



OpenSecrets Launches New State and Federal Lobbying Tool

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State and federal lobbying spending tops \$46 billion after federal lobbying spending broke records in 2023

By Anna Massoglia | January 26, 2024 2:42 pm

OpenSecrets' groundbreaking new Federal and State Lobbying page allows users to explore high-level spending patterns, major players and significant trends in federal and state lobbying across the United States.

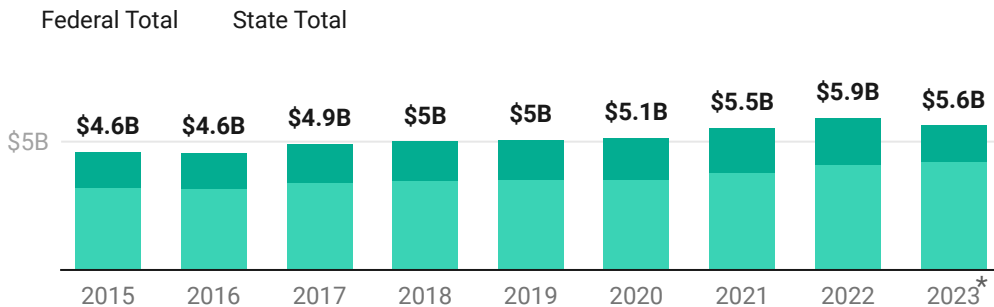
Federal lobbying spending skyrocketed to over \$4.2 billion in 2023 — a nominal record, a new OpenSecrets analysis of federal lobbying disclosures found.

Lobbyists at the state and federal level reported over \$46 billion in combined federal and state lobbying spending since 2015, according to OpenSecrets' new analysis. Lobbying spending continues to grow at both the state and federal levels, highlighting the importance of shining light on efforts to impact public policy.

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State & federal lobbying spending by year

Lobbyists reported over \$46 billion in combined federal and state lobbying spending since 2015.



* Federal lobbying for 2023 includes Q1-Q4. State lobbying includes filings processed as of Dec. 4, 2023.

Chart: Anna Massoglia • Source: OpenSecrets analysis of federal lobbying spending based on data from the Senate Office of Public Records and state-level lobbying disclosures in the 19 states tracked by OpenSecrets. • [Get the data](#) • [Embed](#) • [Download image](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

State lobbying exceeded \$1.4 billion in 2023, though deadlines and reporting requirements for lobbying filings at the state level vary widely so that number will increase as more disclosures are filed.

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In each quarter of 2023, federal lobbying spending topped \$1 billion.

Appropriations bills drove much of the federal lobbying in the final quarter of the year with hundreds of clients paying lobbyists to attempt to shape the National Defense Authorization Act as well as legislation funding for key federal agencies.

Influential corporations and other special interest groups wanting a say in policy decisions beefed up their lobbying game — and not just on K Street. Amid congressional gridlock, many companies and trade associations moved to sidestep the chaos on Capitol Hill by realigning their influence operations to include state-level officials.

Increasingly, state officials are also driving the national conversation on a wide range of issues from guns and abortion rights to gambling.

State and federal lobbying reached a peak in 2022 with \$5.9 billion in total spending to influence the federal government and policymakers in the 19 states tracked by OpenSecrets, with lobbyists reporting more nominal dollars spent to

influence policy at the state and federal level than any prior year. Federal lobbying spending in 2022 topped \$4.1 billion, while state lobbying spending hit \$1.8 billion that year.

Lobbying spending in 2022 and 2023 shows a continuation of several patterns found in recent years at both the federal and state levels, including which industries lobby the most at each level and which kinds of firms they hire.

The health sector continues to be a top spender at both the federal and state level, continuing a trend that started in 2019. Overall, health sector interests spent over \$6.8 billion on lobbying at the state and federal level since 2015. Similar to most recent prior years, health companies spent more than any other sector in 2023 with federal lobbying spending topping \$739 million for the year.

Top 20 industries spending on federal lobbying in 2023

Pharmaceuticals & Health Products	\$378.6M
Electronics Manufacturing & Equipment	\$238.4M
Insurance	\$157.4M
Securities & Investment	\$143.6M
Air Transport	\$136.5M
Hospitals & Nursing Homes	\$131M
Oil & Gas	\$128.7M
Electric Utilities	\$126.9M
Health Services & HMOs	\$126.8M
Misc. Manufacturing & Distributing	\$119.7M
Business Associations	\$119.2M
Civil Servants & Public Officials	\$117.1M
Telecom Services	\$116.9M
Real Estate	\$108M
Internet	\$100M
Education	\$94.2M
Health Professionals	\$93.5M
Automotive	\$84.6M
NonProfit Institutions	\$76.1M
TV, Movies & Music	\$70.2M

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Chart: Anna Massoglia • Source: OpenSecrets analysis of Lobbying Disclosure Act filings in 2023. • [Get the data](#) • [Embed](#) • [Download image](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

The pharmaceutical industry also continued to dominate lobbying spending at all levels as pharmacy benefit companies faced increased scrutiny. The top health sector and pharmaceutical industry clients at the federal and state levels have overlapped substantially in 2023 and 2022, albeit with different lobbying firms at each level.

