

Government Accountability Board

State of Wisconsin

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G.A.B. Releases Lobbying Report for First Six Months of 2013

MADISON, WI – Lobbying of the Wisconsin Legislature in the first six months of 2013 – when the state’s budget is being debated and passed – decreased significantly compared to the last two legislative sessions, according to a new report from the Government Accountability Board.

Overall, lobbying organizations reported spending \$17.1 million, a 28 percent decrease from the \$23.9 million spent during the first six months of 2011. The number of hours spent lobbying lawmakers also decreased by 25 percent, from 165,743 in 2011 to 124,828 in 2013. Lobbying efforts are also down significantly compared to 2009.

“Lobbying activities in Wisconsin had steadily increased every session until 2011-2012, but then began a downturn,” said Jonathan Becker, Ethics & Accountability Division administrator for the Board. “We can speculate that the reason for the decrease is the state of the economy. Most companies and organizations that try to influence the legislature were likely tightening their belts, and that was reflected in the reduced resources they devoted to lobbying.”

In addition, the amount of lobbying by labor-related organizations has also decreased significantly in the wake of 2011 Act 10, which impacted unions’ ability to collect dues from most public employees.

The report on the first six months of 2013 analyzes the activities of 674 registered lobbying principals (organizations and companies that communicated with the legislature) and 605 licensed lobbyists (individuals paid to lobby on behalf of principals). The statehouse lobbying corps was also significantly smaller, compared to 2011-2012 when there were 778 lobbying principals and 803 lobbyists.

"Wisconsin has a strong lobbying law which requires extensive reporting so the public can easily learn who is trying to influence legislation and how much they're spending," said Kevin J. Kennedy, director and general counsel of the Government Accountability Board. "In late 2012, the Board completely revamped its award-winning Eye on Lobbying website (<http://lobbying.wi.gov>) which allows the public to keep track of lobbying activities at the Capitol without leaving home."

The Top 10 Lobbying Organizations, as ranked by dollars spent, in the first six months of 2013 were:

1. Wisconsin Insurance Alliance, 457 hours, \$357,167

2. Wisconsin Hospital Association Inc. (WHA), 2,636 hours, \$323,506
3. Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce, 2,595 hours, \$294,823
4. Wisconsin Counties Association, 2,901 hours, \$292,206
5. Wisconsin Property Taxpayers Inc., 3,070 hours, \$232,955
6. Wisconsin Medical Society, 2,041 hours, \$229,611
7. AT&T Wisconsin, 789 hours, \$200,124
8. City of Milwaukee, 2,199 hours, \$172,174
9. American Federation for Children, 463 hours, \$167,464
10. Milwaukee County, 1,118 hours, \$165,857

Lobbyists spent 40,816 hours working on the state's fiscal 2013-2015 budget, with health services and public instruction as the top two budget subjects. Becker noted that 30,744 hours, nearly one-quarter of lobbyists' time in 2013, was spent lobbying on issues before any related bills were introduced. Lobbyists report this under "[Topics](#)" on the lobbying website. Once a bill is introduced, lobbyists report their activities by bill number.

Most-Lobbied Bills

Of the 24,725 hours spent lobbying actual bills, the two mining bills, SB 1 and AB 1, were far and away the most-lobbied bills in the first six months of 2013. Lobbyists reported spending 3,578 combined hours on those two bills, compared to 1,193 hours for AB 139, which changed the standard for doctors to inform patients of treatment alternatives.

Also making the Top 10 most-lobbied bills were:

4. Assembly Bill 109 relating to fees for dental services.
5. Assembly Bill 85 relating to the changes in the Milwaukee County Board.
6. Assembly Bill 200 relating to the state's lemon car law.
7. Assembly Bill 19 relating to torts and personal injury trusts.
8. Assembly Bill 110 relating to junk food.
9. Assembly Bill 29 relating to the amount of medical damages injured persons can recover.
10. Assembly Bill 219 relating to changes in unemployment insurance law.

By law, any organization that compensates an individual who lobbies state government on five or more days in a six-month period must register and file reports with the Government Accountability Board, which posts them on online in a searchable database. Organizations report their lobbying activities two ways: real-time reports within 15 days of when they begin to lobby on a specific bill or issue, and six-month reports detailing the hours and dollars spent lobbying. The first six-month reports for the current session were due July 31, 2013.

The public can view real-time reports on the lobbying website by clicking the "[What Are They Lobbying About?](#)" link.

The public can use the Eye on Lobbying website to search the lobbying database and run three basic reports showing total lobbying expenditures, sorted by the amount of money spent, numbers of hours spent, or alphabetically by the name of the lobbying principal. In addition, the

G.A.B. staff has produced several custom reports, including lobbying summaries and detailed lists of which bills and subjects received the most lobbying effort. These reports are available on the G.A.B. website: <http://gab.wi.gov/publications/reports/lobbying/2013-6-month-lobbying-summary>.

Under Wisconsin law, lobbyists are forbidden to give meals, entertainment or other gifts to state lawmakers, and campaign donations are limited to specific windows of time outside the normal legislative session.

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The Government Accountability Board is responsible for administration and enforcement of campaign finance, elections, ethics and lobbying laws in Wisconsin. The Board is made up of six non-partisan, former judges and is supported by an agency of non-partisan staff members.