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[Barred from lobbying for six months, ex-Missouri rep returns anyway to sway lawmakers](#)

Less than two months after resigning from office, [former state Rep. Kevin Corlew](#) returned to the Missouri Capitol this week to testify for a national organization in what one watchdog said is an act of stealth lobbying.

Some experts question whether his appearance goes against the state's revolving door law prohibiting former lawmakers from quickly returning to lobby their former colleagues in the Missouri General Assembly.

"If you're representing an organization before a government for political purposes, that's the real world definition of lobbying," said Beth Leech, who studies lobbying as a political scientist at Rutgers University.

Corlew, a Kansas City Republican, narrowly lost his re-election bid to the Missouri House last fall. He then resigned in December, before his term was up, specifically to avoid a new law banning lawmakers from returning to the Capitol as lobbyists for two years after leaving office. Despite managing to avoid the two-year ban, Corlew still must abide by the previous law that required a six months wait before lobbying.

On Tuesday, Corlew testified to lawmakers on the Senate's Government Reform committee. On a witness testimony sheet, Corlew identifies himself as an attorney for Kansas City law firm Shook, Hardy & Bacon, though he represented the American Tort Reform Association at the hearing.

Corlew said in an interview this week he's very cognizant of rules, regulations and "integrity." "I wouldn't do something that would put me in harm's way of that," he said.

On social media, the tort reform group publicized Corlew testifying in support of legislation for the organization.

"I was just testifying as a witness before the committee," Corlew said. "That was the only thing I did, in line with my work here as an attorney."

He added that he also visited "some of my past friends on other issues." He said he spoke to them on a friendly basis, but "not on any legislative issue."

"I would call him a stealth lobbyist," said Craig Holman, a government affairs lobbyist for Public Citizen, which advocates for greater ethics and transparency in government. "He's working for a lobbying association and promoting legislation."

[Missouri law](#) does include exceptions, such as a person "testifying as a witness before the General Assembly or any committee." Corlew said that exception meant he was abiding by the state's revolving door law.

What Corlew is doing may ultimately be legal, but Leech said it can still be practically described as lobbying.

“This is a loophole that exists at the federal level too,” Leech said. “People who are acting as political representatives get to not call themselves lobbyists under the law, even though what they’re doing is part of political advocacy. And to me, a political advocate who is outside of government is a lobbyist.”

Corlew said the tort reform association is a client of the law firm, but he’s not a member. Testifying was part of his job at the firm as an attorney, he said.

“As with any client, the firm likely will bill (the American Tort Reform Association) for my time as an attorney, but they will not be paying me personally or directly,” Corlew said.

Lobbyists in state capitols often testify on behalf of large national organizations who cannot be there in person. Missouri citizens, as well as lawmakers, also testify for and against pieces of legislation in committees.

Lobbyists are required by law to register with the Missouri Ethics Commission and disclose their spending activity. Shook, Hardy & Bacon is listed as not having any lobbyists in the Capitol this session, according to the commission. Corlew has not registered.

The tort reform association has nine lobbyists listed as representing the group in Jefferson City. Corlew is not one of them.

In December, Corlew resigned from the legislature the day before the effective date of a constitutional amendment requiring ex-lawmakers to wait two years — instead of six months — before becoming lobbyists. The Clean Missouri amendment had passed with 62 percent of the vote in November.

At the time, Corlew took to social media and said he didn’t plan to “wine and dine” politicians. But he added that he didn’t want “to tie the hands of my clients for two years if they need representation on a matter that involves a governmental entity. “

Clean Missouri campaign manager Sean Soendker Nicholson said it sounds like Corlew is lobbying.

“Voters were very clear,” Nicholson said. “And Kevin Corlew knew what the rules are because he resigned early so he wouldn’t have to abide by the two-year ban.”

If he’s not registered as a lobbyist, said Senate Majority Leader Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, “then it is what it is.

“If somebody wants to question it and challenge it, then that’s a conversation for the ethics commission.”

Corlew said doesn’t see his work this week as lobbying.

