as lobbyists.

Under existing state law, lobbyists who are paid at least \$3,000 to influence the outcome of policy at the state or local level must file periodic reports detailing who hired them and how much they spent. In 2018, roughly 1,400 registered lobbyists reported a combined \$9.5 million in expenditures, not including salaries or fees.

Jeff Sigurdson, executive director of the Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board, said some lobbyists have complained that former lawmakers are avoiding triggering those disclosure requirements — as well as other restrictions on gifts and political contributions — by bowing out of the discussions after helping clients gain access to decisionmakers.

“Once the introductions are made, once the doors are open, the former legislator ... is not actually involved in lobbying,” Sigurdson said. “They either don’t attend the meeting, or if they do attend, it’s just to make introductions then presumably sit quiet during the discussion of the issues that the lobbyist is concerned about.”

It isn’t immediately clear who is taking advantage of the loophole or how widespread the practice has become. Sigurdson said he has not been provided with names. Kathryn Hahne, a lobbyist who represents the roughly 500 lobbyists who make up the Minnesota Government Relations Council, said she wasn’t aware of complaints.

But supporters of tougher disclosure laws said the issue stems from Minnesota’s relatively lax lobbying laws. Most states have adopted mandatory “cooling off” periods prohibiting lobbying

by former officials for a certain length of time. Minnesota has no such statute, though an internal House rule calls for a one-year moratorium for departing lawmakers.

“We have largely chosen not to regulate this,” said David Schultz, a Hamline University professor who pushed unsuccessfully for tougher laws as a former chairman of Common Cause Minnesota.

The issue re-emerged Friday as members of the state Campaign Finance Board mulled a slate of proposed policy recommendations aimed at updating and improving the state’s campaign and lobbying laws. Sigurdson suggested the board could urge the Legislature to expand the definition of lobbyist to include people who are paid \$3,000 or more to facilitate access to decisionmakers.

Any changes would require bipartisan support from legislators and Gov. Tim Walz, a difficult feat in a politically divided State Capitol during an election year. House Majority Leader Ryan Winkler, DFL-Golden Valley, said he supports tougher disclosure laws.

“I don’t know that we have a big problem right now with people influencing legislation or government agencies without registering, but how would we know if we don’t have that level of disclosure?” he said.

Republican Sen. Mary Kiffmeyer, who chairs a Senate committee that oversees election and lobbying laws, had yet to weigh in as of Monday. A spokeswoman said the senator wanted to review specifics before commenting.

A staff proposal also calls for lobbyists to detail the bills and topics on which they spend the most time during the reporting period. A number of other states, including Wisconsin, require similar disclosure. Sigurdson said the goal was to “get more specific information in the public.”

That recommendation faces opposition from lobbyists. Hahne, with the state Government Relations Council, said while the association isn’t opposed to updating lobbying laws, many paid lobbyists feel the proposed reporting requirements would be too “burdensome and unlikely to help the public understand the issues.” She noted that the issues that take up the most time may not be the most consequential in a given year or session.

Sensing a difficult political path for adopting new lobbying regulations, the board opted not to endorse any specific proposals for the upcoming session. Instead, board members decided unanimously to draft a letter urging lawmakers to review the lobbying disclosure rules.

“As long as the letter’s short, everybody will read it,” said Carol Flynn, a former DFL senator who serves on the board. “If it’s a very long letter, forget it.”

[Ex-Rep. Carnevale registers to lobby at the State House](#)

Former state Rep. John Carnevale, who pleaded no contest to felony charges that he lied about whether he lived in his district, is apparently returning to the State House.

The Rhode Island secretary of state’s website shows Carnevale registered on Jan. 3 to advocate on behalf of Quaker Lane Bait and Tackle, a sporting goods store in North Kingstown, as a \$50-an-hour lobbyist. The business is owned by former North Kingstown Town Councilor Michael Bestwick, according to the website.

In an email, Bestwick said he is tasking Carnevale “to watch and weigh in on any changes in DEM laws, rules and regulations pertaining to fishing and hunting and also firearm sales.”

