

LOBBYING: Oregon has no campaign contribution limits

Continued from 1A

Last summer, the Sunlight Foundation evaluated how all 50 states track spending on lobbying and created a scorecard ranking the states. The foundation awarded Oregon an F grade, meaning lobbyists and their clients face fewer disclosure requirements than in most other states.

Most of Oregon's neighbors received higher grades, from an A in California to a C in Idaho.

Emily Shaw, a senior analyst at the Sunlight Foundation who was involved in the project, said the goal was to evaluate how much information states collected about lobbyists' specific activities and the costs of those actions.

"People should be able to find out who has come to influence their laws," Shaw said. "That's not to say there needs to be any particular restriction on lobbying in a particular situation. But for good public awareness of what's happening in these processes, we need good information about what lobbyists are doing, and when."

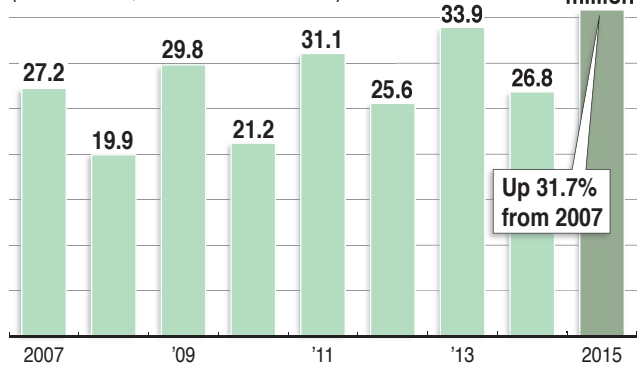
Pete Quist, research director at the National Institute on Money in State Politics in Montana, agreed that it is important for states to require lobbyists to disclose more about how they influence lawmaking. The institute is collecting information about state-level spending on lobbying across the nation. "The lobbying piece isn't analyzed as much in the media as it should be," Quist said. "What we see a lot of public discussion about is the campaign contributions."

Oregon lobbyists have resisted efforts to require them to disclose more details of their work, most recently in 2015 when they won passage of a bill that allows them to avoid reporting spending to lobby other lobbyists, for example to build a coalition for or against an issue. The 2015 bill — which easily passed both chambers of the Legislature and was signed into law by Gov. Kate Brown — extended the disclosure exemption through mid-2017.

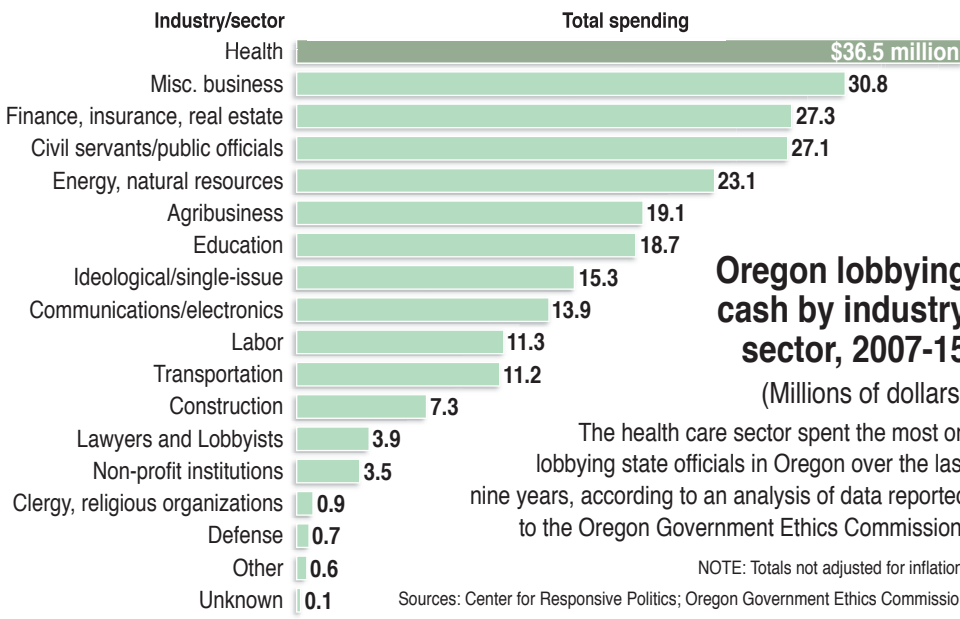
Dan Meek, a public interest attorney and co-chair

Lobbying cash spent in Oregon, 2007-15

(All sectors, millions of dollars)



A wide range of entities, from hospitals and nursing homes to utilities and the governor's office, reported spending more than \$251 million on lobbying Oregon lawmakers and other state officials from 2007 through 2015. Groups spend more in odd years, when the Legislature holds full-length sessions.



