

Cable TV lobbyists must register here

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SANTA CRUZ — Cable television lobbyists are a breed apart in the city and county of Santa Cruz.

They alone will have to register at governmental offices when they come to town and they'll be stopped from contributing to campaigns as elections draw near. They can't give gifts to local government employees.

"Why single out one type of lobbying? If we're going to limit lobbying, we should regulate all lobbying," Councilman Spiro Mellis said at Tuesday's City Council meeting.

He was answered by Councilman Michael Rotkin who said that cable lobbyists who contract with city and county boards "are particularly deserving of this regulation."

He said that cable lobbyists have spent as much as \$5 million on some campaigns to get lucrative contracts for their com-

panies and that some elected boards have been corrupted in the process.

Councilman Joseph Ghio said an elected person should be able to handle the temptation without an ordinance controlling the lobbyists. He and Mellis said all officials are subject to normal lobbying without it being a corrupting force.

Rotkin said the cable companies have stacked audiences and sent paid spokesmen to meetings under false colors.

Ghio said he didn't believe people could be corrupted so easily, insisting, "I'm sorry, but I just don't believe it."

"The cable lobbyists believe it," Rotkin assured him.

The city's ordinance came one week after the county Board of Supervisors gave initial approval to its cable lobbyists regulations.

Both are scheduled to go into effect within 60 days.

On the county side, Supervisors Dan Forbus and Wayne Moore voted against
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the ordinance, and it won approval on the votes of Supervisors Joe Cucchiara and Gary Patton and Chairman Robley Levy.

Patton said his aide had been approached by a representative from Group W cable television for Patton to make statements on a video tape. The representative, Patton said, did not immediately identify himself.

It was later disclosed that Tony Hill, a man under contract with Group W, had identified himself with Patton's office and assumed Patton knew who he was. Patton later said there was confusion and that communication lines had been crossed. Patton said he did not think Hill was misrepresenting himself.

Santa Cruz Mayor Bruce Van Allen said he had a similar experience.

He said Hill called him and asked him to appear on a video-taped presentation to discuss what the mayor and the city wanted in a cable service.

In the next six months, city and county governments will be awarding cable contracts to replace the old Teleprompter cable that weakly served the county in the past.

Van Allen said Hill did not immediately identify himself and it was only after questioning that he said he "was under

contract, or would be under contract, with Group W."

Hill, who said there was never an attempt to deceive, said he told the mayor "right away that was what I was doing."

"I believe that because people aren't communicating, I think there's been a misinterpretation of events," Hill told The Sentinel this morning.

The new ordinances will require that lobbyists for cable service list all the contacts they make between public meetings.

The county is denying lobbyists and their cable companies from contributing to supervisors' and councilmembers' campaigns. At the county, that restriction applies 45 days prior to the election and in the city that is 60 days. No after-election contributions can be made.

Councilmember Joseph Ghio voted against the ordinance and Councilman John Mahaney was absent.

Over the next six months, the city and county will negotiate a new contract.

Group W, which took over Teleprompter, has the first chance to bring in its offer.

If that offer is refused by the city and county, the franchise's contractors, then other cable companies can bid.

The contract is considered worth a gross of \$100 million over a 15-year period.