

Lobbying Is the Profession Americans Trust Least and We'd Like to Change That

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In January, Gallup published its annual survey on the honesty and ethics across a wide range of professions. The survey contains many fascinating findings that can be read here - <https://news.gallup.com/poll/388649/military-brass-judges-among-professions-new-image-lows.aspx>. The finding of greatest interest to us was that, of the professions examined, Americans ranked lobbying as the least ethical. Only five percent of Americans surveyed rated

the trustworthiness of lobbyists as high or very high, and 63 percent – a comfortable majority – rated lobbyists' trustworthiness as low or very low. It is not often that one finds such broad agreement in our country today.

Unsurprisingly, as lobbyists, we object to this perspective.

It cannot be denied that lobbying is a profession with noted unethical behavior. High-profile scandals such as the Jack Abramoff case, which defrauded clients of millions of dollars and led to the downfall of White House officials and a congressman and his staff, have understandably tainted the profession in the public eye. But in the nature of cable news and social media that the bad examples typically earn much more coverage than the good ones. We would like to take the opportunity to explore the other side of lobbying that customarily goes unreported.

As the co-founders and managing partners of a bipartisan lobbying firm with a diverse array of clients and 20 years of combined lobbying experience, we have the opportunity to work on a wide range of important issues: aircraft safety, cybersecurity, and housing affordability are but a slice of our portfolios. We work alongside Members of Congress, presidential administrations, subject matter experts, trade associations, businesses, unions, non-profits, and local governments to improve the lives and security of everyday Americans.

One of our proudest achievements was our work on securing legislative language in the the FAA Extension, Safety, and Security Act of 2016. Now law, that language requires aircraft mechanics working at foreign repair stations to meet the same drug and alcohol testing and background check requirements mandated for mechanics at domestic repair stations. Air travel safety for the American public was drastically improved with this change in law and our lobbying efforts were crucial to make this change; without our advocacy, the issue would have remained dormant within Congress.

In a similar vein, we were instrumental in the design and passage of the Cybersecurity Advisory Committee (“Committee”) within the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). CISA is the lead agency tasked with enhancing the security, resiliency, and reliability of our Nation's cybersecurity. The Committee, which was established in June 2021, is composed of subject matter experts whose role is to advise CISA on effective cybersecurity policy. We designed the Committee and led its inclusion in the National Defense Authorization Act for 2021. Without our work, the Committee would not exist and our government would not have access to best practices being implemented to combat cyberattacks.

Today we are driving the Homes for Every Local Protector, Educator, and Responder (HELPER) Act. The HELPER Act would establish a home loan category within the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) which would enable police and correctional officers, firefighters, EMTs and paramedics, and preK-12 teachers to obtain affordable home loans to keep them in the communities they serve. We are collaborating with industry experts and the Department of Housing and Urban Development to model the program on the wildly successful VA home loan available to our nation’s veterans.

Lobbyists have a reputation as hired guns who will do or say anything for the right price and the opportunity to get overly cozy with elected officials. Every profession has bad actors. As we start our eighth year managing and operating our bipartisan, can-do lobbying firm, we have met countless advocates for the safety, security, and stability of everyday Americans. We are proud to count ourselves among them, and we are proud to serve as exemplars of honest and ethical lobbying for issues that matter.

George McElwee and Keith Pemrick are the founders and Managing Partners of [Commonwealth Strategic Partners](#), a bipartisan government affairs firm located in Washington, D.C. and Harrisburg, PA. Both are Capitol Hill veterans who served under pragmatic, no-nonsense Members of Congress for a combined twenty-one years.

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