



ETHICS LAW – LOBBYING DISCLOSURE¹

The purpose of the 1979 Maryland Public Ethics Law is to protect the public's confidence and trust in government by assuring the impartiality and independent judgment of County officials and employees. That law requires local jurisdictions to enact provisions similar to the State Public Ethics Law. The Queen Anne's County Commissioners complied with this requirement by passing the Queen Anne's County Public Ethics Law. The Queen Anne's County Ethics Commission administers and enforces that law. If you have any questions regarding lobbying disclosure, please call the Ethics Commission staff at 410-758-4406 or write to the Ethics Commission at 107 N. Liberty Street, Centreville, MD, 21617.

LOBBYIST – DEFINED

A lobbyist is a person (defined as an individual or business entity) who communicates with a County official or employee for the purpose of influencing that person in the performance of his/her official duties and

- Spends or intends to spend \$100 or more on food, entertainment, services, or gifts for officials or employees or their spouse or dependent children during a calendar year;
- Is compensated \$500 or more in a calendar year for lobbying;
- Spends \$500 or more in a calendar year to compensate another person or persons for lobbying to influence an official or employee in the performance of his/her official duties; or
- Spends at least \$2000 or more in a calendar year for salaries, contractual employees, postage, telecommunications services, electronic services, advertising, printing and delivery services for the express purpose of soliciting others to communicate with an official or employee to influence that person in performance of his/her official duties.

Required Disclosure

A lobbyist (as defined above to include both the individual doing the lobbying and their principal) must file a registration statement with the Ethics Commission within five days of first acting as a lobbyist. In addition;

- A registration statement must also be filed for each subsequent year in which the person or entity is a lobbyist, and an amended registration must also be filed upon any change in the content of a statement. The registration shall include identification of the lobbyist; identification of any person or entity on whose behalf the lobbyist acts; and the subject matters on which the lobbyist proposes to lobby.
- Finally, lobbyists must also file a year-end report with the Ethics Commission disclosing the value, date and nature of any food, entertainment, or other gift provided to a County official or employee; the identification of the official or employee or their spouse or dependent children receiving gifts with an aggregate value of \$25 or more; the amount and source of all compensation paid to the lobbyist; and a breakdown of expenditures on the activities described therein.

ENFORCEMENT & PENALTIES

Any person found to have violated the county Public Ethics Law will be subject to appropriate action as prescribed in that law. The Commission, among other actions, may:

- Issue a cease and desist order against any person found in violation of the Public Ethics Law; and
- Seek enforcement in the Circuit Court of Queen Anne's County.

A County official or employee found to be in violation of the Public Ethics Law shall be referred to the County Human Resources Office for a determination of disciplinary action. A person who knowingly violates the Ethics Law may be found guilty of a civil violation, and on conviction, is subject to a fine of up to \$1000.

¹ This document is intended as a guide only. Refer to QAC Public Ethics Law (Chapter 8) for specific information.