

**Minutes of the Lobbying Advisory Task Force meeting
April 15, 2015
Senate Lounge**

The meeting was called to order by Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea at 12:35 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 Maureen Martin and seconded by Carolyn Murray to approve the minutes of the April 9, 2015 meeting.

Secretary Gorbea began the discussion on the draft lobbying reform legislation. She mentioned that several suggestions from the task force have been included in the draft legislation.

Robert Corrente provided an overview of the draft legislation. The definition of lobbyist outlines three types of lobbyists, contract lobbyists, in-house lobbyists, and governmental lobbyists. The task force felt it is important that people understand they can advocate for issues on behalf of themselves and not have to register as a lobbyist.

The exception for the news media is seen as an important one that should be carried over from the current laws.

There was discussion and concern regarding the attorney exception. The concern is whether the language would allow attorneys to be exempt from the lobbying registration requirement as opposed to non-attorneys for similar interactions with state government. It was agreed to make some changes to this language.

A question was asked as to what constitutes a "qualified" witness.

There also were concerns raised around the language regarding the display of the lobbying badge and whether that meant lobbyists had to wear in any situation where they are lobbying, even if outside the State House.

Reporting by governmental lobbyists was discussed. There was a question as to the value of government lobbyists reporting filing lobbying reports.

It was suggested that the annual ethics reporting filing take place April 15, similar to the reporting with the ethics commission as opposed to January 15. January 15 was included in the draft legislation to coincide with the lobbying annual reports and be kept to a calendar year reporting timeframe.

There was discussion of whether the \$250 “anything of value”, includes campaign contributions. It was suggested that this is not the case in current law and not the intention of this legislation. The draft also clarifies that the reporting should be for “anything of value” provided or promised to legislative or executive branch officials.

A concern was raised over a potential First Amendment issue with regard to the prohibition of contingency fee lobbying. It was referenced that this is language carried over from current law.

Public Comment:

Ellen Winsor of Jamestown, RI asked whether there can be a substantiation of the quarterly reporting numbers. She also mentioned that lobbying does not mention local lobbying and whether this can be addressed. Also, Ms. Winsor inquired about whether the quarterly reports can include candidates.

Secretary Gorbea thanked the task force for their time and engagement in this process to reform the lobbying laws in our state.

The meeting adjourned at 1:47 p.m.