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FPPC offers guidance on Lobbying Filing Deadlines in wake of COVID-19

In light of the Statewide shelter-in-place order, the FPPC understands the unique and extraordinary situation caused by our united efforts to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. We are issuing this advisory as we acknowledge the reality the impact this order will have on those persons subject to the Political Reform Act's lobbying registration and reporting requirements.

The FPPC encourages people subject to lobbying registration and reporting requirements to continue to make the best efforts to timely file all legally required reports and statements. But the FPPC recognizes the difficulty some may face in filing statements and reports given the shelter-in-place order and other issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We know there are real concerns and potentially dangerous consequences in this pandemic and we’re empathetic to those dealing with difficult circumstances,” said FPPC Chair Richard C. Miadich. “That’s why we’re encouraging common sense in trying to balance health and logistical concerns with the law and the public’s expectation of transparency.”

If circumstances caused by COVID-19 inhibit the filing of a lobbying report or statement, the filer should communicate these issues to the Secretary of State’s Office and document all attempts to file and the issues faced. While quarterly lobbying reports are filed electronically, the law requires certain other statements be filed on paper with an original signature. Restrictions imposed to fight the spread of COVID-19 may make the logistics of filing documents on paper with original signatures difficult or even impossible. To the extent that is the case, people required to file lobbying forms on paper with original signatures are encouraged to make use of digital and electronic options for filing reports to ensure timely filing (e.g. email and fax filing, scanned and/or photocopied signatures, electronic signatures, etc.). Paper statements with originals would need to be filed when feasible.

If a person with lobbying filing requirements makes best efforts to comply with the Political Reform Act’s lobbying registration and reporting rules but is unable to do so due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the FPPC will consider this a strong mitigating factor in determining whether an enforcement action against the person is appropriate. The FPPC is committed to promoting timely and effective lobbying activity disclosure but also appreciates the larger public safety issues currently facing the state.

If you have questions or concerns above campaign filing obligations, please email us at advice@fppc.ca.gov.

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