“I was not acting as a lobbyist, as a lobbyist is defined in the Missouri statute,” Corlew said.

If Corlew decides to become a lobbyist, he will be able to register in June at the earliest, after the Missouri General Assembly’s regular session.

Asked if he planned to become a lobbyist then, Corlew said: “No, not at this point. I plan on continuing to be an attorney.”

New Mexico Legislature sends spurned bill to new governor

The Legislature sent a string of bills to New Mexico's Democratic governor for consideration Wednesday that had been vetoed by her Republican predecessor.

The state House of Representatives gave final approval to bills that would expand cave exploration opportunities, require greater reporting of expenses by lobbyist and limit the ability of police to seize information from personal electronic devices.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham has three days to approve or veto the bills. Bills also become law if the governor takes no action.

A House- and Senate-approved bill from Senate majority leader Peter Wirth of Santa Fe would require a court order before law enforcement agencies can take electronic information from mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets.

The House gave final approval to a bill from Democratic Sen. Daniel Ivey Soto of Albuquerque and Democratic Rep. Christine Chandler of Los Alamos that would close a loophole that allowed lobbyists to buy politicians meals and drinks of up to \$100 without reporting it to state campaign finance regulators.

Lujan Grisham also will consider a bill sponsored by Sen. Bill Soules of Las Cruces aimed at allowing cave exploration underneath private property by waiving liability for land owners under most circumstances.

Legislators are expediting a "rocket docket" of bills that were vetoed in recent years by former Gov. Susana Martinez, who left office in December after two terms.

The Legislature has entered the third week of a 60-day session than concludes March 16 at noon.

In other legislative action, a proposal to divert about an additional \$145 million a year toward early childhood education from a New Mexico state trust fund cleared its first hurdle Wednesday in the Legislature. That proposed constitutional amendment requires approval by the Legislature, a statewide public vote and Congress.

Lawmakers are confronting a court order to provide greater resources to public education, including early childhood programs. Attempts to increase distributions from the Land Grant Permanent Fund have repeatedly failed in recent years as fiscally conservative lawmakers seek to safeguard future investment returns that help fund public schools.

North Dakota lawmakers mull bills aimed at ethics reform

The North Dakota Legislature has a dismal approval rating and most voters believe the state's political system is broken and needs sweeping changes, a primary backer of a successful citizen-led ethics reform measure told lawmakers Wednesday.

"The people of North Dakota want you to hear them," said Ellen Chaffee, vice president of North Dakotans for Public Integrity, a group that sponsored the constitutional amendment aimed at ethics reform.

The initiative billed as an "anti-corruption amendment" would ban foreign money from elections, restrict lobbying and create an independent ethics commission, among other provisions.

The Legislature set aside the Capitol's biggest meeting room on Wednesday afternoon to hear testimony on competing Republican and Democratic bills that would develop rules so they conform with voters' wishes. The bills, however, are vastly different in their approach on how to adhere to the wide-ranging initiative and will require several more hearings during the session, legislative leaders said.

Dina Butcher, a citizen and one of the sponsors of the initiated measure, said in an interview that the GOP version "guts" its intent and continues to restrict transparency, setting "almost meaningless penalties" and making "a mockery of the people's vote."

Measure backers largely have agreed with the provisions in the Democratic bill but have signaled a possible lawsuit depending on how the legislation turns out.

Campaign filings show the backers of the initiative have attracted nearly \$420,000, much of it from left-leaning out-of-state groups.

About 60 people attended the back-to-back hearings, about a third of whom were lobbyists. Some lobbyists, all of whom opposed the citizen initiated measure before it went to voters, supported the GOP-sponsored bill.

Penalties proposed for some violations range from \$100 in the GOP bill to \$10,000 in the Democratic version, sponsored by Tim Mathern of Fargo, who has for years attempted to create an ethics panel for lawmakers in North Dakota, one of only a handful of states without one.

The voter-approved initiative calls for the five-member commission to be chosen by Senate majority and minority leaders and the governor. It may not contain lawmakers.

