

Google's 4Q lobbying bill triples to \$3.76 million

January 23 2012, By MICHAEL LIEDTKE , AP Technology Writer

Google's U.S. lobbying bill more than tripled to \$3.76 million in the fourth quarter as the Internet search leader fought proposed changes to online piracy laws and sought to influence a wide range of other issues that could affect its fortunes.

The amount that Google Inc. spent making its political points from October through December is by far the company's highest lobbying tab for any three-month period since Google's Washington office opened in 2005. The total compared with a lobbying budget of \$1.24 million during the final three months of 2010 and \$2.38 million in the third quarter of 2011.

For all of 2011, Google spent \$9.7 million on political persuasion, nearly doubling from \$5.2 million in 2010.

The company disclosed its [fourth-quarter](#) lobbying figures in documents filed late Friday with the U.S. House clerk's office.

Google's lobbying expenses have been rising steadily against a backdrop of intensified U.S. [government scrutiny](#) of the company's acquisitions and business practices. The focus has been prompted by complaints alleging that Google is abusing its [dominance](#) of the lucrative Internet [search market](#) to stifle competition and muscle its way into other markets.

As a foil, Google last summer hired a dozen lobbying firms to supplement

the team that it already employed in its Washington office. The bills coming in from those firms contributed to the sharp rise in Google's fourth-quarter lobbying expenses, according to the company.

Google's emphasis on lobbying mirrors what [Microsoft Corp.](#) did during the late 1990s while the U.S. Justice Department pursued an [antitrust case](#) asserting the software maker had unfairly bundled its dominant [Windows operating system](#) with key personal-computer applications. Microsoft eventually thwarted the government's attempt to break up the company, but not before years of legal wrangling that included a high-profile trial.

With that case behind it, Microsoft now spends far less on lobbying than Google. In the fourth quarter, Google's lobbying expenses doubled Microsoft's \$1.88 million bill. For all of 2011, Microsoft's lobbying tab totaled \$7.3 million.

Google's fourth-quarter lobbying agenda included a proposed antipiracy law, which inspired an Internet protest last week. While some popular websites such as Wikipedia went dark for 24 hours, Google stamped out its colorful logo to signal its objection to proposed changes to online [piracy laws](#). The company says the changes would result in censorship and discourage Internet innovation. More than 7 people signed a protest petition posted by Google.

Movie and music studio backed the changes - dubbed the Stop Online Piracy Act, or SOPA - as a more effective way to prevent rampant theft of their copyrighted material. Lawmakers postponed the legislation following the online protests.

Google's fourth-quarter lobbying push addressed online advertising, which accounts for most of the company's \$38 billion in annual revenue.

Other topics covered by Google's lobbyists included: online security; personal privacy on the Internet; renewable energy; international tax reform; the treatment of corporate earnings outside the U.S.; the availability of wireless Internet access; free speech; and free-trade agreements with South Korea, Colombia and Panama.

Besides Congress, agencies that Google lobbied in the fourth quarter included: the Federal Trade Commission, the White House; the Federal Communications Commission, the Commerce Department and the U.S. Trade Representative.

The outside firms working for [Google](#) are: Akin, Gump; Bingham; Capitol Legislative Strategies; Chesapeake Group; Crossroads Strategies; Gephardt Group; Holland & Knight; Normandy Group; Prime Policy; The First Group; The Madison Group; and the Raben Group.

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