

Lobbying in Rhode Island

Getting Started with the Lobbying Registration Desk



A Guide for Lobbying Firms



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Nellie M. Gorbea
Secretary of State

This guide was produced by
the Rhode Island Department of State

Important Reminders



Reporting of lobbying activity

All lobbying activity by registered lobbyists, entities, and lobbying firms must be filed using the online Lobbying Registration Desk according to the following schedule.

MONTH OF ACTIVITY	REPORT DUE
January	February 15
February	March 15
March	April 15
April	May 15
May	June 15
June	July 15
July – September	October 15
October – December	January 15



Minor Infractions/Penalties

The following Minor Infractions will be subject to an automatic twenty-five dollar (\$25.00) fine with the possibility of a two dollars per day (\$2.00/day) accrual:

- Filing a late registration; and
- Filing a late report

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Letter from the Secretary

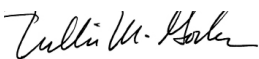
I'd like to personally welcome you to our new Lobbying Registration Desk. It's an exciting time for the RI Department of State as we continue to engage and empower all Rhode Islanders by making government more accessible and transparent. As you know, comprehensive reform of the state's lobbying laws was an immediate, top priority of my administration. I was pleased when the General Assembly passed, and Governor Raimondo signed into law, the Rhode Island Lobbying Reform Act. This law makes it easier to determine who does and does not have to register to lobby and strengthens Rhode Island's commitment to transparency and effective government.

Over the past several months we have been working with a diverse group of stakeholders to develop the new Lobbying Registration Desk. With their feedback, we are pleased to launch this new system with an intuitive user interface that will make it easier for you to register your lobbying relationships and remain in compliance with the new law. This guide will walk you through some of the key changes you can expect resulting from the implementation of the Rhode Island Lobbying Reform Act and how to use the new system.

As always, the staff in our Public Information Office are ready to help! Both Associate Director of Public Information Stacy DiCola and Lobbying Compliance/Public Information Specialist Ted Jendzejec can be reached at (401) 222-3983 or by email at sdicola@sos.ri.gov and tjendzejec@sos.ri.gov, respectively. I encourage you to reach out with any questions or ideas that you may have for improving our services.

Welcome back to the State House. I look forward to seeing you in the halls!

Sincerely,



Nellie M. Gorbea
Secretary of State

Overview of the Rhode Island Lobbying Reform Act

Chapter 42-139.1 is effective January 1, 2017

Clarifies the definitions of who does and does not have to register their lobbying relationships. The Rhode Island Lobbying Reform Act has combined all previous types of lobbying activity into one category and the requirements are the same whether you are lobbying the executive branch or the legislative branch of our state government.

Simplifies the registration and reporting process for those engaged in lobbying activity. The new Lobbying Registration Desk makes it easier to keep track of and report on “money” and “anything of value” given to certain public officials and improves the accuracy of how compensation to lobbyists and firms is displayed to the public.

Strengthens penalties for violations. Anyone found not in compliance with the law may be fined up to five thousand dollars (\$5,000) and debarred from lobbying in Rhode Island for up to three years.

The entire Rhode Island Lobbying Reform Act along with the Rules and Regulations are available on our website at sos.ri.gov/lobbying. You may also request a printed copy from our Public Information Office.

Getting Started

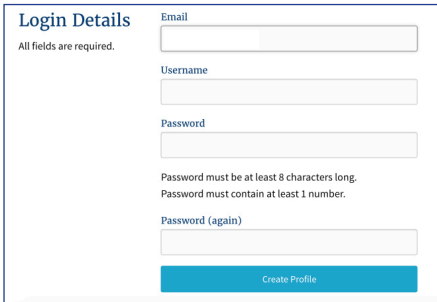
Creating An Account

Follow these directions to create an account in the new Lobbying Registration Desk.

Step 1: Click “Create Profile”

Step 2: Select “Lobby Firm” under **Choose Your Profile Type**

Step 3: Provide your login details. You will be sent an email to activate your account.

