

LOBBYING REFORM

MODERNIZING DENVER'S LOBBYING
CODE FOR TRANSPARENCY AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



DENVER CLERK & RECORDER

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Why reform is needed:

Denver's Current Lobbying Law:

- Dated, confusing, and ineffective
- Fails to provide meaningful transparency for media and the public

The Opportunity:

- High-profile lobbying around tobacco, surveillance, and others policy exposed major gaps
- A clear case for modern reform based on national best practices

Goals of the Rewrite:

- Increase transparency in local government decision-making
- Provide clear, relevant information to the public with new lobbyist disclosure requirements
- Align with best practices from peer jurisdictions
- Establish fair and consistent enforcement, with clarity for the regulated community



New Disclosure Requirements

1. Compensation

- Report how much lobbyists are paid by clients for lobbying

2. Lobbying activity disclosure

- Disclose which covered officials were lobbied during the reporting period, along with the client represented
- Disclose topic lobbied, including council bill, ordinance, or resolution number if applicable

3. “Grassroots” lobbying

- Report spending on public campaigns that urge contact with officials (e.g., “Call your Councilmember”)



Clarity and Consistency

1. Clarify *who* can be lobbied

- Elected and appointed officials
- Does not include Career Service Employees
- *Note: all reporting obligations fall on the lobbyist. An elected official or appointee has no obligation to report that they are lobbied (other than existing ethics reports)*

2. Clarify *who* is a lobbyist

- Only a person *who receives compensation for lobbying* must register.
- Maintains current exemptions. The following do not have to register with our office:
 - Volunteer lobbyists
 - Public officials like state legislators or advisory board members acting in their official capacity
 - People representing themselves or their properties



Other Changes

1. Create a Cooling-Off Period

- Prohibit former elected officials and cabinet members from lobbying for 18 months.
- Prevent “revolving door” influence and the appearance of using previous office for personal gain

2. Improved enforcement language

- Model language on recent campaign finance legislation
- Strengthen accountability and oversight



Bill Updates

1. Changes based on stakeholder and Council feedback

- Lobbying activity reporting: changed from reporting each individual lobbying contact to reporting lobbying activity by reporting period
- Cooling-off period: Narrowed applicability to elected officials and cabinet members
- Grassroots lobbying: Raised disclosure threshold to \$5,000

2. Items under discussion

- Cooling off period length: draft uses 18 months
- Should Council aides qualify as covered officials?



Implementation

1. Lobbying Activity Disclosure

- Covers meetings, direct contact, and emailed communications
- Applies to lobbying related to official action
- For each reporting period, disclose the elected or appointed officials lobbied and the client represented

2. Reporting Compensation

- For each reporting period, disclose compensation by client using reporting ranges (for example, \$1 to \$1,000; \$1,001 to \$2,500; \$2,501 to \$5,000)
- Continue incorporating stakeholder feedback during implementation

