

House Approves Accountability Measures for Lobbyists

Many Iowans want to know what special interests are spending to obtain passage or cause defeat of legislation. The Iowa House has made that easier to find out through new ethics laws governing lobbyists and clients.

The measure, House File 2109, will improve accuracy and transparency in the activities of lobbyists and their clients. The bill will also give the House and Senate Ethics committees more authority to deal with companies and organizations that lobby state government.

One change will require companies and organizations that lobby the Legislature and Executive Branch of state government to file reports on what they spend. Citizens will be able to go to the legislative website and find out how much Company A or Organization Z spends each year.

In addition, companies and organizations hosting receptions must now file reports in advance of the event. They will then have 28 days following the event to file a report on what they spent. These reports will also be available on the legislative website.

This change was prompted after Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement filed a complaint against an organization that failed to file their report in a timely manner. Now, with the pre-event filing, any citizen will be able to tell who is holding events and whether they have filed the necessary post-event report.

The bill now goes to the Senate, where it is expected to pass.

Lobbying information can be found on the website at www.legis.state.ia.us/Lobbyist.html.