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CITY CLERK'S OFFICE ISSUES REPORT ON FIRST YEAR UNDER NEW LOBBYING LAWS

Office has collected \$326,835 in total fines and civil penalties since 2006

The Office of the City Clerk today released a report detailing progress made during the first full year under New York City's new lobbying laws. In 2006 the New York City Council, under the leadership of Speaker Christine C. Quinn and working with Mayor Michael Bloomberg, passed important legislation increasing the accountability and transparency of lobbying in New York City.

These new laws vastly increased public disclosure of the activities of lobbyists, created the framework for much more active and effective enforcement of Lobbying Law violators, and required lobbyists who also serve as political consultants or fundraisers to disclose those activities. In addition, they increased the maximum penalties for violations and added penalties for statements and reports filed late, banned gifts from lobbyists to lawmakers, and made lobbyists' campaign contributions ineligible for taxpayer-financed public matching funds.

The Council and the Mayor charged the Office of the City Clerk, which had historically overseen lobbyist registration, with the responsibility to implement these new laws. Over the course of the past year, the City Clerk has taken significant steps to strengthen its Lobbying Bureau, maximize compliance with laws and provide full public access to information on the activities of those lobbying City government.

To date the City Clerk's office, working with appropriate City agencies, the Council and the Mayor's Office, has:

- **Created and staffed a Lobbying Bureau in the Office of the City Clerk.** The City Clerk created and implemented a blueprint for the operation and staffing of the Lobbying Bureau to best administer and enforce the Lobbying Law.
- **Promulgated Rules to implement the Lobbying Laws.**

- **Created and implemented an e-Lobbyist filing system**, an electronic filing system designed to ease filing and aid in access to data, to replace the paper filing system that had previously been used. E-Lobbyist enables lobbyists and their clients to enroll and submit filings via the internet and allows staff from the Lobbying Bureau to manage enrollments and filings.
- **Created and implemented a publicly searchable database, accessible 24 hours a day.** The public is able to view all registrations and filings via NYC Lobbyist Search, 24 hours a day improving public disclosure.
- **Conducted extensive training and outreach to lobbyists and clients on the new requirements and systems.** The Lobbying Bureau conducted five training sessions to advise lobbyists and clients of changes to the Lobbying Law and to familiarize them with the e-Lobbyist system. The Bureau has also participated in forums in conjunction with non-profit and community based organizations, and established a kiosk in its office to provide easily accessible assistance.
- **Revised the website at www.cityclerknyc.gov to make it user friendly.** Improvements to the website include the creation of a subject matter index to advisory opinions, a calendar of important reporting periods and filing deadlines, and the addition of new training materials.
- **Issued several advisory opinions and bulletins providing information to lobbyists, clients and the public.** The City Clerk has issued four new advisory opinions concerning a variety of issues, including first time opinions on requirements for lobbyists to file Fundraising and Political Consulting Reports.
- **Collected over \$326,000 in total fines and civil penalties.** Since 2006, the Lobbying Bureau has commenced 111 enforcement proceedings against lobbyists and 322 against clients, resulting in \$326,835 in fines and penalties.
- **Established audit protocols and an auditing mechanism, resulting in the creation of the Random Audit Program**, which will be enacted for the 2008 cycle. The Lobbying Bureau has selected 30 firms for audit in 2008, representing a balance between large and small lobbying firms, while maintaining a random selection process. It is anticipated that the Random Audit Program will result in both informal findings and more significant referrals culminating in civil penalties.

While this one year anniversary of the implementation of the City's 2006 reform measure marks the completion of much of the new framework designed to regulate lobbying in the City, it is the beginning of an ongoing process of education, enforcement, and transparency which are the hallmarks of the new law. The full report can be downloaded at <http://www.cityclerknyc.gov/LobbyingBureau/Download/LobbyingBureauSpecialReport.pdf>.

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