

California City, County, School, and Special District Local Lobbying Ordinances

Certain California cities, counties, school and special districts have laws regulating lobbying activities, in addition to federal tax law and California state law. “Special districts” include airport authorities and transportation authorities. These laws do not limit the amount of lobbying your organization can do. Nonetheless, they may impact the ways in which you interact with public officials. The good news is the vast majority of jurisdictions in California do not regulate the interaction between nonprofits and government officials. While local lobbying laws that do exist in some jurisdictions add one more consideration as you develop your local advocacy strategy, they should not be thought of as barriers to your organization’s activity.

Unfortunately, there is no standard law that regulates local lobbying across California jurisdictions. If your organization is active in a particular city, county, or special district, you should take a moment to familiarize yourself with the laws in that location. See the table below for an overview. Although the ordinances vary from location to location, some common local lobbying provisions include:

Registration

Jurisdictions often require a person or entity to file a registration form, either a) before making lobbying contacts or expenditures, or b) after a certain number of lobbying contacts have been made or a certain amount of expenses have been incurred. For example, in the City of Carson, every lobbyist must file a registration statement with the city clerk within 10 days of meeting the threshold for registration. These registration rules may apply if your organization hires a consultant to lobby on your behalf, if you have an employee who spends a certain amount or percentage of time on lobbying activities, or if your organization spends a certain amount on lobbying. Registration fees can range from quite small (\$10-25) to several hundred dollars. Some jurisdictions waive the registration fee for qualifying nonprofits.

Reporting

In addition to filing a registration form, some jurisdictions require individuals and organizations that make significant lobbying contacts or that spend significant amounts of money on lobbying to file reports on an annual, semi-annual, quarterly, or monthly basis. These reports may require the person or organization to disclose the amount of compensation received to lobby, whether the organization made any gifts to local officials, and/or whether the organization spent money on a specific type of lobbying known as grassroots lobbying.

Identification

Some local rules require lobbyists to identify themselves in certain ways. For instance, the City of Irvine requires all people who lobby on behalf of an organization to fill out speaker identification

cards before appearing before the City Council or another city body and to orally identify themselves and the client(s) they represent upon beginning an address. Please check the locality's code for further instructions as to how to comply with any identification requirements.

Gift Limits or Prohibitions

It is also quite common for a jurisdiction to prohibit gifts to public officials from organizations that are registered to lobby. In these jurisdictions, these gift rules apply in addition to California state law gift limits and restrictions that impact local officials and employees. The impacts of lobbying activities on campaign contributions is beyond the scope of this publication; please reference the linked codes for further information.






Exemptions for Nonprofits

Additionally, some local lobbying ordinances specifically exempt nonprofits or employees of nonprofits from registration and/or reporting requirements. Some ordinances exempt nonprofits or employees of nonprofits from one type of lobbying registration and reporting, but not from others.

Exemptions for employees of nonprofit organizations vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction and can change over time. For instance, nonprofit exemptions may not apply when a nonprofit is seeking funding from the local jurisdiction. Be sure to review the specific jurisdiction's ordinances for the details of the exemption.









Summary of Local Lobbying Ordinances
(As of October 2025)

Although we strive to present comprehensive information, the table below is not necessarily an exhaustive list of lobbying ordinances in California, so it is always a best practice to consult the laws and/or regulations in the jurisdiction in which you plan to advocate to ensure you comply with all relevant rules.

Jurisdiction	Registration	Reporting	Identification	Gift Limit or Prohibition	Registration Fee	Exemption for Nonprofits	Code
Beverly Hills	✓		✓				
Carson	✓				✓	✓	
Cathedral City	✓		✓		✓		
Clovis	✓				✓	✓	
Compton	✓	✓			✓		
Desert Hot Springs ¹	✓		✓	✓		✓	
El Segundo ²	✓		✓				









1. Certain prohibitions do not apply to employees or volunteers of a California nonprofit organization. See [Desert Hot Springs Municipal Code Sec. 2.22.040\(A\)](#).
2. An employee working forty hours a week or more full time at the time the employee lobbies on behalf of their employer is not a lobbyist. See [El Segundo Municipal Code Title 1, Ch. 8, §1-8-4\(A\)\(4\)](#).

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Jurisdiction	Registration	Reporting	Identification	Gift Limit or Prohibition	Registration Fee	Exemption for Nonprofits	Code
Fresno ³	✓				✓	✓	
Gardena	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Hawthorne	✓	✓			✓		
Irvine	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Lancaster	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Long Beach	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
L.A. City ⁴	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
L.A. County	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		









3. Nonprofit organizations that have an employee engaged primarily in lobbying services for such nonprofit organization are not exempt from registering. See [Fresno Municipal Code Ch. 2, Art. 12, § 2-1208\(e\)](#).
4. There is a limited exemption for certain 501(c)(3)s that receive government funding and provide direct services to indigent people. See [our factsheet on the Los Angeles Municipal Lobbying Ordinance](#) for more information. Identification is required when engaging in written communication with neighborhood council.

