

**Minutes of the Lobbying Advisory Task Force meeting
April 9, 2015
Senate Lounge**

The meeting was called to order by Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea at 1:09 p.m. Members in attendance are as follows:

Nellie Gorbea, RI Secretary of State
Wally Gernt, President, RI Lobbyist Association, The Bradford Group
Maureen Martin, RI Federation of Teachers
Carolyn Murray, Lobbyist, F/S Capitol Consulting
Greg Mancini, BuildRI
Amy Goins, Common Cause RI
Hilary Davis, ACLU
Paola Fernandez, United Way of RI
Jason Gramitt, RI Ethics Commission
Al Dahlberg, Brown University

Also present: Robert Corrente, Legal Counsel to the Secretary of State.

A motion was made by Al Dahlberg and seconded by Wally Gernt to approve the minutes of the March 11, 2015 meeting.

Bob Corrente provided an overview of the draft discussion document. He stated that compensation is a key component to the definition of lobbying and the requirement to register as a lobbyist. Persons speaking on behalf of their own interests are not covered in the registration requirement.

There was discussion as to whether this language would mean certain persons that are in the State House on a regular basis advocating for certain interests would not be required to register because they are not compensated.

The challenge with having persons register as lobbyists even if they do not receive compensation is how to enforce and identify them.

A concern was raised about the reference to “any other form of recompense” in the compensation definition and that the concern is the language is too broad. In addition, there was concern that the definition of lobbying is too broad as well.

Discussion then focused on the appropriate amount of information to provide and what format should be used. There was disagreement regarding whether actual bill numbers should be reported versus allowing for bill subjects to be sufficient for reporting purposes.

In addition, there was discussion around the need to report the actual officeholders lobbyists met with and whether this is necessary. Many members felt as though this is difficult to know at the time of registration and whether this level of information needed to be reported. It was mentioned that particularly for executive level lobbying that the offices being lobbied is important information to be provided.

Another topic of disagreement was whether government lobbyists should be required to complete the same reports as other lobbyists.

The powers and duties section also was discussed. Discussion focused on the appropriate level of penalty and whether the penalty structure proposed limited the discretion of the Secretary. In addition, there was concern about the potential for frivolous complaints.

A question also was raised regarding what types of expenses should be included in the quarterly reports.

Secretary Gorbea stated that the group would have at least one more meeting. The meeting would likely be next week. A request was made to receive the draft at least twenty-four hours in advance of the meeting so that task force members had a chance to review.

The meeting adjourned at 2:17 p.m.