

## Virginia Makes Key Adjustments to Law Governing Gifts to Officials, Adds New Lobbyist Gift Notification

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Organizations represented by lobbyists in Virginia should be aware of a [new law](#) enacted today. The law eliminates a controversial exception to the state's \$100 limit on lobbyist gifts to legislators and officials, adds a key new exception to that law, and also includes an additional gift notification requirement for lobbyists. The changes represent Virginia's continued efforts to tweak its ethics laws in the wake of Gov. Bob McDonnell's [now-vacated](#) corruption conviction.

First, all registered state lobbyists will have three weeks from the end of each legislative session to send statewide elected officials, cabinet secretaries, and legislators a summary of any gifts the lobbyist gave to that person or their family between January 1 and the end of the legislative session.

Second, the lobbyist gift rule exception for large events open to "individuals who share a common interest" was eliminated. These events are now subject to the \$100 limit on gifts from lobbyists, their principals, and persons seeking state business. This exception was widely criticized as a "loophole" that allowed a senior state official to [attend](#) a luxury suite at a football game. Other exceptions for large events, such as those attended by members of a civic organization or from a particular industry, are still valid.

Third, a new "reception exception" was created. Similar to rules that exist in the U.S. House and Senate, it is no longer considered a "gift" for an official or legislator to attend a reception where "food, such as hors d'oeuvres, and beverages that can be conveniently consumed by a person while standing or walking are offered." Thus, such receptions are not prohibited by the law limiting gifts from lobbyists, their principals, and persons seeking state business.

These are the most broadly-applicable changes for lobbyists and their employers, though the law includes technical amendments and smaller changes as well. Note that the state's executive order on ethics, governing executive branch officials and employees, remains unchanged. Most of the changes take effect July 1, 2017.

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