

# Bill asks that lobbyists register

By MICHAEL MATUSZEWSKI  
Mention lobbyists, and many people imagine figures skulking among the darkened nooks and crannies of the state capitol, stealthily buttonholing all-too-human lawmakers and swaying them with a little under-the-table cash and promises of more to come.

Michigan State Senator Gary Corbin (D-Clío), who introduced the latest lobby reform bill, said he believes most lobbyists and legislators are "honorable" men who would rather have that sinister, backroom, influence-by-bribe notion put to rest.

He said Senate Bill 674 goes a long way towards destroying the cloak of secrecy which veils Michigan lobbying agents and lobbyists.

SB 674 DOES NOT prohibit lobbying. It is a disclosure law. It requires lobbyists to register and to file quarterly reports of expenditures. The proposed bill prohibits the giving of

gifts, except for token items, to legislators and requires that all food and beverage expenses of more than \$1 be recorded separately, and reported.

The bill would also stop the "revolving door" process by preventing, for two years, former legislators from becoming lobbyists to the body on which they once served.

Sen. Corbin, who chairs the municipalities and elections committee, said he expected to see some opposition to the bill from lobbyists and some legislators, but refused to predict which of his colleagues would try to kill it.

Proponents, most notably Common Cause, a statewide citizens lobby, feel that the bill will be severely slashed when it is referred to the senate judiciary committee.

Sen. Basil Brown (D-Highland Park), chairman of the judiciary committee, said the bill "will get a full and thorough hearing and will be reported out in some form." He would

not guarantee all the bill's provisions, however.

While some people had expressed fears of massed special-interest lobby opposition, public forums in Royal Oak and Pontiac heard only testimony supporting the bill.

Through six public hearings the senate municipalities and elections committee has heard from only four lobbyists, including Common Cause and the Michigan Citizens Lobby.

SEVERAL CITIZENS attending the hearings said the absence of lobbying forces could have been anticipated because the lobbyists, as usual, were working away from public view, behind the scenes.

"The problem with lobbying is the secrecy. We don't know what's going on in Lansing. Is it a contest of ideas or a contest of food and drink?" said Randal Darby, chairman of Common Cause's 18th Congressional District.

Beyond the rumored payoffs, gifts and junkets, lobbyists are highly valued for the information and technical expertise which they bring to the legislative arena. Dave Smith, a member of Common Cause, said the real value of lobbyists is their ability to provide "specific expertise" for specific problems.

SB 674 also would authorize the secretary state to handle the expenditure reports and the attorney general to enforce the prescribed penalties.

A lobbyist found guilty of giving a legislator a gift of less than \$5,000, a misdemeanor, could be punished by a maximum fine of \$5,000 and be imprisoned for up to 90 days. For a gift of more than \$5,000, the lobbyist could pay a maximum fine of \$10,000 and be imprisoned for up to three years.

The last of the 10 public hearings will be Sept. 14 at the State Law Building in Lansing.

## Lobbying guide available

State Rep. Perry Bullard (D-Arbor) has prepared the second revised edition of a "Citizens Guide to Lobbying" for this session of the Michigan legislature.

The booklet is now available and contains information to make it easier for citizens and citizen groups to work for reform in Lansing and Washington.

Published originally by Bullard as a guide to the 1975-76 state legislative session in Dec. 1975, the new edition includes advice and suggestions for effective citizen lobbying, as well as names, addresses, offices, telephone numbers and pictures of all members of the House and Senate.

The booklet also shows maps and descriptions of all House and Senate districts; lists the members of House and Senate standing committees, subcommittees and joint committees; explains how a bill becomes law; gives the addresses, telephone numbers, and directors of state departments, and contains other useful information on state and federal government. The revision contains 94 pages of information.

In an introductory note to the guide, Bullard comments that "There is a great need for an increase in general citizen impact on the decision making process between elections... individual communication on

specific legislative proposals at the appropriate time does have an impact. Organized community and citizens' groups can multiply the impact of that individual effort. Organizing citizens' groups in your area of concern is extremely important.

"Regular, informed input from such a group can carry weight in a decision-making situation, particularly if it appears that the group or organization will still be in existence during the next election. The intent of this citizens guide is to provide some of the specific information needed to get in touch with the right people at the right time to make your concerns heard."

Copies of the new guide may be obtained from Bullard at Room 303, State Capitol, Lansing, Mich. 48909.

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