

# Another Year, Another Record

*Nebraska's Continuous Lobbying Climb*



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## Our Report: Another Year, Another Record

# \$21,839,249

Since 2000, Common Cause Nebraska has monitored lobbying activity at our state's Unicameral. Over the last two decades, one thing has become clear: lobbying is a tremendously effective way to make money and it only continues to grow as an industry.

In 2022, lobbying firms received \$21,680,485 in compensation and \$158,764 in reimbursements, amounting to a whopping \$21,839,249 in total receipts.

The principals – those who hire lobbyists – believed they could buy influence through the lobby by *generously* spending \$21,429,666 last year.

Our report has always focused on the lobby toolbox: wine, dine, entertain, and fundraise. Last year, a new lobbying routine came about: capture the press and advertise the product. Included in this year's report is a troubling story of what can go wrong when ethics are forgotten and senators are used as marketing tools for private business.

In the report that follows, we'll break down the numbers to show who makes the money and who spends the money to gain influence. Significant findings from this year's report include:

- In 2022, top lobbying firms received \$21,839,249 in total compensation for their work. Average receipts per firm were \$974,646, with some receiving well over \$1,000,000.
- Principals spent \$21,405,662 on lobbying, including \$401,051 entertaining elected officials and \$21,635 on gifted tickets to events.
- Top spending Principal's in 2022 included the Nebraska Farm Bureau, the League of Municipalities, and the University of Nebraska, among others.
- Lobbyists continue to exert influence through the use of campaign donations, with the top firms giving \$217,255 in monetary contributions to candidates and elected officials.
- Nebraska's lack of campaign contribution limits has allowed lobbyists, principles, and the entities they associate with to impact our elections and drive public policy.



## NEW TOOLS: A COLD CLIMB AND A TWISTED TALE



In November 2021, Nebraska state Sens. Tom Brewer, Justin Wayne, Ben Hansen, Dave Murman, and Anna Wishart climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro. The event's press coverage focused on the bipartisan nature of the effort that could build camaraderie and improve political relationships. What followed was a troubling look into how Nebraska senators can be used as advertising tools.

While the coverage of the climb focused on its political aspects, it became clear that the excursion was an expensive endeavor. Sen. Brewer stated in his local paper, *The Star Herald*: "We had a team of 53 Tanzanians aiding our ascent up Kilimanjaro, consisting of six guides, two camp masters, two chefs, two servers, and the remaining team members were porters to help carry equipment from camp to camp." Other climbers included Dalton Boden, Hunter Armstrong, COL (Ret.) Van Joy, Michael Ferguson, Jeff Bolton, Blaine Bolton, and Mike Wilkinson.

In short, this was not simply five senators and their guide.

Given the large roster of climbers and the scale of the trip, many questioned how public servants making \$12,000 a year would afford the endeavor. Thanks to Statements of Financial Interest later filed by the senators, it was revealed that food supplement company Standard Process pledged to sponsor the climb. But that sponsorship didn't come without gains for the company.

In the months following the climb, a photo of the five senators on top of Mt. Kilimanjaro holding a Standard Process banner appeared on the company's Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram pages. The caption claimed that Sen. Hansen had advised the group on which supplements (presumably those provided by Standard Process) to use on the trip. It was clear the senators' climb was being used as part of the company's social media promotion. While the full connection between Standard Process and the climbers would eventually become clear, at the time of their ascent, it was yet unknown.

In February 2022, three months after the climb, the senators filed their annual Statements of Financial Interest (C-1 Form) with the NADC. Nebraska law requires elected officials to make a yearly public disclosure of the gifts they received in the year prior. While some of the first reports failed to mention Standard Process, all but Sen.



Murman eventually listed a gift of over \$1000 from Standard Process for flight expenses and supplements related to the Kilimanjaro trip.

This “sponsorship” was the first of its kind Common Cause Nebraska had seen in over two decades of tracking gifts to legislators. The use of the word “pledged” in their reporting was particularly vexing. This called into question whether there was a quid pro quo. Additionally, funding from the company seemed to be contingent on the senators’ use of their food supplements and display of the company’s banner.

Despite the issues raised by Standard Process’ “sponsorship,” bringing attention to the situation proved difficult. Much of the public and press’ attention was committed to the “heroic tale” of five senators, seemingly at their own expense, overcoming nature and political tribalism. In the face of such a grand tale, ethics concerns didn’t rise above the noise.

Thankfully, Joe Jordan with News Channel Nebraska took an interest in the story. With the screenshot and gift reports in hand, Joe pursued the five senators and Standard Process. Jordan found that a pledge had indeed been made by the company and, according to Standard Process, checks had been delivered to the senators.

