

# Local units ask lobby law break

Local government officials are seeking to exempt themselves from having to register as lobbyists and list their expenses when they contact state legislators.

"There's no shame in being a lobbyist. It's that we have to keep track of all your expenditures," said Winthrop Rowe, a staff assistant to House Majority Floor Leader Joe Forbes, D-Oak Park.

Those "expenditures" mean more than writing and dining lawmakers. The salary of an official applying for a state grant or a police chief seeking tougher traffic penalties also count as lobbying expenditures.

THE EXECUTIVE committee of the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments last week adopted a resolution asking that local government employees be exempted from the 1978 Michigan Lobbying Law.

Rowe, speaking to the SEMCOG group in the Livonia Holiday Inn West, said, "The act makes lobbyists out of virtually everyone who contacts legislators or the executive branch to influence legislation."

And that is the only reason most calls to Lansing are made, Rowe added.

The lobbying law kicks on whenever \$150 of anyone's salary is spent on influencing legislation, Rowe said.

"Any city submitting a grant application would eat up \$150 in expenditures," said SEMCOG Chairperson Donald E. Shelton, mayor of Saline.

SHELTON SAID Secretary of State Richard Austin's office was asked to send a speaker to the SEMCOG meeting to explain how it will begin enforcement of the act.

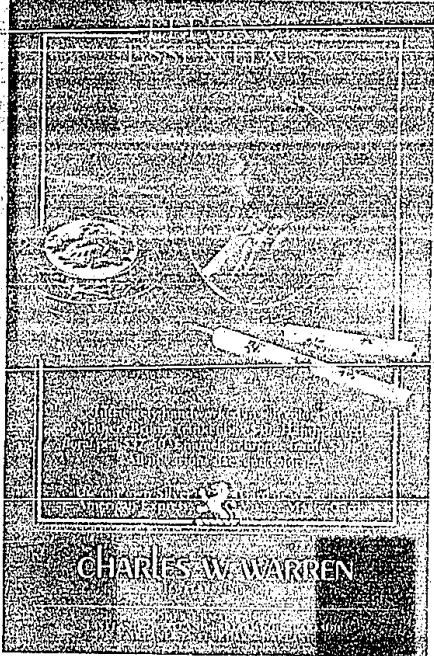
"But since no money had been appropriated to implement the act, they had no money to send someone down here to enforce it," Shelton said.

"It isn't clear who's going to arrest you for that, or how they're going to know you violated the law," Rowe added.

SEMCOG's executive committee and general assembly are composed entirely of elected officials, who are exempt from the lobbying law when acting in conjunction with their elective office.

But employees of counties, cities, villages, townships, school districts and colleges do come under the act.

The SEMCOG resolution complained that registering under the law and listing expenditures would result in costly inefficiencies and undue interference with the conduct of local government.



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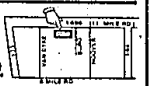
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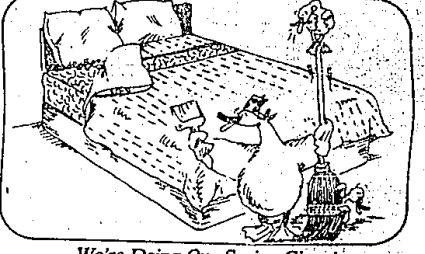
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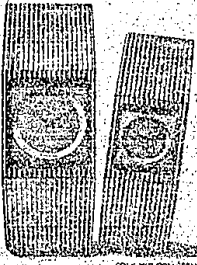
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