



M U L T I S T A T E

[US Chamber, the nation's biggest lobby, is cutting staff](#)

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the biggest spender on federal lobbying, is laying off 12 employees from its roughly 500-person staff as part of a restructuring that the group's insiders say will also aim to expand its policy advocacy.

Most of the laid-off employees were tied to the operation of the group's building, across from the White House, or to putting on in-person events, according to a source familiar with the decisions. The source added that the group was financially "stable" and was likely on track for a break-even year. The chamber disclosed total revenue of more than \$167 million on its 2018 tax forms.

Many of the group's lobbyists will remain, including former House GOP leadership aide Neil Bradley, who will oversee a new unit called strategic advocacy, according to a memo to staff from Suzanne Clark, the chamber's president. That division, under Bradley, will also include political affairs, though Sara Armstrong continues to run political affairs and federation relations, the memo stated.

Clark added in the memo that another former GOP congressional aide, Jack Howard, would continue to run government affairs.

"To further strengthen our capabilities, we will make targeted investments in new talent within the Strategic Advocacy group — primarily within Government Affairs — to ensure we are fully equipped for the battles ahead, which increasingly occur at the state and local levels," she wrote in the memo. "Altogether, this strategic alignment will add new firepower to our advocacy and strengthen the Chamber's influence and impact for our members."

The chamber has remained the nation's [top spender](#) when it comes to federal lobbying through the COVID-19 pandemic. But, in recent years, the group has struggled with internal division over policy issues, [candidate endorsements](#) and [compensation for the group's longtime CEO](#), Tom Donohue.

[Former state senator pleads guilty to campaign charge](#)

A former state senator on Monday pleaded guilty to misdemeanor campaign finance charges.

Former State Sen. [David Burkette](#), 63, pleaded guilty to violating the Fair Campaign Practices Act during his run for the Montgomery City Council five years ago. The attorney general's office said [Burkette](#) failed to deposit \$3,625 in campaign contributions into his campaign checking account, and instead, deposited or cashed those contributions into or against his personal bank account.

[Burkette](#) was sentenced to 30 days in jail, but the sentence was suspended and he was placed on 12 months of probation. He was also ordered to pay a \$3,000 fine.

"Candidates for public office at the state, county and municipal levels must comply with the State's Fair Campaign Practices Act," Attorney General Steve Marshall said in a statement. "Personally profiting from campaign funds erodes public confidence in the system and will not be tolerated."

Burkette of Montgomery resigned suddenly from the Alabama Senate earlier this month ahead of the charges being announced.

"There is not a bone in my body that will stop serving the people from this district. Great things happen when you put everything in God's hands and I have," Burkette said in an earlier statement about his resignation.

A retired educator, [Burkette](#) served on the Montgomery City Council from 2007 to 2018. He was elected to the Senate in 2018 to fill the seat previously held by Quinton Ross, who is now president of Alabama State University. [Burkette](#) suffered a stroke in December 2018, and used a wheelchair at the Statehouse while scheduling therapy sessions around legislative duties.