

New Year, New Developments in State Campaign Finance, Ethics, and Lobbying

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State legislatures and ethics agencies often use the beginning of a new year to institute changes to lobbying/ethics reporting thresholds and other requirements. And in some cases – such as Ohio this year – a new year means a completely new agency regulating elections and campaign finance. A summary of some of the more relevant changes follows.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Louisiana – Definitional Revisions and Changes to Disclosure Obligations

Recent legislation has significantly reshaped Louisiana’s campaign finance landscape, particularly in the areas of donor disclosure, committee definitions, and the scope of regulated expenditures. These changes are designed to clarify reporting obligations and (in most cases) appear to reduce the disclosure obligations for organizations engaging in issue advocacy and paying for independent expenditures from general treasury funds.

Ohio – New Ohio Election Integrity Commission

Ohio formally replaced its campaign finance and election regulator, the Ohio Election Commission, with the newly formed Ohio Election Integrity Commission effective January 1, 2026. The new Commission consists of five members with its Chairperson appointed by the Secretary of State and the four remaining members appointed by the majority and minority leaders in the Ohio General Assembly. The new Ohio Election Integrity Commission will not function as an independent agency like its predecessor, but will rather be housed under the Secretary of State’s office.

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Practice Areas

Election Law & Government Ethics
Federal & State Campaign Finance

LOBBYING

Montana – Lower Lobbyist Principal Reporting Threshold

Principals influencing legislative activity must now file monthly reports following months in which lobbying expenditures exceeded \$3,000 and, in years in which the Legislature is in session, a report on February 15, and another report 30 days after adjournment. This is a decrease from the previous \$5,000 threshold.

Pennsylvania – Increased Lobbyist Registration Threshold

Pennsylvania raised the compensation threshold for triggering lobbyist registration and reporting. The amount increased from \$3,000 to \$4,000 in the aggregate during a quarter.

Rhode Island – Increased Gift Limit, Expansion of Restrictions to Lobbyists/Lobbyist Employers

The Rhode Island Ethics Commission increased the value of gifts public officials can receive from “interested persons.” The current gift limit of \$25 with an aggregated limit of \$75 per year has been doubled to \$50 and \$150 per year. Furthermore, the definition of “interested persons” was expanded to include lobbyists and lobbyist employers.

Texas – Updated Lobbyist Compensation, Expenditure Threshold

Texas updated its relevant thresholds for triggering lobbyist registration and reporting. The compensation/reimbursement threshold increased from \$1,930 to \$1,990 while the lobbyist expenditure threshold increased from \$970 to \$990 per calendar quarter. These changes took effect on January 1, 2026.