



Compliance Notes - Vol. 3, Issue 17

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RECENT LOBBYING, ETHICS & CAMPAIGN FINANCE UPDATES

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

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

New Mexico: The U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear the Rio Grande Foundation's challenge of Santa Fe's campaign disclosure requirements, leaving in place the New Mexico District Court's January 2020 ruling in favor of the city. Santa Fe's campaign finance provision aims to increase transparency by prohibiting organizations that spend more than \$500 on political campaigns from shielding details about the financial sources of their receipts and details about their disbursements. (Staff and Wire Reports, *Santa Fe New Mexican*)

Government Ethics & Transparency

The Office of Government Ethics issued a proposed rule, the first of its kind, which would provide guidelines to federal employees who accept donations to cover job-related legal fees. The proposed rule would expand the universe of people from whom federal employees can receive gifts, which the ethics office argues will help avoid the perception of civil servants using their public office for private gain. Individuals would be able to donate up to \$10,000 per year to a person's fund, as long as they do not have business before the employee's agency, are not a lobbyist or an agent of a foreign government and are not acting on another's behalf. Anonymous donations and contributions from organizations would be prohibited, and all donations worth more than \$250 would be publically reported every quarter. (Eric Katz, *Government Executive*)

Illinois: In hopes of significantly strengthening Chicago's ethics laws, Alderman Michele Smith (43rd) plans to introduce a series of ethics reforms at the upcoming City Council meeting. The proposal increases the maximum fine for ethics violations from \$5,000 to \$20,000 and bans former council members from lobbying the City Council. The proposal also seeks to broaden the city's conflict-of-interest provision by making it a conflict for any administrative or legislative action or decision to benefit the relatives or partners of city officials or employees. The current conflict-of-interest provision is only applicable to contracted firms of city employees or relatives. (Alice Yin and John Byrne, *Chicago Tribune*)

Maryland: Following an investigation, Baltimore County Inspector General Kelly Madigan concluded that between April 2021 and January 2022, Baltimore County Council Chairman Julian Jones violated county policy when at least 40 official emails to constituents included a "donate" button for his political campaign. Even though the emails were sent using a third-party marketing service and transmitted through a private computer server, the "from" line used Jones' county email address. Since replies to those emails went through a county computer server, the IG report found the emails violated county policy prohibiting the use of county email for anything other than "county business." (Alison Knezevich, *Baltimore Sun*)

Legislation

Florida: Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed a bill to create a statewide law enforcement agency, the Office of Election Crimes and Security, within the Department of State. It is dedicated to investigating voter fraud and other election crimes. This new law results from the governor making voting legislation a primary focus this year, pushing the Republican-controlled state legislature to create the policing unit as other states evaluate safeguarding their election systems. (Anthony Izaguirre, *AP News*)