The Republican-led Legislature has rebuffed repeated attempts for such a commission, saying lawmakers always have followed high standards of conduct.

Unlike the GOP version, Mathern's bill would require, among other things, disclosure of all gifts to politicians and make public allegations against lawmakers under investigation for wrongdoing.

Republican Senate Majority Leader Rich Wardner and House counterpart Chet Pollert have maintained their bill "enacts the will of the voters while providing certainty to North Dakotans that they can participate in the democratic process."

"The goal of this legislation is not to make (the measure) more palatable for lobbyists and politicians," Pollert told fellow lawmakers. "The goal of this bill is to clarify the regulations found within the measure so that all North Dakotans can participate freely in the democratic process."

Wardner described the GOP bill as a starting point.

The American Civil Liberties Union's North Dakota chapter said Wednesday it doesn't oppose an ethics commission, but it still has "serious concerns" about the implementation of the measure in North Dakota, mirroring the GOP's assertion that it violates the First Amendment and restricts political speech and advocacy.

[Lobbyists feel crunch in post-shutdown session](#)

Lobbyists are bracing their clients for a short legislative calendar, worrying there is little time to tackle their top priorities after a record-long government shutdown, with new deadlines ahead and the 2020 election quickly approaching.

“[The shutdown] backed the calendar up into 2019 more than normal,” a lobbyist told The Hill. “Congress has until Halloween ... Thanksgiving to get any legislative vehicle done unless [they] attach it to an omnibus at the end of the year.”

Others predicted an even tighter time crunch with the presidential election already drawing candidates and attention.

“We are probably in a sprint to the August recess. The election cycle will start probably in August in earnest. Obviously you’re seeing candidates announce earlier and earlier,” Darrell Conner, co-leader of K&L Gates’s public practice, told The Hill. “After August, it’s kind of an uncertain future.”

The shutdown pushed back priorities for both the Democratic House and GOP Senate as lawmakers spent weeks passing dueling funding measures.

Now, as both parties look to restart, they face the potential for another shutdown in less than three weeks, when the short-term spending measure that reopened the government expires. And there are other items on the agenda that will take priority before Congress can tackle other issues.

“You immediately have to get to debt limit and spending caps in March. And then you have the six, seven, eight months of potential legislating,” Arjun Mody, a principal at S-3 Group, said.

“There are certain things that you just have to get done,” he continued, citing a highway bill expiring at the end of 2020 and work to delay the medical device tax and the health insurance tax.

The State of the Union address, now expected in February, was also delayed by the shutdown fight.

“The State of the Union is usually a table-setter,” Mody said.

Lobbyists said they expected work on a number of important issues across industries. The health care world is anticipating action on drug prices, while tech companies are eager to sway the debate over data privacy legislation.

While neither of those items are on Congress’s must-do list, both could see action before 2020 slows work. Lobbyists predicted a privacy bill could come out of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and that the upper chamber could see drug pricing legislation from Sens. [Chuck Grassley](#) (R-Iowa) and [Ron Wyden](#) (D-Ore.).

To complicate matters, K Street expects to be playing defense more frequently in 2019 for industry clients, with House Democrats touting an ambitious oversight agenda. That could further hamper lobbyists’ efforts to take up issues important to their clients.

House Financial Services Committee Chairwoman [Maxine Waters](#) (D-Calif.) “has been waiting for the gavel for decades,” Mody said.

“She has an agenda. The chairmen that the House has, they’re serious and they’re going to want to legislate in addition to their oversight. [Lobbyists] have to work with them,” he added.

Waters is already teeing up hearings on Deutsche Bank and Equifax as she vows to toughen scrutiny on the financial industry, while energy and tech companies have to prepare to answer to House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman [Frank Pallone Jr.](#) (D-N.J.) on a host of issues.

A divided Congress also has some lobbyists downplaying the chances lawmakers will get much done.

