

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **School Board Policy 6321 – Lobbying and Lobbyist Registry**

**Q:** Is the lobbyist policy intended to prohibit or discourage lobbying?

**A:** No. The policy is intended to provide transparency for lobbying activities.

**Q:** If I wish to discuss a School Board agenda item with my elected board member, am I required to be registered as a lobbyist under the policy?

**A:** Individuals representing their own capacity for the purpose of self-representation are exempt from the definition of a lobbyist. Even if the individual discussing the matter is a lobbyist, he or she is not considered lobbying if they are expressing their individual thoughts on the issue. Unless the agenda item pertains to an award of business and you are officially representing a third-party in a lobbying capacity (regardless of whether you are compensated or not), you are exempt from the lobbyist policy.

*Example: There is an agenda item regarding the purchase of land. Individuals are not required to register as lobbyists to discuss their personal views on the item. This constitutes self-representation and advocacy. However, if the individual intends to discuss the item with a board member or district staff person in an effort to influence the outcome of the decision specifically on behalf of the current land owner's interests, this would constitute lobbying.*

**Q:** If I am the owner of a company currently doing business with our district, am I required to register as a lobbyist under the policy before speaking with a board member?

**A:** No. The only requirement for the owner of a company to register as a lobbyist is if that individual wanted to specifically lobby the School Board, board members or district staff in an attempt to influence for economic gain.

**Q:** As a member of a school allied group (such as the PTA), am I required to register as lobbyist before speaking with School Board members?

**A:** No. School allied groups are exempt from the definition of a lobbyist.

**Q:** If I am a registered lobbyist with our district, must I disclose this fact before all communications with board members or district staff?

**A:** No. Lobbyists are only required to disclose their intent to lobby on behalf of a principal before communications when the communication is intended to lobby—to influence decision-making for the economic gain of a principal.

**Q:** As a lobbyist, may I include the list of all principals I represent on a lobbyist statement form?

**A:** No. An individual Lobbyist Registration Statement Form must be completed for each principal represented by the lobbyist for whom the lobbyist intends to lobby our district.



**Q:** If I am a lobbyist already registered with Hillsborough County Government, must I also separately register with the School Board?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Once I have registered as lobbyist with our district, must I register again before lobbying relative to new issue?

**A:** Lobbyists are required to file a new Lobbyist Registration Statement Form for each principal they represent before engaging in lobbying activities on behalf of that principal, and re-file a Lobbyist Registration Statement Form for each applicable principal prior to July 1 each year. The required fee of \$250 must be submitted with an individual's first registration statement for each fiscal year, beginning July 1. The fee is paid one time per fiscal year per individual lobbyist, not per principal.

**Q:** What happens if an individual is retained to lobby on behalf of a principal after the July 1 filing requirement?

**A:** A lobbyist must register before engaging in lobbying activities. The July 1 deadline is relevant to re-filing for the next fiscal year (our district's fiscal year is July 1–June 30). See example below.

*Example: A lobbyist is retained on behalf of a principal to lobby the School Board in April regarding an issue for the economic gain of the principal. Before engaging in lobbying activities, the individual is required to register as a lobbyist with the Communications Office. Assuming the lobbying activities will continue beyond June 30, or the lobbyist wishes to continue to be recognized as a registered lobbyist for that principal for the next fiscal year, the lobbyist is required to re-file a lobbyist statement form before July 1.*

**Q:** If I am no longer a lobbyist for a specific principal, am I required to notify our district?

**A:** Lobbyists are encouraged to complete a Notice of Cancellation of Lobbyist Registration form when the lobbyist is no longer representing a principal. Submitting this form will allow our district to maintain the accuracy of its list of registered lobbyists. Otherwise, the list will be updated on July 1 when the lobbyist statement form is not re-filed.

**Q:** How should an individual report a violation to the lobbyist policy?

**A:** Individuals are required to file a sworn complaint with the Communications Office to report a violation of the lobbyist policy.

**Q:** Are all complaints investigated?

**A:** All complaints are reviewed, and the superintendent or his or her designee will conduct such an investigation as they deem appropriate based on the alleged violation.

**Q:** If a complaint is filed against me as a lobbyist will I be notified?



**A:** Yes. A lobbyist must be notified by our district.

**Q:** Are there predetermined penalties for a violation to the policy?

**A:** The School Board may warn, reprimand, suspend or prohibit a lobbyist from lobbying our district for a period of time not to exceed two years for violations to the policy. Although a penalty matrix exists to provide a framework for the potential penalty for certain violations, the School Board has the ultimate decision to approve, amend or reject the recommended penalty.