

What went wrong? A timeline of failure to report gifts and meals

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Ohio law prohibits lobbyists from providing legislators more than \$75 in gifts and \$75 in meals/beverages during a calendar year. Lobbyists and legislators are both required to disclose gifts and meals provided and accepted.

In recent years, federal, state and local governments have worked together to crack down on parties that fail to appropriately report meals and gifts. As shown in the following timeline, failure to abide by these regulations can result in fines, probation, jail time and a tarnished reputation.

- December 2009: John Rabenold and George Glover provide Cincinnati Bengals vs. Detroit Lions football tickets to legislators.
- March 2014: John Rabenold, a former lobbyist with Access Financial, pleads guilty to two misdemeanor charges for two counts of filing false legislative lobbying activity and expenditure reports.
- May 2014: As part of an agreement, John Rabenold is fined \$2,000 and given up to three years of probation. Rabenold also agrees to cooperate with the FBI and Legislative Inspector General on investigations into legislators who accepted illegal gifts and/or meals.
- September 2014: George Glover, a registered lobbyist, pleads guilty to two misdemeanor charges for failure to maintain proper lobbying expenditure records. When Rabenold's case came to light, Glover voluntarily amended his lobbying report. Glover is fined \$500 for being unable to provide requested records.
- October 2014: The Joint Legislative Ethics Committee meets and recommends that Rep. Dale Mallory be charged with knowingly accepting prohibited gifts from lobbyists and knowingly filing a false financial disclosure statement. After negotiating with Franklin County Prosecutor Ron O'Brien, Rep. Mallory pleads guilty to improperly accepting and disclosing gifts from lobbyists, according to The Columbus Dispatch.
- December 2014: Rep. Dale Mallory receives sentence of \$600 in fines and one year of probation, according to The Columbus Dispatch.

As in the cases outlined above, lawmakers and lobbyists are treated equally under the law. In fact, cooperating lobbyists can often lessen their charges by exposing lawmakers, creating a zero-tolerance environment for today's legislators. One can infer that in the examples presented, the meals and entertainment were enjoyed by both parties, but the consequences were most likely not worth the experience.

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