

WRITTEN IN THE STARS (AND ALSO CHAPTER 68)



By Rob Casimir

I want you to imagine a technology capable of delivering custom-tailored, subject-specific government ethics information to City employees at precisely the time that information is most relevant. Take it one step further: imagine a technology that can go so far as to *predict* a public servant's future ethics concerns, like one of those precog creatures from the Tom Cruise movie *Minority Report*, which I interpret as a film about the efficacy of governments utilizing cutting edge technology and nothing more. