

# MULTISTATE

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## [How Civil Rights and Liberties Activists Are Taking on Capitol Hill](#)

Although she's a substitute teacher, South Carolina resident Lisa Lemen was nervous to speak in front of what she guessed was 500 people. She got to the Beto O'Rourke town hall early, positioned herself up front and made eye contact with the right person at the right time. Suddenly, she had the mic and a moment to ask the presidential candidate what he thought about reproductive rights.

Lemen is one of many volunteers in a \$30 million ACLU campaign, called Rights for All. Designed to push candidates on the topics of reproductive and voting rights, criminal justice reform, and immigration, the responses are filmed and accessible to voters across the country, courtesy of the donations that came pouring in after the 2016 elections.

Meanwhile, in Washington, D.C., lobbying is a nearly [\\$3.5 billion](#) industry. The issue of civil rights and liberties is only a small subset of that sum but, since the Trump administration took office, the tiny lobby has been [steadily growing](#). In the past two years, 74 organizations newly registered as civil rights and liberties lobbyists, according to data provided to *Fortune* by the [Center for Responsive Politics](#).

The way that Rights for All and lobbyists move the needle on civil liberties is different. Videos like Lemen's rely on voters to influence prospective candidates. Lobbyists, however, try to convince sitting legislators to craft a particular bill, for instance. The legality of tax codes keeps these efforts distinct. But under this administration, both types of work are coming together—and both efforts are increasing substantially.

“It's not a news flash to flag that this particular administration has been uniquely awful in the civil liberties, civil rights space,” said Ronnie Newman, director of the ACLU's political advocacy department. “We have broadened our toolkit to make sure to push on civil rights and liberty issues in other ways.”

The lobby for civil rights and liberties touches a variety of topics, including labor laws, healthcare, immigration and even tax codes, according to lobbying disclosure statements. But some of the new lobbying efforts reflect issues unique to this administration. For example, The Association of Sanctuary Cities is looking to preserve federal funding for cities that aren't willing to cooperate with immigration enforcement officials.

The increase in the filings extends beyond groups that are lobbying. There are even more groups that *can* lobby. The IRS is seeing an uptick in 501(c)(4) registrations which allow organizations to lobby and engage in political campaigning, said Abby Levine, who counsels nonprofits on how they can legally advocate through the Bolder Advocacy Program at Alliance for Justice.

Organizations with c4 status can engage in electoral work and accept large amounts of money without disclosing donors.

After the 2016 election, big-name groups like Planned Parenthood and the ACLU received large donations, which they are using to dramatically expand their work. But not all c4 groups are well heeled, Levine explained. She is working with small upstarts that have limited resources but are looking to get their message across in their states or on the Hill and at the ballot box.

“It takes both the inside game and the outside game for policy to change and legislative action to happen,” Levine said.

Coordinating efforts, some lobbyists half-jokingly say, is a requirement because the reality show nature of the presidency calls for showmanship when it comes to lobbying legislators. But everyone agrees that the brevity and broad reach of social media has been slowly changing lobbying for years.

“We are all adjusting to a world in which the role of facts is diminishing,” said longtime lobbyist Robert Raben, who had been assistant attorney general under President Bill Clinton. “We are figuring out what it’s to be replaced by. I’m not saying there was some halcyon period where facts won but [the role of] research and numbers and white papers used to be greater. Presentation of facts draws a yawn.”

That search for a new presentation is manifesting as increased citizen demonstrations that reinforce what is happening in a back room on the Hill.

Take, for example, the Alliance for Justice’s work on judicial nominations. Neomi Rao was tapped to replace Brett Kavanaugh on the Washington, D.C.’s Circuit Court of Appeals. Alliance for Justice and its lobbying arm, Alliance for Justice Action Campaign, worked on legislators to oppose the nomination.

During the hearings, partner groups lined the hallway outside the committee room wearing black T-shirts with controversial quotes about race or date rape, some of which came from a piece she wrote in a 1994 edition Yale’s undergraduate newspaper.

