



# Compliance Notes - Vol. 5, Issue 15

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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 & Lobbying Compliance**

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U.S. Sen. Mike Braun's Senate campaign must pay a \$159,000 civil penalty to the Federal Election Commission (FEC) for violating campaign finance rules during the 2018 election. The FEC initially charged the Braun campaign with illegally accepting improper loans. However, after the campaign provided documentation, the FEC determined the violation resulted from clerical errors by a former treasurer, Travis Kabrick. Braun's spokesperson said the campaign's treasurer is exploring options to pay the fine. (*AP News*)

**Oklahoma:** To weaken the influence of dark money in state races, Gov. Kevin Stitt's Task Force on Campaign Finance and Election Threats recommended allowing politicians to accept unlimited contributions from

individual and political parties. In its March 31, 2024 report, the task force also recommended Oklahoma triple campaign contribution limits from political action committees to candidates from \$5,000 to \$15,000 per election. Governor Stitt created the task force in November 2023 to study campaign finance, foreign investment and interference in Oklahoma elections. (Clifton Adcock, *The Frontier*)

## Government Ethics & Transparency

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**Alabama:** The Alabama House of Representatives voted for a bill that would repeal the current ethics laws for public officials and employees, replace the code with tougher punishments for ethics violations and weaken the powers of the state Ethics Commission. Rep. Matt Simpson (R-Daphne) sponsored HB 227. Simpson said the bill would make it easier for public servants to understand what an ethics violation is and is not. No legislator spoke in opposition to the bill, but Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall voiced his opposition in an op-ed, including that the proposed legislation would “dramatically” increase how much lobbyists can spend on public servants per occasion to \$100, up from \$33. The bill moves to the Alabama Senate. (Alander Rocha, *Alabama Reflector*)

**Minnesota:** Government ethics experts have questioned if Democrat state Sen. John Hoffman was promoting his official position for personal gain when he prominently touted his political status on his personal consulting firm’s website. The website homepage for his consulting firm, Hoffman Strategic Advisors, featured a posed photo of Hoffman inside the Minnesota State Capitol and a tab that read “Book Senator Hoffman to speak.” Even though Hoffman lists his firm as a source of income on his economic disclosure with the Minnesota Campaign Finance Board, he said he has made no money from the business. While Hoffman did not appear to have violated any laws or rules by promoting his Senate status on his private business website, ethics experts have said the legislative branch could benefit from having clearer rules for lawmakers. (Ryan Faircloth, *Star Tribune*)

## Ballot Measures & Elections

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**Alaska:** A complaint filed against the state Division of Elections argues that the Division violated state law when it certified a ballot measure that seeks to repeal ranked choice voting and open primaries. The Division of Elections certified last month that a grassroots group successfully gathered the signatures needed to put a question on the 2024 general election ballot on repealing Alaska’s voting system. The complaint filed in Anchorage Superior Court by three voters asserts that the ballot group “intentionally conducted their signature petition drive illegally, thereby disqualifying thousands of signatures.” Without those signatures, the complaint argues, the petition fails to meet requirements and should be invalidated. Division of Elections Director Carol Beecher said the complaint is “under review.” (Iris Samuels, *Anchorage Daily News*)