



CRS Report for Congress

Lobbyists and Interest Groups: Sources of Information

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Summary

Lobbyists and interest groups play an active role in the American legislative process. Information on lobbyist registrations and on interest groups in general is available from a variety of online and printed sources, including files available for public inspection.

This report is a guide for locating governmental sources that maintain files on lobby groups, their registrations, and finances. Also included in this report are nongovernmental sources that offer background information on the lobbyists and interest groups who focus on legislation in Washington. Many of the works listed are available to congressional staff in the Jefferson and La Follette Congressional Reading Rooms, CRS research centers, and to constituents in large public and research libraries.

This report¹ will be updated yearly or if current lobbying regulations are changed by Congress. Current legislative proposals related to lobbying disclosure are discussed in CRS Report RL34008, *Lobbying Reform Legislation: Side by Side Analysis of Lobbying Provisions in S. 1 and H. R. 2316, 110th Congress*, by Jack Maskell.

Introduction

The Lobbying and Disclosure Act of 1995 (LDA), P.L. 104-65, 109 Stat. 691 (1995) as amended by the Lobbying Disclosure Technical Amendments Act, P.L. 105-166, 112 Stat. 38 (1998), requires lobbyists to register with the Clerk of the House and Secretary of the Senate and to make semiannual reports of their activities. These reports identify

¹ This report was originally authored by Mari-Jana “M-J” Oboroceanu, who no longer covers this issue.

the name of the registrant (firm or individual), client,² and broad issue area in which lobbying was carried out.

Both the Clerk of the House of Representatives and the Secretary of the Senate receive and maintain the lobby registrations and semiannual disclosure reports of those filing as lobbyists under the LDA. The offices also maintain the records previously required under the Federal Regulation of Lobbying Act of 1946. That law was repealed by the LDA.

Governmental Sources

Clerk of the House of Representatives

Legislative Resource Center
B106 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0515
(202) 226-5200

The filings beginning with 1989 to present are available for public inspection at the location given above. The House website [<http://lobbyingdisclosure.house.gov/>] provides information about the records but does not provide online access to the records themselves.

Secretary of the Senate

Office of Public Records
232 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-7116
(202) 224-0758

The Senate Office of Public Records provides onsite access to the public to filings beginning with 1996 at the location given above. The filings beginning with 1998 are available on its website at [<http://sopr.senate.gov/>].

FARA Registration Unit Public Office

U.S. Department of Justice
FARA Registration Unit
1400 New York Avenue, N.W., Suite 100
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 514-1145

² A “client” is defined under LDA as any person or entity that employs and compensates another person to conduct lobbying activities on behalf of that person or entity. A coalition or association may also be listed as a client. LDA does not require information on the specific membership of these groups to be disclosed. Some observers suggest that this could allow entities to shield their lobbying activities through the use of ostensibly separate, independent coalitions and associations. Consequently, when the client is an association or coalition, the interested parties may not be identified in LDA disclosure reports. For further information, see CRS Report RL31126, *Lobbying Congress: An Overview of Legal Provisions and Congressional Ethics Rules*, by Jack Maskell.

The Department of Justice's Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) Unit receives registrations and financial information of agents representing foreign governments or political parties in the United States as required by the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938, as amended. The records can be inspected by the public at the above address. Online lobbyist registrations can be accessed at [<http://www.usdoj.gov/criminal/fara/links/search.html>]. Currently FARA semiannual reports to Congress available online date back to 1997, and the most recent one is dated December 31, 2005.

GPO Access

GPO Access User Support Team
 Superintendent of Documents
 U.S. Government Printing Office
 732 North Capitol Street, N.W., Mail Stop: SDE
 Washington, DC 20401
 (202) 512-1530; main GPO telephone (866) 512-1800

GPO Access provides online access to the *Congressional Record Index*, which can be used to search for pre-1996 lobbyist registrations at [<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cri/index.html>]. Also available are the full texts of many legislative resources, including the *Congressional Record*.

Legislative Information System (LIS)

User Support can be obtained by calling:
 CRS Hotline: (202) 707-7100
 Senate Library (202) 224-7106
 House Call Center (202) 225-6002
 GAO Library (202) 512-2585

LIS is the legislative and congressional information system available to the Capitol Hill Intranet users at [<http://www.congress.gov>]. It provides access to a variety of academic, commercial, and governmental information sources. Among its contents is the full text from 1989 to present of the *Congressional Record*, in which periodic listings of lobbyist registrations were printed before 1996.

Nongovernmental Sources

American League of Lobbyists (ALL)

P.O. Box 30005
 Alexandria, VA 22310
 (703) 960-3011

The American League of Lobbyists is a membership group of registered lobbyists and other professionals interested in lobbying. It works to improve the public image of lobbyists, monitors lobby legislation, and conducts educational programs on the role of lobbyists. The ALL website can be accessed at [<http://www.alldc.org>].

The Capital Source. Washington, National Journal Group, Inc. (Annual)

This directory provides limited coverage of government, media, and corporate officials. Its sections on interest groups, trade and professional associations, and political

consulting and lobbying firms list some Washington-based lobbying groups, with contact information and executive directors' names. The list is arranged alphabetically by the name of the lobbying firm and does not contain areas of specialties.

