

Thursday, December 31, 2020

Commissioners of the Oklahoma Ethics Commission,

In 1990, the people approved State Question 627 creating Article XXIX of the Oklahoma Constitution, creating the current Oklahoma Ethics Commission. This new article grew out of increasing concern for ethical conduct of political campaigns and public servants.

There is considerable influence applied with the exchange of money, gifts, meals or the prospect of future employment in the process of the exchange in information by lobbying organizations. When influence is applied, there comes an expectation of something in return for that exchange of money, gifts, meals, or prospects that is the problem we see all around us today.

Does the exchange of information rise to a level that would influence an elected official to act on the expectation of something in return for that information? The exchange of information itself is a free speech issue and would not because an exchange of information is necessary in order to understand the merit of an issue. However, the circumstances surrounding the relationship between the elected official and the lobbyist is one that is of great concern. This is already addressed by the thresholds of reporting to give transparency to those relationships.

Would the value of informational materials rise to a level as to have influence over the elected official? There are some publications of information, subscriptions to databases, professional journals, that are very expensive and could be considered influential if gifted to an elected official who could use them beyond their term or during their term personally for certain professions. The threshold of \$10.00 is already established and those materials should be considered gifts and reported.

Tom Gann
State Representative
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