



**UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA**

**Carl Vinson
Institute of Government**

**Ethical Leadership and
Public Service**

Eric M. Robinson

Course 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



What is Ethics?



Course 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

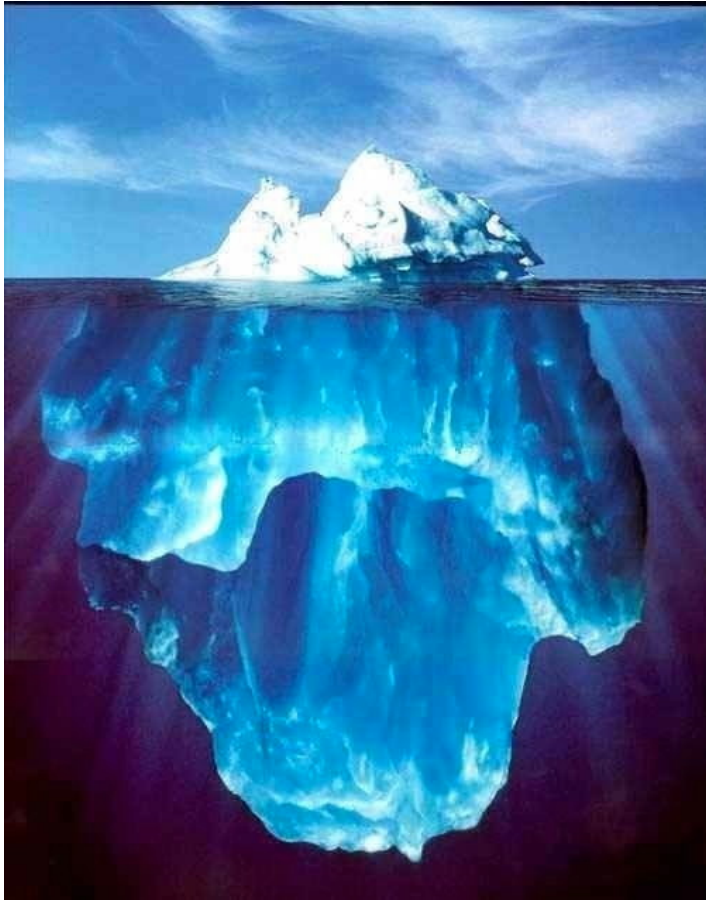


2 Kinds of Ethics Education

- 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



Government Employees Observe Misconduct

- ❑ 52% of federal government employees observed some form of misconduct
- ❑ 57% of state government employees observed some form of misconduct
- ❑ 63% of local government employees observed some form of misconduct

Source: 2008 Ethics Research Center Study



ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER

- ❑ One in 4 employees work in an environment conducive to misconduct (strong pressure to compromise standards, a presence of situations which invite wrongdoing, and a culture where employees' personal values conflict with their values at work).
- ❑ Almost one-third of employees do not report misconduct.
- ❑ More than one-third of government employees believe government does not demonstrate its values through socially responsible decision-making.

Source: 2008 Ethics Research Center Study



Citizens and Government Trust

- ❑ In 2012, Gallup's annual Governance survey showed that 74% of Americans expressed a great deal or a fair amount of trust in their local government.
 - ❑ The same survey found that 65% of Americans expressed a great deal or fair amount of trust in their state government.
 - ❑ In 2009, 69% of Americans expressed a great deal or fair amount of trust in local government and only 51% of Americans expressed a great deal or fair amount of trust in state government.
- Source: 2012 Gallup annual Governance survey



2018 Citizens Trust & Government

- ❑ In 2018, Gallup's annual Governance survey showed that 72% 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 63% 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 2017, 70% of Americans expressed a great deal or a fair amount of trust and confidence in their local government and 63% of Americans expressed a great deal or fair amount of trust and confidence in their state government.

❑ Source: 2018 Gallup annual Governance survey



Federal Government Survey

- ❑ In 2018, Gallup's annual Governance survey showed that 50% 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.
- ❑ The same survey found that 45% 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.
- ❑ In 2017, 52% 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 and 45% of Americans expressed a great deal or fair amount of trust and confidence in our federal government when it comes to handling domestic problem.

❑ Source: 2018 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

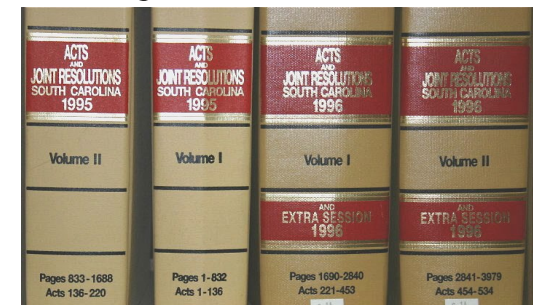
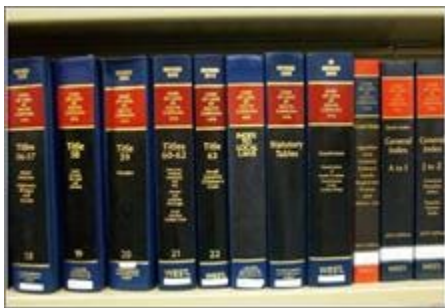


South Carolina Code of Laws Unannotated

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



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



Ethics and Compliance Program

- Written Standards (Code of Conduct)
- Training on Ethics Issues
- Presence of a Helpline for Reporting
- Evaluation of Employees based on Ethical Conduct
- Discipline for Violations
- Resources for Employees with Ethical Questions

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



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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



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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



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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.

Josephson Institute of Ethics, Copyright 1992



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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.

Josephson Institute of Ethics, Copyright 1992



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ETHICS CHECKLIST

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



ETHICS CHECKLIST – Continued

- Is it fair to everyone involved...
- To my family?
- To my friends?
- To my co-workers?
- To my community?
- To those less fortunate than me?
- To others (clients)?



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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THANK YOU!!

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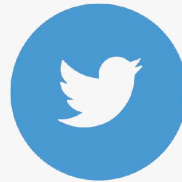


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