Reporting State Lobbying Activity

OVERVIEW

University employees who engage in lobbying activities are required to keep track of and report all applicable lobbying activities. This section defines state lobbying and provides procedures for quarterly reporting of state lobbying.

STATE LOBBYING

Contacts With State Officials

The University encourages employees to have good professional relationships with state elected officials and to be responsive to questions and requests for information.

The University particularly encourages faculty and staff who work in communities around the state to have contact with public officials, including local legislators. Contacts with public officials may provide information concerning University programs offered in particular legislative districts and University assistance available to address local needs.

Lobbying Activities

Many contacts with elected officials are considered by state law to be official lobbying on behalf of the University. State law provides restrictions and reporting requirements for public employees who engage in lobbying activities (see Reporting Requirements).

Activities usually considered to be public lobbying include:

- Most in-person meetings with legislators and their staff.
- Contacts on University time and/or that include any expenses or informational materials prepared with funds controlled by WSU.
- Casual or scheduled conversations on University time with legislators on behalf of the University.
- Most testimony before legislative committees.

Required Notification

Prior to contacting elected officials, employees must discuss all potential lobbying activities with their dean or supervisor and contact the Office of Government Relations.

Activities Permitted

WSU employees are permitted to use University time or resources to provide factual information to public officials or answer questions.
Reporting State Lobbying Activity

Activities Not Permitted

WSU employees are not permitted to use University time or resources to:

- Promote, or encourage others to promote, state funding proposals that are not official budget requests of Washington State University.
- Lobby for or against legislation, unless authorized by the University to represent these issues.

These restrictions apply to telephone calls, electronic mail, letters, in-person conversations, and other forms of communication with legislators.

WSU discourages employees from hosting legislators for meals, drinks, gifts, or entertainment. There are exceptions to this policy that should be discussed with the dean or supervisor and Government Relations.

Activities Forbidden

WSU employees are forbidden from using University time or resources to engage in partisan political activity (see BPPM 60.90). State law also forbids employees from campaigning for or against a ballot measure, except to comment on direct impacts to University programs. (RCW 42.52.180)

In many cases, it is not legal for state employees to encourage other people and constituencies to contact legislators.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The Office of Government Relations submits a quarterly summary to the Washington State Public Disclosure Commission of all time and expenses associated with in-person lobbying by WSU employees.

Each employee who spent any time in-person state lobbying must submit a State Lobbying Activity Quarterly Report. The State Lobbying Activity Quarterly Report is an online form available at the Government Relations Lobbying website at:

governmentrelations.wsu.edu/wsu-lobbying-reports/

The quarterly report must include the following information:

- Date(s) lobbying occurred
- Approximate hours spent lobbying and traveling for the purposes of lobbying
Reporting State Lobbying Activity

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS (cont.)

- Names of legislators and/or legislative staff who were lobbied
- Travel expenses for purposes of lobbying activities (see BPPM 95.05)
- Any money spent on producing and/or distributing printed material designed to influence legislation
- Employee's annual salary
- List of specific issues lobbied, including the bill numbers of proposed legislation discussed
- Employee position regarding support or opposition to the legislation or issues lobbied
- Contact name, email address, and telephone number for the individual who completes the form

Online submission of the state lobbying report must be completed within twenty working days after the end of the quarter covered by the report. The online reporting process transfers the information to the Office of Government Relations and the Office of the President. No additional paper documentation is required.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS FROM LEGISLATORS

Timely Response

University employees are responsible for furnishing timely answers to lawmakers and informing them of the benefits of WSU education and research programs.

Completeness and Accuracy

Employees are strongly encouraged to check with Government Relations before completing any response to elected officials and their staff. Government Relations assists in:

- Assuring the completeness and accuracy of an answer from a University perspective.
- Receiving confirmation from the Budget Office staff concerning the accuracy and consistency of all statistics and financial numbers to be released about the University.

Release of Unpublished Research Studies/Findings

Employees are to obtain approval from the college or campus dean prior to releasing any unpublished research study information and/or findings.
Reporting State Lobbying Activity

Reporting and Prior Notification

Employees should recognize that their answers to questions might be regarded as lobbying, particularly if the answer is framed to persuasively affect legislation.

All lobbying activity must be reported to Government Relations. Many of these contacts, by law, also need to be reported to the state Public Disclosure Commission.

Conferring with Government Relations on legislative concerns is always advisable. Also, the dean or administrator must be aware of lobbying contacts in advance.

Response Requirements

Employees must adhere to the following principles when answering questions:

- Provide nonpartisan answers.

- Provide factual information to all who request it. Information shared with advocates of one point of view should be shared with advocates of apparently opposing views.

- Never question the motives of elected officials or their staffs.

PERSONAL OPINIONS EXPRESSED TO LEGISLATORS

WSU staff and faculty are entitled to personal opinions, including those contrary to University or college administrators. Neither WSU policy nor federal or state laws restricts an employee's right to express personal opinions outside the workplace and without the use of University time or resources.

WSU asks employees to recognize that it is hard for members of the public, including reporters and legislators, to differentiate between an official University position and a personal opinion.

For Employees' Own Protection

Employees should take care to stipulate to state and local officials that the personal opinions expressed are their own and not necessarily those of their employer.

If employees inadvertently cross into communication outside of the guidelines for a personal opinion, they and the University are subject to state lobbying laws, reporting requirements, and possible fines for engaging in illegal lobbying activity.

Employees are strongly urged to consult with the Office of Government Relations.
Reporting State Lobbying Activity

The Office of Government Relations is responsible for:

- Answering employee questions regarding contacts with state officials or political activity.
- Reporting official state lobbying by WSU employees.
- Ensuring that accurate and timely information is provided to state legislators.

For further information and assistance regarding state lobbying activities, contact Government Relations at:

- Olympia; telephone 360-534-2332
- Pullman; telephone 509-335-5756