



# Compliance Notes - Vol. 5, Issue 9

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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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**Illinois:** The Illinois State Board of Elections rejected a request to reconsider or lower more than \$100,000 in fines levied against a political action committee (PAC) that helped expand the Democrat Party's majority on the Illinois Supreme Court. The board's unanimous bipartisan vote followed a request by All for Justice, an independent expenditure PAC backed by Illinois Senate President Don Harmon, after it was fined \$108,500 by the board in 2023 for failing to timely file detailed expenditure reports in spending \$7.3 million to help elect Elizabeth Rochford and Mary Kay O'Brien to the state's highest court in 2022. The fines were among the largest ever levied by the election board. (Rick Pearson, *The Chicago Tribune*)

## Government Ethics & Transparency

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**Michigan:** Attorney General Dana Nessel revealed criminal charges against two Republican fundraisers who were allegedly involved in an effort to conceal the names of donors to a campaign to reduce Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's emergency powers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Heather Lombardini and Sandy Baxter helped raise money for the Unlock Michigan ballot proposal committee in 2020 and 2021 by first moving the dollars through nonprofit organizations so the donors did not have to be publicly disclosed. According to an affidavit filed in Ingham County District Court by Nessel's office, donors wrote "Unlock Michigan" in the memo line on at least two checks to the nonprofits. Nessel claims "[i]t was done specifically with the intent to evade that very reporting that is required under the Michigan Campaign Finance Act." (Craig Mauger, *The Detroit News*)

**Wisconsin:** The Wisconsin Ethics Commission has recommended that state prosecutors file felony charges against a fundraising committee for former President Donald Trump and a Republican state lawmaker related to an effort to unseat Assembly Speaker Robin Vos. The ethics commission alleges that Trump's Save America political action committee, Brandtjen, Republican Party officials in three counties and Steen's campaign conspired to avoid state fundraising limits in the effort to defeat Vos, steering at least \$40,000 into the bid. The ethics commission recommended that charges be brought against the Trump fundraising committee, Brandtjen, Steen's campaign, eight other individuals and three county Republican parties. If county prosecutors do not initiate charges within 60 days, the commission said it will go to another district attorney or the Wisconsin Department of Justice. (Scott Bauer, *AP News*)

## Voting & Elections

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**Oklahoma:** A bill to ban ranked choice voting statewide cleared a House committee last week, prompting pushback from one lawmaker who argues the system would benefit voters and candidates alike. House Bill 3156 by Eric Roberts (R-Oklahoma City), would prohibit ranked-choice voting in statewide and municipal elections. While no municipality in Oklahoma has authorized ranked choice voting, and the state's current fleet of voting machines cannot accommodate the voting method, Roberts told House Elections and Ethics Committee members the bill is necessary to protect the elderly and others from a more complex voting system. The bill cleared the committee on a 5-2 party-line vote and is now eligible to be considered by the full House. (Keaton Ross, *Oklahoma Watch*)