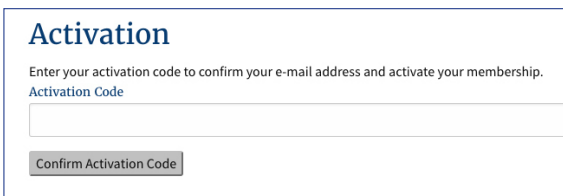


The screenshot shows a registration form titled "Login Details" with the instruction "All fields are required." The form contains the following fields and text:

- Email:** A text input field.
- Username:** A text input field.
- Password:** A text input field.
- Instructions:** "Password must be at least 8 characters long." and "Password must contain at least 1 number."
- Password (again):** A text input field.
- Create Profile:** A blue button at the bottom of the form.

A unique email must be used for each individual account.

Step 4: You will receive an email with an activation code and a link to the Profile Activation Page. Copy and paste the activation code on the Profile Activation Page.



The screenshot shows an "Activation" page with the following elements:

- Activation:** The title of the page.
- Instructions:** "Enter your activation code to confirm your e-mail address and activate your membership."
- Activation Code:** A text input field.
- Confirm Activation Code:** A button below the input field.

Step 5: Once you provide your activation code, you will be able to log in to the Lobbying Registration Desk and finish setting up your account profile.

Adding Your Profile Details

Once you have created your account, you will need to add your user profile details.

Provide the name of your firm and contact information.
Contact information should be provided for the individual who can answer questions regarding your lobbying activities.

Lobbying Firm Name	Lobbying Firm Contact Information	Lobbying Firm Address
Lobbying Firm Name * <input type="text"/>	Primary Email* <input type="text"/>	Address Line 1* <input type="text"/>
	Secondary Email <input type="text"/>	Address Line 2 <input type="text"/>
	Primary Phone* <input type="text"/>	City* <input type="text"/>
	Secondary Phone <input type="text"/>	State* Rhode Island ▾
	Web Address <input type="text"/>	Zip* <input type="text"/>
		Country* United States ▾

or



This information will be available to the public on the Lobby Tracker Database.

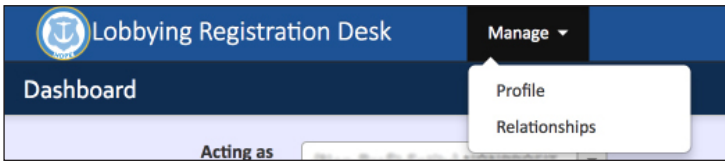
Registering Lobbying Relationships


Upon entering an agreement, the entity you have a contract with must register your relationship first. They will provide the details of your agreement and send the relationship registration request to you for approval.

! This information must be filed with the Department of State within seven (7) calendar days of engagement.

Relationship registration requests from entities will appear on your Lobbyist Dashboard. Below are steps to confirming a relationship registration request.





Step 1: Click on **“Manage”** in the top blue navigation bar and select **“Relationships.”**



Step 2: Click on . You will see a page with your entity relationship details. Note: You may edit the term of your contract, but you may not edit compensation. Any edits will be sent back to the entity for approval.

Step 3: Click 

You will see a list of entities you have registered relationships with.

Relationships for BOOLEAN FIRM			
Entity Name	Start Date - End Date	Compensation	Actions
▶ 123 BIG CORP	Jan 01, 2017 - Dec 31, 2017	\$10,000.00 / annually	   

Assigning Lobbying Relationships

As a lobbying firm, you must assign a lobbyist to the entity. You also have the option of subcontracting with another lobbying firm.

Assigning a lobbyist:

Step 1: Click on 


Step 2: Assign a lobbyist by typing the first three letters of your lobbyist's name.

Step 3: Click "Assign Lobbyist"

Relationships for BOOLEAN FIRM			
Entity Name	Start Date - End Date	Compensation	Actions
▼ 123 BIG CORP	Jan 01, 2017 - Dec 31, 2017	\$10,000.00 / annually	   
▶ DWIGHT A SCHRUTE	Jan 01, 2017 - Dec 31, 2017		 

You can assign as many lobbyists to your entity relationships as necessary.

The entity relationship and lobbyist assigned will appear under your relationships. The assigned lobbyist will then have to provide details on anticipated lobbying activities such as subjects, bills, and executive officials.

