

**REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR POLITICAL CONSULTANTS**

IF YOU WISH TO SPEAK TO CITY COUNCIL, **PRINT** YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, AND EMAIL.

NAME (print)	ADDRESS AND ZIP CODE	Email
✓ Debbie Anna	League of Women Voters	
✓ KATE TITUS	Common Cause Oregon	
✓ Hugh MCGAVIEH	Represent us -	
✓ Aram Andriesian	Represent Portland	



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## The League of Women Voters of Portland

618 NW Glisan St., Suite 303, Portland, OR 97209

(503) 228-1675 • info@lwvpdx.org • www.lwvpdx.org

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## **Reporting Requirements for Political Consultants City Council Testimony April 13, 2016**

The League of Women Voters of Portland is pleased to support the political consultant registration and reporting proposal before you today. The League works at all levels of government to increase access to information and protect the public's right to know. We support reforms of this nature because they reveal information on the pressures exerted on the policy-making process. Government that is open, transparent, and accessible is more likely to engender public trust.

Based on our conversations with Commissioner Fish and his staff, we understand that blurring the lines between political consulting and lobbying is a relatively new phenomenon. We commend the Commissioner for developing a proposal that addresses this new reality and takes an important first step in shining a light on these relationships. The League urges your support.

We also are pleased that the Auditor's office plans to incorporate this new program into the existing lobbying registration and reporting system. The information will be more readily accessible to the public and this approach should add to the ease of administration.

The League encourages the Auditor to evaluate the effectiveness of this program after it has been in place for a period of time. It is possible Portland might want to follow San Francisco's lead with even more comprehensive regulations if necessary.

We are grateful for the time and attention Commissioner Fish, Auditor Hull Caballero, and their staff members have dedicated to enhancing transparency in Portland's city government. We encourage the City Council's support of the proposed reform.

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310 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Ave., Suite 413  
Portland, OR 97204-2311  
503/283-1922  
503/283-1877 (fax)  
[www.commoncause.org/oregon](http://www.commoncause.org/oregon)

April 13, 2016

To: Portland City Council  
From: Kate Titus, Common Cause Oregon  
Re: Political Consultant Disclosure

I submit this testimony on behalf of Common Cause, in my role as the executive director of Common Cause Oregon.

#### Common Cause

Common Cause is a national nonpartisan organization – with on-the ground presence here in Oregon and in most states – that works to safeguard and strengthen the democratic process. Founded in 1970, the organization works to build trust in our institutions of self-government, empower public participation in the democratic process, and ensure that government serves and is accountable to the public interest.

#### Comments

On behalf of Common Cause, I express support for this ordinance to establish transparency of the roles and relationships at play when political consultants interact with city government.

I'd like to speak primarily to **why this ordinance matters**, raising several points:

- **The reason for ethics rules generally** – First, I think it's helpful to put this in context, by reminding ourselves why we set *any* ethics rules. Ethics rules are not simply about stopping "*bad guys*" from acting corruptly. First and foremost, they are about creating clear guidelines for the many "*good guys*" in public service so that we're all able to navigate all the conflicting interests that others have of us in ways that unquestionably ensure government's primary accountability to the public and that uphold public trust. It is our responsibility to do this, but it's also in all of our interests to have these rules, especially now when public trust in government and in elected officials is at an all-time low.
- **The inevitability of political consultant conflicts** – With that in mind, it's clear that political consultants function in roles which create both real and perceived conflicts of interest. This is not simply a matter of a few bad apples figuring out how to use the information, expertise and access gained in one setting to advantage in another. Even those political consultants who would like to avoid conflicts cannot "firewall" their own brain. Furthermore, without even a professional oversight board or code of conduct for political consultants, there is currently no protocol for what's appropriate. Consultants – and the public servants who work with them – inevitably end up navigating continual conflicts.

- **The value of getting ahead of a growing problem** – From a national perspective, this problem is on the rise, and likely to get worse. As campaigning and lobbying evolves, it's becoming increasingly common for political consultants to function in ways that involve conflicts of interests. Here in Portland, we've hardly had to deal with this issue yet. But as this continues to come up, the press and public response will undoubtedly grow harsher, as in New York for example, where both Mayor DeBlasio and Governor Cuomo have come under some intense scrutiny on this issue. Portland is smart to get ahead of this problem, now while it's still possible.

I'll also comment briefly on **this approach to addressing the problem.**

- **Good starting point** –I believe this is a sensible approach and a good first step for Portland. Transparency is always key to addressing conflicts of interest, and a necessary foundation for any further steps. To more fully address this problem, we'll want to go beyond transparency, setting limits against roles that erode public trust. This might include following San Francisco's lead with a revolving door policy, and/or some guidelines for recusal. I also think we may eventually want to broaden the definition of "political consultant" so that it doesn't exempt professional fundraisers and pollsters, however, for now, such a limit is probably a good trade-off if it makes it significantly more practical to oversee the policy. Overall, I think the policy as written is a very reasonable starting point.
- **Should monitor and consider further steps** – I will note the obvious that of course the Auditor and City Council will want to monitor and adjust this measure as necessary. Furthermore, we should also monitor the course of this issue across the country. As more and more municipalities take steps to address this problem, best practices will rise up.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, Common Cause commends Commissioner Fish and the City Council for taking leadership on this issue, expresses support for this ordinance, and encourages your vote to pass it.