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**Senator Bettencourt Passes SB 702 To Increase Transparency on Taxpayer Funded Lobbying**  
*Legislation passed by a vote of 27-4 after extensive debate but transparency Bill prevails!*

**Austin** - Senator Paul Bettencourt (R-Houston) has passed SB 702 by a vote of 27-4 to increase transparency on lobbying that is funded using taxpayer money. Currently, political subdivisions are not required to report expenditures paid to hire lobbyists or contributions of dues to associations that lobby. This makes it difficult for taxpayers to determine the true amount of their money that is being spent on political lobbying. The bill was Co-Authored by Senators Campbell (R-New Braunfels), Hall (R-Edgewood), and Paxton (R-McKinney).

**"Taxpayers have a right to know how their money is being spent,"** said Senator Bettencourt. **"This bill adds transparency to the process and ensures that millions of dollars of taxpayer monies see the light of day! This needs to be readily available to taxpayers in a clear and transparent manner, online in a easily searchable website and at the TEC Commission."**

Specifically, the bill requires the governing body of a political subdivision to approve in advance the amount of money that will be spent on lobbying the states legislature and to post the information as a separate agenda item on their website that is easily searchable. This legislation will greatly increase information citizens possess regarding the lobbying efforts of their local governments.

Under current lobby disclosure law, individual lobbyists bear the responsibility of disclosing their clients as well as a range of compensation they receive. By failing to disclose exact amounts, this requirement inadequately reports the public expenditures by local governments. Furthermore, because some local governments retain individual lobbyists or lobby firms as consultants or legal counsel, it is nearly impossible to distinguish lobby efforts from other services when examining financial records on these expenditures produced by local governments.

**"Taxpayers have a right to know when they're footing the bill for lobbyists. Local control and accountability depend on the ability of citizens to stay informed,"** said Senator Donna Campbell. **"I'm proud to join Senator Bettencourt in this good-government bill and even prouder to see it pass the Senate chamber,"** she added.

The legislation includes some "teeth" to ensure compliance and gives an interested party appropriate injunctive relief to prevent willful activity in violation of components of the bill.

**"The Texas Ethics Commission data showed that an estimated \$32 million was spent on lobbyist compensation in 2018, a non-session year,"** said Senator Bettencourt. **"Therefore, it will be substantially higher during a Legislative session year, and the public has a right to know!"** SB702 moves to the House.

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