



February 5, 2026

Governor Kathy Hochul
New York State

Minority Leader Robert Ort
New York State Senate

Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins
New York State Senate

Minority Leader William Barclay
New York State Assembly

Speaker Carl Heastie
New York State Assembly

Re: Fully fund the Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government with \$9.1 million, and use new fees to fund \$750,000 tech upgrades in FY 2026-2027 budget

Dear Governor Hochul and Legislative Leaders,

We strongly urge you to fully fund the NYS Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government (COELIG) by:

1. Appropriating \$9.1 million in the final FY 2026-2027 state budget, [as requested by COELIG](#); and
2. Using a portion of new fees for late ethics trainings and increased lobby registration fees to fund COELIG's proposed \$750,000 tech upgrades.

\$9.1 million gets COELIG up to a full complement of 68 staff

The Executive Budget appropriation of \$8,910,000 ([State Ops, page 212](#)) falls short of COELIG's request for \$9,160,000 by \$250,000. We urge you to fully fund COELIG at the level they have requested. A \$250,000 increase is a tiny amount in the context of a \$260 billion budget, but a very meaningful amount to COELIG, which is the first line of defense against corruption in state government.

COELIG staff have broad responsibilities, and it is crucial they have the funding to fully staff up and help public officials comply with reporting requirements, hold mandated training sessions, and ensure rules and laws are being followed by all. COELIG is counting on \$9.1 million to fill five positions that are currently on hold; if filled, they would get to a full headcount of 68.

We understand that the discrepancy between their request and your budget could be accounting for what COELIG was provided in the past as a reimbursement for JCOPE's liabilities for production of the Hogan Lovells report.¹ Regardless of past liabilities, failing to provide \$250,000 in additional funding this year's budget will have a negative impact on the agency's ability to fulfill its mission going forward, particularly as it continues to staff up after a [lengthy legal fight](#) over its constitutional status in 2024 and 2025.

New training and registration fees should benefit COELIG and its filers, not general fund
Parts U and Z of the Public Protection and General Government executive budget bill create two new fees related to COELIG's training and registration requirements for lobbyists:

- Part U would impose late fees of \$25 per day on lobbyists and lobbyist clients who fail to timely comply with mandated ethics trainings, raising a total of \$750,000 in revenue, according to the PPGG Memorandum in Support (Page 28).
- Part Z would increase lobbyist registration fees from \$200 to \$250 and require lobbyists to pay the registration fee in both years of the biennial registration period, raising a total of \$300,000 in revenue, according to the PPGG Memorandum in Support (Page 32).

Part Z would be a 250% increase in fees over a two-year period for lobbyists registered in the state of New York. According to COELIG staff and as discussed at their [January 21, 2026 meeting](#), they worked with the Division of the Budget to propose these fees, and asked that a portion of the new fees, \$750,000, be allocated to COELIG for a technology upgrade.

We think it is only fair that if lobbyists are paying more for their registrations, they see some benefit. Upgrading the financial disclosure and lobby filing systems will not only benefit filers, but also COELIG staff, who oversee filings and use them for enforcement actions, and the general public – including the press – who use the disclosures to better understand who is seeking to influence state government.

[COELIG's budget letter](#) states that all current requested updates to its systems submitted to the Office of Information Technology (ITS) “would cost COELIG and the state an additional \$2.9 million and, after a protracted delay to allow OITS to recruit and train new staff, take at least 16 months to add the functionalities to the systems as they were originally designed years and years ago...procuring state-of-the-art systems...could be implemented more quickly and at a fraction of the cost through the procurement process.”

We strongly believe that allocating \$750,000 to COELIG – a portion of total fees, not the entirety – for tech upgrades to its outdated filing systems is a good use of new fees paid for by lobbyists, particularly given that internal improvements would be costly and take time away from other state IT projects. We urge you to include this funding in your final budget, along with the \$9.1 million in total operating funds COELIG needs to best fulfill its mission.

¹ Ironically, this report was one of the tipping points in the push to overhaul JCOPE and create the new Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government due to political and structural problems regarding its independence.
https://ethics.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2022/07/hogan-lovells-jcope-report_2022.07.01.pdf

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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Reinvent Albany

Grace Rauh
Executive Director
Citizens Union

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