Lobbying Clients Fined $24,000 for Failing to File Disclosure Reports

ALBANY – (December 22, 2014) The New York State Joint Commission on Public Ethics (Commission) today announced decisions fining two lobbying clients a total of $24,000 for knowingly and willfully failing to file required disclosure reports.

Community Redemption Center, a lobbying client from the Bronx, was fined $15,000 for failing to file required semi-annual reports disclosing their lobbying activity during the second half of 2010, and for all of 2012. Blackboard, Inc., of Washington, DC, also a lobbying client, was fined $9,000 by the Commission for failing to file disclosure reports covering their lobbying activity for all of 2010.

The Commission's decisions follow a September 10 hearing, and adopt the recommendations of the hearing officer, Judge George C. Pratt. Both matters were commenced in 2012.

Under the State's Lobbying Act, any client, i.e., person or organization who retains, employs or designates a lobbyist for their own behalf, and who anticipates spending more than $5,000 in lobbying compensation and expenses during the year, must file semi-annual reports with the Commission. Such reports, which are available to the public, disclose information such as the matters being lobbied, the government entities lobbied, the lobbyists retained by the client, and the compensation and expenses paid to those lobbyists.

Client semi-annual reports are separate and distinct from the registration and bi-monthly reports that must be filed by lobbyists.

Under the Lobbying Act, knowing and willful failure to file a semi-annual report can result in a civil penalty of as much as $25,000, or three times the amount not reported.

Copies of the Commission's decisions may be viewed by clicking here.