Codebook for the Lobbying Disclosure Data Set

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Studying Groups through Lobbying Disclosure Reports[1]

The 1995 Lobbying Disclosure Act significantly expanded the reporting requirements for organizations active in Washington, D.C. For the first time, it required semi-annual reports from each firm or organization active in Washington lobbying activities. Lobbying firms must file a report for each client; organizations employing their own in-house lobbyists must report separately. All registrants must indicate the amount of money spent and the issues on which they were active, and they must file a separate report for each of 76 distinct issue-areas on which they lobbied. Reports must be filed semi-annually with the Clerk of the House of Representatives and with the Secretary of the Senate. We obtained the complete set of records for the December 31, 1996, filing period—approximately 19,000 reports—and the data from these records are presented in this data set.

We began this project because although the act created a potential data goldmine for interest group scholars, accessibility and ease of use has been a problem (see Baumgartner and Leech 1999b, Furlong 1998). Members of the public may review the records only by traveling to Washington and using computers in the office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives. Even these data are available only as scanned-in images of the reports themselves. That is, the House computers provide no database that would allow one to discern any patterns of activity. (Considerable information from the 1997 lobbying disclosure reports is available from the Center for Responsive Politics and through its web site (<www.crp.org>); but even this source does not have the level of detail available in the original reports. For example, the Center for Responsive Politics site does not provide information about the issues on which the groups lobbied.) To help remedy these problems of accessibility, we purchased the entire set of lobbying disclosure reports for 1996 from the Secretary of the Senate (on microfilm) and have supervised a group of coders as they have worked (logging more than 1,000 hours in the process) to create a computerized database allowing the information to be analyzed systematically.

The data
We previously have discussed (Baumgartner and Leech 1999b, also see Furlong 1998) the various values and drawbacks to the data collected as a result of the 1995 Lobby Disclosure Act. One of the principal advantages is that the law requires much more substantial reporting than previous legislation, allowing a much more accurate picture of the overall distribution of lobbying activities. Further, since registrants mention the actual issues on which they are active, researchers can explore the distribution of activities by issue and by issue-area (see Baumgartner and Leech 2000). Both direct lobbying activities conducted by organizations with Washington lobbyists and indirect lobbying

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[1] This discussion is adapted from Baumgartner and Leech 1999a, 1999b, and 2000.

activities undertaken by public relations and lobbying firms on behalf of paying clients are covered by the law, so its reports are much more complete than any available previously.

There also are limitations to the data of which researchers should be aware. The most important consideration is that groups are not required to register unless their semi-annual level of lobbying rises to above $20,500 in expenditures (including the salaries of staff members who are active in lobbying activities) or $5,000 paid to a single lobbying firm. Thus, groups relying on volunteers, those active only for a short time or on a single issue, and some others may fall beneath the threshold for registration. Further, groups need to report lobbying activities only when those activities take up more than 20 percent of the time an employee or hired lobbyist spent working for the organization in any six-month period. Thus the focus is on professional, full-time lobbying activities; occasional lobbyists are not covered.

A second consideration is how the act defines lobbying. The law considers lobbying activity to include any written or oral contact of a federal government official with policymaking responsibilities—including members of Congress, their staffs, and executive branch officials—if that contact is regarding the formulation or modification of legislation or regulations, or regarding the adoption of a contract, the nomination of an individual, or the execution of some regulation. Many formal processes of lobbying— such as testifying at hearings, filing lawsuits, and submitting reports under notice and comment—are not included in the definition since this information is often available to the public in the form of lists of witnesses or files of public comments. Other activities that are not covered by the registration and reporting requirements of the act include grass-roots lobbying aimed at the general public; the use of paid media such as radio, television, or print advertisements; and activities conducted in response to requests from government.

A third consideration is the familiar problems associated with open-ended survey questions. The Lobby Reports ask an open-ended question about which issues the registrant lobbied on; as a result different groups give widely differing levels of detail regarding the issues on which they were active. Some mention such things as "Medicare reform" whereas others go into considerable detail, sometimes mentioning dozens of small elements of such an issue. In the data set these varied mentions are actually listed within textual variables; there also is a numeric variable that is a count of the number of issues mentioned in the Lobby Report.

A fourth consideration is the spending reports cannot be linked with the issues. That is, a group reporting $1.5 million in spending on five different issue areas need not break out this spending to indicate which issues were the subject of how much of that combined spending. The analyst cannot say, therefore, how much lobbying was directed towards each issue. <u>The total expenditures reported by an organization reflect all lobbying expenses on all issues, including any money spent to pay lobbying firms. The total income listed by a lobbying firm on a Lobby Report reflects the amount that firm received from that client on **all** issues.</u> Hint: The easiest way to deal with this problem

during analysis is to aggregate the reports, then divide the income and expense variables by the number of reports.

