

Frogs Together Strong



By Rob Casimir

Favorite Things



Bigfrog hurried down the sidewalk to Lilfrog's apartment.

Today was an important day: Lilfrog's first day working for the City of New York.

"I'm so excited to be a public servant," said Lilfrog at the door.

Bigfrog said he was excited that Lilfrog was becoming a public servant, too.

"I think serving the public will be my new favorite thing," said Lilfrog.

"But I thought being a frog was your favorite thing?" asked Bigfrog.

"I think being a New York City public servant might be even better than being a frog!" replied Lilfrog.

Bigfrog told Lilfrog that we shouldn't say anything that we can't take back.

Frogs in Cars



Bigfrog and Lilfrog carpooled to the office.

Lilfrog pointed out the window. "I think I see a parking spot!"

"That is a very nice parking spot," replied Bigfrog. "But there is a NO PARKING sign!"

Lilfrog looked at the sign and thought for a bit.

"What if we pretended that we were on an important City mission and that we need to park in this exact spot – for the mission?"

"That would be a lie!" said Bigfrog. "And a misuse of our City position."

"Why?" asked Lilfrog.

"Well, how would you feel if you saw City employees getting special treatment at your expense?"

"I would be annoyed," said Lilfrog. "And angry at City employees."

"But Lilfrog, we are City employees!"

"Oh," said Lilfrog. "I think I will park somewhere else."

A Gift at the Office



Bigfrog and Lilfrog arrived at the office.

There was a large and expensive-looking gift on Lilfrog's desk.

Lilfrog checked the card. It was from someone called Mr. Vendor. "What a nice gift I have been given on my first day!" he said. "I hope I see Mr. Vendor some time soon, so I can do something nice for him, too!"

"Ribbit," said Bigfrog.

"Maybe I will bake him a cake or help him file his permits faster," said Lilfrog, not listening to Bigfrog. "Or I could teach him to catch flies with his tongue. As a vendor, that could be useful if you are in a meeting and there is a fly."

"That would be unethical," said Bigfrog.

"No, no," assured Lilfrog. "It's the circle of life."

Bigfrog slapped his big green head with his big, webbed hand.

"I mean the gift!" he shouted. "If public servants like us take valuable gifts, people might think we're extra nice or give extra special treatment to anyone who

sends us gifts!"

Lilfrog was confused. "Isn't that just being polite?"

"Sure," said Bigfrog. "But when you're a public servant, it's also unethical!"

"Government ethics can be confusing for a frog," said Lilfrog.

Frog & Frog Confidential



Bigfrog was at his desk. He was typing up an important file when Lilfrog snuck up behind him in a very inconspicuous trench coat.

"Why are you in that very inconspicuous trenchcoat?" Bigfrog asked.

"The commissioner of our agency is about to announce a capital reinvestment plan to fund a series of AI-backed cryptocurrency initiatives," said Lilfrog. "We could invest in the company that manufactures the tensor cores for the graphics processing units used to train these AIs – before anyone else even knows!"

"Hmmm," said Bigfrog. "That doesn't sound fair to all the investors that don't have inside information about the City's confidential plans."

"That's true," said Lilfrog, imagining a five Michelin-star meal of juicy crickets. "But it would make us very rich!"

Bigfrog sighed. "Lilfrog, I think that would be unethical and illegal."

"Even in America?" pleaded Lilfrog, imagining a private jet with "AIR FROGGER" painted on the side.

"Even in America," Bigfrog insisted.

The two sat quietly for a moment.

"How come you're so interested in cryptocurrencies, anyway, Lilfrog?"

"My brain is 2 millimeters in diameter," said Lilfrog.

"Oh," said Bigfrog. "That's right."

Boss Frog



After lunch, Bigfrog bumped into Lilfrog again.

"Good afternoon, Lilfrog!" he said. "What are you up to now?"

"Good afternoon, Bigfrog!" Lilfrog replied. "I am standing in the hallway as a supervisor, letting any subordinates who

walk by know the correct candidate to vote for in the upcoming election!”

Bigfrog knew that wasn't allowed. “I don't think that's allowed,” said Bigfrog.