Senators walked past a row of people in black tees emblazoned with quotes like, “and if she drinks to the point where she can no longer choose, well, getting to that point was a part of her choice.”

Though Rao was confirmed, organizers see victory in the loss. The movement engaged a number of people and broadened the public’s interest in the judicial process.

“[We are] continuing the goal of changing hearts and minds of decision makers,” said Keith Thirion, who coordinates campaigns for the Alliance for Justice. But, he adds, there is more to lobbying. “Expanding the people engaged about the laws that affect our lives that should be—and is—a goal.”

And, despite losses, Hill lobbyists say those working on civil rights and liberties are finding footholds.

“With democrats taking back the House, it’s not surprising there is a shift,” said Kristine Lucius, executive vice president for policy and government affairs at The Leadership Conference. “Every single committee we are working with, it’s like they are drinking from a firehose. They are hungry for new ideas.”

And that takes us back to Leman. She may not realize that the lobbying trends in Washington, D.C., are shifting. And she may not realize that in some vague way her work may resonate for that civil rights and liberties lobby far away on the Hill. But she does know that she wasn’t an

activist of any sort before the 2016 election and now she is knee-deep in it, along with many others. She has even recruited her father to ask questions of candidates.

“Perhaps it is a civics course for our entire country,” she said. “Before, you’d have those comedy shows and people couldn’t even name the vice president. Now, you can name representatives in Iowa and people are familiar with everyone in Congress.”

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### **[Democrats Want To End Dark Money, But First They Want To Use It](#)**

Reform-minded Democrats have long held up "dark money" — political money that can't be traced to its source — as a symptom of what's wrong with politics in Washington. But while House Democrats this winter [passed a bill to end the secrecy shielding donors](#) behind unregulated dark money contributions, liberal activist groups now deploy those funds to boost the party's candidates in the 2020 elections.

A recent study by the government reform group Issue One [found](#) that in the 2018 midterm elections, politically active tax-exempt groups spent about \$150 million in secret money, and Democratic-leaning groups accounted for 54% of it.

Issue One's Michael Beckel said the researchers tried to identify the donors behind the groups, but "we turned over every rock we could, and we could only identify about two of every nine dollars that these groups had raised."

One tax-exempt group, [Majority Forward](#), spent about one-third of all the secret money. The group mainly targets Republican Senate candidates — and some Democrats see secret contributions of five, six or seven figures as the pragmatic choice.

"I have no misgivings," said Mark Riddle, executive director of Future Majority, a tax-exempt group financed by unregulated secret money. "On election night 2018, I didn't hear anybody go, 'Oh jeez, we won! But gosh, wasn't all that stuff really bad that helped everybody win?' "

Future Majority ran [an ad](#) in 2018 that attacked the dark-money system. In the ad, aimed at disaffected millennials, a young woman praises candidates who take a pledge to clean up politics. Another woman asks, "What about dark money?" She answers, "No dark money. Full disclosure of donors, and lobbyists."

Future Majority intends to concentrate on messaging, branding and strategic advice, mostly in Midwestern states. Riddle said, "I think looking at the best tactics and the best words and the best images is going to be really, really important in going against one of the best marketers in Donald Trump."

But once that's accomplished, he said he would rather not have secret money. "I actually do believe that House Bill 1 is maybe the most important piece of legislation that can be passed." he said.

[H.R. 1 is the reform bill passed by the House](#); it includes a provision to require disclosure of contributions of \$10,000 or more to politically active tax-exempt groups.

Political strategists began focusing on tax-exempt groups in the mid-1990s, especially on the right, a trend that peaked in the 2008 elections. The Supreme Court's Citizens United ruling in 2010 and the rise of the Tea Party movement helped popularize tax-exempt politicking.

Most of the best-known secret-money groups are conservative, including [the National Rifle Association](#), the Koch network's Americans for Prosperity and the party establishment's Crossroads GPS.

But in the wider perspective, the political parties have been fighting over this same issue since the 1980s. It's about how to get and use "soft money," money that's exempt from both the contribution limits and the transparency of the campaign finance laws.