Note that each line in this database corresponds to an individual Lobby Report filed with the Senate. Organizations may file many reports connected to many different issue areas. Researchers may aggregate the reports so that analysis can be done at the level of the interest group rather than the report by making use of the identification numbers associated with each organization in the dataset (RegID and ClientID).

Future data availability
In the future we will be making available additional data from the 1996 Lobby Reports as used in Baumgartner and Leech 2000. These data make it possible to analyze activity on 142 randomly selected issues mentioned in the reports. Data listing by name the particular contact agencies mentioned in each of these reports also will be available at a future date.

Works cited
Baumgartner, Frank R. and Beth L Leech. 1999a. "Business Advantage in the Washington
        Lobbying Community: Evidence from the 1996 Lobbying Disclosure Reports." Paper
        presented at the 1999 Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Chicago.
Baumgartner, Frank R. and Beth L. Leech. 1999b. "Studying Interest Groups Using Lobbying
        Disclosure Reports," *VOX POP* 17-3: 1-3.
Baumgartner, Frank R. and Beth L. Leech. 2000. "Lobbying Alone or In a Crowd: The
        Distribution of Lobbying in a Sample of Issues." Paper presented at the 1999 Midwest
        Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Chicago.
Furlong, Scott. 1998. The Lobbying Disclosure Act and Interest Group Lobbying Data:
        Two Steps Forward and One Step Back. *VOXPOP* 17 (3): 4–6.

001   ID

A unique number assigned to each Lobbying Report in the database.

002   Regist

A text variable that records the actual name of the organization that filed the lobbying disclosure report (the *registrant)*, as listed on Line 3 of the Lobbying Report [Form LD-2 (1/96)].

003   RegID

A unique number assigned to each registrant in the database. Since each registrant can file multiple reports, there will be numerous lines in the dataset that refer to the same registrant.

004   RegType

A code indicating the type of interest group, such that:

1	professional lobbying firm
2	business corporation
3	trade association
4	professional association
5	labor union
6	citizen group or advocacy organization for the nonprofit sector
7	governmental entities
9	unknown
11	universities, other institutions of higher education, and associations of such institutions
12	hospitals, clinics, and other health-related institutions
13	other institutions, including government-sponsored corporations (FreddieMac, Fannie Mae), stock exchanges, PBS, museums.

Codes 1 and 2 can be combined to give you the total businesses and corporations in the data set. Codes 11-13 can be combined to give you the total "other institutions." Note that Code 7 is not really an accurate measure of governmental lobbying activity, as most governmental entities (states, cities, counties) are not required to register. These entities are sometimes registered anyway by the lobbying firms that they hire, but for the most part this category consists of Native American tribes, water districts, intergovernmental commissions, and public utilities.

These codes were assigned to the registrants by the researchers, using information available in *Washington Representatives* and through Web searches to determine the group type.

005   Client

A text variable that records the actual name of the organization on whose behalf the lobbying disclosure report was filed (the *client*), as listed on Line 5 of the Lobbying Report [Form LD-2 (1/96)]. If the organization is representing itself (as opposed to hiring a lobbying firm), the entry will say "Self".

006   ClientID

A unique number assigned to each client in the database. Since each client can be named in multiple reports, there will be numerous lines in the dataset that refer to the same client. Note that if the organization represented itself for the issues named in this particular Lobby Report, the **RegID** and the **ClientID** will be the same number.

007   ClntType

A code indicating the type of interest group, such that:

1	professional lobbying firm
2	business corporation
3	trade association
4	professional association
5	labor union
6	citizen group or advocacy organization for the nonprofit sector
7	governmental entities
9	unknown
11	universities, other institutions of higher education, and associations of such institutions
12	hospitals, clinics, and other health-related institutions
13	other institutions, including government-sponsored corporations (FreddieMac, Fannie Mae), stock exchanges, PBS, museums.

Codes 1 and 2 can be combined to give you the total businesses and corporations in the data set. Codes 11-13 can be combined to give you the total "other institutions." Note that Code 7 is not really an accurate measure of governmental lobbying activity, as most governmental entities (states, cities, counties) are not required to register. These entities are sometimes registered anyway by the lobbying firms that they hire, but for the most part this category consists of Native American tribes, water districts, intergovernmental commissions, and public utilities. Also note that Code 1, professional lobbying firms, is included here because sometimes professional lobbying firms hire other firms to represent them. They of course also represent themselves on various issues, and thus would show up in the client category on those reports as well.

