

## S.C. Code Sections

### **SECTION 2-17-10. Definitions.**

As used in this chapter, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

(1)(a) “Anything of value” or “thing of value” means:

- (i) a pecuniary item, including money, a bank bill, or a bank note;
- (ii) a promissory note, bill of exchange, an order, a draft, warrant, check, or bond given for the payment of money;
- (iii) a contract, agreement, promise, or other obligation for an advance, a conveyance, forgiveness of indebtedness, deposit, distribution, loan, payment, gift, pledge, or transfer of money;
- (iv) a stock, bond, note, or other investment interest in an entity;
- (v) a receipt given for the payment of money or other property;
- (vi) a chose-in-action;
- (vii) a gift, tangible good, chattel, or an interest in a gift, tangible good, or chattel;
- (viii) a loan or forgiveness of indebtedness;
- (ix) a work of art, an antique, or a collectible;
- (x) an automobile or other means of personal transportation;
- (xi) real property or an interest in real property, including title to realty, a fee simple or partial interest in realty including present, future, contingent, or vested interests in realty, a leasehold interest, or other beneficial interest in realty;
- (xii) an honorarium or compensation for services;
- (xiii) a promise or offer of employment;
- (xiv) any other item that is of pecuniary or compensatory worth to a person.

(b) “Anything of value” or “thing of value” does not mean:

- (i) printed informational or promotional material, not to exceed ten dollars in monetary value;
- (ii) items of nominal value, not to exceed ten dollars, containing or displaying promotional material;
- (iii) a personalized plaque or trophy with a value that does not exceed one hundred fifty dollars;
- (iv) educational material of a nominal value directly related to the public official’s, public member’s, or public employee’s official responsibilities;
- (v) an honorary degree bestowed upon a public official, public member, or public employee from a public or private university or college;
- (vi) promotional or marketing items offered to the general public on the same terms and conditions without regard to status as a public official or public employee; or
- (vii) a campaign contribution properly received and reported under the provisions of Chapter 13 of Title 8.

(2) “Covered agency actions” means the proposal, drafting, development, consideration, amendment, withdrawal, or promulgation of a regulation under Article 1, Chapter 23 of Title 1 of the 1976 Code.

(3) “Covered gubernatorial actions” means:

- (a) gubernatorial approval or veto of legislation;

- (b) gubernatorial consideration or issuance of any executive order;
- (c) gubernatorial consideration or making of any appointment; or
- (d) gubernatorial consideration of or the decision to award any grant derived from federal or other funds or from any source.

(4)(a) “Economic interest” means an interest distinct from that of the general public in a purchase, sale, lease, contract, option, or other transaction or arrangement involving property or services in which a public official or public employee may gain an economic benefit of fifty dollars or more.

(b) This definition does not prohibit a public official or public employee from participating in, voting on, or influencing or attempting to influence an official decision if the only economic interest or reasonably foreseeable benefit that may accrue to the public official or public employee is incidental to the public official’s or public employee’s position or which accrues to the public official or public employee as a member of a profession, occupation, or large class to no greater extent than the economic interest or potential benefit could reasonably be foreseen to accrue to all other members of the profession, occupation, or large class.

(5) “Expenditure” means a purchase, payment, loan, forgiveness of a loan, an advance, in-kind contribution or expenditure, a deposit, transfer of funds, gift of money or anything of value for any purpose, and a payment to a lobbyist for compensation, for expenses, or lobbying, including the direct payment of expenses incurred at the request or suggestion of a lobbyist.

(6) “Family member” means an individual who is:

- (a) the spouse, parent, brother, sister, child, mother-in-law, father-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandparent, or grandchild; or
- (b) a member of the individual’s immediate family.

(7) “Immediate family” means:

- (a) a child residing in a public official’s or public employee’s household;
- (b) a spouse of a public official or public employee; or
- (c) an individual claimed by the public official or public employee or the public official’s or public employee’s spouse as a dependent for income tax purposes.

(8) “Individual” means one human being.

(9) “Income” means the receipt or promise of any consideration, whether or not legally enforceable, including attorney’s fees attributable to lobbying.

(10) “Legislation” means:

- (a) bills, resolutions, amendments, reports, legislative acts, vetoes, nominations, rules, and regulations pending or proposed in either the House or Senate;
- (b) any other matter which may be the subject of action by either house; or
- (c) the appointment of committees of conference and free conference by the Speaker of the House of Representatives or the President of the Senate.