“I just don’t see that they’re going to be able to do so much this year. I think there’ll be a lot of breathlessness and a lot of ‘oh shit, there’s a hearing on this.’ ‘Oh crap, there’s a draft on that,’ ” a lobbyist told The Hill. “But the partisan splits and the calendar, it doesn’t bode well for productivity.”

The anxiety about the year ahead builds on the frustration many on K Street felt during the shutdown, which left lobbyists unable to move on many of their clients’ priorities for weeks. Mody found the “most disruptive part” was on clients with work in front of the administration. He mentioned, for instance, the delays on tax rules at the Treasury Department and the wait for regulatory feedback from the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The Treasury Department’s Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau, for example, was shut down along with about 25 percent of the federal government, leaving alcohol and tobacco companies unable to sell new seasonal beers and other products that did not have approved labels.

With the government open again, many lobbyists will need to play catch up.

Back on Capitol Hill, one of the first big tests for the new Congress will be the renegotiated North American Free Trade Agreement deal, the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). The deal was signed in November, setting off a six-month deadline for Congress to approve the pact. It’s a top priority for many industries.

Lobbyists are watching closely to see whether the trade deal can pass the Democratic House.

“The White House is going to come out of this shutdown with USMCA as their top priority. The pathway to it passing the Senate is pretty good but can the House Democrats pass it?” a lobbyist said. “That’s going to be a good test frame on whether this Congress can get things done or are they going to ... for lack of a better term, resist.”

Getting the deal through Congress would be a big political win for [President Trump](#) ahead of 2020.

The lobbyist questioned if House Democrats’ approach would be, “We’re not going to do anything to help you because we’re in this presidential cycle.”

Lobbyists who spoke to The Hill also pointed to the 2020 election adding to the pressure to move quickly on legislative priorities. For many, the election is already taking attention from Congress.

The number of office holders saying they are running for president is “almost breathtaking,” Marc Lampkin, Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck’s government relations department chairman, told The Hill.

“It seems like with so many people so quickly coming out of the gate, it just ... brings it into 2019 and closer,” he said.

“I would advise clients if you’ve got things that are really urgent, I think to get on the field sooner rather than later ... so the political winds don’t change your trajectory.”

Christopher Armstrong, lobbyist at Holland & Knight, said it is important to target areas where bipartisan action is possible.

“I would talk to both chambers. On specific topics that have the possibility of a bipartisan agreement ... like narrow tax issues, IRS reform, infrastructure, flood insurance or health care prices, I would engage both Houses early and often,” Armstrong added.

But Conner warned that time will be short once the Democratic presidential primary really kicks in.

“Congress may be relegated to just do the noncontroversial stuff and some of the messaging items,” he said.

Lawmakers push crackdown on foreign lobbyists

Lawmakers are seizing on momentum to crack down on unregistered foreign lobbying in the new Congress, after special counsel [Robert Mueller](#)'s investigation put a spotlight on the issue. Sen. [Chuck Grassley](#) (R-Iowa) is aiming to reintroduce legislation that would close loopholes in the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) that critics say allow lobbyists who work for foreign entities to conceal their work.

Grassley has made it clear that updating the decades-old law and toughening enforcement is a top concern, pressing [President Trump](#)'s attorney general nominee, William Barr, on the matter during his confirmation hearing on Jan. 15.

“Do you agree that the Foreign Agents Registration Act is a critical national security and public accountability tool, and if confirmed, will you commit to make sure that that act is a top priority?” Grassley asked.

Barr said he agreed.

Foreign lobbying has been in the national spotlight since Mueller obtained guilty pleas under the law from two prominent Trump 2016 campaign aides, [Paul Manafort](#) and Richard Gates, over their lobbying work on behalf of pro-Russian forces in Ukraine.

FARA dates back to the era of the Second World War, when the nation was worried about the influence of foreign propaganda. But decades later, lawmakers from both sides of the aisle find the law outdated, weak and filled with loopholes.

The law's complexities often bring controversy. Recently, former Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.) faced pressure from watchdog groups to register as a foreign lobbyist for the Chinese telecom firm ZTE. The company is under pressure from lawmakers and the administration over national security concerns because of its ties with the Chinese government. Amid pressure, Lieberman in January officially registered as a lobbyist for the company.

