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## Virginia Adopts New Gift Law

On April 23, 2014, Virginia adopted Senate Bill 649 amending the state's ethics laws. Effective July 1, 2014, the amendments, among other things, impose a gift limit on certain government officers and employees from lobbyists, lobbyist employers and interested parties, change the lobbyist expenditure reporting schedule, and create the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council to facilitate compliance with the state's ethics laws.

Specifically, the new gift law prohibits officers or employees of state or local governmental or advisory agencies, legislators or candidates for the state General Assembly, and other candidates or officials required to file disclosure forms from accepting, within any calendar year, any single tangible gift or a combination of tangible gifts that, in the aggregate, are in excess of \$250, from lobbyists, lobbyist principals, or persons, organizations, or businesses who are a party to or are seeking to become a party to a contract with the state or local government agency of which the donee is an officer or an employee. These candidates and officials must also report to the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council (1) all tangible gifts (i.e., things of value that do not lose their value upon the happening of certain events, such as currency, securities or stock options) with a value of \$250 or less and (2) any intangible gifts (i.e., things of temporary value that lose their value upon the happening of a certain event, such as entertainment, tickets, transportation or meals) received by them or a member of their immediate family from lobbyists, lobbyist principals, or persons, organizations, or businesses who are a party to or are seeking to become a party to a contract with the state or local government agency of which the donee is an officer or an employee. These donees must report the source, a description of the exact gift or event, and the approximate value of the gift or event that they or a member of their immediate families received. This new gift restriction is in addition to the Executive Order signed by Governor Terry McAuliffe in January (described in the attached mailing of January 17, 2014) restricting gifts to executive branch officials and employees.

The new law also requires lobbyists to file semiannual reports of expenditures with the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council by December 15 for the preceding six-month period complete through the last day of October and June 15 for the preceding six-month period complete through the last day of April each year. Previously, filings were required annually.

Senate Bill 649 can be viewed at <http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?141+cab+SC10308SB0649+BC>.