These codes were assigned to the registrants by the researchers, using information available in *Washington Representatives* and through Web searches to determine the group type.

009   InLess

A dichotomous variable that applies only to lobbying firms. Indicates whether the firm checked a box reporting less than $10,000 in income from the client during the past six months. Those receiving less than $10,000 from the client are not required to specify their total income in variables 010 and 011.

010   InSix

A continuous variable, applying only to lobbying firms, that records the actual dollar amount the firm received from the client during the last six months of 1996, as long as that amount is greater than $10,000. Responses may be rounded to the nearest $20,000.

-999   Missing data – *note that this variable will be missing on all Lobby Reports filed by organizations using in-house lobbyists, as well as on all reports listing less than $10,000 in income from the client.*

011   InYear

A continuous variable, applying only to lobbying firms, that records the actual dollar amount the firm received from the client during all of 1996, as long as that amount is greater than $10,000. Responses may be rounded to the nearest $20,000.

-999   Missing data – *note that this variable will be missing on all Lobby Reports filed by organizations using in-house lobbyists, as well as on all reports listing less than $10,000 in income from the client.*

013   ExLess

A dichotomous variable that applies only to organizations using in-house lobbyists. Indicates whether the organization checked a box reporting lobbying expenses of less than $10,000. In such as case the registrant need not specify the exact amount of expenses on variables 014 and 015.

014   ExSix

A continuous variable, applying only to organizations using in-house lobbyists, that records the actual dollar amount of the organization's lobbying expenses during the last six months of 1996, as long as that amount is greater than $10,000. Responses may be rounded to the nearest $20,000.

-999   Missing data – *note that this variable will be missing on all Lobby Reports that were filed by a lobbying firm, as well as on all reports listing less than $10,000 in expenses.*

015   ExYear

A continuous variable, <u>applying only to organizations using in-house lobbyists</u>, that records the actual dollar amount of the organization's lobbying expenses during all of 1996, as long as that amount is greater than $10,000. Responses may be rounded to the nearest $20,000.

-999   Missing data – *note that this variable will be missing on all Lobby Reports that were filed by a lobbying firm, as well as on all reports listing less than $10,000 in expenses.*

016   IssArea

A three-letter code indicating the issue area in which the organization lobbied. Separate Lobby Reports must be filed for each issue area. The issue-areas are selected by the registrant from a list of 76 codes on the Lobby Report form:

ACC Accounting
ADV Advertising
AER Aerospace
AGR Agriculture
ALC Alcohol & Drug Abuse
ANI Animals
APP Apparel/Clothing Industry/Textiles
ART Arts/Entertainment
AUT Automotive Industry
AVI Aviation/Aircraft/Airlines
BAN Banking
BNK Bankruptcy
BEV Beverage Industry
BUD Budget/Appropriations
CHM Chemicals/Chemical Industry
CIV Civil Rights/Civil Liberties
CAW Clean Air & Water (Quality)
CDT Commodities (Big Ticket)
COM Communications/Broadcasting/Radio/TV
CPI Computer Industry
CSP Consumer Issues/Safety/Protection
CON Constitution
CPT Copyright/Patent/Trademark
DEF Defense
DOC District of Columbia
DIS Disaster Planning/Emergencies
ECN Economics/Economic Development
EDU Education
ENG Energy/Nuclear
ENV Environmental/Superfund
FAM Family Issues/Abortion/Adoption
FIR Firearms/Guns/Ammunition
FIN Financial Institutions/Investments/Securities
FOO Food Industry (Safety, Labeling, etc.)
FOR Foreign Relations
FUE Fuel/Gas/Oil
GAM Gaming/Gambling/Casino
GOV Government Issues

HCR Health Issues
HOU Housing
IMM Immigration
IND Indian/Native American Affairs
INS Insurance
LBR Labor Issues/Antitrust/Workplace
LAW Law Enforcement/Crime/Criminal Justice
MAN Manufacturing
MAR Marine/Maritime/Boating/Fisheries
MIA Media (Information/Publishing)
MED Medical/Disease Research/Clinical Labs
MMM Medicare/Medicaid
MON Minting/Money/Gold Standard
NAT Natural Resources
PHA Pharmacy
POS Postal
RRR Railroads
RES Real Estate/Land Use/Conservation
REL Religion
RET Retirement
ROD Roads/Highway
SCI Science/Technology
SMB Small Business
SPO Sports/Athletics
TAX Taxation/Internal Revenue Code
TEC Telecommunications
TOB Tobacco
TOR Torts
TRD Trade (Domestic & Foreign)
TRA Transportation
TOU Travel/Tourism
TRU Trucking/Shipping
URB Urban Development/Municipalities
UNM Unemployment
UTI Utilities
VET Veterans
WAS Waste (hazardous/solid/interstate/nuclear)
WEL Welfare