Lawmakers have tried to change the law in the past, especially since President Trump took office, but those efforts have fallen short.

Grassley introduced the Disclosing Foreign Influence Act in late 2017 with Rep. [Mike Johnson](#) (R-La.). Grassley said at the Barr hearing that he wants to try again to pass the bill, and Johnson said it would be reintroduced this Congress.

The bill would correct loopholes that lobbyists who work with foreign entities use to avoid disclosing their work through FARA. Currently, non-U.S. companies can register through the

Lobbying Disclosure Act, which is the domestic lobbying law, if they are representing foreign entities that are not governments.

But disclosing through the Lobbying Disclosure Act instead of FARA allows companies to avoid sharing advisory services and public relations work.

The House Judiciary Committee passed the Grassley-Johnson bill in January 2018. It was introduced in the Senate and referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where it stalled.

“We feel like it’s a great solution to the problem. It addresses the main deficiencies of FARA without going too far,” Johnson told The Hill. “It’s best tailored to really solve the problem [that] has been going on for decades ... [a] problem that is not going away anytime soon.”

The congressman said he thinks lawmakers and stakeholders across the political spectrum believe FARA needs a fix but there are outside forces pushing Congress to keep the status quo. But some are calling for caution as lawmakers push to change the law.

The Organization for International Investment, a trade association comprised of the U.S. subsidiaries of international companies, believes FARA reforms could complicate matters for their members. The group cited Nestle, a member based in Switzerland that has operations in the U.S.

“There should be a very bright line between somebody working for the Russian government versus Americans working for a Dutch grocery store or a Canadian auto parts company,” the organization’s president and CEO, Nancy McLernon, told The Hill.

“On the FARA issue, we’ve been working quite a bit with our companies going up to Capitol Hill and trying to educate on how these companies that are in their state and in their district are getting caught in the crosshairs,” McLernon added.

The organization is working on revising the law and tightening its requirements to ensure those representing foreign governments thoroughly disclose their activities, without hurting member businesses.

Lobbyists who work with foreign entities are insistent they follow the rules and wouldn’t fall into the trap that two D.C. firms that Manafort recruited to lobby on behalf of former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in the United States did: the now-defunct Podesta Group and Mercury Public Affairs.

Neither firm registered under FARA for lobbying work but instead registered under the Lobbying Disclosure Act.

“I think most of the big firms have very skilled ethics counsel so they would have been registered,” a lobbyist told The Hill. But the lobbyist acknowledged that “even the ones that were in-line with registration and FARA are going to have to reconsider it now.”

There will be no shortage of proposals for reforming FARA as lawmakers look to seize on momentum.

Sen. [Michael Bennet](#) (D-Colo.) and Rep. [John Sarbanes](#) (D-Md.) had a bill last Congress, the Curtailing Lobbyists and Empowering Americans for a New Politics Act. It’s unclear if they will reintroduce it this Congress.

The bill would change the 20 percent rule, which requires people to register as lobbyists only if they spend at least 20 percent of their time lobbying.

Sarbanes is the chairman of the Democracy Reform Task Force, which is behind Speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#)'s (D-Calif.) House Resolution 1.

Among the many ethics reform measures H.R. 1 aims to implement are closing loopholes for lobbyists and foreign agents and ensuring watchdogs have resources to enforce the law.

Others have indicated they also intend to jump into the debate, some with even more draconian proposals.

Sen. [Rand Paul](#) (R-Ky.) called lobbying for foreign governments “unseemly” in an interview with Fox News in December.

“I’m toying with the idea ... of whether or not we should just make a law that you can’t do lobbying for foreign governments because it really does appear to be divided loyalty whether you’re in government or not,” he said.

With Grassley taking a lead in the Senate and with Democrats also highlighting the issue as a priority under Pelosi, an effort to rein in the activity of foreign agents could have bipartisan legs. Democrats got a road map for handling the issue from former President Obama.

