

NYC CONFLICTS OF INTEREST BOARD JANUARY PUBLIC SERVICE PUZZLER

RIDDLE ME THUS

I once was Assistant Trainee (Class II) Clerk
For a big City agency. Each day at work
At my desk I would help all the vendors with questions
I'd give their bids feedback, comments, suggestions.
To my friends who still work there, I mean no disrespect here
But I knew I could do more if I went private sector.
If you take charge of your life, your success is ensured
So I have become, now, an entrepreneur.



Now six months later, and wouldn't you guess
But I found myself standing at the very same desk
That I had once used! See, I was submitting
A bid for my business to fix some pipe fittings.
I'm sure they'll pick us, I know just what appeals —
Oh look! Here's some mail, with the City's round seal!
Wait, Conflicts of Interest Board? Probable Cause?!
This letter says I might have broken the law!

I've left City service, but now I am scared.
Help me, dear reader! Tell me: how did I err?

Which part of Chapter 68 was violated? Submit your response to contest@coib.nyc.gov by 3 pm on Friday, February 22nd; we'll select one correct entrant to be this month's winner.

MEET LAST MONTH'S WINNER, MICHELE SIMENSKY



What is your City/office title? Assistant Corporation Counsel, Vertical Attorney in Manhattan Tort Division, Law Department

What do you do in your job? I represent the City and its agencies in all sorts of interesting cases. I go to court, take depositions, and meet witnesses frequently. There is always something unexpected popping up.

How long have you been working for the City? I came to the City as a lateral hire from private practice and began in June 2018.

Name a special interest or hobby. I love illustrating and I hope to publish a children's book one day.

What are your favorite things about City service? My favorite thing about City service is the sense of community — we are all here to make where we live a better place, and that is pretty satisfying.

DECEMBER SOLUTION



Marvin' the Meerkat's **New Year's resolutions** presented some serious potential violations of Chapter 68. Let's look at each in turn:

1) **MAKE SOME MONEY** Marvin wants to purchase a food cart to make extra cash on the weekends. He'll secure a startup loan from his supervisor to buy the truck, and print out some fliers on the office copier advertising his delicious fried termites and grubs. **The loan would be a prohibited financial relationship between a superior and subordinate; printing advertising on the copier is a misuse of City resources (and misuse of City time, if it's during work hours).** Marvin should secure capital from other funding sources and design and print his fliers at home.

2) **LOOK OUT FOR HIS FAMILY** Marvin's sister Melissa the Meerkat just graduated from business school and is looking for a job. Marvin will call up some vendors he works with at his City position, and see if any of them are hiring. **This is a misuse of position: the vendors Marvin has power over might feel pressured to interview or hire his sister.** However, if a job is publicly posted, he could encourage Melissa to apply on her own, and even help her with her resume, so long as he takes no direct action with any vendor with whom he works to help her.

3) **GET IN SHAPE** Marvin wants to join a gym, but there are so many to choose from! He'll spend a few minutes at his desk reading online reviews. **This is actually allowed under the City's Acceptable Use Policy, which COIB (like many agencies) has adopted.** Checking out a few gym reviews is minimal (not costly to the City), incidental (brief and doesn't interfere with job responsibilities), and personal (no money to be made, non-political, etc).

4) **ORGANIZE FOR A WORTHY CAUSE** Marvin plans to raise funds for his favorite environmental not-for-profit, JustDeserts. He'll send a personal email to the COIB staff members he is closest to, including some subordinates, asking if they would like to contribute any amount they see fit. **Another misuse of position — the workers who Marvin oversees might feel undue pressure to donate to their supervisor's favorite charity.** Marvin should **never ask subordinates to donate** to his pet causes. Ask friends and family instead!

5) **WORK ON HIS MANNERS** The public loves the great job Marvin does promoting COIB, and sometimes people want to show their gratitude with a little cash bonus. Marvin is going to work on remembering to say "thank you" and accepting their tips gracefully, instead of just taking the shiny coins in his teeth and scampering away. **As a City worker, Marvin is already paid a salary for his work. Any additional "thank you" payment offered by a member of the public is a prohibited gratuity.** Even though he works very hard, Marvin must refuse all tips offered by his adoring public.

Thanks to everyone who submitted a correct response. Marvin wishes you all an ethical 2019!