



**Carl Vinson  
Institute of Government**  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

# **Ethical Leadership and Public Service**

**Eric M. Robinson**

# Session Objectives

- Raise ethical awareness
- Define ethics and its relevance to your county/organization
- Explore the ethical decision making process
- Review the Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Law



# Session Purpose

- *Ethical choices and decisions permeate life*
- *Keep county council persons out of jail*
- *Appearances and perceptions matter in public life*
- *Councilpersons set a leadership standard for county employees*
- *Reduce public cynicism and distrust of public officials*
- *Counter negative campaign and constituent pressures*
- *Be able to recognize and identify ethical problems*
- *Unethical choices and decisions result in a real, tangible costs or consequences*
- *Leaders meddle in the lives of others ... it must be done deliberately*



# Ethics Defined

1. Theory, system, discipline, study or philosophy of moral principles, values, duties, and obligations
2. Rules, standards, or principles governing behavior
3. Conscious reflection on and discussion of our values and moral beliefs to guide choices and behavior

Sources: Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary; The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 4th Edition



# Ethics In Action

- The practice of applying a code of conduct to day-to-day actions. The code is based on moral principles that balance what is fair to individuals or organizations and what is right for society.

American Society for Quality, "Quirky Quality Dictionary, Second Edition

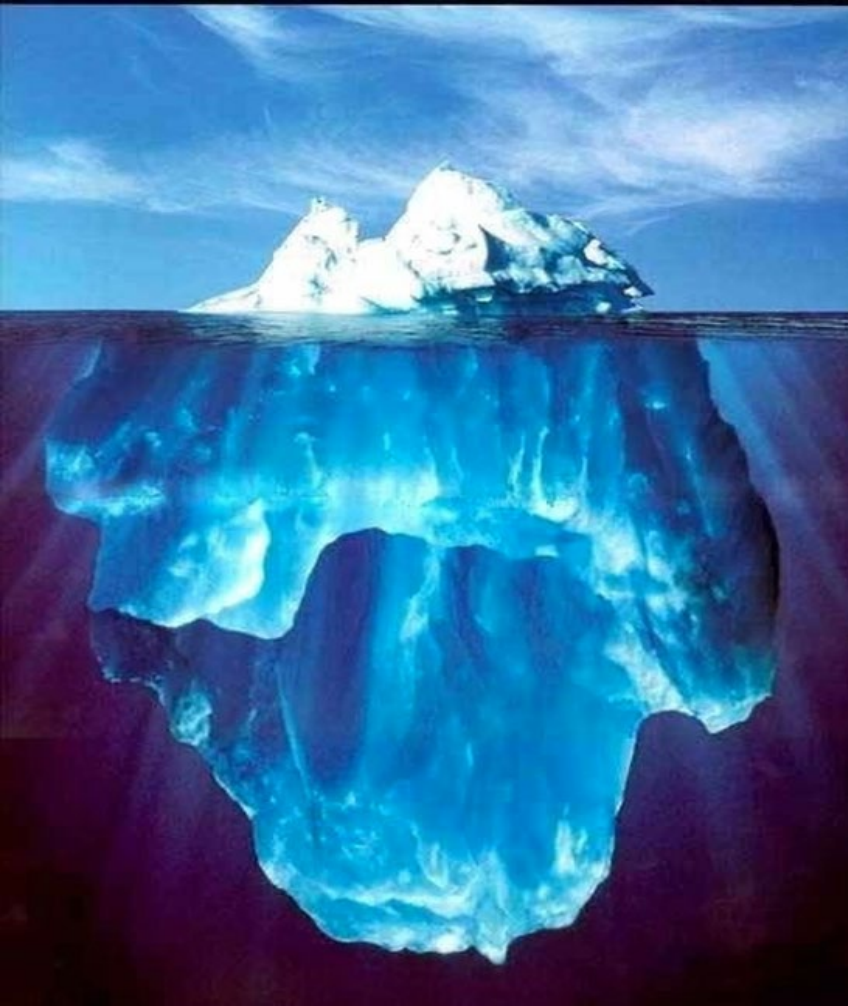


# 2 Kinds of Ethics Education

- Objective or External
  - Ethics laws
  - Codes of ethics
  - Rules
  - Standards of conduct
  - Conflicts of interest
- Subjective or Internal
  - Values
  - Character & virtue
  - Morality and moral authority
  - Obligations
  - Principles for resolving ethical dilemmas



# Three Approaches to Public Ethics



1. Legal ethics (laws) – cans and can'ts
2. Codified ethics (codes) – do's and don'ts
3. Normative ethics (values) – shoulds and shouldn'ts



# Citizens and Government Trust

- ❑ In 2022, Gallup's annual Governance survey showed that 67% of Americans expressed a great deal or a fair amount of trust and confidence in their local government when it comes to handling local problems.
- ❑ The same survey found that 57% of Americans expressed a great deal or fair amount of trust and confidence in their state government when it comes to handling state problems.
- ❑ In 2021, 66% of Americans expressed a great deal or a fair amount of trust and confidence in their local government and 57% of Americans expressed a great deal or fair amount of trust and confidence in their state government. Source: 2022 Gallup annual Governance survey





# Federal Government Survey

- ❑ In 2022, Gallup's annual Governance survey showed that 40% of Americans expressed a great deal or a fair amount of trust and confidence in our federal government in Washington D.C., when it comes to handling domestic problems.
- ❑ In 2021 the same survey found that 39% of Americans expressed a great deal or fair amount of trust and confidence in our federal government in Washington D.C., when it comes to handling domestic problems.

