

Wisconsin Ethics Commission

When must an individual obtain a license to lobby?

You have an obligation to obtain a lobbying license from the Wisconsin Ethics Commission, and the organization that pays you is required to authorize you as its lobbyist, if you attempt to influence state legislation¹ or an administrative rule² on behalf of a business or organization that employs you or from which you receive a payment (other than reimbursement of expenses) and you communicate with a state official or legislative employee about such matters on 5 or more days within a six month reporting period.³

- If you are not acting on behalf of anyone other than yourself, you need not be licensed or authorized.
- If you represent the views of a business or organization but do so as an unpaid volunteer, you need not be licensed or authorized.
- If you represent the views of a business or organization that pays you, but convey those views only to legislators elected from the Senate and Assembly districts in which you reside, you need not be licensed or authorized.
- If you represent the views of a business or organization that pays you and you convey those views to all or many legislators or officials but do so only occasionally, up to 4 days within a 6-month period, you need not be licensed or authorized.

Otherwise, you should be **licensed** as a lobbyist, your employer should be **registered** as a lobbying organization with the Wisconsin Ethics Commission, and your employer should **authorize** you as its lobbyist and file that authorization with the Ethics Commission. Forms are available from the Ethics Commission.

Fees

Currently for each legislative session, the lobby license fee is \$250 to lobby on behalf of one organization; \$400 to lobby on behalf of multiple organizations. Lobby licenses become effective when the Wisconsin Ethics Commission receives the completed form and correct fee and expire December 31 of even-numbered years.

Registration of Lobbyist's Employer

A business, organization, or person that employs a lobbyist has an obligation to register with the Wisconsin Ethics Commission. For an organization that has lobbying expenditures amounting to no more than \$500 annually, there is a special registration form and reduced fee. Registration forms are available from the Ethics Commission.

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- ¹ Including the development, drafting, introduction, consideration, modification, adoption, rejection, review, enactment or defeat of any bill, resolution, amendment, report, nomination, administrative rule or other matter by the legislature or by either house or any committee, subcommittee, joint or select committee thereof, or by a legislator or employee of the legislature acting in an official capacity and also means the action of the governor in approving or vetoing any bill or portion thereof, and the action of the governor or any agency in the development of a proposal for introduction in the legislature. §13.62(8), *Wisconsin Statutes*.
- ² Including the proposal, drafting, development, consideration, promulgation, amendment, repeal, or rejection by an agency of a rule promulgated under chapter 227. §13.62(1), *Wisconsin Statutes*.
- ³ Reporting periods run from January through June and from July through December in each year. Section 13.62(11), *Wisconsin Statutes*, provides: "Lobbyist" means an individual who is employed by a principal, or contracts for or receives economic consideration, other than reimbursement for actual expenses, from a principal and whose duties include lobbying on behalf of the principal. If an individual's duties on behalf of a principal are not limited exclusively to lobbying, the individual is a lobbyist only if he or she makes lobbying communications on each of at least 5 days within a reporting period.

This is a guide. For authoritative information consult Wisconsin Statutes.

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