Robin Kolodny, a political scientist at Temple University who studies the history of campaign finance, said there's a pattern to it.

"One party stretches the law, gets away with it, and then the other party just goes ahead and does the same thing," she said. "And then eventually the FEC [Federal Election Commission] will just say, 'Yeah, obviously, I guess this must be OK.'"

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### **[For years, top NY lobbying firm went unpaid for campaign work](#)**

A politically connected New York lobbying firm, Patrick B. Jenkins and Associates, has provided years of unpaid campaign consulting services to several Democratic state lawmakers, even as the firm has extensively lobbied members of the Legislature, according to records and people with knowledge of the activities.

Good-government groups have long criticized the practice of campaign consultants lobbying those lawmakers that they helped elect, which is legal. But the legal situation may be thornier if lobbying firms – which also have expertise in political campaigns – perform that expert campaign work without recouping payment.

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The New York City-based firm was founded and is run by well-known political consultant Patrick Jenkins. It offers paid, professional campaign fundraising services for candidates.

But the firm has gone unpaid for months or even years in its political and fundraising work on behalf of the several Assembly members, records show, work that's worth tens-of-thousands of dollars. Sources said that fundraising work included Patrick B. Jenkins and Associates soliciting campaign donations from its long roster of lobbying clients during the 2019 budget season.

Jenkins told the Times Union he plans to collect the unpaid tabs, and that those Assembly campaigns have simply been late in offering payment.

If the campaign work remained free, it would raise possible legal questions.

Under the state "gift ban" law, registered lobbyists such as Jenkins are prohibited from giving a gift of more than "nominal" value – \$15 – to a public official, if it can be reasonably presumed the gift is meant to influence the official.

In a statement, Jenkins said that he was expecting payments from several Assembly members for his firm's fundraising and consulting services.

"PBJ&A has contracts in place with all of its clients," Jenkins said. "We expect that all of those contracts will be honored. Nothing in life is free."

Jenkins declined to provide a copy of the contracts he says were signed with the campaign clients. Assembly members Diana Richardson and Latrice Walker, recipients of the Jenkins' campaign services, did not respond to requests for comment.

A third client with no public record of paying Jenkins, Bronx Assemblyman Michael Benedetto, said he has always intended to pay him back, but simply has had trouble fundraising. Jenkins was hired to do fundraising for Benedetto, but the assemblyman blamed his own lack of effort for the financial issues.

Jenkins charges clients a monthly retainer fee, which Benedetto recalled was around \$2,000. But some clients, including Benedetto, have not made payments for extended periods. Benedetto estimated that his campaign owes Jenkins \$20,000 for about a year's work.

"To be absolutely honest with you, the idea that this would have anything to do with him lobbying me is something that never came up in my mind," Benedetto said. "It would never cross my mind. That's not how my mind works."

Benedetto said he would try and find a copy of Jenkins' campaign consulting contract, but couldn't immediately do so. After some recent fundraising success, Benedetto said he plans to send Jenkins a check for a few thousand dollars as a gesture of goodwill.

Records obtained by the Times Union show that an associate at Patrick B. Jenkins and Associates circulated an invite for a September 2018 golf campaign fundraiser hosted by Benedetto, where foursomes were charged \$1,000 for a round at the Bronx's Pelham Bay & Split Rock golf course. Among the recipients of the invite: the Jenkins firm's lobbying clients.

Jenkins' firm had done political consulting for Benedetto dating back to the second half of 2017, according to separate filings with the Department of State.

Yet through 2018, Benedetto's campaign had never paid Jenkins' firm, according to state Board of Elections records. Jenkins ceased working for Benedetto after the September 2018 golf fundraiser.

Jenkins was previously told by state ethics regulators that he should be paid for his political consulting work on behalf of the Assembly's most powerful member, Speaker Carl E. Heastie.

In 2016, the New York Post reported that Jenkins, a longtime political adviser and close friend of Heastie's, was being paid \$4,000 a month by the assembly leader's campaign. Jenkins – whose close ties to Heastie date back to their rooming together at SUNY Stony Brook – told the Post that, "We're doing what's appropriate as advised by" the Joint Commission on Public Ethics.

