

Lobby Fees

1. Are you a registered lobbyist in the state of Vermont?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	
Yes	98.9%	89	
No	1.1%	1	
<i>answered question</i>			90
<i>skipped question</i>			1

2. Are you a lobbyist employer in the state of Vermont?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	
Yes	50.0%	45	
No	50.0%	45	
<i>answered question</i>			90
<i>skipped question</i>			1

3. If you are a lobbyist employer, are you for-profit or non-profit?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	
For-profit	15.4%	8	
Non-profit	84.6%	44	
<i>answered question</i>			52
<i>skipped question</i>			39

4. If you are an individual, do you work for a lobbying firm, or a single organization that employs you to lobby only for that organization?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	
Lobbying Firm	29.1%	23	
Single Organization	70.9%	56	
Other (please specify)		5	
<i>answered question</i>			79
<i>skipped question</i>			12

Number	Other (please specify) (Question 4)
1	individual lobbyist with several clients
2	volunteer lobbyist
3	Vermont Business Roundtable
4	Lobby only for the non-profit for whom I work, who serves as the Lobbyist Employer.
5	Not lobbyist. Just interested bystander.

5. Do you support raising lobbyist and lobbyist employer registration fees, per the bill in House Ways and Means Committee?

Here is the language: * * * Secretary of State * * * Elections * * * Sec. 11. 2 V.S.A. § 263 is amended to read: § 263.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	
Yes	45.1%	37	
No	54.9%	45	
<i>answered question</i>			82
<i>skipped question</i>			9

6. If NO, please explain why not.

Answer Options	Response Count
	51
<i>answered question</i>	51
<i>skipped question</i>	40

Number	Response Text (Question 6)
1	Limited funds especially for nonprofits. For the for-hire folks, sure but for those of us already struggling to have someone in the state house this is an added burden.
2	My organization's total annual budget is under \$50,000. Every administrative expense that increases takes money away from the money that we can devote to our educational and advocacy programs.
3	Fees are high enough now.
4	I have no opinion on this.[] the fees do not seem exorbitant to me though.
5	The additional costs just add expense to our budget, which we already have to manage carefully.
6	I would support an increase if the administration was less cumbersome , also electronic registration would be very helpful to both us and our clients. [] Let's get in to real world and stop pushing paper !!
7	Yes - with the question - it's not a huge increase except for the penalties - I'd like to know why they think it's important to raise these? I hate the idea of making it too expensive for normal people to lobby, but just the fact that you have to file at all takes a certain level of knowledge that makes it difficult for regular Vermonters to lobby, if they're earning more than \$500 to do it.
8	The existing fees seem to be sufficient and it also appears that there is a touch of 'double-dipping' so increasing the rates would just add to that frustration.
9	No, we are a small nonprofit organization whose lobbying activities are a very small part of the mission of the organization. We want to honor all the lobbying registration requirements. However, as a small, nonprofit organization with a small budget lobbying on behalf of children with disabilities increasing these lobbyist fees significantly does not seem to be a good step. Is there some differentiation that can be made between for profit and nonprofit organizations?
10	see below
11	I see no reason to raise the cost. The State has not given a valid reason for raising the cost.
12	Changes are not showing through in text, so it's difficult to know what the changes might be other than what appear to be increases in fees and penalties. Without knowing the rationale for the increases, it's hard to support them. Is the current system broken and needs fixing? Is move oversight of the reporting process the goal? Any increases should be used for better operation of the current system; higher fees simply to collect more money isn't justified.
13	While the fees are not excessive, it's unclear what they will be used for. The registration forms (required now) appear to provide enough information to allow transparency.
14	48 hour timeframe is too onerous
15	right now it's maybe, with these questions:[] - should non-profits be exempted? I'd say likely yes[] - has SoS demonstrated that an increase is warranted, either by showing what the inflation impact has been since the last increase, or demonstrating that their workload has increased and they need more funds?[] - will all fees go directly to SoS?[]
16	- it's known how many lobbyists there are, so how much money would this raise? would be it enough to
17	The ability to participate in advocacy should not be limiter by the ability to pay fees If disclosures can be done electronically I would be fine raising the fee.
18	I work for a nonprofit public-interest organization. It is hard enough to raise money to support our basic operations in this down economy; we have no for-profit clients to pass this expense along to. While some of the lobbying I do is proactive in support of legislation that my organization has proposed, much of the time I spend in the statehouse is by invitation of legislative committees or individual legislators pursuing initiatives conceived by legislators themselves. Of course many of those initiatives align well with the interest of the citizen-members I represent and that is why legislators call on me and my colleagues. Still, it seems unfair to increase the cost of lobbying for people in my position. I fully support increasing the fees assessed to contract lobbyists who are in a for-profit business.
19	No to the extent that it may be appropriate to differentiate between lobbyists and lobbyist employers who work for for-profit and non-profit entities. That being said, I am not strongly opposed to the increase.
20	It is high enough already with no showing that the Secretary of State's office needs to double them in order to cover administrative costs.
21	NO. Lobbying firms should not have to pay filing fees of any kind since they are already paying filing fees for each of their registered lobbyists.