Oregon lobbying cash by industry sector, 2007-15

(Millions of dollars)

The health care sector spent the most on lobbying state officials in Oregon over the last nine years, according to an analysis of data reported to the Oregon Government Ethics Commission.

NOTE: Totals not adjusted for inflation.

Sources: Center for Responsive Politics; Oregon Government Ethics Commission

Hillary Borrud and Alan Kenaga/EO Media Group

of the Independent Party of Oregon, said this exemption is a major reason the public cannot find out how lobbyists use much of the money their clients report spending. Still, Meek said he remains more concerned that Oregon has no campaign contribution limits because political donations do not have to be reported as gifts, even if they are connected to lobbying efforts.

"Lobbying regulation in Oregon is really of secondary importance because it can be so easily evaded," Meek said.

The extension of the lobbying reporting exemption last year provided another example of how lobbyists avoid revealing their impact on Oregon's laws.

Lobbyist Marla Rae, who previously served on the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission and worked for the Oregon Department of Justice and former Gov.

Ted Kulongoski, advocated for the bill during legislative hearings on behalf of the Capitol Club of Oregon, a professional organizations for lobbyists. However, the Capitol Club did not report spending any money on lobbying last year and Rae does not appear to have registered to lobby on behalf of the group.

In an email, Rae explained the Capitol Club did not have to report spending any money on lobbying because she volunteered her time to advocate for the bill. Rae wrote that she did not spend enough time working on the issue — the threshold is 24 hours in a quarter — to trigger the state's requirement to register as a lobbyist for the group.

Bill Cross, the Legislative Committee chair for the Capitol Club, said the group still wants a permanent reporting exemption for lobbying other lobbyists, partly because it is burden-

some for lobbyists to track the information.

"I'm sure we'll be pursuing some sort of way to adjust that because the value of that information just doesn't seem apparent to us," Cross said.

Cross said it would also create a lot of work for lobbyists — with minimal benefit to the public — if lobbyists were required to report all the bills or executive actions they work to influence, because he sometimes tracks hundreds of bills during a legislative session. At the moment, no one is advocating for expanded lobbying disclosures in Oregon, Cross said. "I'm not aware of any issues, I guess, that have evolved in the last four or five years where other organizations have said, 'Wait a minute, we really need to reform our lobbying disclosure laws because of problems with corruption or something,'" Cross said.

Senate confirms Oregon's first resiliency officer

By PARIS ACHEN Capital Bureau

SALEM — The Oregon Senate on Wednesday unanimously confirmed Gov. Kate Brown's nominee for the state's first resiliency officer to develop plans for responding to a major earthquake.

Michael Harryman, former director of emergency operations for Oregon Health Authority's Public Health Division, starts his new job May 26.

"I am honored that the governor has nominated me for this important position," Harryman said May 23 during a hearing of the Senate Committee on Rules and Executive Appointments.

Harryman is charged with "directing, implementing, and coordinating seismic safety and resilience goal-setting, which includes working with state agencies to improve Oregon's seismic safety and resilience," according to a statement from Brown's office.

One of Harryman's first tasks is to participate in the regional earthquake preparation exercise, Cascadia Rising, June 7 to 10. The event is intended to prepare the Pacific Northwest to coordinate a response to a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake and tsunamis. Participants include state and local agencies from Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, along with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, military commands and members of the private sector.

Geologists and seismic experts predict major seismic activity along the Cascadia faultline could devastate commu-

nities throughout Oregon, especially along the state's coastline. Much of Oregon's infrastructure, such as hospitals, roads, and bridges, remain vulnerable to collapse, according to the 2013 Oregon Seismic Safety Policy Advisory Commission Report. Lawmakers also recently approved a record amount — \$50 million — to reinforce the state's schools against collapse in the event of an earthquake.

The Legislature created Harryman's position in 2015 to develop earthquake response and recovery plans for the state.

Harryman is the governor's second nominee for the position. Brown had to withdraw her previous nominee for the position in February because a majority of senators indicated they would vote against her choice. The previous nominee, Derek Smith, a former chief executive officer of Clean Energy Works, had no experience in disaster response or recovery.

Brown announced May 2 that she nominated Harryman, director of emergency operations at the Oregon Public Health Division, to fill the post. Harryman has a master's degree in emergency and disaster management and has directed emergency operations at the Public Health Division for the past 10 years.

"Mr. Harryman has the experience and expertise needed to bring our state agencies together to ensure they are well coordinated as we work toward making Oregon seismically resilient," Brown said in a May 25 statement.

Corrections

The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

EAST OREGONIAN

— Founded Oct. 16, 1875 —

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Office hours: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed major holidays

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East Oregonian (USPS 164-980) is published daily except Sunday, Monday and Dec. 25, by the EO Media Group, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, OR. Postmaster: send address changes to East Oregonian, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. Copyright © 2016, EO Media Group

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