



Lobbying Spending Hits New Record

By Michael F. Conlan

Looming recession or not, lobbying is a growth industry in the nation's capital. Trade associations, corporations, labor unions, and other interest groups spent \$2.79 billion last year trying to influence Congress and federal agencies, according to the non-partisan Center for Responsive Politics. That's an increase of \$200 million, or 7.7 percent, over 2006, and \$1.35 billion more than a just decade ago.

"At a time when our economy is contracting, Washington's lobbying industry has been expanding," said Sheila Krumholz, executive director of the 25-year-old watchdog group, as the final tallies for 2007 were re-

leased this spring. "Lobbying seems to be a recession-proof industry. In some respects, interests seek even more from our government when the economy slows."

It's no surprise to the NCPA government affairs department that the pharmaceuticals/health products industry outspent all industries by shelling out \$227 million for lobbying services during the first session

industry," the center said. "Its reported lobbying increased 25 percent in 2007."

A look at the biggest spenders finds the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America third, Amgen ninth, and Pfizer 13th. Also in the top 15 are the American Medical Association, the American Hospital Association, and AARP.

Increasingly it's a zero sum game on Capitol Hill. It's all about "budget offsets"—pots of money that can be raided from use in one program to a completely different one. Conceivably, GE could be competing against GM for money in a program backed by Amgen. We had the Medicaid tamper-resistant pad requirement foisted on us so the \$150 million "savings" could be used for rural hospitals.

Oh yes, NCPA's lobbying expenses in 2007 were \$380,000. Compare that to Medco, \$2,040,000; CVS/Caremark, \$1,696,661; and Express Scripts, \$980,000.

None of the reported lobbying figures include grassroots lobbying. For us, that is our greatest strength and gives us a chance to be competitive on Capitol Hill despite the huge monetary disadvantage we always face. Our newly revamped grassroots network generated 40,000 contacts to lawmakers last year.

But even grassroots lobbying takes money, which is why contributions to the Legislative Defense Fund and a separate lobbying component, our political action committee, are so important. **ap**

Top Lobbying Spenders 2007

- U.S. Chamber of Commerce* — **\$52,750,000**
- General Electric* — **\$23,620,000**
- Pharmaceutical Research & Manufacturers of America* — **\$22,733,400**
- American Medical Association* — **\$22,132,000**
- American Hospital Association* — **\$19,734,545**
- AARP* — **\$19,540,000**
- Exxon Mobil* — **\$16,940,000**
- AT&T* — **\$16,936,109**
- Amgen* — **\$16,260,000**
- General Motors* — **\$14,560,000**
- Southern Co.* — **\$14,560,000**
- National Association of Realtors* — **\$13,860,000**
- Pfizer* — **\$13,800,000**
- National Cable & Telecommunications Association* — **\$13,020,000**
- Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers* — **\$12,835,527**

of the 110th Congress. When other health care interests are added in, including those of NCPA, the total climbs to \$445 million for the health care sector as a whole.

"The drug industry has spent \$1.3 billion on federal lobbying over the last 10 years, more than any other

Michael F. Conlan is editor of *America's Pharmacist*.