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L.A. County Metropolitan Transportation Authority	✓	✓		✓	✓		
L.A. Unified School District	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Malibu	✓				✓		
Manhattan Beach	✓		✓		✓	✓	
Milpitas ⁵	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Moreno Valley ⁶	✓				✓		
Oakland ⁷	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Oceanside	✓	✓	✓		✓		









5. The nonprofit exemption does not extend to situations where the 501(c)(3) has received compensation or a contribution to lobby for or against a specific project, issue or person.
6. An employee working forty hours a week or more full time at the time the employee lobbies on behalf of their employer is not a lobbyist. See [Moreno Valley Municipal Code Sec. 5.026.020\(D\)](#).
7. Certain nonprofits may be eligible for a registration fee waiver under Oakland Code of Ordinances Title 3, Ch. 3.20, § 3.20.040(F).

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Jurisdiction	Registration	Reporting	Identification	Gift Limit or Prohibition	Registration Fee	Exemption for Nonprofits	Code
Orange County	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Pico Rivera ⁸	✓	✓					
Richmond ⁹	✓	✓			✓		
Sacramento ¹⁰	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
San Diego City	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
San Diego County	✓	✓		✓			
S.D. Unified Port District	✓	✓		✓			
S.D. Regional Airport Authority	✓	✓					






- 8. The Pico Rivera and Santa Cruz lobbying ordinances apply only to cable television decisions. Please see the linked codes for specifics.
- 9. The registration fee is waived for organizations that can show proof of their 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4) tax exempt status. [Richmond Code of Ordinances Sec. 2.54.050\(b\)](#).
- 10. Sacramento provides an exemption for nonprofits where the lobbying members are uncompensated. [Sacramento City Code Title 2, Ch. 2.15, § 2.15.050\(D\)\(3\)](#).

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Jurisdiction	Registration	Reporting	Identification	Gift Limit or Prohibition	Registration Fee	Exemption for Nonprofits	Code
San Francisco ¹¹	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
San Jose ¹²	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
San Luis Obispo ¹³	✓		✓			✓	
Santa Ana	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Santa Clara City ¹⁴	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Santa Clara County	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Santa Clara Valley Water District ¹⁵	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Santa Clarita ¹⁶	✓				✓		

11. Officers or employees of 501(c)(3)s and certain 501(c)(4)s are exempted from registering and reporting their direct communication with San Francisco officials. However, nonprofits must register and report certain grassroots lobbying expenses. See [San Francisco Campaign and Governmental Code Art. II, Sec. 2.105](#) on “Expenditure Lobbyist” and the [Ethics Commission Regulation 2.105](#). Note that employee compensation does not count toward an organization’s monthly \$2,500 grassroots expense reporting threshold, but all other grassroots lobbying expenses do. Certain 501(c)(3)s may apply for a waiver of the grassroots lobbyist registration fee. Additionally, 501(c)(3) organization employees may be exempted from registration fees when they present documentation of their tax status. [San Francisco Campaign and Governmental Conduct Code Art. II Ch. 1 §2.110\(f\)\(3\)](#).

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Santa Cruz City/County ¹⁷	✓	✓		✓			
San Joaquin County	✓				✓	✓	
Santa Rosa County ¹⁸	✓				✓	✓	
Santa Monica	✓				✓		
West Hollywood	✓				✓		

12. San Jose prohibits gifts from sources whose interests or employer's interests have been or could foreseeably be affected by the work of the city officer or employee. [San Jose Code of Ordinances Ch. 12.08, §§ 12.08.040, 12.08.100.](#)
13. This exemption applies to persons representing a nonprofit in grant matters. [San Luis Obispo Municipal Code Ch. 2.64 § 2.64.030.](#)
14. Exemption is limited — it does not apply in situations where the nonprofit organization is lobbying for a specific project, issue or person for which the organization has received compensation or a contribution to lobby for or against it. [Santa Clara City Code Ch. 2.155, § 2.155.020\(k\)\(9\).](#)
15. The exemption applies to nonprofits with a gross annual revenue under \$2 million.
16. A regular employee of an organization who communicates with “the City during the course of their employment,” is not a lobbyist. See [Santa Clarita Municipal Code Sec. 7.03.030\(F\).](#)
17. The Pico Rivera and Santa Cruz lobbying ordinances apply only to cable television decisions. Please see the linked codes for specifics.
18. Exemption is limited — it does not apply in situations where the nonprofit organization is lobbying for a specific project, issue or person for which the organization has received compensation or a contribution to lobby for or against it. [Santa Rosa City Code Tit. 10, Ch. 10-35 §10-35.040.](#)

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