Obama listed ending foreign lobbying as a “good new idea” during a speech in September at the University of Illinois.

“Democrats aren’t just running on good old ideas like requiring presidential candidates to release their tax returns and barring lobbyists from making campaign contributions, but on good new ideas like barring lobbyists from getting paid by foreign governments,” he said.

But it is unclear if that momentum will translate into floor action. Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) (R-Ky.) failed to address it as a top priority at the start of the new Congress.

Although it has broad bipartisan support, a bill to crack down on foreign lobbying may not see the Senate floor this year, with GOP leaders focused on other priorities.

“It’s one of the few issues in Washington that seemingly virtually everyone agrees,” Johnson told The Hill. “We just need to have the political courage.”

[Who funds Utah legislators’ campaigns? Special interests provide 82% of money, while voters in lawmakers’ own districts gave only 6%.](#)

Incoming Utah legislators collected only 6 percent of their campaign donations during the 2018 election year from voters who actually live in their districts.

The lion’s share of contributions — 82.4 percent — came from special-interest groups or out-of-state donors. Another 3.6 percent came from candidates’ own pockets or close relatives, and 8 percent came from Utahns who lived outside a receiving lawmaker’s district, according to an analysis by The Salt Lake Tribune.

“If 80 percent of your money comes from special interests, it seems like you’re going to be more beholden to them,” says Chase Thomas, executive director of the left-leaning Alliance for a Better Utah, which backs campaign-finance reform.

As the Legislature convenes Monday, the statistics again raise questions about how much influence big donors and organized interests wield compared with run-of-the-mill Utah voters.

(Christopher Cherrington | The Salt Lake Tribune)

Influence

Thomas says he doubts that big-donor groups buy any votes but adds that their money may improve their access to lawmakers to make their case for or against legislation.

“All these companies wouldn’t be spending this money if they didn’t feel like something was coming out of it,” he says. “If you are going to get a big check from someone at a fundraiser, you’re probably going to spend more time with them than a random constituent” — and perhaps be more likely to have phone calls returned.

Steve Erickson is a lobbyist for groups that can’t afford to make big donations, such as the Crossroads Urban Center for the poor and some wildlife groups. He says that puts them at a disadvantage in the battle to persuade lawmakers.

“When it comes to lobbying access, money talks,” he says. “That doesn’t mean we don’t have access or don’t have some ability to influence policy. Certainly we do. But it is an extra advantage to have the access that comes from being a big contributor or having assisted with delivery of contributions on behalf of powerful interests.”

New Senate President Stuart Adams, R-Layton, doesn’t see it that way. “I think we try to listen to everyone,” he says about legislators.

“People donate because they think you are doing a good job,” and not to increase access or sway votes, he says. “I think the reason people donate is because they align with the people they want to donate to,” and want to help elect allies.

Incoming Senate Democratic leader Karen Mayne, D-West Valley City, says similarly that she feels big donors “don’t expect anything” for their money, “and we don’t expect to give anything.” Their donations “don’t guarantee a vote. They don’t guarantee anything. We just appreciate them supporting the process.”

Adam Brown, a political science professor at Brigham Young University, says academic research shows “very little evidence that donors change the way legislators act. But there is some evidence that they at least get the chance to make their pitch.”

He adds that research shows most organized interests are not particularly partisan in contributing to campaigns. “They tend to just go to whomever the interest thinks is likely to win so they have some influence with them over their policy area.”

Brown says, “The dominant motivation for organized interests is less about changing who wins than about being on the winner’s good side.”

He notes that new research by his BYU colleague Mike Barber found that in states where laws favor donations by special interests, legislatures tend to be less partisan in their actions. Where laws result in higher donations by individuals, lawmakers are more partisan — likely because individuals who are motivated to donate are also more partisan.

Donations

Tribune analysis found that incoming members of the Legislature received \$3.54 million in donations in 2018 — about triple the amount they received in the nonelection year of 2017.

