

# Lobbyists, Relationships, and Legislators' Votes

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For lobbyists, success is about who you know rather than what you know. Forming and maintaining relationships with legislators is key to public policy success for interest groups and lobbyists. In this paper, I examine how to operationalize the relationship between a legislator and a lobbyist. Disclosure forms on gifts may be a way to operationalize the relationships between legislators and lobbyists. From the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), I analyzed the disclosure process in all 50 states to determine accessibility of information on personal relationships.

The main goal of interest groups and lobbyists is to acquire access to politicians to influence their public policy. Part of what lobbyists do appears to be a function of whom they know and have access to, rather than what they know (Bertrand, Bombardini & Trebbi 2011). The effectiveness of lobbyists has raised some concerns about the power of interest groups to secure and protect special interests at the expense of the broader public interest.

Lobbyists have various tools at their disposal to influence legislation. They can provide expertise information to legislator, give campaign contributions, and lobby legislative and executive branch officials to act on behalf. Lobbying works well for interest groups. A lobbyist explained why it is so important: "It is the only chance I get to make all my points and to answer all of the members' questions. Hearings don't even come close" (Levine, 2009). Lobbying creates relationships between members of Congress, their congressional staff, and lobbyists. A former member of Congress said, "The key to getting most things done is personal relationships. . . Politics is human relations. That's how we campaign and that's how we do our work in Congress" (Levine 2009). Hence, building relationships with legislators is key for lobbyists to influence legislators' public policy.

This study examines the relationships between lobbyists and legislators and whether these relationships factor into legislators' voting decisions. I hypothesize that a strong relationship between a legislator and a lobbyist will incline the legislator to vote in a manner consistent with the lobbyist's position on an issue. However, empirical data on whether or not the relationship developed between a lobbyist and legislator influences the legislator's decision to vote close to or against the lobbyist's stance on an issue does not exist. I analyze the campaign finance laws for legislators across the 50 states and gather a 50-state table with categories of gifts, exemptions for personal relationships, requirement to file a gift disclosure form, and a space on a gift disclosure form for personal relationship exemption.

## Literature Review

There are three schools of thought with regard to interest group formation. According to group theory/pluralist accounts, interest groups arise more or less spontaneously in response to feelings of common interest among individuals who are experiencing some form of deprivation or frustration (Walker 1983, 390). Pluralists argue that democratic ends are achieved through group competition as individuals organize themselves into groups to accomplish shared goals, or

interests (Dahl 1961; Lipman 2011). In pluralist accounts, interest groups are essential for democracy to work and group competition ensures that both majorities and minorities have their voices heard in the public policy-making process.

Some critics challenge the pluralist account, arguing that individuals cannot be expected to organize spontaneously in response to a threat to their common interest. For example, Olsen (1965) shows that the marginal costs of political participation differ greatly among social groups and individual incentives for political action are generally weak (Walker 1983). Critics of pluralism assert the rise of money in politics distorts the interest group system.

Proponents of the elitist theory see interest groups as self-interested rent-seekers that shape policy by exerting influence on congressional committees and agencies and leveraging campaign donations. Elite theorists assert interest groups give special access to elites in order to further their private interests in the name of the public interest (Schattschneider 1975; Lipman 2011).

A third school of thought, investment theory, argues that interest groups utilize campaign contributions to attract the highest bidder to implement their policies. Investment theorists view the interest group system as a political marketplace in which campaign donations serve as the basic currency and the highest bidder influences the implemented public policies (Smith 1995; Lipman 2011).

Interest groups have a variety of ways to influence public policy. Organized interests employ a variety of methods to influence government policies including campaign contributions, endorsements, grassroots campaigns, media campaigns, and lobbying (De Figueiredo & Richter 2013). According to Ainsworth (1993), legislators know that lobbyists' expertise stems from the lobbyists' own private interests and that lobbyists convey information to legislators in a way that reflects the preferences, wealth, and size of their clients. Lobbyists use both money and expert information to influence legislators. Legislators can offset money from lobbyists because legislators with little electoral competition but large financial campaign funds give money to other legislators. In other words, the origin of money to buy a legislator's vote should not matter if it came from an interest group, lobbyist, or another legislator.

