

For the Common Good— Lobbyist Disclosure: Exposing Spending to Influence Legislators

Religious advocates are unique. There are few others whose mission is to influence government decision-making that benefits the common good, the “shalom” or well-being of society as a whole.

But the altruism of this mission is presented with a frustrating dilemma when religious advocacy cannot (and will not) compete with two of the most controlling influences in current political decision-making:

- ⇒ money
- ⇒ power of special interests

It is essential that all citizens require their elected officials to uphold the highest traditions of democracy in the legislative process—rather than be beholden to the highest bidder.

The *Principles for Public Advocacy* of The Pennsylvania Council of Churches states that, “A just Commonwealth ensures that all persons have a voice in government at all levels.” In Pennsylvania, by the very nature of their financial involvement in influencing legislation, some voices are far stronger than others. This is not fair, or just, or in the interest of the common good.

Pennsylvania is the only state in the country without a law controlling the financial influence of lobbyists.

The bottom line:

WE NEED A LOBBYIST DISCLOSURE LAW NOW!



*This important message provided by the
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
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There are currently two lobbyist disclosure bills before the General Assembly—SB 1 and HB 700. While these bills do address the issue, they fall far short of what is needed to truly level the playing field for all Pennsylvanians who wish to speak out on issues of concern—though they are a start.

A spring 2005 IssuesPA/Pew Poll found that:

- ⇒ Two-thirds (66%) of Pennsylvanians want to prohibit public officials from taking gifts from lobbyists
- ⇒ Nine-tenths (87%) want to require lobbyists to report “all spending” made to influence laws, regulations and rules
- ⇒ Two-thirds (68%) want to limit how much money candidates for the legislature can raise from outside their districts.

Those polled represent a spectrum of Pennsylvanians speaking from a range of perspectives. As members of Christian congregations, and as individual people of faith, you need to ask yourselves the same questions, then contact your state legislators and Governor Rendell. Tell them you want the best lobbyist law in the nation – one that:

- ⇒ bans gifts
- ⇒ requires full disclosure, and
- ⇒ imposes tough penalties on public officials and lobbyists who break the law.

All Pennsylvanians need a guarantee that their voices count. A PA lobbyist disclosure law levels the playing field. It is in the common good. It’s a matter of justice.

HOW CAN YOU HELP? Contact the Governor and your legislators NOW! Contact information and tips for doing advocacy are available at www.pachurches.org/

