

Blazer tickets among expenses listed by lobbyists

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Emerald Contributor

SALEM — What do you call someone who gives away Portland Trail Blazer tickets? A friend?



How about a lobbyist?

The latest lobbyist expense reports, filed on May 2 with the Oregon Government Ethics Commission, indicate that the distinction between a friend and a lobbyist may not be all that clear.

In their reports, legislative lobbyists listed everything from food and refreshments to dinners and Blazer games as costs of doing their jobs.

Although Oregon lobbying regulations equate lobbying with "influencing or attempting to obtain the good will of

legislative officials," Tom Barrows, a Capitol lobbyist, sees it a different way.

"We primarily trot information back and forth from client to legislators and legislators to clients," he said.

If the expense reports of two lobbyist are an indicator, a lot of trotting goes on outside of the Capitol and in seats at Blazer games.

Donald Fordyce, a lobbyist for U.S. Bancorp and U.S. Bank of Oregon, indicated on his report that he spent \$70 apiece on Blazer tickets for lawmakers.

Gary Conkling, a lobbyist for many businesses, including Portland-based companies such as Tektronix Inc. and Mentor Graphics Corp., spent more than \$100 apiece for Blazer tickets and dinners.

Between the two of them, Fordyce and Conkling provided tickets for 10 legislators and an aide to attend Blazer games that had been sold out to the public.

The legislators — senators and representatives — are from both major politi-

cal parties. Some of the lawmakers who attended the games include Senate Majority Leader Bill Bradbury, D-Bandon; Rep. Jim Edmundson, D-Eugene; Sen. Lenn Hannon, R-Ashland; and Rep. Margaret Carter, D-Portland.

Fordyce and Conkling are only two of more than 300 lobbyists listed in the Capitol membership roster and almost twice that number registered with the Oregon Ethics Commission.

They are also two who actually reported their Blazer tickets as expenses. Many other lobbyists do not report all expenses because of a loophole in regulations.

Ethics commission guidelines allow lobbyists to omit lobbying expenses less than \$45 from their reports.

Lobbyists such as David Barrows, Tom Barrows' father, who lobbies for the Oregon League of Financial Institutions and Chemical Waste Management of the Northwest, use the loophole to their advantage.

Barrows said he invited 26 legislators

to Blazer games this season, including one playoff game. Barrows' expense report listed only one Blazer game since July 1990. He did not report the other 25.

"We've been in these seats since the '70s," Barrows said. He said bought the tickets for \$38.50 each, and he takes legislators he likes, though he declined to identify those he took to games.

"I don't want to mention names," Tom Barrows said. "Some legislators aren't comfortable with that because the public has the perception that they've been bought off."

But in a way they are being bought off, said John Lie, a University sociology professor who specializes in social interaction and organizations.

"The lobbyists intervene in a direct relationship between the public and the legislators," he said. "Lobbyists represent themselves as serving the public good, and in fact, they only further their own interests."



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