Of that, \$2.9 million, or 82 percent, came from special or out-of-state interests such as corporations, executives, lobbyists, PACs, and party arms or fellow politicians (who in turn usually raise their money initially from other special interests).

So Utah's 104 legislators raised an average of \$34,100 each last year, including \$27,300 from special and out-of-state interests. And only an average of \$2,000 each came from voters living in their own districts.

Some legislators, primarily freshmen who have not yet developed relationships with special interests, donated \$105,200 out of their own wallets to campaigns. And rank-and-file Utah voters donated \$284,300 to lawmakers outside their own districts.

Legislators who raised the most were incoming Rep. Suzanne Harrison, D-Draper, \$121,553; Senate President Adams, \$103,183; new House Speaker Brad Wilson, R-Kaysville, \$100,776; Rep. Jim Dunnigan, R-Taylorsville, \$86,807; and House Majority Leader Francis Gibson, R-Mapleton, \$78,007.

Brown, the BYU professor, notes that legislative leaders almost always are at the top of that list and especially attract big donations from special interests.

The largest donors in the state last year include the Utah Association of Realtors, \$207,858; Reagan Outdoor Advertising, \$74,568; the Utah Bankers Association, \$52,200; the Utah Automobile Dealers Association, \$49,882; EnergySolutions, \$44,440; the Utah Hospital Association, \$43,800; Chevron, \$39,250; 1-800-CONTACTS, \$39,000; and Altria (a tobacco company), \$36,000.

"We basically give because we support homeownership," says Dave Robinson, president-elect of the Utah Association of Realtors, the state's single largest donor. "Our criteria then is supporting people who are going to value housing, value education and value the economy as we make laws."

He adds, "What we give is a small amount of money in the overall cost of a campaign. So what we're trying to do is help people from all walks of life who are running for office so they might have a shot because it is so expensive. We're hoping we can help people out with those expensive campaigns."

Of note, Senate President Adams and House Speaker Wilson are home developers, and Gov. Gary Herbert is a former real estate agent.

By industry, the largest donors include health care, \$278,943; real estate agents, \$228,482; finance industry, \$127,950; the drug industry, \$121,400; labor unions, \$109,122; insurance industry, \$105,520; communications, \$105,000; oil companies, \$99,168; and law firms, \$91,168.

Spending

Lawmakers last year spent nearly \$3.1 million, a bit less than they raised.

But they spent a good deal on expenses not directly related to campaigning, from putting money in their own pockets by repaying campaign loans to buying gifts, donating to community groups, buying lots of food and building support for legislative leadership campaigns by donating to colleagues.

For example, new House Speaker Wilson gave his House colleagues 23,000 reason to vote for him in that new position — with at least \$23,000 in donations to them.

Candidates who repaid themselves large amounts for earlier loans include Sen. Keith Grover, R-Provo, \$60,000; Sen. David Hinkins, R-Orangeville, \$20,000; Rep. Ken Ivory, R-West Jordan,

\$15,000; Sen. Daniel Hemmert, R-Orem, \$10,000; Rep. Kelly Miles, R-South Ogden, \$8,555; Rep. Steve Handy, R-Layton, \$5,400; and Rep. Joel Ferry, R-Brigham City, \$5,000.

Lawmakers decided to give away many of their donations — including \$274,000 to other politicians or party arms; \$74,000 to school, Scout and community groups (which may build goodwill with constituents); and \$26,000 in wedding and other gifts to convention delegates, interns or others.

Legislators also used donations to pay for a combined \$268,000 in travel, and not just around the state. Lawmakers who used it to pay, at least in part, for a trip to China include Adams; Sen. Jake Anderegg, R-Lehi; Sen. Curt Bramble, R-Provo; Sen. Gregg Buxton, R-Roy; Sen. Allen Christensen, R-North Ogden; and Rep. Eric Hutchings, R-Kearns.

Sen. Luz Escamilla, D-Salt Lake City, used some campaign money for a legislative trip to Mexico. Sen. Wayne Harper, R-Taylorsville, reported a trip to Israel.