Jenkins's client list has rapidly expanded since Heastie was elected Assembly speaker in 2015, and includes powerful interests like the New York State Trial Lawyers Association, ride-sharing app Uber and casino giant Genting.

But Jenkins' firm has not been paid for years of work on behalf of several other lawmakers.

Jenkins' associate, lobbyist and campaign fundraiser Jordan Carelus, also sent out a fundraising pitch to lobbying clients earlier this year on behalf of Walker, the Brooklyn assemblywoman. At the time, she was running unsuccessfully in the February special election for New York City public advocate.

Yet Walker's public advocate campaign never paid Jenkins' firm for the work this year, according to recent filings on the state Board of Elections website.

In addition, Jenkins' firm has worked for Walker's state Assembly campaign since the first half of 2018, according to state filings. Walker's Assembly campaign also has never paid Jenkins' firm.

Jenkins' firm has also been a political consultant for Bronx Democratic state Sen. Jamaal Bailey since the first half of 2017, according to state records.

Through 2018, Bailey's campaign had paid Jenkins' firm \$2,000.

Similarly, Jenkins' firm had been a political consultant for Brooklyn Assemblywoman Diana Richardson since the first half of 2017, according to state records.

Through 2018, Jenkins' firm had never been paid by Richardson.

Jenkins said his firm's work for Richardson had ended in early 2018.

Jenkins' firm also solicited donations from clients for a fundraiser thrown this year by another Democrat, Long Island Assemblywoman Kimberly Jean-Pierre, according to a person with knowledge of the matter.

For that candidate, Jenkins has been paid about \$10,000 since last year by her campaign, according to elections records.

Other clients have also been more prompt: Jenkins' firm has also regularly been paid for campaign work by Heastie, as well as Brooklyn Democratic state Sen. Kevin Parker.

While enforcement of the "gift-ban" law has traditionally focused on gifts given to public officials such as meals or travel, state ethics regulators have expanded the definition in recent years, including a long-running investigation of donors to New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio's now-defunct lobbying nonprofit.

Last year, the Joint Commission on Public Ethics reached a \$40,000 settlement with top lobbyist James Capalino after an investigation found that Capalino had raised \$90,000 from his own lobbying clients for de Blasio's lobbying nonprofit, while also lobbying de Blasio. Capalino admitted no legal wrongdoing in the settlement.

The fundraising by Jenkins' firm from its lobbying clients went to political campaigns, not a lobbying nonprofit, making it somewhat different.

A JCOPE spokesman, Walter McClure, said that generally speaking, free campaign fundraising by a lobbying firm "sounded" like something that could constitute a "contribution or in-kind contribution and would implicate Election Law."

Campaign contributions are notably not subject to the gift-ban restriction.

Under election law, a professional fundraising firm cannot provide services for pay in one case, while providing them for free to others, according to John Conklin, a spokesman for the state Board of Elections, unless the services are counted as "in-kind" campaign contributions.

Jenkins's firm, including Carelus, has provided professional campaign fundraising services.

But the several Assembly campaigns that received help from Jenkins' firm, but did not pay him, did not report "in-kind" contributions for the services, according to state elections records.

At the same time Jenkins' firm has been circulating the fundraising invitations to its lobbying clients, those clients have had extensive business before the state Assembly – a situation that good-government groups have derided as a conflict of interest.

It's unclear from public records what extent Jenkins or his employees have lobbied their campaign clients this year. Jenkins' firm has failed to comply with new JCOPE regulations requiring lobbyists to disclose the specific elected officials they lobby.

Instead, Jenkins' firm simply listed their lobbying targets as the "Assembly" and "State Senate." Benedetto said he could not recall whether Jenkins had lobbied him so far in 2019.

Jenkins said in late April that technological issues with JCOPE's new website had prevented his firm from complying with the regulation. He planned to amend his firm's filings for the first two months of 2019, and will comply going forward, he said.

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### [Weld could face scrutiny on party loyalty, lobbying, more amid Trump primary challenge](#)

Former Massachusetts Governor Bill Weld acknowledges he's in an uphill fight against President Trump for the Republican presidential nomination.