An email to Carnevale was not immediately returned.

Once the vice chairman of the powerful House Finance Committee, Carnevale pleaded no contest to a single count of perjury after cutting a deal with prosecutors. As part of the agreement, two other perjury counts were dropped, as was a misdemeanor charge of filing a false document.

Carnevale was given a five-year sentence: nine months of home confinement, with the rest to be served on probation.

He was indicted in January 2017, months after being kicked off the Providence voter rolls following days of hearings before the city’s Board of Canvassers. The panel determined Carnevale was not being honest about where he lived in the wake of a 2016 Target 12 undercover investigation.

The [investigation](#) raised questions as to whether the lawmaker actually lived at a Barbara Street address in Providence he claimed on election and campaign finance paperwork.

Carnevale used the Barbara Street location in his application to be a lobbyist.

Nick Domings, a spokesperson for Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea said lobbying laws do not require a criminal background check to register as a lobbyist.

“The address provided by the lobbyist is for contact purposes – it is not to verify location of a residence,” Domings said in an email.

Carnevale was forced to drop his 2016 re-election bid after being removed from the voter rolls but decided to run again in 2018 while under indictment. That campaign ended when he pleaded guilty.

Per state law, Carnevale won't be able to run again for office until three years after he completes his probation, which means his name could appear on a 2026 ballot at the earliest.

Double Duty: Wayne County Politician Is Also A Lobbyist

In 2017 Joe Palamara, Wayne County Commissioner for the 15th District that includes Trenton, Gibraltar, Wyandotte and several other Downriver communities abstained from an important vote on the sale of the former McLouth Steel site in Trenton to Manuel “Matty” Moroun’s Crown Enterprises. This was an important decision that will affect over a mile of riverfront and potentially shape the future of the region for generations to come. Palamara cited a conflict of interest — which is not uncommon in politics — and struck a noble tone when commenting on his abstention, “I wanted to avoid even the hint or remote appearance of conflict ... I would not, could not, and ultimately did not, vote for them.”

The recusal did Moroun no favors — effectively counting as a “no” — although the 11 to 3 vote approved the purchase. Yet, some found the source of the conflict troubling because in addition to being a commissioner, Palamara is also a registered lobbyist with Karoub Associates — a powerful Michigan lobbying firm whose work entails influencing lawmakers like Palamara himself. Among others, Karoub represents Moroun’s holding company, Cen Tra and businesses like DTE and 3M. Although abstaining may have been Palamara’s best choice, it also denied his district of 120,000 people representation on a crucial vote that affected them directly.

Karoub’s long list of clients means there could be more conflicts for Palamara. More troubling is Karoub’s representation of both the Wayne County Executive and the Wayne County Commission. This means that Palamara’s work as a member of the legislative branch is potentially compromised every day he comes to work by the firm’s representation of the executive.

“I find it more plausible that he could manage the conflict with Matty Moroun than ... the one involving the county executive and the county commission, he's in the middle of that,” John Chamberlain, professor of political science and public policy at University of Michigan says.

Though the situation looks highly suspect – none of this is illegal – it underscores Michigan’s woefully inadequate campaign finance and lobbying laws.

“There’s no restriction on something like this that I’m aware of,” Mark Brewer, former chair of the Michigan Democratic Party, says.

Indeed, Palamara seems to have done what is required to report these and other conflicts. He has filed conflict of interest disclosures with Wayne County for at least every year since 2013. On the most recent form he listed his affiliation with Karoub, along with his son and daughter’s employment with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and his position on the Board of the Michigan Association of Counties Services Corporation.

But the form doesn’t require him to show how much money he is making at Karoub beyond \$500.00 or who his clients are specifically. Palamara also did not share that information with Deadline Detroit.

Patricia Hartig, the former mayor of Trenton who unsuccessfully ran for Palamara’s seat on the commission in 2016, says Palamara’s ties prevent him from properly doing his job – which entails holding the county executive accountable.

"He in particular has a personal financial reason not to have any checks over the executive," she said.

