



2025 LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL

CONCERNING LOBBYING ON BEHALF OF A CHARITABLE TAX-EXEMPT NONPROFIT ENTITY
BILL SPONSORS: REP. ELIZA HAMRICK, REP. ANDREW BOESENECKER & SEN. FAITH WINTER

THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION

Permit leaders and staff members of 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations to have limited contact with state elected and covered officials regarding legislation that impacts their missions and communities without having to register as a lobbyist.

THE CURRENT LAW

If a nonprofit leader or staff member, as part of their job, engages in (1) a single communication (direct or indirect), (2) with a state elected or covered official, (3) regarding a specific bill, the law requires that leader or staff member to register as a lobbyist with the Secretary of State (pay a \$40 registration fee, and file 72-hour disclosure statements and monthly reports for a minimum of one year).

WHY THIS LEGISLATION MATTERS

- Current state lobbying rules have a chilling effect on the ability of 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations to advocate on behalf of their missions and the communities they serve across Colorado.
- 501(c)(3) nonprofits are subject to regulations on advocacy such as federal lobbying limits, prohibition on political campaign activities, and ethics and gift restrictions.
- Nonprofit leaders are already hesitant to engage in advocacy for fear of putting their organization's nonprofit status in jeopardy, having to first register as a lobbyist before making minimal contacts with state lawmakers is an excessive and undue burden.
- Nonprofits have the most experience with issues impacting their communities, often representing those with lived experience. Hampering nonprofit leaders and staff from discussing specific legislation with state elected and covered officials leaves critical expertise and voices behind in decision-making and legislative processes.
- Government works best when state legislators and public policy makers have access to unencumbered information and all perspectives and voices are represented.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT NOW?

- In 2024, legal precedent was established when the Secretary of State fined a nonprofit staff member and required that person to register as a lobbyist after they communicated with only six state lawmakers for a few hours over a two-day period during the 2024 legislative session.
- Due to this precedent, there is legitimate concern that competing interest groups will weaponize this rule and report the smallest infractions to stifle speech and punish nonprofit organizations.

CONTACTS

JACK MURPHY

Associate Director of Government Affairs
Colorado Nonprofit Association
jmurphy@coloradononprofits.org
262.957.0422

EDIE BUSAM

Aponte Busam Public Affairs
ebusam@aponte-busam.com
303.523.6236

EMILY BINIKI

Aponte Busam Public Affairs
ebiniki@aponte-busam.com
805.746.7784

HOW THE LAW WILL CHANGE

- This legislative proposal amends state statute to ensure nonprofits can spend a limited amount of time to advocate for their missions and the communities they serve without having to first register as a professional lobbyist, while still ensuring the transparency of their communications.
- Permit nonprofit leaders and staff members to meet with state elected and covered officials for no more than 30 days a year (with no more than 20 of those days falling in a legislative session) to educate and inform lawmakers and advocate for their missions and communities they serve.
- Whenever a nonprofit leader or staff member contacts a state elected or covered officials they are required to submit a disclosure statement to the Secretary of State within 72 hours.
- When sending multiple staff members to meet with a state elected or covered official, only one day will count towards the 30-day maximum allowed.

SUPPORT & ENDORSEMENTS

The Colorado Nonprofit Association is compiling a list of nonprofit organizations across the state that support this legislative effort. The list will be shared with other nonprofit leaders.

The Association is not sharing our list of supporters with Colorado lawmakers because that would be considered lobbying activity, and as a result, each organization would fall under the current rule that requires lobbyist registration and disclosure with the Secretary of State's office.

To join our growing list of support, please contact Jack Murphy at JMurphy@coloradononprofits.org

“Colorado’s nonprofit sector represents 34,000+ organizations with a wealth of knowledge and practical experience across a number of issue areas that impact every community in our state. Easing the barriers that currently prohibit nonprofit organizations from directly engaging in the legislative process ensures state legislators can better support the communities they represent and serve.”

PAUL LHEVINE, PRESIDENT & CEO, COLORADO NONPROFIT ASSOCIATION