

# Louisiana Amends Lobbying, Ethics and Campaign Finance Rules

March 2008

After a decisive victory last October 20 without the need for a runoff election, the new governor of Louisiana, Bobby Jindal, called a special session on ethics reform immediately after his inauguration on January 14, 2008. That special session produced some results at the end of February when the legislature passed several bills promoted by the Governor. Governor Jindal signed the bills into law in early March.

The immediate impact of the new legislation on lobbyists and lobbyist employers is the elimination of the ability to provide elected officials with free tickets to sporting events, hunting and fishing trips, and golf outings. As of March 30, 2008, the state eliminates the wholesale gift rule exception for food, drink, and refreshments consumed by a public servant while the personal guest of the donor. Instead, the new law imposes a \$50 per-event limit on food, drink, and refreshments provided by lobbyists, lobbyist employers and other interested or regulated entities. (This figure will be adjusted for inflation annually, starting in 2009.)

On January 1, 2009, lobbyists and lobbyist employers will need to comply with a series of changes to the lobbying reporting system, including monthly reports. Lobbyists also will be subject to mandatory training.

In the campaign finance area, another new law immediately begins regulating political organizations exempt from taxation under section 527 of the Internal Revenue Code, although the exact impact of this legislation is hard to discern. Finally, the state will begin regulating electioneering communications, or certain communications made

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near elections, on January 1, 2010.