[Bill Weld](#), the former Massachusetts governor making a longshot challenge for the 2020 Republican presidential nod, has aggressively gone after President Trump since his campaign launch -- [calling](#) him a “one-man crime wave” and even suggesting Attorney General Bill Barr “erred” by not indicting the commander-in-chief.

Trump— known for punching back at even the slightest slights —has thus far ignored his GOP opponent, as his campaign says they’re not concerned about the primary.

But as Weld hits Trump on character, the president could have a few obvious openings to hit back if he so chooses.

Trump’s easiest talking point, should he decide to engage Weld down the road, could be party loyalty.

Weld left the GOP in 2016 to run as vice president on the Libertarian Party ticket with Gary Johnson. He endorsed Barack Obama over John McCain in the 2008 presidential race, though he backed Mitt Romney in 2012 over Obama.

“Trump might try to paint him as a Massachusetts liberal – but Weld can fact check him on that,” Republican political strategist Liz Mair, a leader in the Republicans for Johnson/Weld group in 2016, told Fox News. “The Cato Institute ranked him one of the most fiscally conservative governors in the United States.”

Weld also faced a legal controversy regarding a school he ran more than a decade ago – though the school was later exonerated and more [recent](#) media [accounts](#) said the probe potentially stemmed from a vendetta against Weld.

The federal probe surrounded Decker College, a for-profit school in Louisville, Kentucky, that taught carpentry, electrical and other construction trades. Weld became the school’s CEO in January 2005, when it was already having some financial problems that he sought to turn around.

Later that year, the FBI raided the school’s Louisville offices. The Justice Department investigated whether the school misused federal student loan money. The school went bankrupt when the Department of Education blocked student aid.

In August 2005, Weld entered the race for the Republican nomination for governor of New York, with the backing of several county Republican chairman and state Republican Party chairman Stephen J. Minarik III. He also raised about \$3 million for the campaign, more than any other Republican. Then in December, The New York Times ran a story headlined, [“Ghost of a Shuttered College Follows Weld.”](#) The questions slowed his momentum, and he dropped out in June 2006 before the primary.

Weld handed control of Decker College to bankruptcy trustee Robert Keats. But in 2012, [a bankruptcy judge](#) Thomas Fulton [sided](#) with officials of the closed college and, in 2016,

Education Department administrative law judge Robert Layton said the accrediting agency, the Council on Occupational Education, provided [“factually erroneous”](#) information to the federal government that caused it to withdraw student aid from the college.

The council pulled the accreditation after getting a call from Federal Student Aid official Ralph LoBosco. Keats reportedly said LoBosco sought revenge against Weld. That’s because as a U.S. attorney in the 1980s, Weld prosecuted LoBosco’s former employer for fraud.

The Education Department did not respond to an inquiry for this story.

[Trump, while staying](#) out of the scrum for now, attacked Weld during the 2016 campaign, saying, “I don’t talk about his alcoholism, so why would he talk about my foolishly perceived fascism?” The Boston Globe cited reports that Weld had appeared publicly inebriated several times, which Weld has denied.

“Trump tried to call him a drunk in 2016, but it’s factually inaccurate and I think Trump was just trying to provoke him,” said Mair. “If you were a Republican governor of Massachusetts, it isn’t easy to provoke you.”

Mair supports Weld’s candidacy now, but isn’t committed until the GOP field is finalized.

In an email, the Weld campaign said it would attempt to get a response for this report, but did not respond to several follow-up requests.

Other issues, while not of a legal nature, also could emerge should Weld’s campaign gain momentum.

Weld is on the board of directors for [Acreage Holdings](#), a cannabis company. However, it’s widely known that as a governor and as a vice presidential candidate for the Libertarian Party, Weld favored relaxed drug laws. Former Republican House Speaker John Boehner also sits on the Acreage Holdings board.

“Weld is on the board of a pot company, which might be an issue, but might actually help in New Hampshire,” Mair said, noting the libertarian bent of the “Live Free or Die” state.

