

The Washington Post

Revenue of top lobbying firms jumped in first half of year

By Amanda Becker

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The year is off to a good start for K Street, with eight of the 10 most successful lobbying shops bringing in more revenue during the first half of 2010 than during the same period last year.

The financial services overhaul, health-care legislation and the proposed climate change bill helped generate more than \$128 million in lobbying revenue for these firms since the beginning of the year, with half posting double-digit gains.

"You can feel the difference in town," said Smith Davis, who co-manages the public policy group at Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, which maintained its status as the second-highest grossing lobbying revenue generator in town. "The climate is obviously different than it was in the first quarter of 2009, there's no doubt about that, you can see some recovery here."

Capitol Hill heavyweight Patton Boggs again topped the charts, bringing in \$20.6 million during the first two quarters of the year, according to Capital Business estimates based on Lobbying Disclosure Act forms filed with the Senate. That figure does not include more than \$6 million in revenue reported by mid-sized firm Breaux-Lott Leadership Group, which was acquired by Patton Boggs on July 1. The addition will likely cement Patton Boggs's top rank in upcoming

quarters.

Denver-based Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck leapfrogged several firms by bringing in almost 30 percent more revenue during the first two quarters of 2010 than it did in 2009. Alfred E. Mottur, managing partner of the firm's office in the District, attributed Brownstein Hyatt's success to both general factors boosting overall activity on K Street and the afterglow generated by being the hometown shop during the 2008 Democratic National Convention.

"We have a presence in the mountain states, and with respect to the business community out there, I think the convention helped enhance our image that we can help out in Washington," Mottur said.

Multiple factors contributed to firms' success. Rich Gold, the head of Holland & Knight's

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public policy group, which has brought in \$10.6 million in lobbying revenue so far this year, said it isn't a coincidence that half of the top 10 most successful lobbying groups are housed within full-service law firms.

"The reality in the marketplace is because the issues are so complex and because you have to be able to translate advocacy into the regulatory realm, clients are coming to law firms for that soup-to-nuts-type service," Gold said.

Relationships with companies in the industries that were the focus of Congress -- health care, financial services, energy -- were also the key to nabbing a spot in the top 10. Records show that Patton Boggs's highest-paying clients were Mortgage Investors Coalition, which retained lobbyists on issues related to the mortgage meltdown, and Cantor Futures Exchange, which hired the firm to represent its interests on derivatives provisions contained in the Dodd-Frank Act, the financial regulatory overhaul.

Though Wall Street and health-care legislation dominated much of K Street's time, group leaders also reported that environmental work kept lobbyists busy during the first half of the year. Akin Gump's Davis cited the firm's strengths in representing clients' energy and environmental interests as a factor in its success. Senate records show that Dow Chemical paid Akin Gump more than \$1 million in the first two quarters to work with

Congress on environment-related issues.

Proposed climate-change legislation was another area that brought in significant revenue. Podesta chief executive Kimberly Fritts cited that issue area as a strength of the firm, which was paid \$300,000 by the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity during the first half of the year to lobby both the House and the Senate on the pending cap-and-trade bill and other climate issues.

Because the Senate failed to vote on a version of the climate bill that was passed by the House, Fritts and other head lobbyists expect that it will continue to be a focus of K Street going forward.

"Obviously we've got health care coming down the line as a regulatory issue and a lot of the financial services implementation," Gold said. "But the continuing debate over energy and climate change continues to keep us very busy, and I expect it will continue to

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