

Lobbyist Registration Ordinance

(Effective Date July 1, 2021)

Sec. 2-351. Title and purpose.

- (a) This article may be cited as the "Palm Beach County Lobbyist Registration Ordinance."
- (b) The board of county commissioners of the county and the governing bodies of the municipalities located within the county hereby determine that the operation of responsible government requires that the fullest opportunity be afforded to the people to petition their county and local governments for the redress of grievances and to express freely to the elected officials their opinions on legislation and other actions and issues; that to preserve and maintain the integrity of the governmental decision-making process, it is necessary that the identity and activities of certain persons who engage in efforts to influence the county commissioners, members of the local municipal governing bodies, mayors or chief executive officers that are not members of local municipal governing bodies, county and municipal advisory board members, and county and municipal employees on matters within their official duties, be publicly and regularly disclosed. In accordance with Section 1.3 of the County Charter, this Ordinance shall not apply in any municipality that has adopted an ordinance in conflict governing the same subject matter.

Sec. 2-352. Definitions.

Unless expressly provided herein to the contrary, for purposes of this article, the following definitions will apply:

Advisory board shall mean any advisory or quasi-judicial board created by the board of county commissioners, by the local municipal governing bodies, or by the mayors who serve as chief executive officers or by mayors who are not members of local municipal governing bodies.

Board shall mean the board of county commissioners of Palm Beach County, Florida.

Central Lobbyist Registry shall mean the official location for countywide lobbyist registration.

County commissioner shall mean any member of the board of county commissioners of Palm Beach County, Florida.

Lobbying shall mean seeking to influence a decision through oral or written communication or an attempt to obtain the goodwill of any county commissioner, any member of a local municipal governing body, any mayor or chief executive officer that is not a member of a local municipal governing body, any advisory board member, or any employee with respect to the passage, defeat or modification of any item which may foreseeably be presented for consideration to the advisory board, the board of county commissioners, or the local municipal governing body lobbied as applicable.

Lobbyist shall mean any person who is employed and receives payment, or who contracts for economic consideration, or who registers in the county's central lobbyist registration registry or with any municipality, for the purpose of lobbying on behalf of a principal, and shall include an employee whose principal responsibility to the employer is overseeing the employer's various relationships with government or representing the employer in its contacts with government.

"Lobbyist" shall not include:

- (1) Any employee, contract employee, or independent contractor of a governmental agency or entity lobbying on behalf of that agency or entity, any elected local official when the official is lobbying on behalf of the governmental agency or entity which the official serves, or any member of the official's staff when such staff member is lobbying on an occasional basis on behalf of the governmental agency or entity by which the staff member is employed.

- (2) Any person who is retained or employed for the purpose of representing an employer, principal or client only during a publicly noticed quasi-judicial hearing or comprehensive plan hearing, provided the person identifies the employer, principal or client at the hearing, and providing that the person is not otherwise registered as a lobbyist in the county's central lobbyist registration database, or with any municipal lobbyist registration system when that municipality has its own lobbyist registration process.
- (3) Any expert witness who is retained or employed by an employer, principal or client to provide only scientific, technical or other specialized information provided in agenda materials or testimony only in public hearings, so long as the expert identifies the employer, principal or client at the hearing.
- (4) Any person who lobbies only in his or her individual capacity for the purpose of self-representation and without compensation.
- (5) Any employee, contract employee, or independent contractor of the Palm Beach County League of Cities, Inc., lobbying on behalf of that entity.

Local Municipal Governing Body shall mean the councils and commissions of the municipalities located within Palm Beach County, Florida.

Member of Local Municipal Governing Body shall mean any member of the municipal council or commission.

