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‘Austin’s Oldest Profession’ Continues As Growth Industry

Spending By Texas Lobby Clients Leapt by \$46 Million For 2003 Legislative Sessions

Austin, TX: Lobby spending in Texas—which leads the nation when considering the top value of all lobbying contracts—rose by \$45.9 million dollars from the 2001 legislative year compared with 2003, a new study found. The top value of lobby contracts in 2003 was \$276 million, a 20 percent increase over the \$230 million in contracts in 2001. In just the first half of 2004, lobby spending exceeds the total spent in 2002 by \$10 million. Over the past ten years, special interests spent a total of up to \$2 *billion* to lobby Texas officials. (Texas lobbyists report contract income in ranges such as “\$50,000 to \$99,999”).

Governor Rick Perry made 2003 a banner lobby year by calling the legislature back for three special sessions. The report, *Austin’s Oldest Profession: Texas’ Top Lobby Clients and Those Who Service Them*, found that the number of paying lobby clients in 2003 totaled 2,283, an increase of 265, or 13 percent over 2001 the previous legislative year. The number of paid lobbyists also increased from 1,484 in 2001 to 1,578 in 2003. The number of individual lobbying contracts increased during the period from 6,391 to 6,593.

“Austin has 50 lobbyists for every Senator and 10 lobbyists for every House Member,” said Texans for Public Justice Director Craig McDonald. “This hired-gun army hustles for special favors almost exclusively on behalf of the corporate and business interests of Texas. Of Texas’ nearly 1,600 lobbyists, just 15 work for consumer groups and just 32 worked to promote environmental protection. The corporate lobby goes virtually unchallenged in Texas.”

Austin’s Oldest Profession’s other key findings about the 2002 lobby include:

- The 17 clients that reported maximum lobbying expenditures exceeding a \$1 million apiece accounted for 11 percent of all lobby expenditures. SBC Corp. led the pack, spending up to \$7.6 million on its 110 lobbyists.
- Interests in the Energy & Natural Resources sector spent the most lobby money, paying up to \$43 million for 908 lobby contracts, or 16 percent of Texas total lobby spending.
- 59 lobbyists reported maximum incomes of \$1 million or more in 2003—up from 38 million-dollar lobbyists in 2001. Twenty-six lobbyists reported incomes over \$1.5 million. These elite lobbyists pocketed one out of every five Texas lobby dollars.
- Public Strategies Managing Director Rusty Kelly led the lobby, reporting 58 contracts worth up to \$3.1 million.
- Lobbyists reported 35 mega-contracts worth “more than \$200,000.” This was more than twice the mega-contracts reported in 2001.

*Texans for Public Justice is a non-profit, non-partisan research organization
that tracks the role of money in Texas politics.*

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