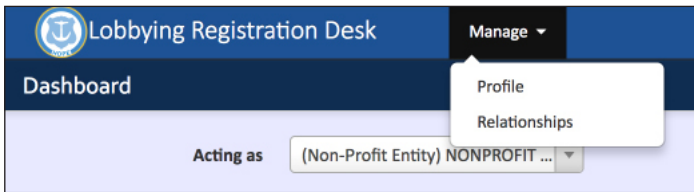
 **You will be notified by email when the Public Information Office approves your registration.**


Adding an Authorized User

As a firm, you may authorize another user to manage your account. Below are the steps to authorize another user to file required reports and.

! Even if your firm authorizes another user to manage your account, your firm is still responsible for ensuring that all reports are filed on time and subject to any penalties associated with violations of the Lobbying Reform Act.

Step 1: Click on **“Manage”** in the top blue navigation bar and select **“Profile”**.




Step 2: At the bottom of the page, you will see **“Authorize Users”**. Click on  .

Step 3: Enter the email address of the user you wish to authorize on your account. The email address must be associated with an existing user in the Lobbying Registration Desk.

Step 4: Click **“Authorize User”**. The user will then appear under your **“Authorized Users”** list.

You can delete this user by clicking the  button.

 **You will be notified by email when the Public Information Office approves your registration.**

Violations and Penalties

The Rhode Island Lobbying Reform Act clarifies the investigatory process of anyone that might be in violation of the law and strengthens penalties for these violations. This section details the investigatory process along with fines and penalties for anyone found in violation of the law.

Failure to Register Lobbying Relationships

The Secretary may initiate a preliminary investigation into the activities of any entity, firm or lobbyist that has allegedly been lobbying without registering their lobbying relationship in accordance with the Rhode Island Lobbying Reform Act.

If an entity, firm or lobbyist is under investigation, the Secretary will notify that entity, firm or lobbyist of investigation and the general nature of the alleged violation within thirty (30) calendar days of starting the investigation.

As part of the investigation, the Secretary may request books, papers or other documents directly relating to services rendered or compensation received in connection with lobbying.

If an entity, firm or lobbyist does not willingly provide the requested information to the Secretary within twenty (20) calendar days, the Secretary may file a complaint with the superior court. The complaint may request such relief as is reasonably required by the Secretary to conduct the investigation. The court may enter an order for the relief requested, including a penalty of up to five thousand dollars (\$5,000), or may modify the relief in the court's reasonable discretion.

Failure to File Reports and Non-Conforming Reports

If an entity, firm or lobbyist does not file a required report or your filed report does not comply with the Rhode Island Lobbying Reform Act and its regulations, the Secretary will notify the entity in writing.

That entity, firm or lobbyist must file or correct the report, as applicable within twenty (20) calendar days of receiving this notice.

If the entity, firm or lobbyist does not file or correct the report within those twenty (20) calendar days, the Secretary will issue a show cause order. The show cause order will require the entity, firm or lobbyist to establish facts which show why a penalty should not be imposed.

If the entity, firm or lobbyist does not establish facts as to why penalties should not be imposed, the Secretary may impose a penalty.

Penalties

The amount of the penalty imposed for a violation depends upon the facts and circumstances, and is up to the Secretary's discretion, based upon but not limited to:

1. Whether the violation was willful and knowing or unintentional;
2. Whether and to what degree there have been repeat violations by the same Person within the immediately preceding five (5) years;
3. The severity of the delinquency; and
4. The duration of time between initial notice of the delinquency by the Secretary and the date of compliance.

The Secretary may impose a penalty of up to five thousand dollars (\$5,000) per violation, and/or revocation of the applicable registration for a period of up to three (3) years for failure to file reports or filing and not correcting non-conforming reports. Additionally, the Secretary may petition the Court to impose a penalty of up to five thousand dollars (\$5,000) and revoke applicable registrations for a period of up to three (3) years for failure to register.

The following are considered minor infractions and will result in an initial penalty of twenty-five dollars (\$25.00).

1. Filing a late registration;
2. Filing a late report; and
3. Failure to pay for badge.

If the minor infraction is not corrected within seven (7) days of the notice of non-compliance, an additional penalty of two dollars (\$2.00) per day (up to a maximum of two thousand dollars (\$2,000) per violation) will be assessed from the date of the non-compliance notice until the violation is corrected.