

UNC Federal Relations Council

Frequently Asked Questions on Lobbying Compliance

Am I considered a lobbyist?

According to the Lobbying Disclosure Act, a lobbyist is defined as someone who makes more than one lobbying contact *and* spends at least 20% of their time engaging in lobbying activity. “More than one lobbying contact” means more than one communication to a covered official.

Who are “covered officials”?

Covered legislative staff broadly refers to all members of Congress and their staff, as well as all committee, leadership, and caucus staff. Covered executive staff includes the POTUS, VPOTUS, any officer or employee in the Executive Office of the President, and more. [Click here for more specifics.](#)

Am I engaging in lobbying activity?

“Lobbying activity” is defined as “lobbying contacts...[and] efforts in support of such contacts, including preparation and planning activities, research and other background work that is intended, at the time it is performed, for use in contacts, and coordination with the lobbying activities of others.” If the intent of the work is to support ongoing and future lobbying, then it would fall within the definition of lobbying activities.

What are the rules on giving gifts?

Covered individuals can never solicit a gift or accept a gift that is linked to any official action the individual has taken or is being asked to take. They may only accept a gift if it falls under one of the following exceptions:

- Gifts based on a long-standing friendship and have been paid for personally
- Books or other informational material
- Special plaques or awards
- Items of nominal value (under \$10), such as caps, t-shirts, and other small ticket items

What is the local and state government gift exception, and does it cover public universities?

The gift exception does cover public universities, and it allows anything paid for by the state or local government to be acceptable. This is a broad provision that extends to tangible items of all kinds. It does not extend to items donated to the university and then given to a Member or staff.

Can I provide a Member with tickets to an event, such as a football game or play?

Public universities, thanks to the local and state government gift exception, are allowed to provide tickets.

What about food and drink?

Again, public universities are exempt from traditional rules that govern the provision of food and drink to Members and staff.