

Lobbying Advertisement Transparency

**Testimony for the House Committee
on Government Operations**

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What does H.686 solve for?

Reporting, identification gap

- Lobbying advertising expenses made “...at any time prior to final adjournment of a biennial or adjourned legislative session.”

Tue, June 18, 2025 – Tue, Jan 7, 2026

- 204 days with no reporting, no required identification
- 28% of the total days in that 2-year period

Additional Issues

Potentially non-covered activities (and a potential solution)

“(1) “Advertisement” means a notice that appears in any of the following public media: radio, television, newspapers or other periodicals, or internet websites.”

“(1) “Advertisement” means a notice or communication that appears in any of the following public media: radio, television, newspapers or other periodicals, mass mailings, robotic phone calls, or paid internet communications ~~internet websites.~~”

2 V.S.A. § 264c (c)(1)

Additional Issues

Inadequate information for real transparency

“(2) The report shall be made for each advertisement or advertising campaign described in subdivision (1) of this subsection and shall identify the lobbyist, lobbying firm, or lobbyist employer that made the expenditure; the amount and date of the expenditure and to whom it was paid; and a brief description of the advertisement or advertising campaign.”

A brief description, from actual filings:

“Ads in support of Renewable Energy Standard”

“Ad campaign opposing Act 18”

“Online advertising”

“Advertising with VT Digger”

“Email blast”

2 V.S.A. § 264c (b)(2)

Additional Issues

Inadequate information for real transparency (a potential solution)

“...and a brief description of the advertisement or advertising campaign, including the bill(s) or issue(s) it is focused on and whether the advertisement or advertising campaign expresses support, opposition, or neutrality on the bill(s) or issue(s).”

2 V.S.A. § 264c (b)(2)

Additional Issues

(9) “Lobby” or “lobbying” means:

(A) to communicate orally or in writing with any legislator or administrative official for the purpose of influencing legislative or administrative action;

(B) solicitation of others to influence legislative or administrative action;

(C) an attempt to obtain the goodwill of a legislator or administrative official by communications or activities with that legislator or administrative official intended ultimately to influence legislative or administrative action; or

(D) activities sponsored by an employer or lobbyist on behalf of or for the benefit of the members of an interest group, if a principal purpose of the activity is to enable such members to communicate orally with one or more legislators or administrative officials for the purpose of influencing legislative or administrative action or to obtain their goodwill.

2 V.S.A. § 261 (9)



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