
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 434

AN ACT INCREASING VARIOUS MONETARY THRESHOLDS UNDER THE STATE CODES OF ETHICS.

SUMMARY

The state codes of ethics generally prohibit public officials, candidates, and state employees from soliciting or accepting (and lobbyists from giving) various gifts if they are worth more than a certain amount. The codes also impose various prohibitions, requirements, and other conditions on certain items and actions if are worth more than a certain amount.

This bill increases these financial thresholds in the state codes of ethics as shown in the table below. More specifically, it increases the thresholds that determine whether (1) something is a gift subject to various prohibitions under the codes and (2) other various prohibitions, requirements, and conditions apply to an item or action (e.g., the minimum value of an expenditure that must be reported on client lobbyist registrant financial reports).

Table: Financial Thresholds Under Current Law and the Bill

<i>Current Financial Threshold</i>	<i>Threshold Under the Bill</i>
\$10	\$20
30	60
50	100
100	250
1,000	1,500

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2024

§§ 1 & 5 — GIFTS

The bill increases the value thresholds that determine whether something is a “gift” subject to various prohibitions under the Code of

Ethics for Public Officials (§ 1) or the Code of Ethics for Lobbyists (§ 5). For example, the code for public officials generally prohibits public officials and state employees from (1) accepting a gift based on any understanding that their vote, official action, or judgment would be influenced by it (CGS § 1-84(g)); (2) knowingly accepting a gift from a known registered lobbyist (CGS § 1-84(j)); or (3) knowingly accepting a gift from someone who the official or employee knows is seeking to do business with their department or agency (CGS § 1-84(m)). The code for lobbyists similarly prohibits registered lobbyists from knowingly giving a gift to a state employee or public official (CGS § 1-97(a)).

The table below shows a brief description of the covered gift and its value threshold under current law and the bill for determining whether it is exempted under the codes.

Table: Exempted Gift Thresholds Under Current Law and the Bill

<i>Gift</i>	<i>Current Exempted Gift Value</i>	<i>Exempted Gift Value Under the Bill</i>
Certificate, plaque, or other ceremonial award	Less than \$100	Less than \$250
Food and beverages per recipient, per year, consumed at an occasion attended by the person paying for the food and beverages	Less than \$50	Less than \$100
Food and beverages per person consumed at a publicly noticed legislative reception for all legislators, or those from a particular state region, hosted once per year by a lobbyist or business organization	Less than \$50	Less than \$100
Gifts, including food and beverages, from someone who is not a family member to celebrate a major life event	\$1,000 or less	\$1,500 or less
Total gifts or food and beverages provided at a hospitality suite at a meeting or conference of an interstate legislative association, by someone who is not a registered lobbyist or doing business with Connecticut	Less than \$100	Less than \$250
Anything with a certain value	Less than \$10 for individual items and less than \$50 total	Less than \$20 for individual items and less than \$100 total

<i>Gift</i>	<i>Current Exempted Gift Value</i>	<i>Exempted Gift Value Under the Bill</i>
	value for all things provided by a donor to a recipient in a calendar year	value for all things provided by a donor to a recipient in a calendar year

§§ 2-11 — OTHER PROHIBITIONS, REQUIREMENTS, AND CONDITIONS

The bill also increases the financial thresholds that trigger various prohibitions, requirements, or other additional conditions. These include, for example, the value of a contract that a public official cannot enter into without an open and public process, or expenditure amounts that trigger certain reporting requirements. The table below shows the bill's threshold increases and a brief description of the provision it applies to.

Table: Thresholds for Other Prohibitions, Requirements, and Conditions

<i>Bill Section</i>	<i>Threshold Increase Under the Bill</i>	<i>Provision</i>
2	From at least \$100 to at least \$250	The value of most contracts that public officials and state employees (and members of their immediate families and associated businesses) cannot enter unless it was awarded through an open and public process
3	From at least \$10 to at least \$20	The value of anything given to a public official or state employee that must be reported if it was given by a person (1) doing business, or seeking to, with the official's or employee's agency or (2) engaged in activities regulated by the agency
4	From at least \$50 to at least \$100	The annual cost of an "expenditure" under the code for lobbyists if it is (1) paid communications on pending administrative or legislative action or (2) solicitations of another person to communicate with public officials or state employees to influence a legislative or administrative act (by law, expenditures are subject to various reporting requirements (e.g., CGS § 1-96))
6	From less than \$50 to less than \$100	The amount that someone may spend to benefit a public official in the legislative or executive branch without being considered a lobbyist (as long as they are not paid or reimbursed specifically for lobbying and spend five hours or less lobbying)

Bill Section	Threshold Increase Under the Bill	Provision
7	From up to \$100 to up to \$250	The monthly amount that a client lobbyist registrant that attempts to influence legislative action may spend or agree to spend for lobbying without having to file an interim monthly report on its lobbying activities during regular legislative session
8	From at least \$10 to at least \$20	The value of each expenditure per person to benefit a legislative or executive branch public official that must be reported on client lobbyist registrant financial reports
8	From less than \$30 to less than \$60	The amount of expenditures per person that do not have to be reported if they (1) benefit General Assembly members at an event open to all legislators or members of a particular region or (2) are personally and directly received by a public official or state employee at a charitable or civic event where they participate in their official capacity
9	From at least \$10 to at least \$20	The amount of each expenditure to benefit a public official that a former registrant must report if it occurs within six months after the end of their registration
10	From at least \$10 to at least \$20	The value of each expenditure to benefit a public official for which registrants must keep records for three years
10	From at least \$50 to at least \$100	The value of all other expenditures for which registrants must keep records for three years
11	From at least \$10 to at least \$20	The amount a registrant paid or reimbursed to a public official or state employee that triggers a requirement to file a statement with the Office of State Ethics

COMMITTEE ACTION

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 19 Nay 0 (03/26/2024)