Four lawmakers used campaign cash to pay transponder fees to use express lanes on Interstate 15: Anderegg; Rep. Mike McKell, R-Spanish Fork; Sen. Deidre Henderson, R-Spanish Fork; and Rep. Kay Christofferson, R-Lehi. McKell has said that cuts travel time to allow him to stay at home during the Legislature and saves in potential hotel cots.

Christofferson used campaign money to pay a \$170 fee to expedite processing of his passport. Rep. Brad Last, R-St. George, spent \$53 for dry cleaning.

Five lawmakers reported campaign donations to pay fines for errors or delays in campaign finance reports. They included Rep. Melissa Ballard, R-North Salt Lake, \$188; Rep. Steve Waldrip, R-Eden; \$245; Rep. Ken Ivory, R-West Jordan, \$150; Rep. Susan Duckworth, D-Magna, \$22; and Rep. Rex Shipp, R-Cedar City, \$10.

Finally, lawmakers spent \$136,000 combined on food with donations — from pizza for volunteers to candy to throw in parades to meals at restaurants with delegates and others. They spent the most such money on food at Costco, \$8,985, followed by \$8,395 at Smith's Food.

Maine bills aim to reduce influence of lobbyists

A Maine lawmaker has proposed limiting the influence of lobbyists, restricting when former lawmakers can start lobbying and banning the use of political funds for personal profit.

The bills, sponsored by Democratic Sen. Justin Chenette of Saco, are due for public hearings Wednesday and Feb. 6 at the Maine State House.

Similar bills have failed in the past under Democrats and Republicans amid concerns that current ethics rules are strong enough. However, Chenette said several of his bills have buy-in from Democratic leaders wielding newfound control in the Senate and House.

An Associated Press review of campaign finance reports shows individuals who identified as lobbyists gave at least \$25,000 to legislative candidates and political action committees run by lawmakers last year. The state's biggest law and lobbying firms gave over \$47,000.

Advocacy group Maine Citizens for Clean Elections found that self-described lawyers and lobbyists gave over \$145,000 to political action committees run by lawmakers in the 2016 cycle. The groups that hire those lobbyists — from labor groups to construction companies — regularly donate hundreds of thousands of dollars more in contributions that can be hard to track, said executive director Anna Kellar.

“Unlimited amounts of money are being funneled through sitting lawmakers to PACs. It’s time we rein in any undue influence in this pay-for-play system weighing down good governance in Augusta,” Chenette said.

Advertisement

Most money in Maine politics from special interest groups comes through legislator-run PACs, Kellar said.

“It’s one of the things that we hear about the most from members of the public and voters, across all political spectrums,” Kellar said. “They don’t think lobbyists should be able to give money to the people they’re trying to lobby, and lawmakers shouldn’t be taking from industries they’re regulating.”

Kellar’s group worked with Chenette on some of his legislation, which aims to close what he calls loopholes in state campaign finance law.

Currently, lawmakers cannot accept contributions from lobbyists and their employers when the Legislature is in session. But that creates a situation where Maine lawmakers wait until the minute they are out of session to start such fundraising.

One of Chenette’s bills would prevent any contributions from lobbyists or their employers year-round. He says the Senate Democratic caucus has made the bill a “top legislative priority.”

Another bill sponsored by Chenette would prevent lawmakers from using their PACs for personal profit. That bill, which is co-sponsored by Senate President Troy Jackson, D-Allagash, is in response to the 2017 revelation that a former Republican lawmaker failed to disclose that he lent money to his business from his political action committee.

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Publicly funded candidates can’t run their own PACs in the first place. Chenette also wants to prevent privately funded candidates from running such groups.

Another of Chenette’s bills would prohibit former lawmakers from lobbying for four years, up from one year currently. That bill would also remove the “safe harbor” in current law that allows former lawmakers to immediately lobby up to eight hours a month.

“There is a revolving door of legislators becoming lobbyists and blurring the lines of who is fighting for the best interest of Maine people,” Chenette said.