

Google's 1Q lobbying bill more than triples to \$5M

April 23 2012, By MICHAEL LIEDTKE , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- Google's U.S. lobbying bill more than tripled to \$5 million during the first three months of the year amid increased government scrutiny of the Internet search leader's business and privacy practices.

The first-quarter expenses for political persuasion are by far the highest that [Google Inc.](#) has rung up for any three-month period since the company opened a lobbying office in Washington seven years ago. At the same time last year, Google spent \$1.48 million trying to make its points with U.S. lawmakers and regulators.

The company, which is based in Mountain View, Calif., disclosed the figures in documents filed late Friday with the U.S. Senate secretary's office.

The total for the most recent quarter is more than the combined lobbying bills among four of Google's biggest rivals. Microsoft Corp., Apple Inc., Yahoo Inc. and [Facebook](#) Inc. spent a combined \$3.6 million in the first quarter.

Microsoft, one of the technology industry's biggest spenders for years, had been spending more on lobbying than Google until the second quarter of last year.

Google's lobbying expenses have been rising steadily against a backdrop of government inquiries triggered by complaints from some of its rivals and [privacy watchdog](#) groups.

The Federal Trade Commission and attorneys general in at least six states are looking into allegations that Google has abused its dominance of the lucrative Internet search market to stifle competition and muscle its way into other markets.

Google's privacy practices came under fire in February after a [Stanford University graduate student](#) released research showing the company has had been bypassing the security settings in Apple's Safari browser for iPhones and [iPads](#) to track Web surfers' online activities. Google called the intrusion an inadvertent mistake, but the FTC is now examining whether the maneuver violated a settlement reached last year that prohibits Google from engaging in deceptive practices.

To help make its case with lawmakers and federal policymakers, Google last summer hired a dozen lobbying firms to supplement the team that it already employed in its Washington office. That expansion has driven up the company's lobbying budget.

Earlier this year, Google brought in even more political clout earlier this year by hiring a former congresswoman, Susan Molinari, to oversee its lobbying efforts.

Molinari, a Republican who represented New York in Congress for seven years during the 1990s, formerly worked for a firm that lobbied on behalf of Microsoft, among other companies.

Google's first-quarter lobbying agenda covered a wide range of Internet-focused issues, including advertising, privacy and completion, according to the company's disclosures. Other lobbying topics included copyrights, patents, renewable energy, immigration and international tax reform.

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