Lobbying refers to a class or menu of strategies from which lobbyists choose as they pursue their proximate political objectives (Hall & Deardorff 2006). John M. de Figueiredo (2002) defines lobbying as the manifestation of information transfer between interest groups and policy-makers. Again, John M. de Figueiredo and Brian Kelleher Richter (2013) define lobbying as the transfer of information in private meetings and venues between interest groups and politicians, their staffs, and agents. Lobbying is conceptualized as a two-stage process in which the first stage involves the acquisition of specialized information, and the second involves the strategic communication of a message to the legislator concerning this information (Austen-Smith & Wright 1992). Mayer (2008) defines lobbying from two perspectives, which are the tax law and the Lobbying Disclosure Act. The tax law defines lobbying solely by the type of government action that charity and private foundations seek to influence. The Lobbying Disclosure Act defines lobbying under the communications with individuals who are covered executive or legislative branches with regards to legislation, executive branch action, a federal program or policy, or the nomination or confirmation of a person for a position subject to confirmation by the Senate (Mayer 2008).

Expertise information from lobbyists provides more influence to legislators. Josh Brodbeck, Matthew T. Harrigan, and Daniel A. Smith (2013) discuss how members of Congress focus on reelection and are uncertain of what decisions in policy will lead them to this goal. Electoral uncertainty motivates members of Congress to look to outside sources of certainty, to those

individuals and groups who can provide them with some answers as to what “positions they need to take to gain reelection” (Hansen 1991; Herrnson 2000; Jacobson 2004; Brodbeck, Harrigan & Smith 2013). De Figueiredo and Richter (2013) state there may be an intermediate form of information—such as how many jobs a policy position will create, how will constituents be affected by a yea or nay vote, whether business leaders will give support in the next election, — but ultimately, the key piece of information the politician cares about is understanding how position-taking on various issues will affect his or her re-election, promotion, and ideological policy outcomes. Similarly, Marie Hojnacki and David C. Kimball (1998) state that in order to influence legislators’ voting decisions, groups provide information about the pros and cons of a piece of legislation and its electoral consequences. Interest groups submit draft legislation and amendments as well as other facts, statistics, and arguments that help legislators participate in bill formulation and coalition building on behalf of the group. This arrangement serves legislators as well as interest groups because legislators can use expertise information from interest groups and lobbyists in order to overcome electoral uncertainty.

Thomas L. Gais, Mark A. Peterson, and Jack L. Walker (1984) describe the rise of iron triangles, which are tightly integrated triangular connections between interest groups, members of Congress, and the bureaucracy pursuing their own private interests in public policy, in the American representative system. The idea of iron triangles is usually connected to subgovernments. Iron triangles, or subgovernments, are another mechanism in which interest groups and lobbyists can influence legislators in public policy-making. Iron triangles assume more-complex relations whereby congressional committees, agency clientele, and agency personnel all enjoy low-visibility cordial relations and produce policy that favors all parties involved (Golden 1998). Interest groups in a mature subgovernment would enjoy an intimate, co-operative relationship with government, and would seldom be directly challenged by hostile groups fundamentally opposed to their interests (Gais, Peterson & Walker 1984). The fragmented authority of Congress and administrative autonomy of bureaucratic agencies led to the formation of iron triangles.

Michael T. Heaney and Geoffrey M. Lorenz (2013) introduce the idea of a coalition portfolio in regard to interest group coalitions, and determine their effectiveness in influencing policy. Interest group coalition exists when two or more interest groups collaborate in advocating their public policy agendas. Coalition portfolios are the set of coalitions within a given area of public policy in which an interest group participates at a particular point in time (Heaney & Lorenz 2013). Interest groups have a variety of reasons to form coalition portfolios on a set of issues in public policy. An interest group may join one coalition to help advertise its issue position to the public, a second coalition to lobby on an important provision of a pending bill, and a third coalition to advance its interests in the courts (Heaney & Lorenz 2013). These coalitions signal policymakers that interest groups collaborate together on a particular stance on a specific issue. The signal from interest group coalitions minimizes the transaction costs of legislators dealing with interest groups in these coalitions.