Official or employee means any official or employee of the county or the municipalities located within the county, whether paid or unpaid. The term "employee" includes but is not limited to all managers, department heads and personnel of the county or the municipalities located within the county. The term also includes volunteers of the county or the municipalities located within the county when such volunteers exercise discretionary police, fire, or parking enforcement department authority. The term "employee" also includes the chief executive officer of the county or any municipality, who is not part of the local governing body. If the county or municipality utilizes and contracts for "privatized" chief administrative officers or chief executive officers, then the person providing such services, or the officers, directors and employees of any entity providing such services, shall be considered the employees of the county or municipality that he or she serves. However, it shall not include local government attorneys as defined in Florida Statutes §112.313, or attorneys who render contracted services to the county or municipality that are limited in scope to a specific issue or subject, to specific litigation, or to a specific administrative proceeding. The term "official" shall mean members of the board of county commissioners, a mayor, members of local municipal governing bodies, and members appointed by the board of county commissioners, members of local municipal governing bodies or mayors or chief executive officers that are not members of local municipal governing body, as applicable, to serve on any advisory, quasi-judicial, or any other board of the county, state, or any other regional, local, municipal, or corporate entity.

Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics means the commission established in section 2-254 et seq. to administer and enforce the ethics regulations set forth herein, and may also be referred to as the "commission on ethics" in this article.

Persons and entities shall be defined to include all natural persons, firms, associations, joint ventures, partnerships, estates, trusts, business entities, syndicates, fiduciaries, corporations, and all other organizations.

Principal shall mean the person or entity a lobbyist represents, including a lobbyist's employer or client, for the purpose of lobbying.

Sec. 2-353. Registration and expenditures.

- (a) **Registration required.** Prior to lobbying, all lobbyists shall submit an original, fully executed registration form to county administration, which shall serve as the official location for countywide lobbyist registration and which shall be known as the "Central Lobbyist Registry." The registration may be submitted in paper or electronic form pursuant to countywide policies and procedures. Each lobbyist is required to submit a

separate registration for each principal represented. A registration fee of twenty-five dollars (\$25) must be included with each registration form submitted. A registrant, or principal who is represented by the registrant, shall promptly send a written statement to county administration canceling the registration for a principal upon termination of the lobbyist's representation of that principal. This statement shall be signed by the lobbyist or principal. Lobbying prior to registration is prohibited. It is the responsibility of the lobbyist to keep all information contained in the registration form current and up to date.

(b) Registration form. The registration form shall be prepared by county administration and shall require the following information:

- (1) the name, phone number and address of the lobbyist;
- (2) the name, phone number and address of the principal represented;
- (3) the date the lobbyist was initially retained by the principal;
- (4) the nature and extent of any direct business association or partnership the lobbyist and principal might have with any current county commissioner, member of a local municipal governing body, mayor or chief executive office that is not a member of a local municipal governing body, advisory board member, or employee;
- (5) the area of legislative interest;
- (6) a statement confirming that the registrant is authorized to represent the principal;
- (7) signatures of both the registrant and principal where such signatures may be made electronically pursuant to countywide policies and procedures; and
- (8) the county or municipalities to be lobbied.

(c) Registration exceptions. Registration shall not be required for the following:

- (1) Persons under contract with the county or municipalities as applicable who communicate with county commissioners, members of local municipal governing bodies, mayors or chief executive officers that are not members of a local municipal governing body, advisory board members, or employees regarding issues related only to the performance of their services under their contract;
- (2) Any attorney representing a client in an active or imminent judicial proceeding, arbitration proceeding, mediation proceeding where a mediator is present, or formal administrative hearing conducted by an administrative law judge in the Division of Administrative Hearings, in which the county or municipality as applicable is a party, who communicates with county or municipal attorneys on issues related only to the subject matter of the judicial proceeding, arbitration proceeding, mediation proceeding, or formal administrative hearing. This exception to the registration requirement includes communications with other government officials and employees conducted during depositions, mediation, arbitration hearings or trial, judicial hearings or trial, and settlement negotiations for active litigation, so long as the county or municipal attorneys are present for those communications.