However, the company’s story soon changed. Standard Process now claimed an “accounting error” prevented the checks from being delivered. Shortly after Jordan first contacted Standard Process, the company called Sen. Ben Hansen, their connection to the climbers. Hansen had been affiliated with Standard Process through his chiropractic practice and had promoted their products since 2007. Hansen instructed Standard Process to send the money to charity rather than to the senators as originally agreed. A letter to the NADC from Sen. Wishart later acknowledged that Hansen had arranged for the money to go to Mosaic (a nonprofit serving people with intellectual disabilities).

Based on Jordan’s reporting, the NADC sent letters to each senator requesting that they correct their C-1s and submit a letter explaining the discrepancy in reporting. Some of those responses are currently available via the NADC’s website and some state they “did not accept the money.” However, in the senators’ letters of explanation, none mention their display of Standard Process’ banner nor the company’s social media posts using their photo.

The question then became whether it was legal for legislators to allow their picture and titles to be used for advertising. If so, this transaction would create an unsettling precedent in the relationship between Nebraska’s elected officials and private companies. Common Cause Nebraska was informed by the NADC that since the senators did not receive the money themselves, there was no breach of state ethics law. According to NADC rules, senators are barred from using their public office to obtain financial gain, but because the payment from Standard Process was diverted to charity, they did not breach their legal obligation. The fact that Standard Process was using a photo of the senators for advertising simply didn’t matter.

In the end, Standard Process got what it wanted from the transaction: a photo for social media of five Nebraska senators holding their banner atop Mt. Kilimanjaro and the implication that those senators endorse their products. As Nebraska law currently stands, the line between acceptable gifts and illegal financial gains is unclear. If this tale is any indication of how corporate advertisers view our legislators, we may soon have a real opportunity to determine just when that line is crossed. Until then, our elected representatives should not provide advertising for a private company in exchange for money, even if it was pledged and not received.

*For further information regarding the Standard Process scandal, scan the QR code below.*



<https://www.commoncause.org/nebraska/our-work/new-tools-a-cold-climb-and-a-twisted-tale/>

# REGISTERED LOBBYISTS AND PRINCIPALS

**Did you know?**

Volunteer lobbyists pay a \$15 registration fee, whereas the fee for a paid lobbyist is \$200

In Nebraska, anyone who seeks to influence legislation on behalf of another before state legislators must register as a lobbyist. Their principals (the organizations and companies they represent) must also register with the state.

While most lobbyists are professionals paid to represent the interests of others, many nonprofits have unpaid lobbyists, individuals who testify frequently at legislative hearings and meet with senators. Both groups are required to register with the Clerk of the Legislature.

During the year, the number of lobbyists changes depending on the issues before the legislature. Registrations are added and withdrawn. The chart below shows the number of registrations as of Jan. 21, 2023.

## Registered Lobbyists and Principals

Year	Compensated Lobbyists	Non-Compensated	Principals	Volunteer Principals
2020	367	32	560	24
2021	366	39	678	27
2022	336	31	544	23
2023	389	34	597	24

*(Recorded from NADC 1/22/23)*



## PRINCIPALS

Principals are the entities that hire lobbyists to represent and advocate for their interests. They range from corporations and nonprofits to labor unions, religious organizations, and schools. They pay the bills and are the ones seeking to impact public policy.

### Principals' Total Expenses

	2000	2010	2020	2021	2022
Miscellaneous	\$171,173	\$169,401	\$173,115	\$204,412	\$275,921
Entertainment Expenses	\$70,173	\$281,745	\$290,087	\$202,556	\$401,051
Lodging	\$4,028	\$15,710	\$6,947	\$4,389	\$8,761
Travel	\$28,188	\$45,660	\$26,326	\$18,724	\$35,060
Office Expense	Not Reported	\$89,695	\$44,226	\$12,337	\$17,863
Lobbyist Compensation	\$2,727,482	\$11,713,360	\$17,383,723	\$19,259,772	\$20,159,783
Lobbyist Reimbursements	Not Reported	\$269,848	\$604,602	\$545,169	\$474,647
Gifts	Not Reported	\$19,913	\$6,377	\$24,362	\$10,941
Tickets	Not Reported	\$16,422	\$4,233	\$21,186	\$21,635
Total	\$3,001,044	\$12,621,754	\$18,539,636	\$20,292,907	\$21,405,662

(Recorded from NADC 2/9/23)

### Our Top Ten Spending Principals

Firm	2019	2020	2021	2022
NE Farm Bureau	\$182,306	\$167,509	\$219,474	\$206,873
League of Municipalities	\$160,761	\$109,434	\$155,064	\$181,773
University of Nebraska	\$143,058	\$143,689	\$108,065	\$170,359
Centene Corporation	\$116,590	\$130,694	\$150,915	\$146,535
NE. Chamber of Com.	\$96,979	\$103,566	\$124,297	\$140,270
NE. Bankers	\$132,582	\$98,359	\$100,964	\$134,216
NE. County Official	\$165	\$128,152	\$135,067	\$131,157
Altria Client Services	\$267,287	\$143,930	\$128,656	\$127,725
NE. Council of School Admin.	\$166,243	\$131,122	\$151,944	\$116,407
NE State Education Assoc.	\$107,302	\$121,457	\$90,900	\$90,900

(Recorded from NADC 02/13/23)

## Principals' Entertainment, Gifts, and Tickets Expense

The breakdown below shows how much was spent in 2022 by principals on the executive branch, legislative branch, and "Others." "Others" can include any individual involved in lobbying or being lobbied including government staff.

