

South Carolina DOT tallied \$1.5 million in D.C. lobbying

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South Carolina's Department of Transportation spent \$1.5 million on Washington D.C. lobbyists from 2001 through 2007 – stopping the practice because Gov. Mark Sanford reportedly believed government shouldn't "be in the business of paying money to lobby for more taxpayer money."

The Associated Press reported the state DOT hired two firms, including one that helped the state obtain a \$100 million loan for a Charleston, SC, bridge.

South Carolina has worked with the U.S. DOT on multiple tolling projects in recent years, including the recently approved Interstate 73 – a six-state highway running from the Atlantic shore northwest near the Canadian border.

State officials in North Carolina and South Carolina have lobbied for federal approval to toll Interstate 95.

OOIDA opposes tolling on interstates, even if tolls are dedicated to pay for new construction.

Although it's common for state governments to lobby in Washington, \$1.5 million is a considerable figure for one state, said Rod Nofziger, OOIDA's director of legislative affairs.

"That's a pretty healthy chunk of cash from one agency from one state," Nofziger told Land Line.

The South Carolina DOT's lobbying budget is comparable to lobbying expenses racked up by Pennsylvania, Nofziger said.

Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell has proposed leasing the Pennsylvania Turnpike to investors for an immediate cash influx, although such a public-private partnership would cede toll control to a corporate entity.