
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ELECTIONS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**
Senator Scott Wiener, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: SB 1175 **Hearing Date:** 4/7/26
Author: Rubio
Version: 3/24/26
Urgency: Yes **Fiscal:** No
Consultant: Carrie Cornwell

Subject: Lobbyist registration and termination

DIGEST

This bill requires a lobbyist to file an amended lobbyist certification or a notice of lobbying termination directly with the Secretary of State (SOS), rather than with the lobbying firm or the lobbyist employer.

ANALYSIS

Existing law:

- 1) Requires lobbying firms and lobbyist employers to register with the SOS.
- 2) Requires each individual lobbyist to submit a lobbyist certification to the SOS. This certification shall include:
 - a) A recent photograph;
 - b) The full name, business address, and telephone number of the lobbyist;
 - c) A statement that the lobbyist understands the statutory gift limit; and
 - d) A statement that the lobbyist has or will complete an ethics course.
- 3) Requires, when any of the information in the lobbyist certification changes or if the lobbyist terminates all lobbying activity, the lobbyist to submit an amended certification or a notice of termination to the lobbying firm or lobbyist employer, who shall submit it to the SOS.

This bill requires the lobbyist to submit changes in certification or a notice of termination directly to the SOS.

BACKGROUND

Proposition 9, which appeared on the June 1974 ballot, created the California Political Reform Act (PRA) and established California's system of regulating lobbying activity, campaign finance, and conflicts of interest for public officials. Proposition 9 created the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) to implement, administer, and enforce the PRA. The PRA regulates lobbyists, including requiring lobbyists to register with the SOS and file periodic reports disclosing their activities.

COMMENTS

- 1) Author's statement. Transparency and accountability are foundational to public trust, and this is especially true for California's lobbyist registration system. Current law requires lobbyists to submit registration amendments or termination notices to their lobbying employer or firm if there are any changes in their certification information. The lobbyist's employer or firm then files with the SOS.

This current lobbyist registration system can create significant delays and transparency issues when lobbyists change employers or need to update their registration. Because employers have 20 days to file certification changes with the state, and because lobbyists can only be registered with one employer or firm at a time, lobbyists may have to wait weeks for their former employer to file termination paperwork before they can register with a new employer. This delay can result in lobbyists filing late disclosure reports through no fault of their own, and the lobbyist's relationship with their new employer remaining undisclosed to the public.

This bill modernizes our lobbying disclosure system by requiring lobbyists to file terminations, employment changes, and registration amendments directly with the SOS, instead of going through their employer or firm. In doing so, it eliminates unnecessary delays, and ensures Californians have clear and timely information about who is advocating before their government.

- 2) Cal-Access and CARS. In 2000, the SOS deployed, pursuant to SB 49 (Karnette), Chapter 866, Statutes of 1997, the California Automated Lobby Activity and Campaign Contribution and Expenditure Search System, or Cal-Access. Cal-Access replaced the paper-based system and provides on-line filing of reports and statements required by the PRA. It also provides online access to these statements and reports for the public.

Cal-Access is now 26 years old, and the SOS reports that components of the system are no longer supported by its vendor. As a result, the system has periodically crashed and denied public access. Additionally, the SOS has indicated that its ability to make modifications to Cal-Access is very limited.

SB 1349 (Hertzberg), Chapter 845, Statutes of 2016, directed the SOS, in consultation with the FPPC, to replace Cal-Access with a new disclosure system, the Cal-Access Replacement System or CARS. The SOS expects to fully deploy CARS by the end of 2026.

- 3) Same code section twice? The PRA includes various sections that exist in two different versions with the same code section number. The existence of multiple versions of the code with the same code section number reflects a technical mechanism to allow certain changes to state law to go into effect when CARS is deployed.

In anticipation of the deployment of CARS, SB 1239 (Hertzberg), Chapter 662, Statutes of 2018, made numerous substantive and technical changes to provisions of the PRA governing the filing of campaign and lobbying reports. Because CARS was in development at the time, SB 1239 made changes to campaign and lobbying

disclosure rules that were incorporated into the design of CARS but specified those changes would not go into effect until the SOS certified that CARS was functional and met the requirements of state law. As a result, various provisions of the PRA exist in two different versions: one version is operative now, and a second version becoming operative when the SOS certifies that CARS meets specified requirements of state law (at which point, the currently operative version of the section will become inoperative). As a result, this bill amends both the versions of Government Code Section 86107.

- 4) Urgency. Should it become law, this bill needs to take effect immediately so the change it makes to lobbyist certification can be incorporated into CARS before it is completed this fall. Without the urgency clause, the system would be built under outdated statutory requirements and require costly retrofitting after the launch.
- 5) Arguments in support. Writing as the sponsor of the bill, the SOS states that by “making this change, greater responsibility is placed directly on lobbyists for maintaining accurate registration status, allowing government efficiency and transparency to be upheld in the process for the public.”

POSITIONS

Sponsor: California Secretary of State Shirley N. Weber, Ph.D.

Support: Fair Political Practices Commission

Oppose: None received.

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