Note that "Entertainment" is a catchall for everything from food and beverages to golf outings and social events. "Gifts" can be anything from Christmas presents to birthday gifts and other items. While "Tickets" are self-explanatory, the most visible are tickets to University of Nebraska sporting events.

### Principal's Entertainment, Gift, and Ticket Expenses

	2000	2010	2020	2021	2022
<b>Entertainment for</b>					
Legislators	\$75	\$90,363	\$74,576	\$70,741	\$121,915
Executive Branch	\$0	\$4,873	\$2,067	\$4,108	\$9,281
Others	\$70,098	\$186,509	\$213,444	\$145,705	\$269,855
<b>Gifts for</b>					
Legislators	\$0	\$12,769	\$3,757	\$20,967	\$7,339
Executive Branch	\$0	\$702	\$74	\$498	\$425
Others	\$0	\$6,442	\$2,546	\$2,915	\$3,176
<b>Tickets For</b>					
Legislators	\$0	\$13,840	\$3,450	\$21,083	\$21,267
Executive Branch	\$0	\$88	\$0	\$0	\$0
Others	\$0	\$2,494	\$783	\$463	\$368

(Recorded 03/03/23)

# PUBLIC ENTITY PRINCIPALS

## Public Schools

Nebraska public schools have a large interest in the legislature. The Unicameral relies on a “school funding formula” to determine how much money a school district receives from the state. However, the process for funding is complicated, with only a handful of people able to predict its results. This is a result of too many variables included in the process, as well as the formula changing several times over the years. Because of these complications, some school districts believe employing professional lobbying firms will ensure the formula is working for them.

There are 244 school districts in Nebraska, but only 14 can afford to hire a lobbying firm. In the battle for state tax dollars, those 14 districts have a clear advantage, with lobbyists working for those who can afford to pay. As a result, most smaller districts and the children they represent become spectators in the battle for a better education.

### Public School Lobbying

School District	2000	2010	2020	2021	2022
Adams Central	\$0	\$2,072	\$5,200	\$5,200	\$5,200
Bellevue	\$0	\$80,000	\$54,000	\$54,200	\$54,200
Bennington	\$0	\$9,000	\$5,200	\$5,200	\$6,450
DC West	\$0	\$0	\$5,200	\$5,200	\$29,000
Elkhorn	\$0	\$20,000	\$28,200	\$28,200	\$29,040
Grand Island NW	\$0	\$2,081	\$5,200	\$0	\$0
Grand Island	\$0	\$26,500	\$34,274	\$35,301	\$36,361
Lincoln	\$31,201	\$96,186	\$43,400	\$21,600	\$32,600
Millard	\$493	\$65,383	\$64,246	\$70,824	\$60,200
Omaha	\$22,144	\$67,038	\$83,357	\$97,700	\$118,884
Papillion	\$0	\$20,983	\$39,400	\$39,000	\$39,000
Ralston	\$0	\$31,020	\$42,021	\$43,270	\$44,641
Springfield Platt.	\$0	\$0	\$42,950	\$15,950	\$400
Westside	\$4,406	\$25,985	\$8,826	\$11,701	\$9,084
Learning Com.	\$0	\$10,000	\$28,700	\$26,900	\$29,450

(Recorded from NADC 02/15/22)



**Did you know?**

Senators are only required to disclose gifts over \$100. As a result, we have no way of knowing how entertainment and gifts under that amount are distributed.

The University of Nebraska ranked third among the top spending entities on lobbying in 2022. It reported spending \$170,359 on lobbying, including \$30,000 to Peetz and Company and \$90,000 to in-house lobbyist and former-senator Heath Mello.

### University Entertainment, Gifts, and Tickets

Category	2020	2021	2022
Entertainment	\$30,589	\$30,685	\$24,349
Gifts	\$1,804	\$1,782	\$4,351
Tickets	\$1,416	\$19,760	\$21,324

*(Recorded from NADC 02/16/23)*

Because the University is a public entity that provides gifts and entertainment to elected officials, they are required to disclose the tickets to university events they distribute to legislators. Consequently, we can cross-check the University’s reported ticket gifts with what elected officials report on their annual Statements of Financial Interest (C-1 forms).

