
LOS ANGELES CITY ETHICS COMMISSION

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City Council Reverses Course and Adopts Weakened Lobbying Package

Recusal Requirement for Officials Lobbied by Big Donor Lobbyists

Amended to Require Only Disclosure of Officials' Actions

In a surprising reversal, the Los Angeles City Council voted today to approve a severely scaled back version of the lobbying reform package it had approved six months ago but never enacted. The original reforms were proposed by the City Ethics Commission to limit the potential for City Hall lobbyists' and contractors' preferential access to and influence on the City's policymaking process. Since August 2001, the Commission had urged that laws be put in place that would require an elected official to refrain from voting on matters on which lobbyists or City contractors who lobby them have made significant political contributions, conducted substantial fundraising on the official's behalf or acted as a paid consultant to the official's campaign. After two years of delays, the Council instead opted to require only disclosure by elected officials and in more limited circumstances. Under the new rules, lobbying entities and contractors will have new disclosure requirements about their fundraising activities that benefit City officials.

Following the Council's action today, City Ethics Commission Executive Director LeeAnn Pelham said "While a disclosure requirement for elected officials sounds good in theory, it remains to be seen whether this approach will have a meaningful effect in practice absent a recusal requirement for those officials."

The new law will require lobbyists and contractors for the first time to make public when they fundraise at least \$15,000 to benefit the elected Councilmember they seek to influence, or \$35,000 if the official holds a citywide office. If the official is then lobbied, that official has two business days to make public that they acted on a matter on which they were lobbied by those financial interests.

The draft language will again be considered by the City Council next Friday, August 15. If the language is approved by the Council and Mayor, the new law will go into effect in January 2004.

For more information, contact the City Ethics Commission at (213) 978-1960.

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