

Ethics Commission Fact Sheet:

Overview of the San Francisco Lobbyist Ordinance



This fact sheet describes the basic requirements and prohibitions imposed on lobbyists under the San Francisco Lobbyist Ordinance.

Definition of a Lobbyist

A lobbyist is someone who:

- Is paid to contact a City officer;
- To influence local legislative or administrative action;
- On behalf of a client or employer.

To find out whether you qualify as a lobbyist, see the Ethics Commission's "[Who is a Lobbyist?](#)" Fact Sheet.

Basic Duties

If you are a lobbyist in San Francisco, you must:

- Register as a lobbyist on the Ethics Commission's website;
- Complete online trainings provided by the Ethics Commission;
- File a disclosure report every month describing your efforts to influence local legislative or administrative action (including who you have contacted, on whose behalf, and about what); and
- Retain documents to support your disclosure reports.

Prohibitions

You may not:

- Generally make gifts worth more than \$25 to City officers;
- Lobby to attain future employment;
- Falsely claim to lobby on someone else's behalf; or
- Violate any other part of the Lobbyist Ordinance.

Penalties for Non-Compliance

If you do not file the required disclosure reports on time, the Commission will fine you \$50 per day until you file. In limited circumstances, the Ethics Commission may reduce or waive this fine.

If you violate any part of the Lobbyist Ordinance, you may be subject to:

- Administrative proceedings before the Ethics Commission;
- A civil action brought by the City Attorney;
- Termination of your lobbyist registration; and
- Penalties up to:
 - Three times the amount you failed to report;
 - Three times the amount you gave or received in excess of the gift limit; or
 - \$5,000 per violation, if greater.

Your employer or client will also be liable for the full amount of any penalty imposed on you for lobbying on their behalf.

When investigating violations, the Ethics Commission and City Attorney can inspect all documents you are required to retain.

Deliberately falsifying, misrepresenting, or concealing any information or documents in an Ethics Commission or City Attorney investigation is a violation of the Lobbyist Ordinance.

Last Updated 12/8/14