Cross-checking the filings on tickets reveals many senators fail to report tickets given to them by the public university. This lack of reliability calls into question what gifts legislators may have received and failed to report from private principals.

The chart below lists senators who accepted university gift tickets and the value of those tickets. This year, the university reported all tickets to athletic events distributed to senators, including tickets intended for staff. Since senators only need to disclose tickets valued over \$100, we marked “Not Reported” next to those gift tickets that did not appear on the senators’ C-1s.

The total value of university tickets given to senators and their staff is \$20,324. The amount over \$100 that should have been reported is \$8,530. The charts below show the major ticket gifts to senators, for all UN ticket gifts see page...

## UNL Football Season Tickets

All senators listed received 2 Season Tickets valued at \$840. Those marked in red did not report the gift.

Senator	
Sen. Bostar	Sen. Lindstrom
Sen. Brewer	Sen. Lowe
Sen. J. Cavanaugh	Sen. McDonnell
Sen. Day	Sen. McKinney
Sen. Erdman	Sen. Morfeld
Sen. Friesen	Sen. Slama
Sen. M. Hansen	Sen. Stinner
Sen. Hughes	Sen. Vargas
Sen. Hunt	Sen. Walz
Sen. Kolterman	Sen. Wayne
Sen. Lathrop	Sen. Kauth

## UNL Football Suites

All senators received two Suite Tickets for either the Chancellor's or President's suite. Those gifts marked in red were not reported by the senator.

Senator	State	Value
Sen. B. Hansen	Illinois	\$120
Sen. Arch	Illinois	\$120
Sen. McKinney	Illinois	\$120
Sen. McDonnell	Wisconsin	\$120
Sen.-Elect Dungan	Wisconsin	\$120

## LOBBYISTS

Lobbyists are the people and firms who work to influence the legislature on a day-to-day basis. Hired by principals, their main job is to push the legislative agenda of the special interest groups who hire them. Daily access to legislators – sweetened by campaign contributions, gifts, entertainment, and meals – produces influence.

### Lobbyists' Total Compensation

*Lobbyists are required by state law to report their compensation, expenses, and reimbursements every quarter. Below is a look at how much the industry is paying and is paid to influence legislation.*

	2000	2010	2020	2021	2022
Compensation	\$2,653,548	\$11,713,360	\$18,788,087	\$20,789,181	\$21,680,485
Reimbursement	Not Reported	\$175,528	\$173,167	\$139,527	\$158,764
Total	\$2,653,548	\$11,888,888	\$18,961,254	\$20,928,708	\$21,839,249

(Recorded from NADC 2/9/23)

### Total Lobbyist's Expenses

	2000	2010	2020	2021	2022
Miscellaneous	\$35,305	\$66,328	\$59,175	\$52,845	\$60,698
Entertainment	\$58,305	\$153,357	\$116,176	\$110,046	\$143,114
Lodging	\$4,028	\$15,710	\$5,520	\$4,604	\$8,943
Travel	\$16,165	\$44,521	\$18,023	\$118,464	\$22,021
Office Expense	Not Reported	\$18,787	\$2,224	\$2,401	\$2,578
Lobbyist Compensation Paid	Not Reported	\$2,417	\$166,495	\$160,407	\$151,355
Lobbyist Reimbursement	Not Reported	\$675	\$483	\$2,537	\$1,119
Gifts Given	Not Reported	\$4,320	\$1,001	\$1,487	\$2,954
Tickets Given	Not Reported	\$466	\$1	\$500	\$0
Total Expenses	\$113,803	\$306,581	\$369,098	\$453,291	\$392,782

Recorded from NADC 2/9/23



## Our Top 10 Highest Compensated Firms

*These firms represent some of the highest-compensated lobbying interests in Nebraska.*

<b>Firm</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
Mueller/Robak.	\$1,432,282	\$1,363,349	\$1,645,683	\$1,765,124
Radcliffe/Asso	\$1,434,238	\$1,304,547	\$1,340,799	\$1,309,759
Husch/Blackwell	\$458,597	\$538,700	\$828,500	\$1,159,869
Zulkoski/Weber.	\$681,828	\$736,586	\$822,995	\$1,089,613
O'Hara/Lindsay	\$974,070	\$1,040,459	\$903,276	\$895,693
Kissel/E+S	\$548,310	\$551,723	\$656,998	\$821,443
Am.Comms.	\$640,116	\$641,350	\$694,794	\$763,916
Peetz/Co	\$806,650	\$836,600	\$827,100	\$747,600
Nowka/Edwards	\$576,385	\$556,316	\$656,998	\$706,563
Jensen/Rogert	\$419,578	\$442,830	\$584,712	\$486,880

*(Recorded from NADC 02/13/23)*

# CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS

**Did you know?**

Nebraska is one of five states with no limits on corporate campaign contributions, according to the NCSL.