Number	Response Text (Question 6)
22	Doubling these fees will be significant. I would like to see proof that the costs at the Secretary of State's Office to implement the lobbyist disclosure program have doubled and this fee increase is justified.
23	We are a non-profit and don't have much money to spend.
24	As a non-profit we already struggle to cover our lobbying costs.
25	As a non-profit, fewer fees are better. Is the reason for these fee increases because the Secretary of State needs money? What's the driver/rationale?
26	I did answer no, because more fees are never great for a non-profit organization, BUT, these fees are substantially higher so it would not be a hardship for our organization to pay these. I would say it is more accurate to say that I am on the fence about this and not strongly opposed to increasing fees.
27	The proposed registration fees are not too unreasonable, but the penalties would be pretty high.␣ (Hense no "yes or no")
28	Infringes on my constitutional rights...yes
29	The current rate is sufficient and does not need to be raised. Administrative responsibilities in this regard are very minimal and should not require a high charge.
30	SOS should not need this additional revenue.
31	We are a nonprofit
32	Though I would not SUPPORT the increase, I certainly would not object to it, provided that the increase is used to fund an electronic registration and reporting system. With that said, though, the justification provided in the fee bill materials was that this would bring the fees in line with other states. The fees should be related to the cost of running the program. Nothing more. Once an electronic system is in place, in theory the cost should decrease. What will happen with the fees in that situation?
33	This sounds like a small amount of money in the big picture, but I'm voting a bit in the dark, since I don't know what the fees are actual used for.
34	Doubling fees is too large an increaase.
35	Don't really care one way of the other/
36	What's the point?
37	I do not understand why lobbyists should pay for the privilege of doing their jobs. Other who seek to influence policymakers do not.
38	non profits are strapped
39	This would place another burden on non profits whose funding is tight as it is and gives an unfair advantage to for- profit corporations and entities who can well afford the fees.
40	What would the fees go towards? One would hope digital reporting and disclosure. Would be better if there was a for-profit and not-for-profit rate. Nonprofit advocates do not have as much capacity to absorb the cost increase.
41	Question - Are reporting limits for gifts to legislators increasing? I would not agree with that.
42	I work exclusively for a non-profit religious organization; higher fees would present a hardship.
43	As a nonprofit, only a limited amount of our time and mission is spent lobbying but this treats us the same as contract lobbyists who represent multiple clients on a year round basis.
44	Many businesses count on lobbyists to keep then informed of how pending legislation may affect their respective businesses. These higher fees may cause businesses to re-think becoming involved in the legislative process.
45	perhaps a more modest increase (\$35 or \$40). The higher the fee, the more likely some part time organizations will avoid registering.
46	I am not aware of why the fee is being raised, such as some added cost to administer. It appears that the constantly changing forms may be causing inefficiency in administration and they should look for internal efficiencies before doubling the fees.
47	We are perhaps in a unique situation, but as an NPO that heavily encourages grassroots lobbying by everyday people in VT, nearly all of our staff are registered lobbyist to stay within the confines of the lobbying laws (as we understand them), yet, on a day-to-day basis, lobbying activities can be minimal or nonexistent. Therefore, we register a lot of people that may only be engaged in lobbying activity +/-5-10 hours per month. If the steep increases proposed in this legislation were to pass, we would need to evaluate if our grassroots approach remained economically feasible given our 501c.3 status.
48	As a small non-profit organization we'd prefer not to incur this additional cost.

