

Know Your Local Lobbying Laws – Failure Can Be Costly

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Corporations, especially those engaged in procurement lobbying, must be mindful of not just state, but also local, lobbying laws. Failure to comply with local lobbyist registration and reporting requirements can be costly.

In December, the Los Angeles City Ethics Commission issued a \$45,000 penalty on a man and his company for failure to register as lobbying entities and file quarterly disclosure reports. In July, the Commission approved fines totaling over \$70,000 against two employees and their employers for failure to register and report.

As previously reported by *Election Law News* in 2017, the Chicago Board of Ethics fined a major company \$92,000 for failure to register as a lobbyist. More recently, in November, the Board issued \$6,000 in fines for later reports.

In December, the Seattle City Council adopted legislation that creates registration and reporting obligations for grassroots, or indirect, lobbyists. Specifically, any group or person that spends, in the aggregate, more than \$1,500 in a three-month period, or more than \$750 in a single month, “in presenting a program to the public, a substantial portion of which is intended, designed, or calculated primarily to influence legislation” must register and report as a sponsor or a grassroots lobbying campaign. On their registrations, sponsors of grassroots lobbying campaigns must include, among other information, the names and addresses of each person contributing more than \$25 to the campaign, along with the aggregate amount that person contributed. Sponsors are required to file monthly reports.

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Practice Areas

Election Law & Government Ethics
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Wiley frequently advises our clients on local lobbying law, including determining whether certain activity will trigger local lobbying registration and reporting obligations.