017   House

A dichotomous variable indicating whether the report mentioned contacting the U.S. House on these issues, such that

0   U.S. House not mentioned
1   U.S. House is mentioned

018   Senate

A dichotomous variable indicating whether the report mentioned contacting the U.S. Senate on these issues, such that

0   U.S. Senate not mentioned
1   U.S. Senate is mentioned

019   WhiteH

A dichotomous variable indicating whether the report mentioned contacting the White House on the issues listed in the report. This variable was coded as yes if the group mentioned President Clinton, the Clinton administration, Vice President Gore, or the White House policy liaison for the issue area.

0   White House not mentioned
1   White House is mentioned.

020   Agencies

A continuous variable indicating the actual number of different agencies and sub-agencies mentioned as having been contacted in connection with the issues listed in the report.

021   Issues

Indicates the number of different issues lobbied on by the registrant that are listed in the report. Note that this is not the same thing as the total number of issues lobbied on by that registrant, since each registrant may file reports in a variety of issue areas. The issues listed on the other reports may be the same issues or may be different issues. Also note that this variable is truncated at 12 issues.

022   Lobbyist

Number of registered lobbyists listed by the registrant.

-999   Missing data

023   Foreign

A dichotomous variable indicating whether the registrant identified a "foreign entity" on line 12 of the Lobby Report. Note that this line of the report was worded in a confusing manner and the resulting data from this question are suspect. Only 554 respondents identified a foreign entity, and a close look at the data will show that many respondents representing foreign governments and firms failed to respond to this question.

0   Foreign entity not mentioned
1   Foreign entity is mentioned.

024   IssueA

A text variable that lists the description of issues lobbied on that the registrants listed in the report. This variable recreates as closely as possible the language from the report, however in many cases abbreviation and editing was necessary. The next 11 variables contain other issue-mentions if the report contained other issue-mentions. Usually each variable contains a description of just one issue (or no issue if the organization mentioned fewer than 12 issues). In a few cases, however, where the organization mentioned more than 12 issues, the additional descriptions are squeezed into the same cell of the database. This happens relatively rarely, as the modal number of issues mentioned is 1.

025   IssueB

A text variable that lists the description of issues lobbied on that the registrants listed in the report. This variable recreates as closely as possible the language from the report, however in many cases abbreviation and editing was necessary.

026   IssueC

A text variable that lists the description of issues lobbied on that the registrants listed in the report. This variable recreates as closely as possible the language from the report, however in many cases abbreviation and editing was necessary.

027   IssueD

A text variable that lists the description of issues lobbied on that the registrants listed in the report. This variable recreates as closely as possible the language from the report, however in many cases abbreviation and editing was necessary.

028   IssueE

A text variable that lists the description of issues lobbied on that the registrants listed in the report. This variable recreates as closely as possible the language from the report, however in many cases abbreviation and editing was necessary.

029   IssueF

A text variable that lists the description of issues lobbied on that the registrants listed in the report. This variable recreates as closely as possible the language from the report, however in many cases abbreviation and editing was necessary.

030   IssueG

A text variable that lists the description of issues lobbied on that the registrants listed in the report. This variable recreates as closely as possible the language from the report, however in many cases abbreviation and editing was necessary.

031   IssueH

A text variable that lists the description of issues lobbied on that the registrants listed in the report. This variable recreates as closely as possible the language from the report, however in many cases abbreviation and editing was necessary.

032   IssueI

A text variable that lists the description of issues lobbied on that the registrants listed in the report. This variable recreates as closely as possible the language from the report, however in many cases abbreviation and editing was necessary.

033   IssueJ

A text variable that lists the description of issues lobbied on that the registrants listed in the report. This variable recreates as closely as possible the language from the report, however in many cases abbreviation and editing was necessary.

034   IssueK

A text variable that lists the description of issues lobbied on that the registrants listed in the report. This variable recreates as closely as possible the language from the report, however in many cases abbreviation and editing was necessary.

035   IssueL

A text variable that lists the description of issues lobbied on that the registrants listed in the report. This variable recreates as closely as possible the language from the report, however in many cases abbreviation and editing was necessary.