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## California cities, counties find funds to hire Capitol lobbyists

**Local governments contend the money they pay for influence in Sacramento is worth it. The sum dwarfs the lobbying bills of the largest unions, big oil companies and other energy interests combined.**

By Anthony York, Los Angeles Times

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SACRAMENTO — Although many of California's cities and counties have been struggling financially, putting off road repairs, cutting back library hours and reducing police patrols, there is one way in which they have not held back: hiring Sacramento lobbyists.

Local governments' spending on advocacy in the Capitol has surged in recent years, topping \$96 million during the two-year legislative session that ended last fall — an increase of nearly 50% from a decade ago.

The sum dwarfs the lobbying bills of the state's largest labor unions, big oil companies and other energy interests combined, according to the California [secretary of state's](#) office. No sector spends nearly as much trying to influence government in California as government.

One reason is more than two decades of term limits. Turnover in the Capitol and in some local offices has weakened relationships between state and local officials. Many lobbyists work in Sacramento for decades, are more knowledgeable about policy details and intricate funding formulas than sitting lawmakers, and have long-standing relationships with Capitol staffers.

Another is the state budget crises of the last decade, which have taken an ever larger bite out of allocations to local governments, putting municipal and state leaders at loggerheads.

With tens of millions of local dollars going to capital insiders "at a time when cities and counties are cutting back essential services, it's worth asking whether this spending is the best use of taxpayer money," said Phillip Ung, a spokesman for the watchdog group California Common Cause.

Local officials say the lobbying expenses are a small price to pay to protect their share of exponentially larger state dollars. The right advocate can steer some state funds in one direction or another, and these days, a lobbyist's blessing for a policy proposal can carry more weight in the Capitol than a legislator's endorsement.

Lobbyists may be retained as a defensive measure against decisions made in the Capitol that could adversely affect local communities. They may be asked to help secure state contracts or bond money, or to arrange meetings with leaders of the Legislature and other top government officials.

Orange County officials credited their Sacramento lobbyists, Platinum Advisors, for arranging a meeting last summer with Assembly Speaker John Pérez (D-Los Angeles) that led to last-minute legislation restoring \$48 million to the county budget.

The city and county of Los Angeles both have full-time staffs dedicated to monitoring the Capitol, but they seek additional help from several Sacramento-based firms. The two entities paid external lobbyists a combined \$5.3 million over the last two years, according to spending reports filed with the state.

The city of Los Angeles paid the Sacramento firm of Shaw/Yoder/Antwih more than \$251,000 in 2011 and 2012 combined — part of the more than \$3.3 million spent on outside lobbying during those two years. The firm helped secure millions of state bond dollars for city projects and helped defeat legislation that could have required the city to spend as much as \$2 billion to repair damaged sidewalks, said Juan Rodriguez, director of state relations for the city.

Other big spenders include the counties of Alameda, San Bernardino and Orange, which each devote more than \$1 million annually on outside advocates. But some of the big money comes from small cities.

Anthony Gonsalves, the son of a former assemblyman, runs a lobbying firm with his two sons that specializes in representing cities with populations of 50,000 to 100,000 and budgets to match.

The firm's three Sacramento lobbyists did nearly \$5 million in business during the last two-year session of the Legislature, according to records that lobbyists must file with the state. Most of that business came from the 60 municipalities on its roster.

The cities paid the firm as much as \$8,000 per month, often to lobby on legislation that Gonsalves was being paid to address by other clients as well, according to his firm's state filings. Such fees can be hefty for a small municipality, but the cost of not having such a lobbyist can be much higher, said Alan Kapanicas, city manager of Beaumont in Riverside County, which Gonsalves represents.

Like much municipal funding, most of the city's budget passes through Sacramento, Kapanicas said, and lawmakers have cut those funds deeply over the last decade. The elimination of redevelopment agencies, for example, deducted billions of dollars from city budgets. The governor and Legislature also transferred responsibility for many low-level criminals from prisons to local jails, straining county budgets.

"The state is always coming up with new ways to take money away from us," he said. "We need to have some protection" in Sacramento against those efforts.

The city, with slightly more than 16,000 residents and an annual budget of \$28.7 million, paid Gonsalves more than \$73,000 over the last two years to "be our eyes and ears in Sacramento," Kapanicas said.

Gonsalves said he offers connections that local officials need in the Capitol and may not be able to make through the legislators from their area. "We are a conduit," he said. "We have the relationships."

Many contracts are approved with little or no public scrutiny. Some are arranged by city managers and approved pro forma by council members, without public discussion. Some have come under criticism.

A January report from City Controller Wendy Greuel found that the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power approved four no-bid contracts totaling \$480,000 to Sacramento advocacy firms. None of the

contracts had been advertised publicly or required regular updates from the lobbyists on their work.