The impact that lobbying has on the Cornhusker State and what policies are enacted has close ties to Nebraska's loose campaign finance laws.

In 2012, when Nebraska's Campaign Finance Limitation Act was declared unconstitutional, our state lost all limits on how much anyone could donate or spend on elections. That means lobbyists and their principals can donate as much as they want to the campaigns of legislators they are working to influence. As a result, thousands of dollars flow from lobbyists to legislators' war chests every year.

Currently, it is legal to limit campaign contributions, and bills have been introduced in the Unicameral to place a cap on how much anyone can donate. So far the legislature has refused to advance those ideas out of committee.

## Campaign Contributions from Principals

Like lobbyists, principals contribute money to campaigns in order to persuade candidates of their policy ideas. These multimillion-dollar principals often donate upwards of tens of thousands to candidates. Below are just two examples of principals using their funds to influence Nebraska representatives.

### Centene Corporation

Centene Corporation is a publicly traded managed care company based in St. Louis. It serves as an intermediary for government-sponsored and privately insured healthcare programs. Centene ranked No. 26 on the 2021 Fortune 500 and was ranked fourth amongst some of 2023's top lobbying firms in Nebraska, with a total expense of \$146,535. Centene also contributed \$69,000 to Nebraska political campaigns in 2022. The major benefactors are shown below (the remaining \$22,000 was distributed amongst 29 Nebraska state senators).

### Centene Contributions

Recipient	Amount
Gov. Pillen	\$25,000
Nebraska Republican Party	\$10,000
Gov. Ricketts	\$10,000
Sen. Linehan	\$2,000

## Nebraska Bankers Association

The Nebraska Bankers Association describes itself as the “voice of Nebraska’s banking industry.” On our list of biggest spenders in 2022 they ranked sixth with an expense of \$134,216.

The Bankers proved to be far more generous to state senators than Centene when it comes to campaign contributions. In 2022, the association coughed up \$285,295 in direct contributions and spent another \$21,254 on in-kind contributions.

The top recipient was Gov. Pillen, who received multiple contributions over the election cycle amounting to more than \$24,000. Single contributions to other candidates ranged from \$100 to \$10,000.

## Campaign Contributions from Lobbyists

**Did you know?**

Nebraska has no restrictions on lobbyist contributions or fundraisers according to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL).

Nebraska’s lax campaign finance rules provide many opportunities for lobbyists to gain favor with legislators. From hosting fundraisers throughout the year to directly contributing to campaigns and channeling funds from principals, the lobby takes full advantage of our current system.

Groups of lobbyists often host fundraisers for candidates and sitting legislators, pooling their resources to pay for food, beverages, and facilities. Candidates and lobbyists must report each lobbyist’s share of the expense as an “in-kind contribution.” These shared expenses are usually distributed equally among the lobbyists and range from \$25 to \$100.

### Lobby Campaign Contributions

*Lobbying firms also make monetary contributions to individual campaigns. Collectively, these 9 lobbying firms contributed \$211,425 to candidates in 2022.*

Firm	In-Kind	Monetary
Mueller Robak	\$2,581	\$38,410
Radcliffe Associates	\$2,210	\$65,900
Husch Blackwell	\$125	\$27,021
Zulkoski Weber	\$597	\$6,650
O’Hara Lindsey	\$989	\$12,050
American Com.	\$1,201	\$12,025
Peetz and Co	\$875	\$33,770
Nowka Edwards	\$540	\$13,850
Jensen Rogert	\$744	\$1,750
Total	\$9,862	\$211,426



## Husch Blackwell Strategies LLC

As we noted above, Nebraska's lack of campaign finance limits allows our state's top lobbying firms to exert influence during election season. One example of this power comes from Husch Blackwell Strategies LLC, an entity that made \$1,159,869 lobbying in 2022.

During 2022 and yearly 2023, Husch Blackwell Strategies LLC donated \$27,020 to candidates across the political spectrum running for Nebraska's top offices. While many of their donations went to legislative races, they reached all the way to county-level positions and gave generously to multiple candidates running for governor.

Nebraska's lobbyists have learned that impacting elections and endearing themselves to candidates can aid in their work to move policy at the capitol. While appealing to policymakers with the right facts and arguments is a core element of moving a client's agenda, building influence is a year-round goal that includes aiding people favorable to you in winning their elections.

Below is a list of Husch Blackwell Strategies' donations of \$500 or more that shows the wide-ranging influence top lobbying firms can exert on our electoral process.