(d) Reporting of expenditures. Commencing January 1, 2020, and by February 1 of each year thereafter, all lobbyists shall submit to the Central Lobbyist Registry a signed statement under oath listing all expenditures made by the lobbyist in lobbying county or municipal officials and employees in excess of twenty-five dollars (\$25) for the preceding calendar year. A statement shall not be required to be filed if there have been no expenditures in excess of twenty-five dollars (\$25) during the reporting period. The statement shall list in detail each expenditure category, including food and beverage, entertainment, research, communications, media advertising, publications, travel, lodging and special events. Political contributions and expenditures

which are reported under election laws as well as campaign-related personal services provided without compensation are excluded from the reporting requirements. A lobbyist or principal's salary, office overhead expenses and personal expenses for lodging, meals, and travel also are excluded from the reporting requirements. Research is an office expense unless it is performed by independent contractors rather than by the lobbyist or the lobbyist's firm.

(1) The county administrator of the Central Lobbyist Registry shall provide notice of violation to any lobbyist who fails to timely file an expenditure report. In addition to any other penalties which may be imposed under this article, any lobbyist who fails to file the required expenditure report within thirty (30) days of the date of notice of violation shall be suspended from lobbying unless the notice of violation has been appealed to the commission on ethics.

(e) False statements. A lobbyist shall not knowingly make, or cause to be made, a false statement or misrepresentation in maintaining registration or when lobbying county commissioners, members of local municipal governing bodies, mayors or chief executive officers that are not members of local municipal governing bodies, advisory board members, or employees.

(f) Existing County registrations. All registrations on file and in effect with the county before the effective date of this ordinance shall remain in full force and effect.

Sec. 2-354. Record of lobbying contacts.

(a) Contact log. Except when appearing before the board, local municipal governing body, or any advisory board, all persons shall sign, for each instance of lobbying, contact logs maintained and available in the office of reception of each department of county or municipal government as applicable. The person shall provide his or her name, whether or not the person is a lobbyist as defined in this article, the name of each principal, if any, represented in the course of the particular contact, and the subject matter of the lobbying contact. All contact logs shall be maintained by the county or municipality as applicable for a period of five (5) calendar years.

(b) Lobbying outside of county or municipal offices. In the event that a lobbyist engages in lobbying which is outside of county or municipal offices as applicable, and which is a scheduled appointment initiated by any person for the purpose of lobbying, the lobbyist shall advise in writing the commissioner's office, the member of a local municipal governing board's office, the mayor or chief executive officer's office, the advisory board member's office, or the employee's department office as appropriate of the calendar scheduling of an appointment and the subject matter of the lobbying contact.

Sec. 2-355. Cone of silence.

(a) **Cone of silence** means a prohibition on any communication, except for written correspondence, regarding a particular request for proposal, request for qualification, bid, or any other competitive solicitation between:

(1) Any person or person's representative seeking an award from such competitive solicitation; and

(2) Any county commissioner or commissioner's staff, any member of a local governing body or the member's staff, a mayor or chief executive officer that is not a member of a local governing body or the mayor or chief executive officer's staff, or any employee authorized to act on behalf of the commission or local governing body to award a particular contract.

(b) For the purposes of this section, a person's representative shall include but not be limited to the person's employee, partner, officer, director, consultant, lobbyist, or any actual or potential subcontractor or consultant of the person.

