

Money & Politics

BACKGROUND:

While political contributions and free meals may not “buy” legislators’ votes on specific issues, everyone agrees that such gifts do help gain access to lawmakers. Alabama law makes it easy to hide the source of such contributions from the public. Allowing undisclosed gifts creates a general perception that interest groups with ample funds enjoy greater influence than others.

At least eleven bills this year would increase transparency of political contributions and reduce the impact of lobbyists:

- **HB32** by Rep. Mac Gipson would expand the authority of the Ethics Commission and reduce the amount of unreported spending by lobbyists.
- **HB118** by Rep. Randy Hinshaw would require the disclosure of the source of funding of all electioneering communications – including printed material and telephone solicitation – and paid political advertising.
- **HB120** by Rep. Jeff McLaughlin would prohibit transfers between political action committees (PAC-to-PAC transfers).
- **HB130** by Rep. Oliver Robinson would require lobbyists to report *all* spending on public officials, public employees and the family members of public officials or employees.
- **HB158/SB95** by Rep. Mike Hubbard and Sen. Arthur Orr, respectively, would ban transfers between political action committees and campaign committees.
- **HB159/SB134** by Rep. Steve McMillan and Sen. Ben Brooks, respectively, would require lobbyists to report all spending on public officials and require those who lobby the executive branch to register.
- **SB57** by Sen. Arthur Orr would require a candidate to file reports of campaign contributions and expenditures whether or not the candidate has an opponent.
- **SB237** by Sen. Wendell Mitchell would prohibit unfair political practices in which a candidate uses false information about an opponent and would ban transfers between PACs.
- **SB273** by Sen. Ted Little requires the disclosure and identification of sponsors of telephone callings for political purposes.

BOTTOM LINE:

- **Voters deserve to know who is attempting to influence the political process.**
- **The source of every dollar a candidate receives in political contributions should be a matter of public record.**
- **Disclosure of all lobbying expenses will show voters which interest groups are gaining access to lawmakers.**