Amy McKay (2011) proposes that negative lobbying, which is lobbying against a proposal, has a profound effect on the chances of a proposal being adopted. This concept is interesting because legislators might be more inclined to reject voting for a proposal instead of adopting it after receiving negative lobbying from lobbyists and interest groups. Lobbying pressure in opposition to a proposal alerts policymakers to the potential of considerable public disapproval of the government action, bringing electoral risks, infringed autonomy, public embarrassment, and similar consequences (McKay 2011). Out of the other factors that affect policy outcomes,

such as conflict, majority preferences, resources, and institutional influences, negative lobbying produces the most powerful predictor of policy outcomes except presidential support or opposition from McKay's data. Hence, negative lobbying is an intriguing way to influence legislators and affect policy outcomes on legislation by interest groups and lobbyists.

Interest groups and lobbyists engage in both inside and outside lobbying to influence legislators in public policy. Special interest groups (SIGs) can use inside lobbying techniques (e.g., contributions, hiring a lobbyist to draft a bill or to contact legislators) to influence content of a bill (Wolton 2013), while outside lobbying expenditures (e.g., running advertising campaigns, hiring petitioners to collect signatures or to mobilize voters) are adopted to affect the likelihood a piece of legislation is enacted into law (Wolton 2013). SIGs utilize inside lobbying not only for gaining policy to their position but to seek a compromise with government officials in order to avoid costly outside lobbying. Furthermore, outside lobbying complements inside lobbying. Wolton found special interest groups' influence on policy outcomes and choices is marginal. However, she asserts SIGs have a strong impact on political decisions through threat of or participation in outside lobbying activities (Wolton 2013).

Despite the many ways interest groups and lobbyists try to influence legislators in the policy-making process, legislators alter the structure of public policy-making in a multitude of ways in order to reduce the influence of interest groups and lobbyists. Ainsworth (1993) argues that by first structuring their environments in anticipation of interactions with lobbyists and then judiciously choosing strategies, legislators can influence lobbyists and avoid undue pressures without stricter regulations or repeated investigations. Legislators have two distinct advantages: they design rules governing their interactions with lobbyists, and they can accomplish tasks for an interest group that the group acting alone would not accomplish (Ainsworth 1997). In addition, Ainsworth (1997) states legislators affect their interactions with lobbyists by forming lobbying enterprises in order to reduce ubiquitous uncertainty and costliness associated with ongoing transactions. Austen-Smith and Wright (1992) state legislators can check on information about district support given by lobbyists by visiting constituents in their districts.

According to Victor (2007), legislative context is an important factor in groups' decisions about lobbying. Victor (2007) defines context as the various aspects of the environment that can describe any political situation for any policy. When the legislative environment is particularly unfriendly, interest groups have a more difficult time making inroad into legislation (Victor 2007). Therefore, legislators can alter certain aspects of their environment not only to reduce the influence of interest groups and lobbyists but also to protect their autonomy and themselves from interest groups and lobbyists.

Next, campaign money and grassroots lobbying influence public policy. Morten Bennesen and Sven E. Feldmann (2006) analyze what is the right combination of information and money contributions for lobbyists and interest groups to use to influence legislators on political decisions. In order to influence a political decision, an interest group faces the choice of providing the decision-maker with information, lobbying via contributions, or both (Bennesen and Feldmann 2006). They claim twists can occur when interest groups induce decisions through money contributions. Ainsworth (1997) states that money may not be the most effective currency when lobbying for legislators' votes from Wright (1990). Constituency, not money, drives access to Congress (Brodbeck, Harrigan & Smith 2013).

Randall S. Kroszner and Thomas Stratmann (1998) examine political action committees (PACs) and their competing contribution patterns. They assert a legislator's main goal is reelection, and receiving campaign contributions from interest groups and PACs is an important

element to achieve this goal. An interest group can try to influence legislation by forming a PAC and contributing money to candidates for Congress (Nownes 2012). John M. De Figueiredo (2002) states PAC contributions are mechanisms for interest groups to gain access to legislators so that they can engage in a more valuable activity—lobbying. Kroszner and Stratmann affirm this statement from De Figueiredo. Contributions can be used as a substitute for direct services in gaining recognition and support among voters and fending off attacks by challengers (Kroszner & Stratmann 1998). Matilde Bombardini and Francesco Trebbi (2011) assume contributions are valued by politicians and therefore affect legislators' votes on certain bills.

