

LOBBYING REFORM

MODERNIZING DENVER'S LOBBYING
CODE FOR TRANSPARENCY AND
ACCOUNTABILITY



DENVER CLERK & RECORDER

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Why:

Denver's current lobbying code is outdated, vague, and insufficient for ensuring meaningful transparency. As lobbying efforts in the city become more sophisticated, our current framework fails to capture the full scope of influence on elected and appointed officials.

Lobbyist reports lack critical details, such as compensation, specific legislation targeted, and which decision makers were lobbied. This leaves the public, media, and policymakers without the information they need to understand who is influencing public policy, how, and on whose behalf.



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 other policy areas 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 activities

2. Legislative Activity

- List the 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”)

4. Meeting Disclosure

- Report which elected officials and agency heads were lobbied during the reporting period
- For lobbying directed to council aides, mayoral staff, or board and commission members, disclose the office, board, or commission lobbied.



Clarity and Consistency

1. Clarify *who* can be lobbied

- Any elected official or agency head.
- Boards and commissions, council offices, and mayoral staff (provided that individual staff members or commissioners do not need to be listed on reports).
- *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.
- Bill maintains current exemptions. The following will *never* have to register with our office:
 - Volunteer lobbyists
 - A public official (like a state legislator, or a member of an advisory board) acting in their official capacity
 - People representing themselves (or their properties)



Other Changes

1. Create a cooling-off period

- Prohibit former elected officials and agency heads from lobbying for **12 months**.
- Prevent “revolving door” influence and the appearance of using previous office for personal gain

2. Improved enforcement language

- Model enforcement process on recent campaign finance legislation
- Create stronger deterrents to noncompliance