Number	Response Text (Question 6)
49	The proposed doubling of fees in is too much. In the electronic era where we have asked for more electronic filing should lower costs. In the meantime, firms and employers are filling out paperwork and submitting, essentially doing all the work. With each disclosure the forms have been reformed whcih does not work, errors in the forms are frequent. This makes the process very time consuming. ¶ Asking the lobbyist to pay a fee a and then charge a lobbyist employer to pay a fee plus a fee on each lobbyist is double dipping. ¶ One form, one fee that can be filed electroncially.
50	We all have a right to petition for redress of grievances and to talk to our legislators. There should be NO FEE for lobbyists or firms. This is just an attempt to find a few more dollars for a state that is perennially in need.
51	Unnecessary.

7. If you are a lobbyist or lobby firm, do you pass this expense directly to clients, or do you consider it part of your overhead expense?

Answer Options	Response Count
	57
<i>answered question</i>	57
<i>skipped question</i>	34

Number	Response Text (Question 7)
1	Overhead.
2	We only pay this for our employee lobbyist.
3	Part of overhead
4	overhead
5	part of overhead
6	Overhead
7	It becomes part of our overhead expense, which our clients or other funding sources ultimately pay for.
8	lobbying firm--both, depending on the client.
9	In most cases overhead!
10	registration for the employer passed on to that employer
11	it usually goes towards the grants as a required fee. So, it is passed on.
12	pass it through
13	Consider it part of our overhead
14	pass to my employer
15	Overhead expenses. There are no clients to pass on the cost to.
16	for themost part clients pay their fees; our firm pays ours
17	The cost is passed to the client because cost includes overhead.
18	NA
19	Part of overhead expense.
20	overhead
21	overhead
22	Yes
23	overhead
24	Overhead
25	overhead
26	We pass the cost on
27	It is an overhead expense
28	Some clients allow us to pass on expenses so we pass them along and the client pays but for many the client wants to pay a flat monthly rate for the legislative session and expenses are not allowed. In those cases, we have to pay and eat the fees.
29	I am an employee of a non-profit and we do not charge clients - the costs are part of our overhead.
30	Overhead expense
31	Overhead
32	overhead

Number	Response Text (Question 7)
33	Overhead.
34	Expense
35	Employers pay their portion and The firm pays it's own.
36	I would pass it on.
37	Yes.
38	It is passed to my employer.
39	Pass along.
40	yes
41	overhead
42	Overhead expenses
43	Part of overhead, so the expense is passed along to our clients.
44	Client pays
45	Part of overhead
46	overhead
47	overhead
48	Pass these fees directly to clients.
49	Overhead
50	yes
51	Mix
52	Our organization doesn't hire professional lobbyists, nor do we have "clients." We are a "lobbying firm" by definition because nearly all our staff engage in activities to encourage others to participate in democracy to improve lives and build communities that care about each other through social and economic justice. We consider the fees as overhead, and actually receive very few funds to support this kind of citizen lobbying because of the very important rules and restrictions that seek to discourage corruption, fraud, or other tomfoolery that has heavy influence on our democratic process.
53	Part of Overhead
54	Overhead
55	Part of overhead.
56	Expenses are not passed on to clients.
57	Must be picked up by clients.