At the state level, lobbying dynamics are primarily shaped by in-house lobbyists and firms exclusively dedicated to state-level work. The top state lobbying firms often specialize solely in state-level advocacy, concentrating their efforts in states where they have cultivated close relationships and possess intricate policymaking knowledge.

Similarly, industries lobbying at the federal level often enlist specialist firms and lobbyists with ties to federal regulators and policymakers.

Other sectors also ramped up federal lobbying spending in 2023. Driven largely by a bump in spending by the air transport industry amid a heated fight over Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization legislation, the transportation sector alone spent \$308 million, over a \$20 million increase from the prior year. Hundreds of clients from a wide range of sectors spent on lobbying around the FAA Reauthorization Act.

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The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the largest business advocacy association in the U.S., has been the top overall lobbying spender since 2015 with over \$746 million in total spending. In 2023 alone, the Chamber of Commerce spent over \$69 million on federal lobbying. While the bulk of the chamber's spending was at the federal level, it has also spent millions on lobbying at the state level.

The second biggest spender of 2023 was the National Association of Realtors, which spent over \$52 million on federal lobbying last year. The real estate trade association's nearly \$82 million in 2022 federal lobbying spending put it on par with the Chamber of Commerce, which spent about \$81 million that year.

The top state-level spender in 2023 was the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians based on filings processed as of Dec. 4, 2023. The Native American tribe spent about \$12.8 million lobbying in California last year, though that number is subject to increase as more state lobbying disclosures covering the end of the year are filed and processed.

Verizon is another top spender on lobbying at the state level. The telecommunications company spent over \$34.6 million on state-level lobbying since 2015 with \$3.5 million in 2022 alone. The company spent even more on lobbying at the federal level with nearly \$11.8 million on federal lobbying in 2022 and another \$12.1 million in 2023.

Major corporations like Amazon, AT&T and Chevron have also spent millions on federal lobbying and millions more lobbying at the state level.

The lobbying firm that reported receiving the most money to influence legislation at the state level for 2022 and 2023, based on filings processed to date, has no known presence on K Street. Instead, the Southern Group focuses on the southern U.S. states. The firm reported \$22.8 million in spending by its clients in 2023 and \$24.7 million in lobbying spending the prior year.

Capital City Consulting, another top firm, reported \$19.2 million in payments for lobbying in 2022 and another \$18.4 million in 2023 but only has offices in Florida.

Ballard Partners, a firm started in Florida, rose to national prominence during former President Donald Trump's administration after fundraising for the former president's campaign. The firm made over \$21.9 million from state clients in 2023 and another \$15.9 million from federal clients. Similarly, the firm brought in \$24.5 million from state clients in 2022 and another \$17.7 million from federal clients.

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In-depth analyses of state and federal lobbying spending was made possible by the 2021 merger of the Center for Responsive Politics, which had been tracking federal lobbying activities for nearly 25 years, and the National Institute on Money in Politics, which collected state lobbying spending for at least seven years in 19 states where meaningful data on lobbying spending is available. The remaining states do not require sufficient disclosure of lobbying activity in a way that makes it possible to include them in a comparable manner to the 19 states that provide fuller disclosure.

Limited disclosure in some states still leaves the public in the dark about the details of lobbying efforts, including what lobbyists are getting paid. In particular, information about how much companies and other clients pay lobbyists or firms to represent them is often not reported at the state level and constitutes the vast majority of the money spent on lobbying. In-house lobbyists and state-focused firms take the lead in state-level lobbying, leveraging relationships and

expertise within specific states. National corporations often enlist the services of local lobbyists who boast strong connections to government officials and a nuanced understanding of each state's legislative processes. Although different firms may operate at both state and federal levels, clients frequently allocate their resources across all tiers of government.

This report is part of a project funded in part by Omidyar Network examining the intersection of state and federal lobbying spending.

Pete Quist, Brendan Glavin and Dan Auble contributed to this report.

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Anna is OpenSecrets' Editorial and Investigations Manager. She is also responsible for OpenSecrets' dark money research and researches foreign influence as a part of Foreign Lobby Watch. Anna holds degrees in political science and psychology from North Carolina State University and a J.D. from the University of the District of Columbia School of Law.

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