“Why? I think it is good, in a democracy, to vote for the correct candidate. And I'll die on that hill!” Lilfrog tried to explain more of what he knew about democracy, but Bigfrog interrupted him.

“Well, what happens if someone, maybe your subordinate, wants to vote for a different candidate?” asked Bigfrog.

“Hmmm,” mused Lilfrog. “I would probably hate them and accuse them of destroying our society and our way of life, and then I'd make sure they get all the bad assignments at work. But in a patriotic way.”

“I think this is why the Conflicts of Interest Law doesn't allow supervisors to solicit their staff politically or financially.”

Lilfrog inflated and then deflated his air sacs dejectedly.

“I suppose that makes sense,” said Lilfrog. “But I can still do politics on my own time, right?”

“Of course,” said Bigfrog.

“And I can still yell at people about politics on the internet or on a residential sidewalk in Manhattan?”

“Of course,” repeated Bigfrog.

“Phew!” said Lilfrog.

Outreach



Lilfrog watched Bigfrog microwave his old coffee. “Today I saw a video that said the Conflicts of Interest Board can help solve our ethics issues,” he said.

“That's true,” said Bigfrog. “They have a hotline. If you have a telephone, you can call it by pressing **(212) 437-0707**.”

“I heard all calls are confidential, and they can even give you the advice in writing,” said Lilfrog.

“That's also true,” said Bigfrog.

“I heard it's especially useful if you are moonlighting, like at a second job, and you need to get a waiver for it, because you're a public servant, like us.”

“Yes, true.”

“The video also explained how we aren't allowed to use City resources – like cars or computers or office space, stuff like that – for our own personal reasons.”

“Wow,” said Bigfrog, carefully watching the microwave tick down.

“And it said, it said: I can't be an expert witness against the City!”

"Uh huh," said Bigfrog.

"Or supervise my family."

"Of course," said Bigfrog.

"Or make a compensated appearance as a former public servant at the agency I previously served within one year of my exit date."

Ding! Bigfrog took his coffee from the microwave. "It sounds like you can really learn a lot from those COIB videos," he said.

Lilfrog agreed. "Those guys in the Training Unit really are ready, willing, and able to sacrifice any and all traditional markers of occupational dignity to inform others about the Conflicts of Interest Law."

Bigfrog took a big, froggy sip of his reheated coffee. "Mmmmm," he said. "They sure are."

A Job Well Done



Bigfrog was tucking Lilfrog into bed.

"It was a wonderful first day working for the City," said Lilfrog. "But now I am sad. What will I do with all the hours I can't do my City job?"

"All sorts of things! You could go for a nice walk, or go fishing, or go to one of many secret amphibian-only discotheques hidden in Manhattan, or get a second job, or join a jazz band, or maybe kiss a princess, or spend time with the tadpoles you never see, or volunteer at a community organization – or just [watch more of those COIB Youtube videos](#) you liked so much! If you watch enough of them, you can even form what they call a "parasocial relationship" with some of the characters – which is kind of like a friendship!"

"That doesn't sound very healthy, Bigfrog" said Lilfrog.

"Well, at least you'd learn a lot about Chapter 68," said Bigfrog.

"That's true," said Lilfrog, dozing off.

"And that's good," said Bigfrog.

"That's true too," said Lilfrog.



"Tomorrow will be a good day to work for the City, I think," said Bigfrog, but Lilfrog had already fallen asleep.

Rob Casimir is the Senior Education & Engagement Specialist at the New York City Conflicts of Interest Board.

Recent Enforcement Cases

Misuse of City Resources. A Family Assistant for Students in Temporary Housing (“STH”) at the New York City Department of Education took her two children, who were not STH, on four free excursions intended to enrich the educations of STH: to a performance of the Broadway show “Wicked” and on trips to Washington, D.C., the Rocking Horse Ranch Resort, and Florida, including Disney World, Universal Studios, and Cape Canaveral. After a full hearing, New York City Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (“OATH”) Administrative Law Judge Julia Lee issued a Report and Recommendation recommending a \$7,500 fine, which fine the Board imposed on the now-former Family Assistant. In setting this fine, the Board considered that, while her conduct was egregious, Respondent was a low-level public servant with very little authority, factors also considered by Judge Lee.

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