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## The top five ethics disclosure pitfalls for Georgia Lobbyists

Posted on [February 25, 2013 6:29 AM](#) by [Todd Rehm](#)

Helpfully compiled by [our friends at R. Thompson & Associates:](#)

### 5 Common Lobbyists' Reporting Mistakes

Timely and accurate reporting for lobbyists is critical when trying to win and maintain client relationships. In an environment of increasing transparency, RTA Political Management Group founder and managing partner, Rick Thompson, says his firm is being increasingly retained to assist lobbyist in avoiding pitfalls.

The biggest mistake Thompson runs across is perhaps the most frustrating for lobbyists.

"Time and again we find a lobbyist that believes he or she filed a disclosure report but failed to get a confirmation." Even though most tech savvy filers recognize the e-filing system has bugs, too often the assumption is made that a report is filed when the submit button is clicked. It is important to have the confirmation, which assures the report has been accepted.

Detail, detail, detail! Another common error found on lobbyists' reports is when a lobbyist will identify a Bill, Resolution or Ordinance for which expenditure was incurred. It is only required to provide such identification if the expenditure was truly made in attempt to influence the public officer's decision. Although a specific measure may have been discussed, it is most likely the expenditure was not made specifically to influence the public officer but rather allowed for the opportunity to discuss the issue.

Understanding filing procedures at each level of government is important. It is not uncommon for lobbyists, accustomed to e-filing with the State, to fail to mail a paper disclosure to the City or County election official when the lobbyist is registered at the local level. Many local jurisdictions have unique filing requirements. It is important to know who, where and how each jurisdiction expects the lobbyist to report.

"We see a number of lobbyists failing to register at all the appropriate levels," says Thompson. Making sure your registration is current at the proper level is an integral component of registration. State, State Agency, Vendor and Local levels each carry unique criteria.

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Finally, of the five most common mistakes, over disclosing the cost of an expenditure rounds out the list. On numerous occasions a lobbyist will divide the expenditure equally based on how many people are in attendance. Many times there are individuals present who are not public officers; therefore, their portion should not be allocated as lobbyist expenditure. Over disclosing expenditures does not provide a clear accounting of the money spent on public officers.

RTA Political Management Group offers lobbyist peace of mind. Knowing these pitfalls and taking the time to attend detail makes its services low cost assurance to lobbyist pros. Whether it is simple review and consultation to insure best reporting practices are followed, or comprehensive outsourcing, Thompson's team stands ready to assist.

Summary:

#### Top Five Lobbyist Mistakes

- 1) Not filing on time or believing the report was submitted without receiving a confirmation.
- 2) Identifying a bill, resolution, or ordinance for a reported expenditure.
- 3) Lobbyists registered on the Local level not sending a paper copy to the city or county election official where the expenditure was made.
- 4) Not registering for the proper levels: State, State Agency, Vendor, and Local.
- 5) Over disclosing the cost of an expenditure.

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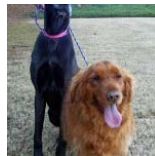
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#### About Todd Rehm

Todd Rehm is a Republican political campaign consultant and pollster based in Atlanta and editor of GaPundit.com, the most-read political newsletter in Georgia, which focuses on Republican politics, state and local government, and elections. He is a graduate of Emory University and veteran of 20 years of political campaigns. He also wrote for [PeachPundit.com](#), a blog about Georgia politics. Todd's writing has appeared in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, [Gainesville \(GA\) Times](#), Macon Telegraph, [Marietta Daily Journal](#), and other local periodicals. His photography has appeared in the [United Methodist Reporter](#).

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