- (c) The cone of silence shall be in effect as of the deadline to submit the proposal, bid, or other response to a competitive solicitation. The cone of silence applies to any person or person's representative who responds to a particular request for proposal, request for qualification, bid, or any other competitive solicitation, and shall remain in effect until such response is either rejected by the county or municipality as applicable or withdrawn by the person or person's representative. Each request for proposal, request for qualification, bid or any other competitive solicitation shall provide notice of cone of silence requirements and refer to this article.
- (d) The provisions of this article shall not apply to oral communications at any public proceeding, including pre-bid conferences, oral presentations before selection committees, contract negotiations during any public meeting, presentations made to the board or local municipal governing body as applicable, and protest hearings. Further, the cone of silence shall not apply to contract negotiations between any employee and the intended awardee, any dispute resolution process following the filing of a protest between the person filing the protest and any employee, or any written correspondence at any time with any employee, county commissioner, member of a local municipal governing body, mayor or chief executive officer that is not a member of the local municipal governing body, or advisory board member or selection committee member, unless specifically prohibited by the applicable competitive solicitation process.
- (e) The cone of silence shall not apply to any purchases made in an amount less than the competitive bid threshold set forth in the county purchasing ordinance (County Code, chapter 2, article III, division 2, part A, section 2-51 et seq.) or municipal ordinance as applicable.
- (f) The cone of silence shall terminate at the time the board, local municipal governing body, or a county or municipal department authorized to act on behalf of the board or local municipal governing body as applicable, awards or approves a contract, rejects all bids or responses, or otherwise takes action that ends the solicitation process.
- (g) Any contract entered into in violation of the cone of silence provisions in this section shall render the transaction voidable.

Sec. 2-356. Enforcement.

- (a) If the county administrator or municipal administrator as applicable is informed of any person who has failed to comply with the requirements of this article, he or she shall conduct a preliminary investigation as deemed necessary under the circumstances. In the event the county administrator or municipal administrator as applicable determines that a violation may have occurred based on the results of the investigation, the county administrator or municipal administrator as applicable shall forward the matter to the county commission on ethics for further investigation and enforcement proceeding as set forth in article XIII of this chapter, the countywide code of ethics. For the purposes of further investigation and enforcement by the commission on ethics, a complaint submitted under this subsection by the county administrator or municipal administrator shall be deemed legally sufficient.
- (b) The commission on ethics may process any other legally sufficient complaints of violations under this article pursuant to the procedures established in article XIII of this chapter.

Sec. 2-357. Penalties.

Violations of this article shall be punishable as follows:

- (1) Failure to properly register as required by section 3-353 of this article shall be deemed a single violation, punishable by a fine of two hundred fifty dollars (\$250) per day for each day an unregistered lobbyist engages in lobbying activity, in an amount not to exceed a total of two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500).

- (2) Failure to properly provide lobbying contact information as required by section 2-354 of this article shall be punishable by a fine of two hundred fifty dollars (\$250) for each violation.
- (3) Violations of the cone of silence set forth in section 2-355 of this article shall be punishable by a fine of two hundred fifty dollars (\$250) for each violation.
- (4) Any person who knowingly makes or causes to be made a false statement or misrepresentation in maintaining a lobbyist registration shall be subject to a fine of two hundred fifty dollars (\$250) for each violation.
- (5) Any person who violates the provisions of this article regarding yearly reporting of expenditures as required shall result in a suspension of lobbying activity until such time as the required expenditure report is filed. A first violation shall also include a suspension of all lobbying activity for an additional 90 days beyond the point the expenditure report is filed. A second violation shall result in a suspension from lobbying for an additional 180 days. Three or more violations shall result in a permanent suspension from lobbying; a petition for reinstatement may be filed with the commission on ethics 365 days after permanent suspension is ordered.
- (6) A violation of any provisions of this article not related to expenditure reporting more than once during a twelve-month period shall result in being prohibited from lobbying as follows: A second violation shall result in a prohibition of one (1) year; a third violation shall result in a prohibition of two (2) years.
- (7) The penalties provided in this section shall be exclusive penalties imposed for any violation of the registration, contact log, and cone of silence requirements of this article. Willful and knowing violations of this article shall be referred by the commission on ethics to the state attorney for prosecution in the same manner as a first degree misdemeanor pursuant to Florida Statutes, §125.69. Failure or refusal of any lobbyist to comply with any order of the commission on ethics shall be punishable as provided by law, and shall otherwise be subject to such civil remedies as the county or municipality as applicable may pursue, including injunctive relief.

Secs. 2-358—2-370. Reserved