

**School of International and Public Affairs  
Columbia University  
Office of Career Services**

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**CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN  
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS / LOBBYING**

***Description of Field***

Government relations involves monitoring legislative and executive activities to influence policy, legislation, regulations, or negotiations, on behalf of interest groups, governments, industries, specific companies or constituencies. These activities are also known as "lobbying."

***Career Paths and Entry Salaries***

Typical entry-level job titles include issues analyst, research analyst, research assistant or associate. Salaries vary based on experience and professional contacts. Private sector companies typically pay more than non-profit and public interest organizations. In 1996 the salary range in government relations extended from \$12,000 to more than \$150,000 with a median annual salary of \$49,000.

Most of those seeking careers in lobbying begin with volunteer work on political campaigns, on Capitol Hill, in State Houses or in governmental agencies. With such experience, graduates can often move to the mid-level of organizations; without such experience, graduates will typically enter the research area or in roles that support more senior staff.

Successful lobbyists often have experience working in government. Moving in and out of government, sometimes known as the "revolving door," usually increases marketability in both the public sector and private sector. There are few straight line careers in lobbying as these positions are influenced by the ebb and flow of politics, or opportunities in the government. From a position as a research assistant, a graduate could become an analyst or manager within a lobbying organization or might find a position on the staff of an elected official or government agency.

***Demand***

The lobbying industry is very competitive, and many positions are filled by networking. Without experience or contacts, graduates must be willing to start at an entry level. There are very few purely international positions available, although there are many international issues, for example, representing a foreign government, a company with international trade concerns, or an advocacy group working on human rights.

***Qualifications Necessary to Enter the Field***

Government experience is a highly regarded qualification. Strong communications skills, both written and verbal, are essential. A comprehensive understanding of governmental processes and legislative procedures is important. Excellent people skills, high energy, flexibility and willingness to work long hours are important. The ability to compromise is often critical.

People interested in lobbying careers should consider volunteering on political campaigns or interning with a government agency. The contacts developed through volunteer work and the experience analyzing issues and understanding government processes can be invaluable. A graduate degree in law or in public affairs/public policy is often necessary for advancement in the field. The most important entry advice is

network, network, network. Internships, volunteer work and part-time jobs can lead to valuable contacts and information.

### ***Sample Group of Employers***

Employers consist of lobbying firms, public interest organizations, trade and professional associations, corporations, law firms, political action committees and political parties. A sample listing of each follows:

LOBBYING FIRMS: Black, Kelly, Scruggs & Healy; Morgan Casner Associates

PUBLIC INTEREST ORGANIZATIONS: Children's Defense Fund; Handgun Control, Inc.

TRADE & PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: National Federation of Independent Business

LAW FIRMS: Arnold & Porter; Patton, Boggs & Blow

POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES: connected with Trade and Professional Organizations.

POLITICAL PARTIES: Democratic National Committee and Republican National Committee

### ***Future Challenges to the Profession***

Lobbyists provide information and advice to elected officials and staff. As issues facing government become more numerous and more complicated, lobbyists become more important and more prevalent. Lobbying in Washington, DC is the most visible, but lobbying on the State level as well as lobbying foreign governments and agencies is growing. While government regulations are restricting the lobbying activities of former government employees, there will always be opportunities for influencing people in the political arena.

### ***To Obtain More Information***

Publications:

Beacham's Guide to Key Lobbyists, Washington Representatives,  
Jobs in Washington, DC, The Complete Guide to Public Employment,  
National Trade and Professional Associations, American Lobbyists  
Directory, Corporate Public Affairs.