The president also could note that Weld is the only federal candidate that former Special Counsel [Robert Mueller](#) contributed to, according to the Center for Responsive Politics, which tracks money in politics. Mueller donated \$450 to Weld’s unsuccessful campaign against then-Sen. John Kerry in 1996.

Weld also was a registered lobbyist from 2007 to 2011 for the international law firm McDermott, Will & Emery, and represented defense contractor Raytheon, CNX Gas Corporation, Sony Electronics and shoemaker New Balance, according to government watchdog The Center for Public Integrity. Weld advocated for issues such as cap-and-trade legislation, shoes for Armed Forces members and recycling electronics, according to CPI.

There’s nothing illegal about lobbying, a freedom protected under the First Amendment. Still, because of various excesses over the years, lobbying is among the least popular occupations. When Trump talks about the Washington “swamp,” it conjures up the cozy relationship between politicians and lobbyists.

Interestingly, McDermott, Will & Emery [formerly represented](#) Trump’s former personal lawyer Michael Cohen in the Russia probe at a time when Cohen was firmly on Trump’s side.

Cohen [claimed](#) in a lawsuit the Trump Organization stopped paying the firm for his legal defense when he flipped on Trump. Stephen Ryan, who leads the firm’s government strategies practice,

was formerly Cohen's counsel before the former Trump lawyer began cooperating with prosecutors.

Weld is a member of lobbying firm ML Strategies, but isn't listed as a lobbyist with the firm, according to CPI. The firm says Weld "provides clients with counsel related to government strategies, litigation, and general business advice."

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### **[New law to ban all lobbying in former lawmaker's first year](#)**

A new Maine law bans future lawmakers from any paid lobbying within their first year out of office.

Democratic Gov. Janet Mills recently signed the bill into law.

An Associated Press review found about two dozen Maine lawmakers elected as far back as 1999 have gone on to register as paid lobbyists in the last decade. The AP's review found roughly half of those lawmakers did so within the same year of leaving office.

A 2013 state law pushed for a one-year "cooling-off" period. But a loophole allows former lawmakers to avoid registering if they lobby below eight hours a month.

The new law closes that loophole. State ethics commissioners had called for the change in 2017.

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### **[Fulfilling Voter-Approved Ethics Reform up to Commission](#)**

The Republican-led Legislature was successful in pushing its own bill aimed at ethics reform. But it wasn't what Democrats and others wanted and worked to get voters to pass last year.

Whether the GOP version fulfills the goals of the initiative will be determined in large part by a commission to oversee the conduct of legislators, statewide officials, candidates and lobbyists.

Applications for the five-member commission are being taken until May 24. Applicants include former lawmakers, lawyers, a farmer and several lobbyists.

Gov. Doug Burgum and legislative leaders must select the panel by consensus.

Dina Butcher, a spokeswoman for the group that pushed a constitutional amendment to toughen ethics rules, says a threatened lawsuit is on hold until the group sees how the commission works.

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### **[Nearly \\$300 Million in Tax Breaks Awarded to 4 Companies With Close Democratic Ties](#)**

The backlash over New Jersey's lucrative corporate tax incentives grew on Thursday when it was disclosed that four politically connected companies received nearly \$300 million in tax breaks based on questionable claims that they would otherwise move out of state.

The four companies all had close ties to George Norcross, a powerful Democratic leader in the southern part of the state.

A state official revealed that three of the companies had indicated that they were considering moving to Philadelphia in order to qualify for tax breaks to stay in New Jersey, but in fact did not have viable offers to go there.

The fourth business identified a potential relocation site in Philadelphia four days before the state approved its \$40 million tax credit in 2014, the official said.

The revelations about those companies, which all sought to move to the city of Camden with sizable tax credits, under a 2013 law known as the Economic Opportunity Act, were made public

during a daylong hearing by a panel of investigators appointed by Gov. Philip D. Murphy, a Democrat.

The task force is examining whether \$11 billion in economic development programs have delivered significant economic benefits or have been a boon to politically connected firms and companies.