Center for Responsive Politics (CRP)

1101 14th Street, N.W., Suite 1030
Washington, D.C. 20005-5635
(202) 857-0044

This website [<http://www.opensecrets.org/lobbyists/index.asp>] provides access to *Influence, Inc.*, CRP's annual lobbying report. It gives year-to-year comparisons of lobbying spending on Capitol Hill, background on the issue, lists of top spenders, and includes the political spending patterns of various industries. It also gives an industry-by-industry spending breakdown and has a searchable database of individual lobbyists, lobbying firms, and client businesses.

Encyclopedia of Associations. Farmington Hills, MI, Gale Group. (Annual)

This multi-volume listing of nonprofit American membership organizations of national scope is arranged by broad categories. It gives details on the location, size, objectives, and other aspects of some 22,000 trade associations, professional societies, interest groups, labor unions, and fraternal and patriotic organizations. It contains name, geographical, executive, and keyword indexes.

Government Affairs Yellow Book: Who's Who in Government Affairs. Washington, Leadership Directories, Inc. (Semiannual)

This directory profiles more than 22,000 government affairs experts who represent the interests of businesses, professional organizations, interest groups, and government institutions before federal, state, and local governments. Private organizations are listed alphabetically. Federal government organizations are listed alphabetically by department, and by agency. State, city, and county government sections are organized alphabetically by state, city, and county names, respectively. Each listing gives the organization's name; address; contact; organizational description; any political action committee; the Washington, DC, office's address and telephone number; lobbying firms representing the group on the federal, state, and municipal levels; and other pertinent details. This extensive listing provides subject, geographical, name, and organization indexes. *Government Affairs Yellow Book* is available online to subscribers as part of *The Leadership Library* on the Internet. This online resource that is updated daily can be accessed at [<http://www.leadershipdirectories.com>].

Legal Times: Law and Lobbying in the Nation's Capital. Washington, *Legal Times*, part of American Lawyer Media, Inc. (Weekly)

This newspaper has articles on Washington's law and lobbying communities. In June 2000, *Legal Times* launched its biweekly newsletter, *Influence: The Business of Lobbying*. It focuses on the business of lobbying, ranging from firm assignments and earnings to business strategies and mergers. *Influence* can be found on the Web as *Influence Online* at [<http://www.influence.biz>]. It has detailed lobby firm profiles and same-day reporting on new lobby registrations. Several portions of this electronic

resource are available only to subscribers, such as a biweekly newsletter, 24-hour access to *Influence Online*, and e-mail alerts on the latest registrations and breaking news.

LexisNexis Group

P.O. Box 933
Dayton, OH 45401-0933
(800) 227-9597

Lexis-Nexis subscribers have access to full-text coverage of the *Congressional Record*, which can be searched online for lobbyist registrations filed from 1985 to 1996 at [<http://www.lexisnexis.com>].

National Trade and Professional Associations of the United States. Washington, Columbia Books, Inc. (Annual)

This directory lists more than 7,500 trade associations, labor unions, professional societies, and similar national groups. Many have offices in Washington, DC, that lobby on federal legislation of interest to their members. Among the details provided for each group are its annual budget, a brief history, and dates and sites of its annual conventions. It contains subject, geographic, budget, executive, and acronym indexes.

Public Interest Group Profiles. Washington, Congressional Quarterly, Inc. (Biennial)

This selective guide to more than 200 public interest and policy groups has been compiled by the Foundation for Public Affairs, which maintains a national, nonpartisan clearinghouse on public interest groups and corporate public affairs programs cooperatively with the Public Affairs Council. Each group's profile includes basic details, as well as ratings of effectiveness and political orientation. Profiles are grouped into 12 subject categories.

Washington. Washington, Columbia Books, Inc. (Annual)

This work provides information on nearly 5,000 businesses, government agencies, national associations, international and national affairs organizations, law firms, and cultural organizations in the Washington, DC, area. It is arranged by broad subject categories, with brief listings of key officials in each entry. It also has a "National Affairs" section, which is a selective list of nonprofit activist organizations and special interest lobbying groups in the Washington area.

Washington Information Directory. Washington, Congressional Quarterly, Inc. (Annual)

This guide to Washington, DC, area governmental and private organizations is arranged in 20 broad subject areas. Under each area, pertinent federal departments and agencies, congressional committees, and private nonprofit organizations are listed.

Washington Representatives. Washington, Columbia Books, Inc. (Annual)

This is a list of 17,000 Washington contacts of U.S. trade associations, professional societies, labor unions, corporations, and various special interest and public interest

groups. This source has three main sections: the firms and the organizations they represent, the clients being represented, and the people who work for the firms or the listed organizations. In addition, *Washington Representatives* has four indexes. The first index is organized by clients by subject/industry. The second index helps the user to research foreign clients by country. The third index provides information on PACs (political action committees). The fourth index guides the user in the legislative areas and provides help in identifying clients and firms working in particular legislative issues. *Washington Representatives* can be accessed online at [<http://www.lobbyists.info>]. However, the searchable database is only available to subscribers.