

# Lobbying in Rhode Island

## Getting Started with the Lobbying Registration Desk



### A Guide for Lobbyists



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**Nellie M. Gorbea**  
Secretary of State

This guide was produced by  
the Rhode Island Department of State

# Important Reminders



## Reporting of lobbying activity

All lobbying activity by registered lobbyists, entities, and lobbying firms must be filed using the online Lobbying Registration Desk according to the following schedule.

MONTH OF ACTIVITY	REPORT DUE
January	February 15
February	March 15
March	April 15
April	May 15
May	June 15
June	July 15
July – September	October 15
October – December	January 15



## Lobbying Identification

Your badge **MUST** be visible while engaged in any lobbying activity in any state government building.

You only need one lobbyist badge annually, regardless of the number of registered lobbying relationships.

The badge fee is ten dollars (\$10.00). If you lose your badge, you may request a replacement badge for an additional ten-dollar (\$10.00) replacement fee.



## Minor Infractions/Penalties

The following Minor Infractions will be subject to an automatic twenty five dollars (\$25.00) fine with the possibility of a two dollars per day (\$2.00/day) accrual:

- Filing a late registration;
- Filing a late report; and
- Failure to make payment for lobbying badge.

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## Letter from the Secretary

I'd like to personally welcome you to the 2017 Legislative Session. It's an exciting time for the RI Department of State as we continue to engage and empower all Rhode Islanders by making government more accessible and transparent. As you know, comprehensive reform of the state's lobbying laws was an immediate, top priority of my administration. I was pleased when the General Assembly passed, and Governor Raimondo signed into law, the 2016 Lobbying Reform Act. This law makes it easier to determine who does and does not have to register to lobby and strengthens Rhode Island's commitment to transparency and effective government.

Over the past several months we have been working with a diverse group of stakeholders to develop the new Lobbying Registration Desk. With their feedback, we are pleased to launch this new system with an intuitive user interface that will make it easier for you to register your lobbying relationships and remain in compliance with the new law. This guide will walk you through some of the key changes you can expect resulting from the implementation of the 2016 Lobbying Reform Act and how to use the new system.

As always, the staff in our Public Information Office are ready to help! Both Associate Director of Public Information Stacy DiCola and Lobbying Compliance/Public Information Specialist Ted Jendzejec can be reached at (401) 222-3983 or by email at [sdicola@sos.ri.gov](mailto:sdicola@sos.ri.gov) and [tjendzejec@sos.ri.gov](mailto:tjendzejec@sos.ri.gov), respectively. I encourage you to reach out with any questions or ideas that you may have for improving our services.

Welcome back to the State House. I look forward to seeing you in the halls!

Sincerely,



Nellie M. Gorbea  
*Secretary of State*

# Overview of the 2016 Lobbying Reform Act

Chapter 42-139.1 is effective January 1, 2017

**Clarifies** the definitions of who does and does not have to register their lobbying relationships. The Lobbying Reform Act has combined all previous types of lobbying activity into one category and the requirements are the same whether you are lobbying the executive branch or the legislative branch of our state government.

**Simplifies** the registration and reporting process for those engaged in lobbying activity. The new Lobbying Registration Desk makes it easier to keep track of and report on “money” and “anything of value” given to certain public officials and improves the accuracy of how compensation to lobbyists and firms is displayed to the public.

**Strengthens** penalties for violations. Anyone found not in compliance with the law will be fined up to five thousand dollars (\$5,000) and debarred from lobbying in Rhode Island for up to three years.

The entire 2016 Lobbying Reform Act along with the Rules and Regulations are available on our website at [sos.ri.gov/lobbying](http://sos.ri.gov/lobbying). You may also request a printed copy from our Public Information Office.

# Getting Started

## Creating An Account

Below are directions to create an account in the new Lobbying Registration Desk. We also encourage you to view our video tutorial for how to create an account at: [sos.ri.gov/lobbying](http://sos.ri.gov/lobbying).

**Step 1:** Click “Create Profile”

**Step 2:** Select “Lobbyist” under **Choose Your Profile Type**

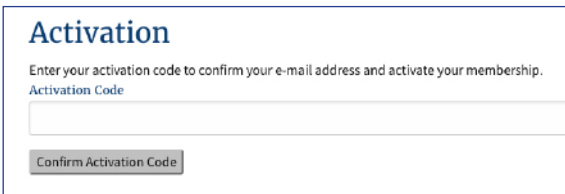
**Step 3:** Provide your login details. You will be sent an email to activate your account.



