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## STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

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### PRESS RELEASE

#### **Bills Seek to Shine Sunshine on Lobbyist Activities During Legislative Sessions**

*Santa Fe, NM, February 3, 2025* – Today Sen. Harold Pope introduced **Senate Bill 248** to shine light on the spending and activities of lobbyists during the legislative session. The bill is one of two which would require lobbyists to disclose which specific legislation they are working on and the source of funds used to influence legislators through meals, special events and other expenditures. The other is **House Bill 143**, sponsored by Rep. Sarah Silva and Sen. Jeff Steinborn.

Both are supported by the New Mexico State Ethics Commission, which, in its work enforcing the existing law, has found major loopholes which allow lobbyists and their clients to operate in semi-darkness.

During last year's regular session, from January-March 2024, lobbyists and their employers spent a total of \$293,608 on meals, beverages, entertainment, advertising campaigns and "other" expenses, according to Secretary of State reports. That is in addition to the \$12 million that *NM In Depth* reported that lobbyists and their employers spent on political contributions to candidates from 2021-2024<sup>1</sup>.

"Lobbyists spend big bucks up here every session, but due to loopholes in the reporting requirements, no-one knows where the money comes from and who gets it" said Sen. Harold Pope. "But the public has a right to know. SB248 doesn't

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<sup>1</sup> Marjorie Childress, "Lawmakers, ethics commission want more lobbying information disclosed to public," *New Mexico In Depth*, January 24, 2025, <https://nminddepth.com/2025/lawmakers-ethics-commission-want-more-lobbying-information-disclosed-to-public/>.

solve everything but it is simply closing some of those loopholes so the public can regain trust in the integrity of the legislative process.”

SB248 would require lobbyists to disclose: the date and amount of the expenditure; the individuals or groups who directly benefitted from the expenditure; the client who hired the lobbyist; the specific individual or organization on whose behalf the lobbying is conducted; and the purpose of the expenditure identified by specific bill number and the position taken by the lobbyist. If an expenditure is not related to specific legislation, the lobbyist would indicate this and provide a brief description of the lobbying activity’s purpose.

HB143 contains many of the same requirements.

New Mexico’s current lax lobbyist reporting requirements have resulted in a poor ranking on at least one national report card. OpenSecrets, a non-profit that tracks lobbying and campaign finance nationwide, ranked New Mexico 41<sup>st</sup> in its 2022 lobbyist disclosure report card. New Mexico’s neighboring states, Colorado and Texas ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> respectively.

“Lobbyists serve a very legitimate purpose in Santa Fe,” said Jeremy Farris, executive director of the State Ethics Commission. “As we move into a more professional and modernized legislature, they just need to be accountable, so both the public and legislators themselves can see clearly who is supporting or opposing legislation.”

For additional information, see: (1) [Policy Brief: Amendments to the Lobbyist Regulation Act](#); (3) [HB143: Lobbying Activity Reports](#)

### **About the State Ethics Commission**

The State Ethics Commission is an independent, constitutional state agency with the authority to enforce civil violations of New Mexico’s governmental ethics and disclosure statutes, including the Financial Disclosure Act. The Commission is comprised of three Democratic Commissioners, three Republican Commissioners, and one independent Commissioner who is registered as “decline to state.”

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For more information about the State Ethics Commission, visit [www.sec.nm.gov](http://www.sec.nm.gov).