The Wayne County executive’s office would not comment when asked about Palamara’s work at the Karoub firm.

Palamara earns about \$70,000 per year as a commissioner and will receive a lifetime pension of \$33,600. The gig is part-time.

Of his dual duties, he says, “It’s all about transparency. And I’ve been transparent since day one.”

But it’s tough to tell what that means in Michigan politics, where transparency and reporting requirements for lawmakers are often lacking.

“Michigan has some of the worst ethics and transparency rankings in the country,” Sam Ingot, who works on lobbying reform with the nonprofit Progress Michigan, says. “And a lot of that has

to do with the fact that we know so little about the interactions between lawmakers and lobbyists.”

Having a lawmaker who is actually a lobbyist seems to only magnify the issue. Progress Michigan’s proposal to make lobbyists identify their clients would at least let us know who Palamara represents for his firm.

However, even that requirement would only tell us so much. By playing on the same team as all the other lobbyists at Karoub, Palamara’s paycheck is effectively tied to all their clients as well.

Former state legislator and co-director of Michigan State University’s Michigan Political Leadership Program, Steve Tobocman, doesn’t see this case as so different from other conflicts of interest in Michigan.

“I would argue that we don't have the right laws and that's not specific to Joe Palamara,” he says. “That's specific to Michigan and many of our local communities.”

Palamara believes that it’s up to voters to decide if his roles as commissioner and lobbyist are compatible.

“The people of my district are well aware of what I do,” he says. “They've made an informed vote.”

Moreover, he characterizes all this as “old news.” This is true in the sense that he’s been on the Wayne County Commission since 1999 — after serving in the Michigan House of Representatives for thirteen years — and he’s worked as a lobbyist for most of his time on the commission.

Yet, although his lobbying work and ties to Moroun have been criticized by Downriver papers like The News-Herald, his conflict with Wayne County government has received little attention. Nor do his colleagues seem to want to call him out on it. Several mayors and state representatives declined to comment for this article.

“Republicans are going to stick with Trump no matter what,” Hartig says of the situation. “And it's almost like the Democrats here will stick with Joe no matter what, even though they all agree that what he's doing is wrong.”

[Carnevale ‘terminated’ as lobbyist for tackle shop](#)

Former state Rep. John Carnevale's fledgling career as a registered lobbyist has come to a close, less than four days after it began.

On Monday, [Target 12 reported Carnevale had registered as a lobbyist](#) for Quaker Lane Bait and Tackle in North Kingstown. By Tuesday morning, the shop's owner, Michael Bestwick, sent an email to Target 12 with a screenshot of the Rhode Island secretary of state's website showing Carnevale had been "terminated" as a lobbyist.

"As you can see below I have terminated this relationship," Bestwick wrote in the email.

He has not yet responded to an inquiry as to why.

Nick Domings, a spokesperson for the Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea, confirmed in an email that Bestwick "contacted our Public Information Office this morning and terminated the lobbying relationship with Mr. Carnevale."

On Monday, the website showed Carnevale was hired as a \$50-an-hour lobbyist, and Bestwick had said Carnevale was hired "to watch and weigh in on any changes in DEM laws, rules and regulations pertaining to fishing and hunting and also firearm sales."

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[**Lobbyist tied to Parson calls Galloway 'scorned' because he won't back her for governor**](#)

Democrat Nicole Galloway is taking aim at one of Republican Gov. Mike Parson's top political advisers and fundraisers, calling their relationship proof that "the well connected get what they want, while regular families continue to struggle."

Galloway, Missouri's auditor and likely Democratic challenger to Parson next year, released a campaign memo this week targeting Steve Tilley, the former House speaker turned lobbyist [who has been friends with Parson for years](#).

Tilley, who has largely remained out of the public eye in recent months, responded to Galloway on Twitter by [calling her "scorned"](#) and alleging she was upset because she sought his support but he chose Parson.