Source: 2022 Gallup Annual Governance survey



# Federal Government Survey

- ❑ In 2022, Gallup's annual Governance survey showed that 45% of Americans expressed a great deal or a fair amount of trust and confidence in our federal government in Washington D.C., when it comes to handling international problems.
- ❑ In 2021, 39% of Americans expressed a great deal or a fair amount of trust and confidence in our federal government when it comes to handling international problems. Source: 2022 Gallup Annual Governance survey



# ETHICS

Despite the codes of ethics, the ethics programs and the special departments, corporations don't make the ultimate decisions about ethics.

Ethical choices are made by individuals.



M. Euel Wade, Jr. – Senior Vice President  
Southern Company Services, Inc



# Ethics: Bigger Than Compliance

**Compliance** is about doing what you have to do.

**Ethics** is about doing what you should do.

**ETHICS IS ABOUT DOING  
WHAT IS RIGHT!!!**



# The Ethical Decision Making Process

- Obtain the Facts
- Define the Ethical Issues
- Ensure Legality
- Promote Fairness
- Check your Intuition



# Common Rationalizations

- If it's legal, it's ethical; if it's permissible, it's proper.
- I'm just fighting fire with fire.
- We've always done it that way.
- Everyone else is doing it.
- It's ethical as long as it doesn't hurt anyone.
- It's ethical as long as I don't gain personally.



# ETHICAL DECISIONS

- Have extended consequences
- Have multiple alternatives
- Have mixed outcomes
- Have uncertain consequences
- Have personal implications



# Current Laws and Policies

- The South Carolina Constitution
- The South Carolina Code of Laws
- Your County's Ethics Policy





# The South Carolina Constitution



All political power is vested in and derived from the people only, therefore, they have the right at all times to modify their form of government.

Article I – Declaration of Rights

Section I – Political Power in the People

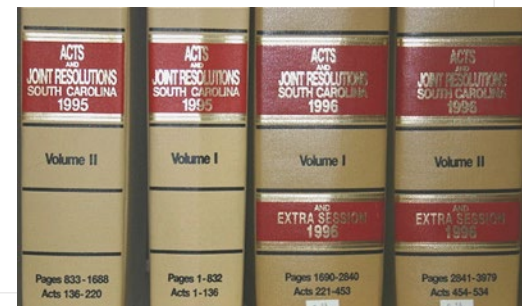
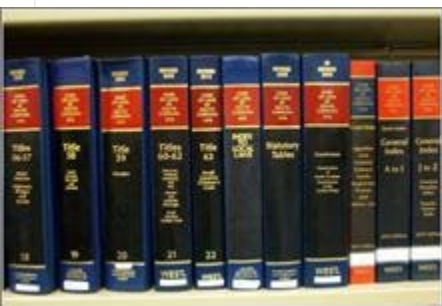


# South Carolina Code of Laws Unannotated

## Title 8 – Public Officers and Employees

### CHAPTER 13

## Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform



# Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform

- Article 1. General Provisions
- Article 3. State Ethics Commission
- Article 5. Senate and House of Representatives Ethics Committees
- Article 7. Rules of Conduct



# Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform

- Article 9. Forms and Reports by Candidates for Election by the General Assembly
- Article 11. Disclosure of Economic Interests
- Article 13. Campaign Practices
- Article 15. Penalties



# Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform

## Article 7. Rules of Conduct

- Section 8-13-700. Use of official position or office for financial gain; disclosure of potential conflict of interest.



# Organizational Alignment

- **The Organization's Values**
- **The Individual**



# Organizational Values

Organizational Values are principles, goals, or standards held and accepted by an organization. These values govern the organization's norms or standards for activity. They represent a management philosophy.

**“Values provide a common language for aligning leadership and its people”**

*(Amuso and Giblin, 1997).*



# Strong Ethical Cultures

- Ethical Leadership
- Supervisor Reinforcement of Ethics
- Peer Commitment to Ethics
- Embedded Ethical Values
- Source: 2008 Ethics Resource Center Study





# Principles of Public Service Ethics

- Public Interest
- Objective Judgment
- Accountability
- Democratic Leadership
- Respectability

• Josephson Institute of Ethics, Copyright 1992



# PUBLIC INTEREST

Public servants should treat their office as a public trust, only using the power and resources of public office to advance public interests and not to attain personal benefit or pursue any other private interest incompatible with the public good.

Josephson Institute of Ethics, Copyright 1992



# OBJECTIVE JUDGEMENT

Public servants should employ independent objective judgment in performing their duties, deciding all matters on the merits, free from avoidable conflicts of interest and both real and apparent improper influences.

Josephson Institute of Ethics, Copyright 1992



# ACCOUNTABILITY

Public servants should assure that government is conducted openly, efficiently, equitably, and honorably in a manner that permits the citizenry to make informed judgements and hold government officials accountable.

Josephson Institute of Ethics, Copyright 1992



# DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP

Public servants should honor and respect the principles and spirit of representative democracy and set a positive example of good citizenship by scrupulously observing the letter and spirit of laws and rules.

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# RESPECTABILITY

Public servants should safeguard public confidence in the integrity of government by being honest, fair, caring and respectful and by avoiding creating the appearance of impropriety or whatever might be otherwise unbecoming a public official.

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# ETHICS CHECKLIST

- Is it in compliance with...
- Civil Law
- Institutional Policy
- Rules of the Game
- Family Rules
- Other Rules



# The Difference between Rational Thought and Rationalization

- It's the timing of the decision
- Rational thought leads to a decision
- Rationalization attempts to justify a decision already made





# THE BALANCING ACT





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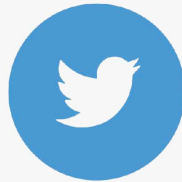
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