In Malibu, officials raised concerns about potential conflicts of interest in the way their work was being handled by a firm called California Strategies, which the city has paid \$150,000 a year since 2004 for state government advocacy. The firm simultaneously represented U2 guitarist David Evans, better known as the Edge, in his 2009 quest to build five homes on the bluffs overlooking the Malibu coastline — an effort some members of the City Council opposed.

"It made me uneasy, because the lobbying firm [was] representing something the city may not be happy with," said Jefferson Wagner, who sat on the City Council from 2008 until mid-2012. Wagner was opposed to the development and told the city's advocate, California Strategies' Ted Harris, that the firm's work on the project "made it awkward for me."

Jason Kinney, a spokesman for the firm, said its partners determined there was no conflict in accepting Evans as a client because the necessary permits were dispensed by the California Coastal Commission, not the Malibu City Council. The Coastal Commission ultimately rejected the project.

Sometimes there are personal ties between local governments and their lobbyists. The Yucaipa Valley Water District paid more than \$110,000 to Platinum Advisors during the last two-year legislative session. One of the firm's lobbyists, Brett Granlund, is the brother of district board member Bruce Granlund and ex-husband of another member, Lonni Granlund.

Joseph Zoba, general manager of the Yucaipa Valley Water District, said the Granlunds recused themselves from the vote on hiring a lobbyist.

"Brett is a former city councilman and assemblyman from Yucaipa. He has a great working knowledge of Yucaipa," Zoba said. "Most people don't even know where we are on the map. Having someone like Brett really helps out."

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## Caltrans investigates broken steel rods on new Bay Bridge

By Lisa Vorderbrueggen Contra Costa Times San Jose Mercury News

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OAKLAND -- Bay Area transportation officials grilled Caltrans on Wednesday morning for answers to why nearly three dozen threaded steel rods -- 9 to 24 feet long -- on the new eastern span of the Bay Bridge snapped like pretzels.

"We want to assure the public that the bridge being constructed is safe," said Metropolitan Transportation Commission Chairwoman and Orinda Councilwoman Amy Worth following a detailed presentation. "It is very important that we have these briefings and we expect to hear from you (Caltrans) again."

Commissioners' questions ran the gamut, from the bridge's earthquake safety to who will pay the extra costs. They also wanted to know how defective rods came to be installed on the bridge in the first place.

The rods are not part of the span's day-to-day structural integrity and the state is confident engineers and American Bridge/Fluor Joint Venture will find a fix that leaves the bridge equally sound when the "Big One" hits, Caltrans Toll Bridge Program Manager Tony Anziano told the commission.

"This is one of many on a list of issues we have faced in the last decade of construction, so we are very optimistic that we will find a solution," Anziano said. The repairs are not expected to delay the scheduled Labor Day bridge opening.

Manufactured in Ohio, the rods are part of a set of seismic components designed to control the pier's movement during an earthquake. The pier -- a column anchored on the bay floor that supports the bridge -- is located just east of the self-anchored suspension span tower.

On the bridge, 288 three-inch thick rods of varying lengths were inserted into vertical holes in eight pre-cast seismic components called "shear keys" and "bearings" -- picture a block of wood with holes drilled out to make room for bolts. Those components were placed atop the pier before construction crews lowered the bridge deck in late 2011.

Workers then placed giant nuts on the threaded ends, which serve to clamp the shear keys and bearings sandwiched between the bridge deck and the top of the pier. The final nut tightening was done after the suspension span settled into position near the end of construction.

When crews tightened the 96 rods on two shear keys a few weeks ago, roughly a third broke under the pressure. Tightening of the remaining rods is on hold pending Caltrans' investigation.

Anziano suspects the defective rods contained excess levels of hydrogen, which weakens high-strength steel. Caltrans is investigating how and when the steel rods became brittle.

The high-strength galvanized steel rods were subject to Caltrans' product testing and manufacturing protocols, said commission Executive Director Steve Heminger.

"Right now, we are focused on trying to find a solution," Heminger said. "But given the significant number of failures in the bolts, there was clearly a quality control problem. At some point, we will need to assign responsibility for the additional cost."

That cost has not yet been determined. In the meantime, the commission, state and contractor are exploring fixes.

The area where crews have already tightened down 96 rods pose the biggest repair challenge. The lower end is sealed and crews only have 5 feet of clearance on the top for rods that range from 9 feet to 24 feet long.

One possible solution is an external collar that would clamp the deck, shear keys and pier together, Anziano said. The remaining 192 rods that have not yet been tightened are accessible from the bottom of the pier cap and could be

[http://www.mercurynews.com/bay-area-news/ci\\_22880035/caltrans-investigates-broken-steel-rods-new-bay-bridge](http://www.mercurynews.com/bay-area-news/ci_22880035/caltrans-investigates-broken-steel-rods-new-bay-bridge)  
replaced, Anziano said.