8. Do you have additional comments?

Answer Options	Response Count
	34
<i>answered question</i>	34
<i>skipped question</i>	57

Number	Response Text (Question 8)
1	For the firms and multi-client folks, it's a little bit different. For the many advocates, any increased fees for work that we already are having a hard time funding is tough.
2	I imagine that the proposed fee increases are not a big deal to large companies and large lobbying firms. Small nonprofit organizations such as mine will feel the impact disproportionately.
3	no....thanks for doing this survey.
4	Please ask Ways and Means to include a provision allowing electronic submission of all registration and disclosure forms. At a minimum, they should allow fax transmission.
5	We need to be able to do electronic filings--- the current system is archaic -- makes me crazy
6	I am concerned that this might impact non-profits if the fees go much higher than this.
7	fine to raise fees.
8	It would be helpful to make a distinction in terms of fees and penalties between for profit lobbying firms/companies and non-profit advocates/organizations.
9	no

Number	Response Text (Question 8)
10	The filing instructions are rather confusing, not to mention, the forms seem to be modified with each reporting cycle and often have restrictive formatting issues that do not allow full access to each field, whether in PDF or Word. There should be a way these forms can be filed on-line and somehow consolidated for a smoother filing process to avoid having to duplicate information over and over. As it is now, the filing process is extremely burdensome and to add additional 'fees' to a seemingly broken system would not be a positive step.
11	Is there some differentiation in fees that can be made between for profit and nonprofit organizations?
12	i believe lobbying fees should be set at a rate that covers the cost of running the oversight of lobbying- nothing more ; nothing less. [] [] forms should be able to be filed electronically or by fax
13	Tell the State to stop raising the rent. Thank you for your time and efforts.
14	Thanks for asking and good luck with your testimony.
15	I think overall the fees are low. If increased fees will provide support for greater access to lobbyist information that would be good. I would also support a graduated approach that would levy higher fees on for-profit entities and/or based on the size of employer entities, or number of lobbyists employed (or both). Those who seek more influence in the state should pay more to support the disclosure system and access to it through upgrades to technology, etc.
16	thanks for doing this
17	I responded "yes," to an increase, but I would like to see what the funds will be used for. My answer may change depending on the answer to that question.
18	The disclosure law is poorly written, open to interpretation and therefore ineffective. A 48 hour window for filing registrations is unrealistic when the Elections office requires original documents. They need to get this system online NOW.
19	As far as I know the fee's have been the same for many years. Just like anything else the cost goes up. I would think that this money helps to pay the cost of workers who have to keep track of the forms and I want to make sure that they keep their jobs.
20	None
21	These additional fees should go toward allowing the technological infrastructure for the electronic filing of reports, etc. Filing paper forms is arcane and inefficient. If this is not the plan, I do not support raising the fee.
22	Those who lobby against any tax increases should undersatnd that fees must sometimes go up to cover the real costs of the process.
23	You are so fucking efficient and organized
24	no
25	these increases seem reasonable
26	I support increasing the fees, as long as I can file electronically.
27	Don't mind the additional fees but would hope we could move to an electronic filing system. Current paper system is outdated.
28	Making money for the state.
29	It seems popular to raise fees for lobbyists because it is likely seen as "free money" but vt business bear those costs and their costs of doing business are ultimately borne by the citizens who buy their goods or services. Also, businesses that do pay to keep their costs down are actually doing their customers a favor.
30	um, anonymity concerns, or call me to flush out some better quotes. <3
31	I'm assuming that the above laguage is missing the strikethrough delete lines and the new fee is listed next to it?
32	I am curious what they will use the fees for. The current system is hard to understand, confusing and cumbersome. Would make sense to be all electronic.
33	Before increasing fees perhaps the SOS should provide an overview of the need, the scheduled improvments for filings. [] [] Please be transparent.
34	Probably not a concern for lobbyists that work for clients or associations that have strong and sustainable funding - this is pennies in their budget. I wonder if it could be a burden for younger, new and unestablished lobbyists.