



Congressman Pedro R. Pierluisi  
Statement as Prepared for Delivery  
The Washington Center Presents “Political Leadership & Córdova Program Symposium:  
Lobbyists, Legislators, and Policymakers”  
2168 Rayburn House Office Building  
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Thank you. I want to welcome all of you to today’s symposium on lobbyists: who they are, what they do, how they interact with legislators like myself, and the important role they play in the policymaking process. I am honored to have been asked to offer some brief remarks, and I apologize for my late arrival.

We are privileged to have with us this afternoon a wonderful four-member panel. Michael, Marie, Chuck and Raul: thank you for being here and for sharing your personal insights into the lobbying profession, insights that I know are the product of long experience and reflection. We look forward to hearing you candidly discuss the opportunities and challenges involved in this line of work.

Next, I want to welcome my friend Jeffrey Farrow, who will be moderating today’s panel. Some of you young folks in the audience—especially if you are from Puerto Rico—may have heard of Jeff. Jeff has held various high-level positions in the executive and legislative branches, including eight years spent as President Clinton’s top aide on issues involving Puerto Rico and

the other U.S. territories. Jeff currently serves as a consultant to a number of clients, including the government of Puerto Rico. Whether in the public sector or the private sector, Jeff is highly respected for his intelligence and integrity. For purposes of today's event, Jeff will be taking off his "Puerto Rico" hat and putting on his "Washington Insider" hat.

Finally, I want to warmly welcome you, the students from the Washington Center's Political Leadership Program and the Córdova Congressional Internship Program. Most of you are college students. Many of you likely have an interest in government service and public policy. But, if you are anything like I was at your age, you are probably still figuring out precisely what professional path to take. You are trying new things and seeing where your passions and talents lie.

Who knows where each of you will be in five years, or 10 years, or 20 years? But I have to say: I have a good feeling about you guys. You know why? Because you chose to apply for this competitive internship. The decision to accept you was not yours to make, but the choice to apply was. Nobody made you do this—although, as a father myself, I recognize that some of you may have received a gentle, or not-so-gentle, nudge from your parents. But, ultimately, it was *you* who made the daunting decision to leave behind your family—and the comfortable familiarity of college life—to come to Washington. So, each of you has already demonstrated that you possess the desire, the determination and the drive that—in my experience—are absolutely essential for success in life.

Now let me say a brief word about the subject of today's symposium—lobbying—before I turn the floor over to Jeff and the panel. Essentially, a lobbyist is an individual who is hired by a state or local government, by a company, or by an organization or industry to advocate on its behalf before the legislative and executive branches. For example, an organization representing senior citizens may hire a lobbyist who will meet with members of Congress and other government officials. The lobbyists will inform those officials of the needs and interests of seniors in an effort to influence government action when it comes to, say, health care or social security. Some lobbyists are lawyers; others are not. But every good lobbyist is an effective advocate.

To be an effective advocate for your client's cause, it is not enough to have a silver tongue—you must be knowledgeable as well. I am particularly fond of a quote from David Brooks, a columnist for *The New York Times*, who wrote: “There's a word for lobbyists: ‘experts.’” In my tenure in Congress, I have had occasion to meet many lobbyists, advocating for a variety of clients and causes. As in any profession, some are fair, some are good, and some are great. The great ones know the substantive issues cold, they know how to make their client's case to busy lawmakers in a clear and concise way, and they always abide strictly by the ethical rules governing their profession. This last point is so important that I will say it again: the best lobbyists are not only the most persuasive and the most knowledgeable, they are also the most ethically-conscious.

As the panelists will describe in more detail, certain myths and misperceptions about lobbying exist. I think it is fair to say that lobbyists, like lawyers, are often unfairly characterized as “hired guns.” As a general matter, I would gently urge you to be skeptical of any argument that

denigrates an entire profession. I feel strongly about this issue, in part, because the government of Puerto Rico, and many Puerto Rico companies and institutions, make use of lobbyists. The need for lobbyists to explain Puerto Rico's needs and to promote Puerto Rico's interests is particularly acute because the Island lacks meaningful voting representation in the federal government. Island residents, who are American citizens, cannot vote for president. Moreover, Puerto Rico has no U.S. senators, whereas every state has two. Finally, a state with the same population as Puerto Rico would have at least five voting representatives here in the U.S. House. As a territory, the Island has just me—and I have limited voting rights. Accordingly, Puerto Rico hires lobbyists who supplement and complement the work that I do. I know these men and woman personally. They are talented, hard-working and principled. That is why when I hear negative things being said about the lobbying profession, they don't always ring true.

Thank you very much.