### Husch Blackwell Strategies Donations

Recipient	Contribution
JIM PILLEN FOR GOVERNOR	\$10,000
FRIENDS OF LINDSTROM	\$2,000
JIM PILLEN FOR GOVERNOR	\$2,000
JIM PILLEN FOR GOVERNOR	\$2,000
JULIE SLAMA FOR LEGISLATURE	\$1,000
MIRCH FOR LEGISLATURE	\$521
SCHORR FOR COUNTY COMMISSIONER	\$500
BEN HANSEN FOR LEGISLATURE	\$500
TODD PFITZER FOR DOUGLAS COUNTY ENGINEER	\$500
NEBRASKANS FOR MURANTE	\$500
SUZANNE C GEIST FOR LEGISLATURE	\$500
LINEHAN FOR LEGISLATURE	\$500
ELIOT BOSTAR FOR LEGISLATURE	\$500
NATHAN FOR LNK	\$500
MIRCH FOR NEBRASKA	\$500

## Lobbyists' In-session Fundraisers in Nebraska

**Did you know?**

Nebraska is one of 22 states that have no restriction on in-session fundraisers according to the NCSL. Fifteen states allow no campaign contributions during the legislative session. Thirteen states prohibit lobbyist campaign contributions during the legislative session.

Lobbyist-sponsored fundraisers held during the legislative session have become a tradition in Nebraska politics.

Lobbyists typically solicit senators and arrange breakfasts or lunches, most often at Billy's, a restaurant within walking distance of the capitol. For these events, legislators attend for free while lobbyists typically pay \$100 at the door. These lobbyists may also bring campaign contributions from their principals. The press and the public are not invited.

To ensure that the fundraisers don't conflict with each other, lobbyists usually post the gatherings on the clerk's calendar of events. While most lobbyists are professionals paid to represent the interests of others, many non-profits have unpaid lobbyists, individuals who testify frequently at legislative hearings and meet with senators. Both groups are required to register with the Clerk of the Legislature.

### 2022 In-Session Fundraisers

Date	Senator
Jan.11	Sen. Lowe
Jan. 28.	Sen. Aguilar
Feb. 2.	Sen. Moser
Feb. 9.	Sen. Brandt
Feb. 16.	Sen. Hunt
Feb. 22	Sen. Cavanaugh
Feb. 28.	Sen. Slama
Mar. 3.	Sen. McCollister
Mar. 8	Sen. Morfeld
Mar. 23	Sen. Sanders
Mar. 24.	Sen. Arch
Mar. 31.	Sen. Albrecht
Apr. 7.	Sen. Riepe

*Recorded from the Clerk's Office on 3/15/22.*

### 2023 In-Session Fundraisers

Date	Senator
Jan. 6	Sen. Brewer
Jan. 13	Sen. Geist
Feb. 2.	Sen. Day
Feb. 7	Sen. Ballard
Feb. 28	Sen. Aguilar
Mar. 1	Sen. Cavanaugh
Mar. 14	Sen. DeBoer
Apr. 3	Sen. Hardin
Apr. 5	Sen. Fredrickson
Apr. 17	Sen. Lippincott

*Recorded from the Clerk's Office on 3/15/22.*

To view the full clerk's calendar of events for the 2023 Legislative Session, scan the QR code below.



## Campaign Contributions from Political Action Committees (PACs)

**Did you know?**

Nebraska is one of only 13 states with no limits on campaign contributions from PACs, according to the NCSL.

PACs (Political Action Committees) are organizations established by corporations, labor unions, and other special interest groups to raise money for political causes. As of March 2021, there were 114 registered PACs in Nebraska.

For many elected officials and candidates for public office, PACs are one of the largest sources of campaign funds. During the 2020 election cycle, PACs recorded \$4,243,615 in receipts and \$3,824,196 in expenditures.

Organizations that establish PACs may also be registered principals. These principals then employ lobbyists who can direct contributions to candidates favorable to the organization's interests. In fact, 31 Nebraska-related PACs list registered lobbyists as their treasurers.

### Friends of the University PAC

The Friends of the University is one example of a Nebraska-based PAC with close ties to a principal. Though not explicitly connected to the University of Nebraska, the PAC's goal is to advance the interests of the institution in politics through generous donations.

In the 2020 election cycle, the Friends of the University PAC was one of the largest donors to legislative races. It distributed a total of \$84,750 to a large number of legislative candidates and sitting senators. Major recipients included Sens. Dorn, McDonnell, Stinner, Vargas, and Wishart.

During the 2022 election cycle, Friends of the University PAC contributed \$59,000 to 32 legislative candidates, with individual gifts ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000. Major recipients included the speaker of the legislature John Arch, as well as Sens. Wishart, Conrad, Dorn, Linehan, and Jacobson, among others.

Although Friends of the University PAC is a large donor to political campaigns, it is run by a small group of powerful contributors. During the 2020 election cycle, \$136,000 out of \$136,750 was provided by just nine donors.