An investigation by [The New York Times found](#) that lawmakers allowed a real estate lawyer, Kevin D. Sheehan, whose influential law firm has close ties to Democratic politicians and state legislators, to edit drafts of the 2013 law that unlocked sizable tax breaks for his firm's clients.

The testimony on Thursday by current and former officials at the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, which oversees the tax credit programs, raised serious concerns about the law, the lack of oversight in reviewing applications and the way some tax credits were awarded.

A former president of the authority, Tim Lizura, also acknowledged that many last-minute changes to the law were made by Mr. Sheehan. The Times found that those alterations were done without any public disclosure.

Companies had been awarded \$4.9 billion under the 2013 legislation by moving to New Jersey or remaining in the state and creating and retaining jobs.

The hearing was the second held in recent months by the task force, which in April referred evidence to federal prosecutors for possible criminal charges. It is not immediately known whether the evidence might lead to charges or what might result from Thursday's testimony.

But a member of the task force said companies could be held criminally liable.

"There is real criminal exposure for companies that lie to the E.D.A.," said Pablo Quiñones, a special counsel on the task force.

For several hours, another special counsel, Jim Walden, displayed some of the specific edits of the bill on a large screen. Some changes, he noted, were intended to allow specific companies, such as Subaru of America, to claim hundreds of millions of dollars in additional tax breaks.

Several companies had business ties with Mr. Sheehan's firm, Parker McCay, Mr. Walden said.

Mr. Sheehan did not register with the state as a lobbyist for the Economic Opportunity Act, and his firm told The Times that its work on the legislation did not amount to lobbying.

"Parker McCay was asked by policymakers, including those in the Legislature, to review this legislation and offer input and suggestions on ways it could be strengthened to help Camden and other localities in South Jersey, which have historically lost out to North Jersey in receiving economic benefits from the state," the company said in a statement on Thursday.

Beside his work on the bill, Mr. Sheehan also helped the four businesses who were considering a move to Philadelphia — Cooper Health System; Conner Strong & Buckelew; the Michaels Organization; and N.F.I. — assemble their tax credit applications, Mr. Walden said.

Cooper Health was awarded nearly \$40 million in tax credits to relocate to Camden. It submitted an application on Nov. 7, 2014, and stated that none of its employees were at risk of losing their jobs and wrote "TBD" in response to a question about whether it was considering leaving the state, according to a copy of its application shown during the hearing.

The next month, a Cooper Health executive told the state that it had located a property in Philadelphia. Four days later, the Economic Development Authority approved its tax credit submission.

A Cooper Health spokesman said on Thursday that the company was truthful in its application and had hired more employees than it had proposed. A representative for Conner Strong & Buckelew said that suggestions made during the hearing were inaccurate and that the company was seriously considering a move out of state to consolidate its offices.

The building that Cooper Health eventually moved into had been owned by the Economic Development Authority, according to records obtained by The Times. The agency sold the site in late December 2014 to a nonprofit organization, which sold it that same day to a real estate investment group, documents show.

Intersecting nearly every piece of the testimony on Thursday, even though their names were rarely mentioned, were the Norcross brothers.

Parker McCay's chief executive is Philip Norcross, whose brother is George Norcross, an insurance executive at Conner Strong and the chairman of the board of trustees of Cooper Health System.

A third brother, Donald Norcross, is a former Democratic state senator who represented Camden and had been a sponsor of the 2013 law; he is now a United States representative.

Conner Strong, the Michaels Organization and N.F.I. submitted tax credit applications on the same day in October 2016. They collectively sought \$245 million to relocate together to a new 18-story tower on the Camden waterfront. Without the tax credit, they were considering moves to office towers in Philadelphia, the companies claimed.

But by the time they applied for the credits, the offers to lease space in Philadelphia had expired, according to David Lawyer, an official with the Economic Development Authority who had reviewed the applications for the task force.

The companies later submitted new leases, but those offers should also have raised red flags, Mr. Lawyer said.

The companies had proposed new lease configurations in Philadelphia, with far different office layouts that had employees scattered on different floors, he said.