(11) “Legislative caucus” means:

- (a) a committee of either house of the General Assembly controlled by the caucus of a political party or a caucus based upon racial or ethnic affinity, or gender;
- (b) a party or group of either house of the General Assembly based upon racial or ethnic affinity, or gender. However, each house may establish only one committee for racial, ethnic, or gender-based affinity;

(c) “legislative caucus” does not include a legislative special interest caucus as defined in Section 2-17-10(21).

(12) “Lobbying” means promoting or opposing through direct communication with public officials or public employees:

- (a) the introduction or enactment of legislation before the General Assembly or the committees or members of the General Assembly;
- (b) covered gubernatorial actions;
- (c) covered agency actions; or
- (d) consideration of the election or appointment of an individual to a public office elected or appointed by the General Assembly.

“Lobbying” does not include the activities of a member of the General Assembly, a member of the staff of a member of the Senate or House of Representatives, the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, or a member of the executive staff of the Governor or Lieutenant Governor acting in his capacity as a public official or public employee with regard to his public duties.

(13) “Lobbyist” means any person who is employed, appointed, or retained, with or without compensation, by another person to influence by direct communication with public officials or public employees: (i) the action or vote of any member of the General Assembly, the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, or any other statewide constitutional officer concerning any legislation; (ii) the vote of any public official on any state agency, board, or commission concerning any covered agency actions; or (iii) the action of the Governor or any member of his executive staff concerning any covered gubernatorial actions. “Lobbyist” also means any person who is employed, appointed, or retained, with or without compensation, by a state agency, college, university, or other institution of higher learning to influence by direct communication with public officials or public employees: (i) the action or vote of any member of the General Assembly, the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, or any other statewide constitutional officer concerning any legislation; (ii) the vote of any public official of any state agency, board, or commission concerning any covered agency actions; or (iii) the action of the Governor or any member of his executive staff concerning any covered gubernatorial actions. “Lobbyist” does not include:

- (a) an individual who receives no compensation to engage in lobbying and who expresses a personal opinion on legislation, covered gubernatorial actions, or covered agency actions to any public official or public employee;
- (b) a person who appears only before public sessions of committees or subcommittees of the General Assembly, public hearings of state agencies, public hearings before any public body of a quasi-judicial nature, or proceedings of any court of this State;
- (c) any duly elected or appointed official or employee of the State, the United States, a county, municipality, school district, or a political subdivision thereof, or a member of the judiciary when appearing solely on matters pertaining to his office and public duties unless lobbying constitutes a regular and substantial portion of such official’s or employee’s duties;
- (d) a person performing professional services in drafting legislation or in advising and rendering opinions to clients as to the construction and effect of proposed or pending legislation;

(e) a person who owns, publishes, or is employed by a radio station, television station, wire service, or other bona fide news medium which in the ordinary course of business disseminates news, editorials, columns, other comments, or other regularly published periodicals if such person represents no other person in lobbying for legislation, covered agency actions, or covered gubernatorial actions. This exception applies to the publication of any periodical which is published and distributed by a membership organization to its subscribers at least twelve times annually and for which an annual subscription charge of at least one dollar fifty cents a subscriber is made;

(f) a person who represents any established church solely for the purpose of protecting the rights of the membership of the church or for the purpose of protecting the doctrines of the church or on matters considered to have an adverse effect upon the moral welfare of the membership of the church;

(g) a person who is running for office elected by the General Assembly or a person soliciting votes on the behalf of a person who is running for office elected by the General Assembly unless such person is otherwise defined as a lobbyist by this section; or

(h) an individual who receives no compensation to engage in lobbying and who does not make expenditures or incur obligations for lobbying in an aggregate amount in excess of five hundred dollars in a calendar year.

(14) “Lobbyist’s principal” means the person on whose behalf and for whose benefit the lobbyist engages in lobbying and who directly employs, appoints, or retains a lobbyist to engage in lobbying. However, a lobbyist’s principal does not include a person who belongs to an association or organization that employs a lobbyist, nor an employee, officer, or shareholder of a person who employs a lobbyist. If a membership association or organization is a lobbyist’s principal, the association or organization must register and report under the provisions of this chapter. A person is considered a lobbyist’s principal only as to the public office or public body to which he has authorized, pursuant to this chapter, a lobbyist to engage in lobbying.

(15) “Person” means an individual, a partnership, committee, an association, a corporation, labor organization, or any other organization or group of persons.

(16) “Public body” means the General Assembly, the Executive Office of the Governor, any department of the State, or any state board, commission, agency, or authority, including committees of any such body, by whatever name known.

(17) “Public employee” means any person employed by the State.

(18) “Public official” means any elected or appointed official of the State, including candidates for any such state office. However, “public official” does not mean a member of the judiciary.

