

# Government Accountability Board

## State of Wisconsin

212 E. Washington Ave., Third Floor • Madison, WI 53703 • gab@wi.gov • (608) 266-8005 • Help Desk (608) 261-2028 • <http://gab.wi.gov>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
August 21, 2015

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:  
Reid Magney, 608-267-7887

## G.A.B. Releases Lobbying Report for First Six Months of 2015

MADISON, WI – Lobbying of the Wisconsin Legislature increased in the first six months of 2015 – when the state’s budget is being debated – compared to the same period in 2013, according to a new report from the Government Accountability Board.

Overall, lobbying organizations reported spending \$18.5 million, a 9 percent increase from the \$17.2 million spent during the first six months of 2013. However, lobbying activity remained below the \$23.9 million spent in the 2011 budget period.

While lobbying spending increased, the number of hours spent lobbying lawmakers declined slightly, from 124,857 in 2013 to 123,522 in 2015. Efforts are down significantly from 2011, when lobbyists reported 165,743 hours communicating with lawmakers.

“In the last several years we have seen lobbying activities in Wisconsin ebb with the slow economy,” said Jonathan Becker, Ethics & Accountability Division administrator for the Board. “This session the Legislature passed two bills affecting organized labor (right-to-work and prevailing wage) and as a result we saw higher reports of lobbying activity by business and labor organizations. There was also significant lobbying about the new Milwaukee Bucks arena. ”

The report on the first six months of 2015 analyzes the activities of 718 registered lobbying principals (organizations and companies that communicated with the legislature) and 598 licensed lobbyists (individuals paid to lobby on behalf of principals). The number of lobbying principals is again growing compared to the same period in 2013-2014 when there were 674 lobbying principals and 605 lobbyists. That compares to 778 lobbying principals and 803 lobbyists in 2011-2012.

The totals for the first half of 2015 do not include lobbying activities in the special session called in July to finish the budget bill and consider Milwaukee Bucks arena funding and a 20-week abortion ban. While the dollars and hours spent lobbying in July 2015 will not be reported until January 2016, the public can still view timely information about who was trying to influence the Legislature on those bills by visiting the Eye on Lobbying website (<http://lobbying.wi.gov>).

"Wisconsin has a strong lobbying law which requires extensive, real-time 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. "The Eye on Lobbying website 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 2015 were:

1. Milwaukee Bucks, 208 hours, \$482,496
2. Wisconsin Hospital Association Inc. (WHA), 2,755 hours, \$378,816
3. Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce, 2,765 hours, \$348,733
4. Wisconsin Infrastructure Investment Now Inc., 2 hours, \$329,180
5. Wisconsin Property Taxpayers Inc., 2,909 hours, \$283,339
6. Americans for Prosperity, 565 hours, \$268,715
7. Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, 1,188 hours, \$232,892
8. Wisconsin Counties Association, 2,366 hours, \$192,108
9. Wisconsin Realtors Association, 1,563 hours, \$182,674
10. AT&T Wisconsin, 578 hours, \$180,839

Lobbyists spent 48,543 hours working on the state's fiscal 2015-2017 budget, with medical assistance services and long-term care services as the top two budget subjects. Becker noted that 24,165 hours, nearly one-quarter of lobbyists' time in 2015, 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 21,019 hours spent lobbying actual bills, three bills regarding wages and unions were the most-lobbied bills in the first six months of 2015. AB 32 dealt with prevailing wages, SB 44 with right-to-work and SB 49 with prevailing wages. Of the three, only SB 44 was enacted into law; however, prevailing wage reforms were included in the 2015-17 budget. Lobbyists reported spending 5,575 combined hours on those three bills, compared to 987 hours for the fourth most-lobbied bill, SB 179, the bill banning abortions after 20 weeks, which was enacted.

These are the rest of the 10 most-lobbied bills (**enacted bills in bold**):

5. Assembly Bill 61 – right-to-work.
- 6. Assembly Bill 143 – regulating transportation network companies.**
7. Assembly Bill 253 – ratification of the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact.
- 8. Assembly Bill 113 – operating farm equipment on highways.**
9. Assembly Bill 177 – limiting the foods that may be purchased under FoodShare.
10. Senate Bill 1 – school and school district accountability reports.

By law, any organization that compensates someone 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 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, 2015.

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/2015-6-month-lobbying-summary>.

[Under Wisconsin law](#), lobbyists are generally 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.

###

---

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.