

Group seeking ban lists lobbyists' presents

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August 25, 2006*

Colorado lawmakers received more than \$200,000 worth of gifts and free travel from lobbyists since January 2005, according to a report issued Thursday by a group seeking a constitutional ban on such gifts.

Coloradans for Clean Government claims that such gifts give lobbyists more clout than average citizens. The group is promoting an initiative that will appear on the November ballot as Amendment 41.

If approved by voters, gifts from lobbyists to public officials would be banned and gifts from non- lobbyists would be held to an annual \$50 limit. It also would create an independent ethics commission and establish a two-year "cooling off" period before legislators can become paid lobbyists after leaving the statehouse.

"This will promote trust in the integrity of government and lead to a cultural change in how we do business in the state Capitol," said Jared Polis, co- chairman of Coloradans for Clean Government and a member of the Colorado Board of Education.

Lawmakers are required to report gifts they receive.

According to those reports, lawmakers took tickets to concerts, sporting events, rounds of golf and meals.

Earlier this year, The Denver Post reported that 65 of the 100 state lawmakers reported accepting more than \$29,000 worth of tickets, golf outings, ski-lift passes and fly-fishing and rafting trips in 2005.

State Sen. Peter Groff, D- Denver, was one of the biggest gift takers, accepting tickets worth \$2,180 from lobbyists who represent utilities, computer- services firms, skiing interests, casinos, health care providers, cable companies, cigarette-makers and several other interests.

The report issued Thursday

tallies the reports filed by all 100 lawmakers and Gov. Bill Owens but does not name specific recipients or donors.

So far this year, lawmakers have accepted \$37,650 in honoraria or other forms of compensation and \$31,097 in travel reimbursements.

The report also lists other gifts and their value:

- 58 tickets to Colorado Avalanche games, \$4,908.
- 11 tickets to Denver Broncos games, \$2,245.
- 34 tickets to Colorado Rockies games, \$2,374.

- 17 tickets to Denver Nuggets games, \$1,505.
- 19 rounds of golf, \$3,152.
- Theater tickets, \$1,736.
- Meals and fundraisers, \$1,681.
- Other gifts and entertainment, \$7,243.

Dan Hopkins, spokesman for Owens, said the governor never accepts speaking fees for in-state speeches and never takes travel or speaking fees from groups that could affect state business.

"As far as gifts," Hopkins said, "they are reported meticulously and the public can judge for themselves."

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Source: http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_4234364