### *Relationships*

Relationships between legislators, interest groups and lobbyists, and the revolving door lobbyists serve as my foundation to this research paper. Marianne Bertrand, Matilde Bombardini, and Francesco Trebbi (2011) state whom lobbyists give to (and mostly likely whom lobbyists know) is systematically related to the issues they work on. Hence, issue expertise appears to not be the main factor in lobbyist's access to legislators. Lobbyists tend to follow legislators from various committees regardless of the issue. We find evidence that lobbyists switch issues in a predictable way as the legislators they were previous connected to through campaign donations switch committee assignments (Bertrand, Bombardini & Trebbi 2011). Bertrand, Bombardini, and Trebbi (2011) argue lobbyists' connections serve as an external factor to what issues they work on, but also serve as an internal factor to creating the transferring of knowledge and information on the issues to relevant lawmakers.

Bruce E. Cain and Lee Drutman (2014) assess the effectiveness of the revolving door lobbyist provision in Honest Leadership and Open Government Act (HLOGA) of 2007 and gain a better understanding of the factors that make former congressional staffers employable as lobbyists. They define "revolving door" as the process by which congressional staff seamlessly leaves government service to represent private clients before the very same congressional offices for which they previously worked (2014, 27). Former congressional staffers have three distinct qualities in which make them valuable as lobbyists: personal contacts, policy expertise, and knowledge of congressional procedure. Cain and Drutman state that their evidence from their paper confirms the recent research that whom you know tends to be more important than what you know.

The consequences of the revolving door lobbyists are explored by evaluating lobbying success of former congressional members and staff (Lazarus & McKay 2012). According to lobbyists, congressional experience is extremely valuable to people who want to persuade members of Congress for their living. Lazarus and McKay (2012) suggest maybe much of the information shared by lobbyists who formerly worked within the Congress is tactical or policy-related, rather than private information. Further, congressional offices might be more likely to secure funding for the clients of former staffers because those staffers make more effective lobbyists, not because they have a preexisting relationship. Jordi Blanes I. Vidal, Mirko Draca, and Christian Fons-Rosen (2012) evaluate the extent in which revolving door lobbyists turn their political contacts into lobbying revenue. They argue lobbyists cash into their connections since connections to people in power is an asset compare to other attributes, such as experience or knowledge of how the government works. Vidal, Draca, and Rosen (2012) further state that other revolving door lobbyists, e.g. ex-Congress members, benefit more with their connections whereas other lobbyists rely less on connections and more on policy expertise. Kurt Wise (2007) analyzes the relationships of lobbyists with members of Congress, other lobbyists, etc. All

lobbyists interviewed for this study place a great deal of importance on their relationships with members of Congress, Congressional staff, or employees of federal bureaucracies (Wise 2007). Ethics is crucial for maintaining relationships with members of Congress according to lobbyists.

Modest forms of socializing between members of Congress and lobbyists (for example, lunches and dinners) can be constructive and are valuable in building trust and furthering prospects for the development of good public policies (Levine 2009). Furthermore, Levine argues friendships between legislators and members of Congress can provide higher quality deliberation on relevant issues by more aggressive discussions. The subjects for Levine's survey state that socializing with lobbyists does not pose any threat to the integrity of the policymaking process. Actually, lobbyists can serve as sounding boards for members' legislative ideas and strategic plans (Levine, 2009). Levine asserts for members and for lobbyists mutual friendships and the ability to trust one another are often synergic and positive relationships.

### **Research Question**

If maintaining relationships between members of Congress and congressional staff is important to lobbyists, then these relationships should weigh into legislators' decision-making on votes for public policy. Does the relationship between a legislator and an interest group or a lobbyist influence a legislator to vote for or vote against a proposal that an interest group or a lobbyist lobby for? A legislator would be helping out a friend, in this case the lobbyist, or interest group, by voting for a bill that favors his/her ideological stance. On the contrary, a legislator could aggravate the relationship with an interest group or a lobbyist by voting against a bill that an interest group or a lobbyist lobbies for. My research fits into the literature that emphasizes relationships between members of Congress, interest groups, and lobbyists because it accounts the relationship between a legislator and an interest group or a lobbyist into the decision whether to vote for or against a proposal that an interest group or a lobbyist lobbies for. My research is significant because the relationships between legislators and interest groups or lobbyists could be affecting the legislators' decision making on crucial public policies that impact hundreds of Americans.

