CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN GOVERNMENT RELATIONS / LOBBYING

Description of Field:
Government relations, also known as lobbying, consists of individuals and organizations engaged in promoting the interests of their employers or clients. Their activities involve monitoring legislative and executive activities to influence policy, legislation, regulations, or negotiations, on behalf of governments, industries, specific companies, interest groups or constituencies. In Washington, DC, lobbying is regulated by law, calling for disclosure by lobbyists of organizations or clients they represent, LDA (Lobbying Disclosure Act) or FARA (Foreign Agents Registration Act).

In addition, lobbying may also be carried out by PACs (Political Action Committees) that represent specific constituencies or may simply represent themselves on stated issues. Lastly, there is a subdivision of Executive Branch Legislative Offices that represents various departments and agencies of the Executive Branch of the U.S. Government, charged with the purpose of influencing the Congressional Branch on legislative affairs.

As the issues facing government become more numerous and more complicated, lobbyists become more important and more prevalent. While lobbyists serve as advocates for the interests of their employers or clients, they also provide information to elected officials and staff that may be useful in the decision process. Lobbying in Washington, DC is the most visible, but lobbying on the state level as well as lobbying foreign governments and agencies is growing. It should be noted that at the present time, regulations restrict the lobbying activities of former U.S. government officials.

Career Paths and Entry Salaries:
The lobbying industry is very competitive, and without experience or contacts, graduates must be willing to start at an entry-level position. Positions abroad might be scarce initially, but there are many international issues to work on, such as representing a foreign government, a company with international trade concerns or a human rights advocacy group. Vacancies are rarely posted since many positions are filled by networking and by referral.

Most of those seeking careers in lobbying begin with volunteer work on political campaigns for elected public officials, or as legislative staff on Capitol Hill, in State Houses or in governmental agencies. The contacts developed through volunteer work and the experience gained from analyzing issues and understanding government processes can be invaluable. With such experience, graduates can often move to the mid-level of organizations. Without such experience, graduates will typically enter in the research area or in roles that support more senior staff. A graduate degree in law, international affairs or public affairs/public policy is often necessary for advancement in the field. The most important entry advice is network, network, network. Internships, volunteer work, temporary positions and part-time jobs can lead to valuable contacts and information.

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. The salary range in government relations typically extends from the $20,000s to more than $150,000, with a median annual salary of $49,000.

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. The ebb and flow of politics and arising opportunities in government influence the availability of lobbying positions in the government. Opportunities also exist in the government relations office of large firms. From a position as a research assistant, a person 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.

Recommended Qualifications to Enter the Field:
- Government experience
- Private sector experience
- Strong oral communication skills
- Superior writing skills
- Comprehensive understanding of governmental processes and legislative procedures
- Excellent interpersonal skills
- High energy
- Flexibility
- Dedication and willingness to work long hours
Sample Employers and Resources for More Information:
According to a 2005 Washington Post article, the number of registered lobbyists in Washington has more than doubled since 2000 to more than 34,750. 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:**
- Bose Public Affairs Group – http://www.bosepublicaffairs.com
- Poole McKinley Government Consulting – http://www.poolemckinley.com

**Public Interest Organizations:**
- The Brady Campaign – http://www.handguncontrol.org
- Center for Democracy and Technology – http://www.cdt.org
- Handgun Control, Inc. – http://www.bradycampaign.org
- Public Citizen – http://www.citizen.org

**Public Relations Consultants:**
- Burson Marsteller - http://www.burson-marsteller.com
- Edelman - http://www.edelman.com

**Trade & Professional Organizations:**
- Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers – http://www.autoalliance.org
- Renewable Fuels Association – http://www.ethanolrfa.org

**Law Firms:**
- Patton Boggs LLP - http://www.patonboggs.com/about/Overview

**Political Parties:**
- Democratic National Committee – http://www.democrats.org
- Republican National Committee – http://www.rnc.org

**Associations:**
- American League of Lobbyists (ALL) http://www.alldc.org
- American Political Science Association – http://www.apsanet.org
- American Society of Association Executives – http://www.asaenet.org/main
- Elliott School Career Connection – http://www.elliottschoolcc.com
- International Association of Political Consultants – http://www.iapc.org
- Public Affairs Council – http://www.pac.org

**Internet Resources:**
- Advocacy Institute - http://www.advocacy.org
- Association of Government Relations Professionals - http://grprofessionals.org
- Brad Traverse – http://www.bradtraverse.com
- Campaign Finance Guides http://cfinst.org
- Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest - http://www.clpi.org
## Course Suggestions for Careers in Government Relations/Lobbying

The following list represents a sampling of different courses offered throughout The George Washington University that would be appropriate for this career field. As academic departments continually update their bulletin, these courses might not be available on a regular schedule. This list does not include required courses in the Core or Regional Fields and does not correspond to, though it closely follows, the curriculum for graduation. Students should consult their academic advisors to see if taking some of the courses below fits into their academic plan.

### Political Management:
- Applied Political Communications
- Fundamentals of Political Management
- Fundraising & Budgeting
- Grassroots Engagement
- Lobbying
- National Campaign Dynamics
- Digital Strategy

### Political Science:
- American Political Process
- Politics of U.S. National Security Policy

### Economics:
- Survey of International Trade Theory and Policy
- Economics of the Environment and Natural Resources

### Media & Public Affairs:
- Advocacy and Political Network
- Editorial and Persuasive Writing
- Speechwriting

### History:
- 20th Century U.S. Foreign Policy

### Professional Skills Courses:
- Congress & Foreign Policy
- Ethics in International Affairs
- Formal Briefing
- Negotiating Skills
- Nuts and Bolts of US Trade Policy

### Political Advertisement
- Campaign Strategy
- Influencing the Media
- Maximizing Social Media
- Strategic Management of Issues
- Speechcraft

### U.S. Foreign Policy Making

### International Migration and Labor Markets
- Urban and Regional Economics

### Politics and Public Relations Fundamentals
- Strategic Political Communication
- Campaign Targeting and Voter Content

### Benefit-Cost Analysis
- Legislative Management – Congress

### Public Speaking
- Technology for International Crisis Response
- Analyzing the U.S. Federal Budget
- Writing for International Affairs Professionals
- Writing for International Policymakers