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Opinion

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# The lobbying boom: The numbers are in

By: [Timothy P. Carney](#)

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Since March, I've been looking at lobbying numbers and lobbying filings and detecting [a possible lobbying boom](#) under President Obama. Today, the Center for Responsive Politics [gives us the hard numbers](#):

In all, federal lobbyists' clients spent more than \$3.47 billion last year, often driven to Washington, D.C.'s power centers and halls of influence by political issues central to the age: health care reform, financial reform, energy policy.

That figure represents a more than 5 percent increase over \$3.3 billion worth of federal lobbying recorded in 2008, the previous all-time annual high for lobbying expenditures. And it comes in a year when a recession persisted, the dollar's value against major foreign currencies declined and joblessness rates increased....

Last year's 4th quarter also marked the first quarter in U.S. history that federal lobbying expenditures cracked the \$900 million mark -- which they did with ample room to space, hitting a record \$955.1 million for the quarter, the Center's research shows....

"Lobbying appears recession proof," said Sheila Krumholz, the Center's executive director. "Even when companies are scaling back other operations, many view lobbying as a critical tool in protecting their future interests, particularly when Congress is preparing to take action on issues that could seriously affect their bottom lines."

I discussed the causes and nature of this boom in my Christmas column, "[Barack Obama and The Miracle on K Street](#)," but I think the Cato Institute's David Boaz [put it best](#): "Lay out a picnic, you get ants. Hand out more wealth through government, you get lobbyists."

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