



## ETHICS IN GOVERNMENT

Presented by:

Eric M. Robinson, Public Service Associate

[ericr@uga.edu](mailto:ericr@uga.edu)

PROMOTING EXCELLENCE IN GOVERNMENT

## Today's Objectives

- Raise ethical awareness
- Define ethics and its relevance to your government organization
- Explore the ethical decision making process







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## Ethical Styles

- Rule-bound – obedience to law, rules
- Utilitarian – consequences for everyone
- Loyalist – the organization first
- Prudent – our long-term advantage
- Virtuous – character, reputation
- Intuitive – spontaneous judgments
- Empathetic – how must he feel?
- Darwinian – whoever survives is right

Source: Robert C. Solomon and Kristine Hanson, "Ethical Styles" from IT'S GOOD BUSINESS



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## 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



## A Practical Definition

- 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.

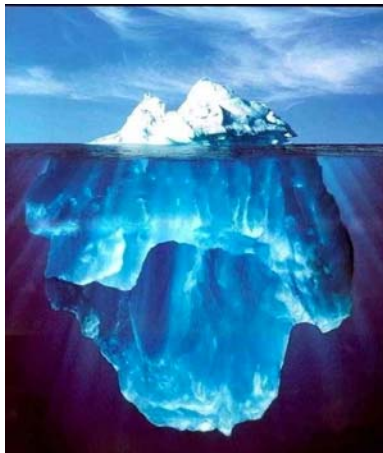
American Society for Quality, "Quirky Quality Dictionary," Second Edition



## Two 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

## 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 and confidence in their local government.
- The same survey found that 65% of Americans expressed a great deal or fair amount of trust and confidence in their state government.
- In 2009, 69% of Americans expressed a great deal or fair amount of trust and confidence 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



## Citizens and Government Trust

- In 2016, Gallup's annual Governance survey showed that 71% of Americans expressed a great deal or a fair amount of trust and confidence in their local government.
- The same survey found that 62% of Americans expressed a great deal or fair amount of trust and confidence in their state government.
- In 2015, 70% of Americans expressed a great deal or fair amount of trust and confidence in local government and 58% of Americans expressed a great deal or fair amount of trust and confidence in state government.

Source: 2016 Gallup annual Governance survey



## If it's "Legal" is it "Ethical"?

- Seven States and the District of Columbia have adopted laws legalizing the recreational use of marijuana. Would it be ethical for a coworker on vacation to one of these locations to partake?
- Is it ethical for organizations and the public to scrutinize employees' social media pages?



## 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.



## The Ethical Decision Making Process

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





## Ethics Case Study

Hazel is a valued, long-term employee. She has been with your organization for 17 years and is a model employee. She's always willing to put in extra time when needed without complaining. She has stood by your side several times in crises. Recently, she has come to you and admitted that for some time she has been "borrowing" money from the petty cash fund and writing false receipts to cover it. It was never much, \$10 or \$15, and she always repaid it. It has bothered her so much that she felt she must confess. Under the personnel policy, her actions are cause for dismissal.



## 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.

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## Current Laws and Policies

- The Georgia Constitution
- The Georgia Code
- The Governor's Executive Order
- Your Government Organization's Ethics Policy



## The Georgia Constitution



All government, of right, originates with the people, is founded upon their will only and is instituted solely for the good of the whole.

Public officers are the trustees and servants of the people and are at all times amenable to them.

Article 1, Section 2, Paragraph 12



## The Georgia Code

### CODE SECTION 45-10-1

- I. Loyalty
- II. Uphold the Constitution, Laws, Regulations
- III. Full Day's Labor
- IV. More Efficient and Economical Ways
- V. Special Favors
- VI. Private Promises
- VII. Engaging in Business with Government
- VIII. Confidential Information
- IX. Expose Corruption
- X. Uphold these Principles



## Governor's Executive Order

- Ethics Officer
- Conflicts of Interest
- Gifts
- Honoraria
- Lobbying
- Fair and Equal Access
- Dual Employment/Board Service
- Unique or Compelling Circumstances



## Organizational Alignment

- The Organization's Values
- The Individual



## 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

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## 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.

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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.

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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 judgments and hold government officials accountable.

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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.

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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



*Continued on next slide*





## Ethics Checklist

- 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



# Questions



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