

\$286 mil. – a record for lobbyists in California in 2011

By Patrick McGreevy, Los Angeles Times

SACRAMENTO – State Assemblyman Warren Furutani looked out over a sea of red – protesting oil industry workers wearing scarlet T-shirts – and saw trouble for his plan to raise \$2.5 billion for universities with a tax on crude.

The Central Valley workers had packed a legislative hearing to oppose the idea. Their shirts said “Save Our Jobs” and oil companies had spent close to \$5,000 to bus them to the Capitol from Bakersfield.

The bill died, one of many victories for an industry that paid \$12 million to an army of lobbyists last year to do its bidding.

Businesses, unions and other interests set a record in 2011 for money spent lobbying the state: \$286.6 million, a 6.8% increase from the year before, according to recent filings. That surprised even veteran Capitol watchers, who refer to the lobbying corps as the “Third House” because its power rivals that of the two houses of the Legislature.

Amid the state’s lingering economic slump and Sacramento’s persistent budget crisis, a record 2,768 entities hired lobbyists last year, many of them to fight for a slice of the shrinking public pie. Corporations sought an edge with a Democratic governor after seven years when a business-friendly Republican was in charge.

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