



**NEWS FROM:
THE JOINT COMMISSION ON PUBLIC ETHICS**

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Lobbyist Fined \$180,000 for Repeated Lobbying Act Violations

ALBANY, NY (November 2, 2016) – The New York State Joint Commission on Public Ethics (the “Commission”) announced that it has fined registered lobbying firm State Advisers, LLC (“State Advisers”) \$180,000 for repeatedly violating the registration and reporting requirements in the State Lobbying Act over a five-year period.

State Advisers, based in Garden City, New York, was found to have failed to file or filed late 148 lobbyist bimonthly reports between 2011 and 2015. The Commission also found that State Advisers failed to pay the required registration fee for 22 lobbying registration statements and neglected to file eight client agreements.

State Advisers, through its principal Keith Sernick, previously entered into an agreement with the Commission in April 2016 to settle these matters for \$62,000. As a result of the firm’s failure to pay the penalty or comply with any of the terms of the settlement agreement, the Commission conducted a public hearing on August 11 before the Hon. Elaine Jackson Stack to determine if State Advisers violated the Lobbying Act and, if so, whether a civil penalty should be assessed against it. Keith Sernick appeared on behalf of State Advisers.

Judge Stack found for the Commission, dismissed Sernick’s contention that he was willing to work to resolve these matters as “hollow and false,” and recommended a civil penalty of \$180,000. The Commission adopted her findings and recommendations in full.

“[R]espondent flouts the law and has done so since 2008,” Judge Stack wrote. “Nothing in respondent’s history reflects any intention to follow the law as it is written.”

Under the State’s Lobbying Act, every lobbyist must file a registration statement for each of its clients every two years, pay a registration fee, and include with its registration a copy of its agreement with the client. A registered lobbyist must also file reports reflecting its lobbying activity on a bimonthly basis for each client throughout the registration period. Such reports are available to the public on the Commission’s website. Failure to file these reports exposes lobbyists and clients to civil penalties of as much as \$25,000, or three times the amount not reported.

A copy of the Commission’s decision may be viewed by clicking [here](#).