### Friends of the University PAC Contributors

Donor	Amount
Cassling	\$25,000
Howard Hawks	\$15,000
Henning Brothers LLC	\$1,000
John Kotouc	\$5,000
James Pillen	\$25,000
Walter Scott, Jr.	\$25,000
David D. Slosburg	\$10,000
Streak, Inc	\$5,000
Barbara Weitz	\$25,000

# THE REVOLVING DOOR

When we elect individuals, we expect them to serve the public good. As a result, they gain special knowledge and relationships. This background is a public trust and it should not be bought and sold for the benefit of special interests. However, here in Nebraska, elected officials can leave their role serving the state and take up a lucrative job lobbying their former colleagues the next day.

This “Revolving Door” between government and private interests has been debated in the legislature for decades. Bills to impose a two-year “cooling-off period” before public officials can become paid lobbyists have been proposed multiple times over the years. Unfortunately, the Unicameral has yet to adopt such a rule and would rather keep their options for future employment open.

**Did you know?**

44 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, and the U.S. Federal government all place some limit on the revolving door. NCSL: [Revolving Door Prohibitions \(ncsl.org\)](https://www.ncsl.org/revolving-door-prohibitions)

## Former Legislators Registered as Lobbyists in 2021

*Below is a current list of former state senators who joined the ranks of lobbyists within two years of public service.*

Lobbyist	Years in Office	Registered as Lobbyist	2022 Compensation
Chris Abboud	1983 - 1998	2000	\$103,300
Greg Adams	2007 - 2015	2016 - 2021	Retired
Curt Bromm	1993 - 2004	2004	\$80,052
Colby Coash	2009 - 2017	2018	\$19,500
Danielle Conrad	2007 - 2015	2015	\$9,880
Annette Dubas	2007 - 2015	2015	\$8,000
Nicole Fox	2015 - 2016	2017	\$4,290
Tim Gay	2006 - 2010	2011	\$144,000
Burke Harr	2011 - 2018	2019	\$121,790
Sara Howard	2012 - 2020	2021	\$4,615
Scott Lautenbaugh	2007 - 2014	22015	\$92,000
John Lindsay	1989 - 1997	1997	\$60,000
Heath Mello	2009 - 2017	2017	\$90,000
Mick Mines	2003 - 2007	2008	\$100,063
Adam Morfeld	2014 - 2022	2023	\$2,320
Kent Rogert	2007 - 2011	2011	\$120,600
Kenneth Schilz	2008 - 2016	2017	\$378,444*

\*Corporate Income

(Recorded from NADC records 03/12/23.)

# ALEC

SourceWatch describes American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) as follows:

“Through ALEC, corporations hand state legislators their wish lists to benefit their bottom line... . [Corporations] pay for a seat on ALEC task forces where corporate lobbyists and special interest reps vote with elected officials to approve ‘model’ bills.”

(For more, see the Center for Media and Democracy’s website, [ALECexposed.org](http://ALECexposed.org).)

ALEC has always tried to keep its roster of members secret. When former-state Sen. Jim Smith was the State Chair of ALEC in 2017, he claimed 50% of the Nebraska senators were ALEC members, yet refused to list their names. Over the years, more than 25 Nebraska legislators have attended ALEC meetings, have become ALEC members, or have served on ALEC committees.

In 2021, former governor, now-Sen. Ricketts praised the work of ALEC and was chosen by the council as the Governor of the Year. Currently, state Sen. Linehan is the state chair of ALEC and former ALEC State Chair Smith serves on the ALEC Corporate Advisory Board.

## ALEC Membership

*The current and former senators listed below were reported by Source Watch as ALEC members.*

Senator	ALEC Connection
Sen. Brewer	Joined ALEC in 2017
Sen. Clements	Joined ALEC in 2019
Sen. Halloran	Joined ALEC in 2017
Sen. B. Hansen	Joined ALEC in 2019
Sen. Friesen	Registered ALEC member, term limited 2022
Sen. Lindstrom	Registered ALEC member, term limited 2022
Sen. Linehan	Joined ALEC in 2019, State Chair of ALEC
Sen. Lowe	Joined ALEC in 2017
Sen. Murman	Attended 2019 ALEC Annual Meeting
Sen. Slama	Joined in ALEC 2020
Sen. Stinner	Registered member, term limited 2020

*(Recorded from Source Watch 3/10/23.)*





## CONCLUSIONS

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One thing is clear: the Nebraska lobby continues to thrive. The continued growth of lobbying as an industry showcases how special interests have and continue to impact Nebraska politics. Nebraskans of every demographic have the right to address their legislators on matters of policy. However, — more often than not — lobbyists and their skills are employed by those who can afford them.