The screenshot shows a registration form titled "Login Details" with the instruction "All fields are required." It contains five input fields: "Email", "Username", "Password", "Password (again)", and a "Create Profile" button at the bottom. Below the "Password" field, there are two lines of text: "Password must be at least 8 characters long." and "Password must contain at least 1 number."

A unique email must be used for each individual account.

**Step 4:** You will receive an email with an activation code and a link to the Profile Activation Page. Copy and paste the activation code on the Profile Activation Page.



The screenshot shows an "Activation" form with the instruction "Enter your activation code to confirm your e-mail address and activate your membership." It features a single large input field for the "Activation Code" and a "Confirm Activation Code" button below it.

**Step 5:** Once you provide your activation code, you will be able to log in to the Lobbying Registration Desk and finish setting up your account profile.

# Adding Your Profile Details

Once you have created your account, you will need to add your user profile details.

- Step 1:** Provide your name and contact information.  
*This information will be publicly available on the State’s Lobby Tracker Database.*

Lobbyist Name	Lobbyist Contact Information	Lobbyist Address
Prefix <input type="text"/>	Primary Email* <input type="text"/>	Address Line 1* <input type="text"/>
First Name* <input type="text"/>	Secondary Email <input type="text"/>	Address Line 2 <input type="text"/>
Middle Name <input type="text"/>	Primary Phone* <input type="text"/>	City* <input type="text"/>
Last Name* <input type="text"/>	Secondary Phone <input type="text"/>	State* Rhode Island ▾
Suffix <input type="text"/>	Web Address <input type="text"/>	Zip* <input type="text"/>
		Country* United States ▾

or

- Step 2:** Once you click “Add Profile Details”, you will be brought to your Lobbyist Dashboard.

The Dashboard will display important information and reminders from the Public Information Office.

## Registering Lobbying Relationships

Relationship registration requests from entities and lobbying firms will appear on your Lobbyist Dashboard. Below are steps to confirming a relationship registration request.

**!** This information must be filed with the Department of State within seven calendar days of engagement.

Pending Relationships for JOHN SMITH			
Entity Name	Start Date - End Date	Compensation	Actions
123 BIG ENTITY	Jan 01, 2017 - Dec 31, 2017	\$4,00.00 / monthly	  
Bills	Subjects	Executive Bodies	Executive Officials

**Step 1:** Click on .

You will see a page with your entity relationship details.  
Note: You may edit the term of your contract, but you may not edit compensation. Any edits will be sent back to the entity for approval.

**Step 2:** Fill out information about your lobbying activity. You must fill out the subject you will be lobbying about. Start typing the subject and a drop down menu will appear.

**Step 3:** Click "confirm relationship."



You will be notified by email when the Public Information Office approves your registration.

### Lobbying Details

Executive Officials to be lobbied

Executive Entities to be lobbied

Subjects to be lobbied

Agriculture  Animals |

Adoption

Advertising

**Agriculture**

Aids

Airports

Alcoholic Beverages



## Badge Payment



All lobbyists are required to wear a lobbying badge while engaging in their lobbying activities.

With the Lobbying Reform Act, you are only required to have one badge.

**Step 1:** You will see the following at the top of your dashboard when you receive your first lobbying registration request.

You have not yet paid for your badge. [Please pay for it now](#)

**Step 2:** Click **“Please pay for it now”** to initiate your online badge payment. Contact the Public Information Office if you wish to pay in person.

Your payment history will then appear on our profile page.

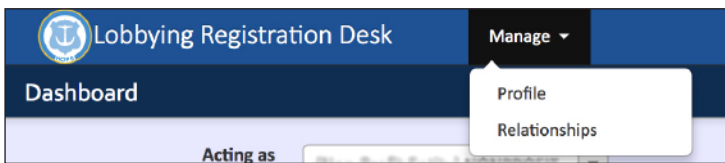
Description	Amount	Quantity	Item Total	Paid On
Lobbying Badge	\$10.00	x 1	\$10.00	2016-12-22

**!** Further lobbying relationship registrations will not be approved by the Public Information Office until badge payment has been made.

