

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE LOBBYISTS STATEMENT OF LOBBYING PRINCIPLES

PREAMBLE

The National Association of State Lobbyists (NASL) is a nonprofit association founded to further the understanding, awareness and standards of the lobbyists, government affairs professionals and advocates who focus on the state legislative, regulatory or administrative level.

The Association is comprised of individuals—men and women—who have strong track records and experience in lobbying, government affairs or advocacy at the state level, selected by their peers because of their leadership, competence and sense of responsibility as a professional and as a representative of our chosen profession. While we are all “government affairs professionals,” we are all proud of our service as “lobbyists” and proud to use the title.

Founded in 2003, its purposes are to foster the best practices of lobbying and representing clients and interests at the state level; increase the general awareness and understanding of this sector of the lobbying profession; promote the highest standards of integrity, trustworthiness and credibility in state-based advocacy; and work within our profession and with others to better the practices of lobbying and advocacy.

As independent contract lobbyists who represent various clients, we place a high value on our trustworthiness and credibility—not only for our ability to keep existing clients and obtain new ones, but more important, for our ability to maintain our relationships and reputation based on trust, integrity, accuracy and success. As such, the principles we share are core to our personal and professional commitment to our clients, others we interact with and the system we participate in.

In forming our association, it became clear very quickly that these principles were an even stronger bond bringing us together as the basis for our common association. As peers, the recognition that these values were a high priority in our professional lives led us to distill them as a common set of principles important to us all and our association.

Even more so, we believe these are critically important to our profession and the legislative and government processes we participate in. The members of the National Association of State Lobbyists believe that it is the responsibility of each government affairs professional or lobbyist to strive to conduct their activities with the highest standards of ethical behavior in accordance with the following Lobbying Principles.

THE LOBBYING PRINCIPLES OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE LOBBYISTS

REPRESENTING A LOBBYING OR GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS CLIENT SHOULD ALWAYS BE IN FULL COMPLIANCE WITH ALL APPLICABLE LAWS AND REGULATIONS.

We believe that a lobbyist:

- Should comply with all federal and state laws, regulations and local ordinances that apply to lobbying and related government affairs activities.
- Should never cause or encourage any public official, policymaker or other person to violate any law or rule applicable to them.
- Should not facilitate or otherwise participate in an apparent violation.
- Should not bring discredit to the profession, to government or to colleagues by their conduct.
- Should always conduct themselves and the representation of their clients to protect their clients from any scandal or violation.

WE KNOW THAT INTEGRITY IS A LOBBYIST'S MOST IMPORTANT PRODUCT, AND NOT TO BE COMPROMISED, NOR SUBJECT TO CONFLICTS.

We believe that a lobbyist:

- Should strive to maintain professional relationships based upon honesty and integrity.
- Should not undertake or continue representations that create, or are likely to create, conflicts of interest in the absence of the knowledgeable consent of the clients involved.

- Should affirmatively, fully and timely disclose a potential conflict to a client and resolve it in a manner that is clearly understood and acceptable to the client, or otherwise withdraw from the conflicting representation.

WE CONSIDER TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY OUR MOST IMPORTANT GOALS, AND HONEST AND ACCURATE INFORMATION OUR MOST IMPORTANT TOOLS.

We believe that a lobbyist:

- Should provide accurate, current and factual information, whether it is being reported to his or her employer or client, government officials, the media or professional colleagues.
- Should not engage in any misrepresentations.
- Should accurately represent the client's positions and policies.
- Should promptly correct any inaccurate information provided or submissions later determined to be in need of correction, and should update information provided as necessary to keep it from being misleading.

WE BELIEVE IN THE REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT AND ITS PROCESSES, AND THAT ITS STRENGTH IS BASED IN INFORMED DECISION MAKERS AND FAIR PARTICIPATION BY ALL INTERESTED PARTIES AND OPPONENTS.

