



# Compliance Notes - Vol. 1, Issue 33

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## RECENT LOBBYING, ETHICS & CAMPAIGN FINANCE UPDATES

**We read the news, cut through the noise and provide you the notes.**

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Welcome to *Compliance Notes* from Nossaman's **Government Relations & Regulation Group** – a periodic digest of the headlines, statutory and regulatory changes and court cases involving campaign finance, lobbying compliance, election law and government ethics issues at the federal, state and local level.

Our attorneys, policy advisors and compliance consultants are available to discuss any questions or how specific issues may impact your business.

If there is a particular subject or jurisdiction you'd like to see covered, please let us know.

Until then, please enjoy this installment of **Compliance Notes**. If you would like to have these updates delivered directly to your in-box, please click below to subscribe to our Government Relations & Regulation mailing list.

### **Campaign Finance & Lobbying Compliance**

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The Senate Committee on Rules and Administration voted to advance three Federal Election Commission nominations to the full Senate: Shana M. Broussard, Sean J. Cooksey and Allen Dickerson. The three nominations passed by voice vote. (Rules & Administration Press Release) On December 9 the Senate approved the nominations of Ms. Broussard and Messrs. Cooksey and Dickerson, and the FEC's quorum will be restored upon their swearing in. (Kate Ackley, *CQ Roll Call*)

According to a federal court's unsealed memorandum opinion, the Justice Department is reviewing possible evidence of a scheme to obtain a presidential pardon or a sentence reduction in exchange for political contributions. This investigation appears to have two prongs: possible violations of the Lobbying Disclosure Act for unregistered lobbying related to the pardon and possible bribery charges linked to the political contribution. (J. Howell, Memorandum Opinion)

**California:** Samuel Leung, a Torrance-based real estate developer, pleaded guilty to felony conspiracy in a campaign money laundering case involving more than six years' worth of political contributions to eight politicians. Leung admitted he took part in a scheme to reimburse campaign donors between January 2009 and February 2015 — just as his six-story apartment project was being reviewed and approved at Los Angeles City Hall. The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office said Leung was guilty of illegally donating "hundreds of thousands of dollars" in the hope that local elected officials would rezone his property and approve his 352-unit project in L.A.'s Harbor Gateway neighborhood. (David Zahniser and Emily Alpert Reyes, *Los Angeles Times*)

**Ohio:** Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine signed House Bill 404 into law, extending expiration dates for licenses issued by state agencies due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Lobbyist registrations set to expire at the end of 2020 will remain active until July 1, 2021. Any lobbyist who does not plan to continue lobbying activity in 2021 must log in and terminate engagement in the Ohio Lobbying Activity Center. (Marilyn Wesel, *LobbyComply News Roundup*)

**Texas:** Arlington Mayor Jeff Williams was fined \$1,500 for violating multiple campaign finance laws in 2019, according a Texas Ethics Commission filing. (Kailey Broussard, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*)

## Contribution Limits

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**California:** The Inglewood City Council voted unanimously to set the city's contribution limit at \$100,000, one of the highest caps in the state. At the meeting, Inglewood Mayor James T. Butts Jr. said he supports the higher limit because it allows a candidate to compete against political action committees, which are not bound by contribution limits due to the federal Supreme Court's ruling on Citizens United. Locally, Inglewood's limit is magnitudes higher than Los Angeles County's other largest cities. Burbank caps contributions at \$500, Torrance at \$1,000, Long Beach at \$400 and Los Angeles at \$800. Other major cities, including San Diego and San Francisco, have caps that are less than \$1,000. (Jason Henry, *Pasadena StarNews*)

## Elections

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Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton said he's suing Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin in the U.S. Supreme Court, accusing the swing states of exploiting the coronavirus pandemic to sidestep federal and state election laws and pass last-minute changes to mail-in voting. Paxton is asking the U.S. Supreme Court to block the battleground states from casting "unlawful and constitutionally tainted votes" in the Electoral College. (Emma Platoff, *The Texas Tribune*)

**Georgia:** According to the Georgia Secretary of State, a Florida attorney is being investigated in connection with his attempt to register to vote in Georgia and his instructions (provided in a now-deleted Facebook Live video) to other Florida Republicans regarding how to do the same. (Nicole Carr, WSB-TV)

## Political Speech & Campaign Advertisements

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Advertising spending in Georgia has exceeded \$329 million since Election Day as lawmakers descend on the state to sway voters in two highly anticipated Senate runoffs. (Morgan Phillips, *FOXBusiness*)

## State & Local Ballot Measures

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The Alaskan Independence Party, its chairman and two Anchorage residents are suing the state of Alaska and the Alaska Division of Elections to overturn Ballot Measure 2, a sweeping election reform initiative that would install ranked-choice voting in Alaska's general elections. The lawsuit claims that the measure would violate the plaintiffs' rights "to free political association, free speech, right to petition, right to due process" and other rights guaranteed by the Alaska and U.S. constitutions and requests that the measure be nullified. (James Brooks, *Anchorage Daily News*)