(19) “Voluntary membership organization” means an organization composed of persons who are members thereof on a voluntary basis and who, as a condition of membership, are required to make regular payments to the organization.

(20) “Official capacity” means activities which:

(a) arise because of the position held by the public official or public employee;

(b) involve matters which fall within the official responsibility of the agency, the public official, or the public employee; and

(c) are services the agency would normally provide and for which the public official or public employee would be subject to expense reimbursement by the agency with which the public official or public employee is associated.

(21) “Legislative special interest caucus” means two or more legislators who seek to be affiliated based upon a special interest. Under no circumstances may a legislative special interest caucus engage in any activity that would influence the outcome of an election or ballot measure. Each legislative special interest caucus must register with the Clerk’s Office of the Senate or House of Representatives in a manner mandated by the Clerk’s Office. However, each legislative special interest caucus must provide, and the Clerk’s Office must maintain a record of:

- (a) the name and purpose of the caucus;
- (b) the names of all caucus members; and
- (c) the date of creation, and dissolution, if applicable.

The Clerk’s Office must maintain these records for at least four years following the dissolution of the caucus. A legislative special interest caucus may include, but is not limited to, a representation of sportsmen and women desiring to enhance and protect hunting, fishing, and shooting sports.

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**SECTION 8-13-700.** Use of official position or office for financial gain; disclosure of potential conflict of interest.

(A) No public official, public member, or public employee may knowingly use his official office, membership, or employment to obtain an economic interest for himself, a member of his immediate family, an individual with whom he is associated, or a business with which he is associated. This prohibition does not extend to the incidental use of public materials, personnel, or equipment, subject to or available for a public official’s, public member’s, or public employee’s use which does not result in additional public expense.

(B) No public official, public member, or public employee may make, participate in making, or in any way attempt to use his office, membership, or employment to influence a governmental decision in which he, a member of his immediate family, an individual with whom he is associated, or a business with which he is associated has an economic interest. A public official, public member, or public employee who, in the discharge of his official responsibilities, is required to take an action or make a decision which affects an economic interest of himself, a member of his immediate family, an individual with whom he is associated, or a business with which he is associated shall:

- (1) prepare a written statement describing the matter requiring action or decisions and the nature of his potential conflict of interest with respect to the action or decision;
- (2) if the public official is a member of the General Assembly, he shall deliver a copy of the statement to the presiding officer of the appropriate house. The presiding officer shall have the statement printed in the appropriate journal and require that the member of the General Assembly be excused from votes, deliberations, and other action on the matter on which a potential conflict exists;
- (3) if he is a public employee, he shall furnish a copy of the statement to his superior, if any, who shall assign the matter to another employee who does not have a potential

conflict of interest. If he has no immediate superior, he shall take the action prescribed by the State Ethics Commission;

(4) if he is a public official, other than a member of the General Assembly, he shall furnish a copy of the statement to the presiding officer of the governing body of any agency, commission, board, or of any county, municipality, or a political subdivision thereof, on which he serves, who shall cause the statement to be printed in the minutes and require that the member be excused from any votes, deliberations, and other actions on the matter on which the potential conflict of interest exists and shall cause the disqualification and the reasons for it to be noted in the minutes;

(5) if he is a public member, he shall furnish a copy to the presiding officer of any agency, commission, board, or of any county, municipality, or a political subdivision thereof, on which he serves, who shall cause the statement to be printed in the minutes and shall require that the member be excused from any votes, deliberations, and other actions on the matter on which the potential conflict of interest exists and shall cause such disqualification and the reasons for it to be noted in the minutes.

(C) Where a public official, public member, or public employee or a member of his immediate family holds an economic interest in a blind trust, he is not considered to have a conflict of interest with regard to matters pertaining to that economic interest, if the existence of the blind trust has been disclosed to the appropriate supervisory office.

(D) The provisions of this section do not apply to any court in the unified judicial system.

(E) When a member of the General Assembly is required by law to appear because of his business interest as an owner or officer of the business or in his official capacity as a member of the General Assembly, this section does not apply.

**SECTION 8-13-765.** Use of government personnel or facilities for campaign purposes; government personnel permitted to work on campaigns on own time.

(A) No person may use government personnel, equipment, materials, or an office building in an election campaign. The provisions of this subsection do not apply to a public official's use of an official residence.

(B) A government, however, may rent or provide public facilities for political meetings and other campaign-related purposes if they are available on similar terms to all candidates and committees, as defined in Section 8-13-1300(6).

(C) This section does not prohibit government personnel, where not otherwise prohibited, from participating in election campaigns on their own time and on nongovernment premises.