Amnesty and Compliance Program for Lobbyists, Clients Who Have Not Previously Filed With JCOPE

Starting January 1, 2016, JCOPE will begin a six-month amnesty and compliance program meant to encourage non-filing lobbyists and clients of lobbyists to comply with the Lobbying Act and disclose information about their lobbying activities.

This program will be run in parallel to a similar amnesty program offered by the New York City Clerk's Office, and would waive all late filing and civil penalties that could have been assessed between December 10, 2006 and the date of application for amnesty.

To apply, click here.

Who is Eligible?

- Lobbyists or clients of lobbyists who: (1) were required to file, but never filed applicable reports required by the Lobbying Act, including statements of registration, bi-monthly reports and/or client semi-annual reports, at any time on or after December 10, 2006; (2) have never been contacted by JCOPE for non-compliance with filing requirements; and (3) have never been the subject of a criminal proceeding for a Lobbying Act violation.
- Parties who act as both a lobbyist and client are eligible to apply in either capacity (or both), but must meet the eligibility criteria for each application.

Participation Requirements

Applicants deemed eligible will be required to:

- Submit all applicable statements of registration and periodic reports for lobbying activity occurring between January 1, 2013 and the date the amnesty application is filed;
- Submit all filing fees applicable to such submissions;
- Waive the application of §1-o(c)(iii) of the Lobbying Act to any future violations;
- Comply with a training component designated by JCOPE, and;
- Submit all required reports and filing fees within 15 days of acceptance into the Amnesty Program.

Why is This Amnesty Program Being Offered?

- The Amnesty Program provides an opportunity to increase transparency and improve compliance relating to groups that are unknown to JCOPE but should have been publicly disclosing information about their lobbying activities. It is the intent of JCOPE that

organizations that have not filed outstanding reports due to concerns about growing amount of late fees and potential penalties, will submit those required filings and comply with filing requirements going forward.

Are the Requirements of Both Programs the Same?

JCOPE and New York City's Amnesty Programs both allow a similarly-situated, targeted group of lobbyists or clients to seek amnesty. Although similar in most ways, key differences include:

- Any lobbyist or client who has previously been contacted by JCOPE for non-compliance with the Lobbying Act is ineligible for amnesty with JCOPE;
- JCOPE requires the submission of reports going back three years;
- JCOPE specifies that all applicable filing fees must be submitted to JCOPE;
- JCOPE requires applicants to waive the future application of §1-o(c)(iii) of the Lobbying Act which allows first-time violators to avoid fines and penalties, and;
- JCOPE requires applicants to comply with a specified training component.

Application forms will be accepted between January 1, 2016 and June 30, 2016.

For more on the New York City amnesty program, go to
http://www.cityclerk.nyc.gov/html/lobbying/amnesty.shtml

To fill out an application form online, click here.