I must analyze the impact of relationships on legislators' voting. In order to do this task, I need to have a mean of operationalizing these relationships. So, the research question for this paper is how political scientists operationalize the relationships between legislators and lobbyists. Disclosure forms on gifts may be a way to operationalize the relationships between legislators and lobbyists. There are several variables to consider once operationalizing the relationships between legislators and lobbyists. Here is a list of the variables once operationalizing the relationships between legislators and lobbyists: the size of an interest group, revolving door lobbyists, campaign contributions, access, policy expertise, information on the preferences of legislators' constituents, and negative lobbying.

### **Research Design**

My research design for this paper is to analyze disclosure process in all 50 states to determine accessibility of information on personal relationships. The source of this data is the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). I obtained information on both the gift exceptions and gift exemptions for personal relationships or friendships columns from the NCSL Legislator Gift Restrictions Overview page.

For every state, the NCSL Legislator Gift Restrictions Overview page states the gift limits, definitions of gifts or things of value, and exceptions. I looked at whether or not a state has gift

exceptions for its legislators' gift restrictions, and if the state allows gift exemptions for personal relationships. I conducted the same method for finding information on whether or not a state allows gift exemptions for personal relationships or friendships. If a state mentions the word 'personal' or phrase 'prior relationship before serving in office,' I put yes, and vice versa. However, the gift exemptions for personal relationships or friendships were not applicable to some states.

The information obtained for whether or not a state requires legislators to file gift disclosure forms was gathered from the NCSL Personal Financial Disclosure: Gift and Honorarium page. Every state provides the type of gifts and monetary amount in which legislators must file a gift disclosure form. States that require legislators to report on their gifts receive a yes in my table, and states that did not require legislators to report their gifts on gift disclosure forms receive a no in my table. I individually researched the gift disclosure forms that states require legislators to file their gifts to determine whether or not there was a fill-in or check out for personal relationships or friendships exemptions. I examined a blank gift disclosure form for a particular state whether or not there was a fill-in or check out categorized for personal relationships or friendships exemptions. For a few states, the gift disclosure form is only accessible to elected officials and registered lobbyists. If a state has a place for personal friendship or relationship exemptions on its gift disclosure form, I determine whether it was a fill-in or check out. When a legislator has to write in the gift and whom it is from, I put yes and fill-in for a particular state in this table. If a state did not recognize gift exemptions for personal friendship or relationship or did not require its legislators to file a gift disclosure form, I put not applicable in the table. I did this same approach for researching gift disclosure forms in a particular state became difficult (see Table 1).

### **Analysis**

Forty-six of the fifty states allow gift exceptions for legislators. The four states that don't allow gift exceptions for legislators are Alabama, North Dakota, Rhode Island, and South Dakota. Twenty-three of the 50 states give legislators gift exemptions for personal relationships or friendships. Twenty states don't allow legislators gift exemptions for personal relationships or friendships, and seven of the 50 states indicated that gift exemptions for personal relationships or friendships by legislators were not applicable to their gift exceptions. Twenty-two states of 50 had yes in both gift exceptions and personal relationship or friendship gift exemptions columns. Only North Dakota, Rhode Island and South received no in both gift exceptions and personal relationship or friendship gift exemptions columns. 40 percent, twenty of 50 states, allowed gift exceptions but no personal friendship or relationship gift exemptions. In addition, 5 states allowed legislators gift exceptions but did not specify any gift exemptions for personal relationships or friendships.

Thirty-six of 50 states (72 percent) require legislators to file a gift disclosure form. Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Mississippi, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont and Wyoming are the states that have no requirement for legislators to file a gift disclosure form. Notably, I relied on the information from personal friendship or relationship gift exemptions column to gather information for my last table column. Thirteen out of 50 states, or 26 percent, have a fill-in or check out for personal relationship or friendship gift exemptions on their gift disclosure forms. For example, the state of Alaska requires its legislators to file a separate form for gifts of compassion in which may indicate gifts due to a personal relationship. States that do not allow gift exemptions for personal relationship

or friendship or do not require their legislators to file gift disclosure forms, I found thirty-seven states met this criteria. None of the thirty-six states that require legislators to file a gift disclosure form could access completed forms by current elected officials.