The story of five state senators withholding their full arrangement with Standard Process reveals an inherent weakness in Nebraska's accountability rules. While the NADC recently fined police officers for appearing in uniform in a campaign ad for Charles Herbster, they refused to act against senators appearing in advertising campaigns for private business.

Our report reveals who earns the most, who spends the most, and who entertains the most. But more and more, we are becoming concerned about who *contributes* the most.

This year's report gives a clearer picture of how much influence lobbyists and their principals hope to gain from campaign contributions. Nebraska has no legal limits on campaign contributions, which has resulted in yet another year of record-breaking elections that mold the future of our democracy.

If indeed money and speech are the same thing, those with money get to speak louder and more often.

Nebraska deserves better. Our elected leaders should prioritize the voices of the people, not of the highest bidder. We must do everything in our power to make sure strong, resounding campaign finance reform is passed in our state.

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## APPENDIX I: UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA TICKETS

The ticket prices shown here are those reported by the university on their filings with the NADC. The public is often required to make a donation to the University Foundation in addition to the season ticket prices. This, of course, does not apply to senators. In past years, the university has provided the senators with \$20 parking passes along with special seating. This did not appear on the reports for 2021 or 2022.

### UNL Men's Basketball (2/9/2022)

#### UNL Men's Basketball

Senator	Gift	Value
Sen. Brandt	2 Suite Tickets	\$46
Sen. Kolterman	2 Suite Tickets	\$46
Sen. Morfeld	2 Suite Tickets	\$46
Sen. Bostar	1 Suite Ticket	\$23

### UNL Women's Basketball

#### UNL Women's Basketball

Senator	Gift	Value
Sen. Day	4 Suite Tickets	\$92

### UNL Spring Game Suite Ticket (4/9/2022)

#### UNL Spring Game Suite Tickets

Senator	Gift	Value
Sen. Bostar	2 Suite Tickets	\$40
Sen. McDonnell	2 Suite Tickets	\$40
Sen. Kolterman	2 Suite Tickets	\$40
Sen. Brandt	2 Suite Tickets	\$40
Sen. Walz	2 Suite Tickets	\$40

### UNL Spring Game Tickets (4/9/2022)

#### UNL Spring Game Tickets

Senator	Gift	Value
Sen. Brewer & Staff	10 Tickets	\$100
Sen. Wayne & Staff	8 Tickets	\$80
Sen. Williams Staff	8 Tickets	\$80
Sen. B. Hansen Staff	6 Tickets	\$60
Sen. Bostar Office	6 Tickets	\$60
Sen. Brandt Office	6 Tickets	\$60
Sen. Day Office	6 Tickets	\$60
Sen. DeBoer Office	6 Tickets	\$60
Sen. Erdman Office	6 Tickets	\$60
Sen. Hunt Office	6 Tickets	\$60
Sen. Lindstrom Office	6 Tickets	\$60
Sen. M. Hansen Office	6 Tickets	\$60
Sen. McDonnell Office	6 Tickets	\$60
Sen. McKinney Office	6 Tickets	\$60
Sen. Murman Office	6 Tickets	\$60
Sen. Geist Staff	4 Tickets	\$40
Sen. Albrecht	2 Tickets	\$20
Sen. Flood Staff	2 Tickets	\$20
Sen. Gragert Staff	2 Tickets	\$20
Sen. Halloran Staff	2 Tickets	\$20
Sen. Lathrop Staff	2 Tickets	\$20
Sen. Morfeld	2 Tickets	\$20
Sen. Slama	2 Tickets	\$20

## Nebraska Cures Annual Tribute Lunch

### Nebraska Cures Annual Tribute Lunch

Senator	Gift	Value
Sen. DeBoer	1 Ticket	\$65

## UNO Baseball Game (Q2 2022)

### UNO Baseball Game

Senator	Gift	Value
Sen. J. Cavanaugh	6 Tickets	\$90
Sen. Day	4 Tickets	\$60
Sen. McCollister	1 Ticket	\$15

## UNO Hockey

### UNO Hockey

All senators listed received 2 Season Tickets valued at \$840. Those

Senator	Gift	Value	Date
Sen. Arch	2 Suite Tickets	\$110	2/18/2022
Sen. Brewer	2 Suite Tickets	\$110	2/18/2022
Sen. J. Cavanaugh	2 Suite Tickets	\$90	12/2/2022
Sen. Arch	2 Suite Tickets	\$90	12/2/2022
Sen. Walz	2 Suite Tickets	\$90	12/2/2022

One rather interesting football ticket transaction involving Regent Tim Clare appeared during our research. In 2021, Regent Clare spent \$10,990 on football tickets, as well as an additional \$9,240 in 2022. Candidates with substantial war chests will often buy tickets and other items to use as gifts for major donors. While we don't know where those \$20,000 in tickets eventually ended up, they were likely used to raise more money.