We believe that a lobbyist:

- Should always seek to strengthen and protect the integrity of the public policy process.
- Should serve as a source of reliable information, using their expertise and awareness to explain and assist in the understanding of the varied aspects of complex public issues.
- Should at all times exhibit the proper respect for our democratic institutions and processes, public officials and policymakers, and fellow government affairs professionals.
- Should not act in any manner that will undermine public confidence and trust in the governmental process.
- Should recognize and encourage diverse viewpoints within the public policy process, acknowledging that disagreement on issues is both inevitable and healthy.
- Should recognize that informed decisions are the best and should assist in ensuring that decision makers have balanced information on both sides of the issue.

AS LEADERS IN OUR PROFESSION, WE ARE PROUD OF IT AND TAKE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO ENSURE THAT OTHERS UNDERSTAND ITS VALUE IN THE PROCESS, OUR STANDARDS OF INTEGRITY, AND OUR PROUD ROLE.

We believe that a lobbyist:

- Should uphold the dignity and standards of the government affairs profession by counseling or even admonishing those government affairs colleagues who manifest behaviors that are inconsistent with these lobbying principles.
- Should publicly acknowledge his or her role as a legitimate participant in the public policy process, and the right of every interested participant to present their information and utilize lobbyists to do so.
- Should take every opportunity to increase the understanding of our true role and standards of integrity and trust, and our value as advocates in informing the process and the decisions it makes.

CONFIDENTIALITY IS A TRADEMARK OF OUR PROFESSION, WHICH WE GUARD CAREFULLY.

We believe that a lobbyist:

- Should always protect confidences, not only those of employers or clients but those of elected and appointed officials of government and colleagues.

WE ARE STRONG PROPONENTS OF DISCLOSURE AND REPORTING OF RELATIONSHIPS, CONTRIBUTIONS, GIFTS AND OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION BEARING ON THE OPENNESS AND HONESTY OF THE PROCESS.

We believe that a lobbyist:

- Should support and honor full disclosure, recordkeeping and reporting as required by law.
- Should encourage full reporting and disclosure by others in the process, and erring on the side of full disclosure when there is any question.

AS LEADERS IN OUR PROFESSION, WE RECOGNIZE OUR ROLE IN KEEPING THE STANDARDS OF THE PROFESSION HIGH AND IN INFLUENCING OUR FELLOW PROFESSIONALS TO DO THE SAME.

We believe that a lobbyist:

- Should conduct their relationships with fellow government affairs professionals with the highest standards of fairness, dignity and respect.
- Should not solicit or knowingly permit solicitation of a prospective client for the purpose of obtaining professional employment if the member knows or reasonably should know that the client to whom the solicitation is directed is already represented by a government affairs professional in the matter.

THE SUCCESS OF THE CLIENT IS PARAMOUNT TO US, AS IS THEIR COMPLETE PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNICATION IN OUR EFFORTS AND STRATEGIES.

We believe that a lobbyist:

- Should keep a client fully informed as to relevant events relating to the client.
- Should give the client meaningful and informed participation in the development and implementation of strategies and the prioritization of the acceptability of potential results.
- Should maintain the confidentiality of information provided by the client and of any other confidential information that would be contrary to the client's material interests if disclosed.
- Should have a written agreement with the client regarding the engagement with the client that clearly defines the relationship and services to be provided, including the amount and terms of compensation.
- Should conduct the representation of clients diligently and vigorously to advance the interest of the client.
- Should devote the necessary time, attention and resources to the interests of the client. Should always emphasize how the client's interests align with the public interest.

AS EXPERTS IN THE STATE LEGISLATIVE AND POLITICAL PROCESSES, WE PRIDE OURSELVES ON BEING THE BEST INFORMED AND MOST COMPETENT.

We believe that a lobbyist:

- Should fully understand the legislative, governmental and political processes in order to represent a client or an employer in the most competent and effective manner.
- Should be current in the ethical, campaign and election laws and restrictions, and other areas affecting the respect and reputation of the profession.
- Should maintain a high level of current knowledge of relevant specialized subject areas to ensure the ability to be an effective participant in all major policy issues.
- Should participate in continuing education, seminars and similar activities to maintain a current and ongoing high level of proficiency.