## Managing Lobbying Relationships

Once you have confirmed your lobbying relationship with the entity and/or lobbying firm, you will be able to easily keep track of your registered information.

**Step 1:** Click on “Manage” in the top blue navigation bar and select “Relationships.”



**Step 2:** You will see a list of entities you have registered relationships with.

Click the ➤ next to the entity name to expand the view.

You will see the anticipated lobbying activity you have registered for that entity including executive branch officials, subjects, and bills you may be monitoring.

Relationships for JOHN SMITH			
Entity Name	Start Date - End Date	Compensation	Actions
▼ 123 BIG ENTITY	Jan 01, 2017 - Dec 31, 2017	\$4,00.00 / monthly	 
Bills	Subjects	Executive Bodies	Executive Officials
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Agriculture</li><li>▶ Animals</li></ul>		

## Accepting an Authorized User Request

As a lobbyist, an entity may authorize you to manage their account. This will allow you to file reports on behalf of the entity you are lobbying for.

You will receive email notification once an entity has made you an authorized user.

Once authorized you will be able to toggle back and forth between user profiles. NOTE: The color of your dashboard header will change depending on the type of user you are acting as.

## Acting as Lobbyist



! If you are an authorized user, the entity whose account you are managing is still subject to any penalties associated with violations of the Lobbying Reform Act, including late or incomplete filings.

## Acting as an Entity



# Violations and Penalties

The Lobbying Reform Act clarifies the investigatory process of anyone that might be in violation of the law and strengthens penalties for these violations. This section details the investigatory process along with fines and penalties for anyone found in violation of the law.

## Failure to Register Lobbying Relationships

The Secretary may initiate a preliminary investigation into the activities of any entity, firm or lobbyist that has allegedly been lobbying without registering their lobbying relationship in accordance with the Lobbying Reform Act.

If an entity, firm or lobbyist is under investigation, the Secretary will notify that entity, firm or lobbyist of investigation and the general nature of the alleged violation within thirty (30) calendar days of starting the investigation.

As part of the investigation, the Secretary may request books, papers or other documents directly relating to services rendered or compensation received in connection with lobbying.

If an entity, firm or lobbyist does not willingly provide the requested information to the Secretary within twenty (20) calendar days, the Secretary may file a complaint with the superior court. The complaint may request such relief as is reasonably required by the Secretary to conduct the investigation. The court may enter an order for the relief requested, including a penalty of up to five thousand dollars (\$5,000), or may modify the relief in the court's reasonable discretion.

## Failure to File Reports and Non-Conforming Reports

If an entity, firm or lobbyist does not file a required report or your filed report does not comply with Lobbying Reform Act and its regulations, the Secretary will notify the entity in writing.

That entity, firm or lobbyist must file or correct the report, as applicable within twenty (20) calendar days of receiving this notice.

If the entity, firm or lobbyist does not file or correct the report within those twenty (20) calendar days, the Secretary will issue a show cause order. The show cause order will require the entity, firm or lobbyist to establish facts which show why a penalty should not be imposed.

If the entity, firm or lobbyist does not establish facts as to why penalties should not be imposed, the Secretary may impose a penalty.

## Penalties

The amount of the penalty imposed for a violation depends upon the facts and circumstances, and is up to the Secretary's discretion, based upon but not limited to:

1. Whether the violation was willful and knowing or unintentional;
2. Whether and to what degree there have been repeat violations by the same Person within the immediately preceding five (5) years;
3. The severity of the delinquency; and
4. The duration of time between initial notice of the delinquency by the Secretary and the date of compliance.

The Secretary may impose penalty of up to five thousand dollars (\$5,000) per violation, and/or revocation of the applicable registration for a period of up to three (3) years for failure to file reports or filing and not correcting non-conforming reports. Additionally, the Secretary may petition the Court to impose a penalty of up to five thousand dollars (\$5,000) and revoke applicable registrations for a period of up to three (3) years for failure to register.

## Minor Infractions

The following are considered minor infractions and will result in an initial penalty of twenty-five dollars (\$25.00).

1. Filing a late registration;
2. Filing a late report; and
3. Failure to pay for badge.

If the minor infraction is not corrected within seven (7) days of the notice of non-compliance, an additional penalty of two dollars (\$2.00) per day (up to a maximum of two thousand dollars (\$2,000) per violation) will be assessed from the date of the non-compliance notice until the violation is corrected.