The memo, written by Galloway's campaign manager, Chris Sloan, accuses Parson of "cutting deals for insider lobbyists like Tilley." He points specifically to donations from Tilley clients in industries regulated by the state agencies the governor oversees — ranging from gaming to medical marijuana to low-income housing tax credits.

"Where there's smoke, there's fire," Sloan wrote, "and the relationship between Tilley and Parson is leaving a lot of smoldering ash around the Capitol as the interests of Missouri's families get snuffed out."

In a tweet published Wednesday afternoon, Tilley alleged that [Galloway had sought his support](#) and "begged for \$1000's in campaign cash while asking how she could 'help' on issues important to me. Nicole wanted me on her team - I chose team Gov. Parson."

Galloway's spokesman didn't respond to Tilley's tweet. Parson's campaign did not respond to a request for comment.

'GOV. TILLEY'

The memo, which refers to the former speaker as "Gov. Tilley," notes Parson and Tilley's long relationship, which goes back to their service in the House. In 2009, Tilley helped his friend and colleague Parson become chairman of the powerful House Rules Committee.

When Tilley resigned as speaker of the Missouri House in 2012 to become a political consultant and lobbyist, Parson was among his first clients.

Sloan pointed to the fact that candidates, like Parson, accepted donations from Tilley's dormant campaign committee and then hired him as a political consultant. The result, according to Tilley's critics, was he was able to convert campaign funds into personal cash.

Lawmakers felt Tilley exploited a loophole in Missouri law, ultimately passing legislation in 2016 [requiring elected officials to dissolve their campaign committees](#) when they register with the Missouri Ethics Commission as lobbyists.

While he had to close his candidate committee, Tilley was able to transfer much of his cash to other political action committees controlled by friends and family.

Late last year, donations from four of those PACs to Independence Mayor Eileen Weir garnered scrutiny when it was revealed [the FBI was interviewing local officials about a pair of projects tied to Tilley](#).

Weir cast a vote in favor of one of those projects — a solar farm operated by one of Tilley's lobbying clients — just days after receiving campaign cash from the Tilley-affiliated PACs.

'TAKE DOWN' OF GREITENS

Analysis by The Star found [a quarter of every dollar raised during the first six months of 2019 to elect Parson governor was connected to Tilley](#).

And since Parson took the oath of office in June 2018, Tilley's business has greatly expanded.

The week before Parson took over as governor he was registered to lobby for 25 clients, according to data provided by the Missouri Ethics Commission.

In the months since, Tilley has registered to represent 62 new clients.

Sloan's memo even points to allegations made by former Republican Gov. Eric Greitens that figures in the low-income house tax credit industry were [behind payments by newspaper publisher Scott Faughtn to St. Louis attorney Al Watkins](#) in 2018.

Watkins subsequently helped publicize accusations that Greitens had photographed a bound and partially nude woman without her consent to blackmail her into silence about their 2015 affair.

The accusations were the [first in a series of scandals that led to Greitens' resignation](#) and Parson's becoming Missouri's 57th governor.

Faughn made \$100,000 in payments to the attorney in the days leading up to the story about the affair and alleged blackmail breaking on a St. Louis television station. Watkins testified under oath to a House investigative committee that Faughn told him that the money came from an "anonymous wealthy Republican who did not like Greitens."

Faughn has told a different story about the money, saying it was his and that he was buying secret recordings of the woman confessing the affair for a book he was writing about Greitens.

The recordings were given to other journalists for free, and Faughn's book has yet to be published.

Faughn has been friends with Tilley for years, and has been a vocal advocate for the low-income housing tax credits. One of the sponsors of a weekly television talk show Faughn hosts is Sterling Bank, a Tilley client that specializes in financing projects involving low-income housing tax credits.

Although Galloway's memo points to the accusations that Sterling Bank could have had a role in the "take down" of Greitens, her campaign spokesman insists the auditor is not alleging Parson personally played any role.

"We have not seen any reporting to suggest that, and therefore do not know if Gov. Parson knew about the payment or where the money came from," Eric Slusher, Galloway's spokesman, said in an email to The Star. "We were careful to not make a connection that we cannot prove."