**TABLE 1. LOBBYIST RELATIONSHIP DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS**

<b>State</b>	<b>Gift Exception</b>	<b>Exemption for Personal Friendship/Relationship</b>	<b>Reporting Disclosure on gifts?</b>	<b>Check out/fill in location for exemption for personal friendship/relationship on gift disclosure form</b>
Alabama	No	Yes	No	Not Applicable
Alaska	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes – a specific form for gifts of compassion
Arizona	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not Applicable
Arkansas	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes – fill in
California	Yes	NA	Yes	Not Applicable
Colorado	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes – fill in
Connecticut	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes – fill in
Delaware	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes; but only accessible if you’re a legislator or registered lobbyist
DC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes – fill in
Florida	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Georgia	Yes	No	Yes	Not Applicable
Hawaii	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes – fill in
Idaho	Yes	Yes	No	Not Applicable
Illinois	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not Applicable
Indiana	Yes	NA	No	Not Applicable
Iowa	Yes	No	No	Not Applicable
Kansas	Yes	No	Yes	Not Applicable
Kentucky	Yes	No	Yes	Not Applicable
Louisiana	Yes	No	No	Not Applicable
Maine	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes – fill in
Maryland	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes; but only accessible for elected officials
Massachusetts	Yes	No	Yes	Not Applicable
Michigan	Yes	No	No	Not Applicable
Minnesota	Yes	No	No	Not Applicable
Mississippi	Yes	No	No	Not Applicable
Missouri	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes – fill in
Montana	Yes	No	No	Not Applicable
Nebraska	Yes	No	Yes	Not Applicable
Nevada	Yes	No	Yes	Not Applicable
New Hampshire	Yes	No	Yes	Not Applicable
New Jersey	Yes	NA	Yes	Not Applicable
New Mexico	Yes	Yes	No	Not Applicable
New York	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes; only electronically by state legislators
North Carolina	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes – fill in
North Dakota	No	NA	No	Not Applicable
Ohio	Yes	NA	Yes	Not Applicable
Oklahoma	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes – fill in
Oregon	Yes	No	Yes	Not Applicable



Pennsylvania	Yes	No	Yes	Not Applicable
Rhode Island	No	No	Yes	Not Applicable
South Carolina	Yes	No	Yes	Not Applicable
South Dakota	No	No	No	Not Applicable
Tennessee	Yes	No	Yes	Not Applicable
Texas	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not Applicable
Utah	Yes	No	No	Not Applicable
Vermont	Yes	NA	No	Not Applicable
Virginia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not Applicable
Washington	Yes	No	Yes	Not Applicable
West Virginia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes – fill in
Wisconsin	Yes	NA	Yes	Not Applicable
Wyoming	Yes	Yes	No	Not Applicable

**Discussion**

This study examined whether or not a lobbyist having a preexisting relationship prior to public policy-making with a legislator influence the legislator’s decision-making on the vote of a proposal in this paper. I hypothesize when a lobbyist who has a preexisting relationship with the legislator prior to public policy-making and lobbies for a proposal, the legislator will vote closer to the lobbyist’s position on the proposal. In addition, a legislator who does not have a preexisting relationship with the legislator prior to public policy-making and lobbies for a proposal, the legislator will vote against or for the lobbyist’s position on the proposal.

The size of an interest group, access, campaign contributions, and revolving door lobbyists can have a major impact on the relationships from my research design. The size of an interest group that a lobbyist represents can influence the amount of access and campaign contributions given to a legislator. I hypothesize revolving door lobbyists variable will profoundly influence the relationships between the dependent and independent variables in my research design due to a preexisting relationship as a former staff member with a legislator. Particularly, I predict negative lobbying can have a key impact on the relationships between the dependent and independent variables in my research design.

A significant limitation to this research design is the accessibility. While political scientists know lobbyists and legislators form relationships, obtaining information on the impact of these relationships is very difficult. Also, this information on the impact of legislator-lobbyist relationships has no empirical data. If there is any information on relationships between legislators and lobbyists, such as when legislators file for a gift exemption form, it is not readily accessible to the public or is kept in the ethics committee’s office. Why do states restrict the general public viewing public forms of information, such as gift disclosure forms, by their legislators? I believe that the general public should be able to access a completed gift disclosure form to determine whether or not a relationship with a lobbyist is impacting a legislator’s decision-making on votes. I would suggest discussing about the difficulty obtaining information on the relationships between lobbyists and legislators and the various methods in which a researcher could measure a personal relationship between a lobbyist and a legislator. Asking why it is so difficult to receive information on the relationship between lobbyists and legislators and continuing to explore its impact on public policy-making can serve as a huge benefit to move forward on this research.

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