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## Cost to fix Bay Bridge pegged at about \$1 million

*The Associated Press News Fuze*

Posted:

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SAN FRANCISCO—Fixing problems caused when nearly three dozen steel rods broke on a new span of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge will cost about \$1 million, a state transportation official said.

The work is not expected to delay the planned Labor Day opening of the span, Tony Anziano, a California Department of Transportation toll bridge program manager, told the San Francisco Chronicle ( <http://bit.ly/Z62p8r>) in a story published Monday.

The rods that snapped last month after being tightened connect steel earthquake safety devices called shear keys to the deck of the bridge and a large concrete cap.

At least some of the failed rods are located beneath that cap and cannot easily be replaced. Crews instead will have to create two metal collars that will provide room for new rods to be inserted, Anziano said.

Workers are replacing the bridge's eastern span that was damaged during the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. The work is designed to withstand a major temblor.

Tests have discovered hydrogen in some of the damaged steel rods, which is an indication of weakness in the metal.

Caltrans officials are looking into the fabrication and supply process for the bolts made by Dyson Corp. of Ohio.

"The department has ordered a full review to find out exactly what went wrong, to determine how it will be fixed and assure that responsible parties are held accountable," Caltrans spokesman Will Shuck told the Sacramento Bee ( <http://bit.ly/Z6ahqu>).

A call to the company on Tuesday by The Associated Press was not immediately returned.

The Bee reported that at least 14 other parts built by Dyson for the suspension span have failed Caltrans quality tests. That's more failures than any other supplier on the contract, the Bee reported, citing Caltrans records.

Caltrans also is reviewing whether the broken bolts failed quality tests, Shuck said.

The Bee reported that the records it obtained were of tests of 352 parts for the suspension portion of the bridge.

While the records were not comprehensive, they showed that Dyson faced consistent quality control problems, the Bee said.

## Planning for whole Bay Area: Nothing sinister about it

By Supervisor Jim Spering *TheReporter.Com*

Posted:

TheReporter.com

One of the issues I give great consideration to is what kind of Solano County will we leave for our children and grandchildren? Will they be able to afford to live here? Will they even want to?

Planning is underway to examine housing and transportation needs through 2040 -- a seemingly distant time but one that will arrive quickly. Known as Plan Bay Area, this is an integrated, long-range transportation and land-use/housing plan for the San Francisco Bay Area, including Solano County.

There's nothing revolutionary about Plan Bay Area. It builds on earlier efforts to develop an efficient transportation system and grow in a financially and environmentally responsible way. You would think otherwise, however, if you listen to those claiming the plan is part of a United Nations conspiracy to take our personal liberties and property.

Rather than abetting imaginary global villains, Plan Bay Area simply responds to state law. Senate Bill 375, passed in 2008, requires regions such as the Bay Area to plan for needed housing growth while reducing emissions from cars and light trucks. One of the advantages of this law is that Solano County's elected officials, and not legislators in Sacramento, are at the table making decisions on what's best for our communities.

As an elected member of the Solano County Board of Supervisors, I serve on the board of one of the agencies tasked with developing Plan Bay Area -- the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. MTC, along with the Association of Bay Area Governments, will release a draft plan for public comment later this month.

My job as Solano County's representative is to ensure the plan positions Solano for the best possible future in terms of transportation, housing and economic development. That means keeping all land-use decisions local, preserving what we love about our cities and farmlands, working to unclog our highways and maintain our local streets, and encouraging business development and jobs where it makes sense -- while still making room for future generations.

Solano residents historically have looked forward. Nearly 30 years ago voters passed the Orderly Growth Initiative, and then reaffirmed it in 2008 with more than 75 percent support. This locally grown vision will have far more to do with how our cities and county develop than anything adopted at the regional level.

The Orderly Growth Initiative specifically directs urbanized growth into incorporated cities and limits encroachment on farms and open space. Plan Bay Area concentrates new growth in areas chosen by local governments, with most of it taking place toward the center of our region in large cities like San Francisco, Oakland and San Jose.

To quote Dwight Eisenhower, "Plans are nothing, but planning is everything." As Allied commander in World War II, General Eisenhower knew the importance of planning. As president, his vision gave us an interstate highway system that spurred economic growth and united America. We would do well to follow Eisenhower's lead and work together for a better future.

By setting local and regional priorities now, we can create a Solano County we'll be proud to leave to future generations.

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The author, a Suisun City resident, represents District 3 on the Solano County Board of Supervisors.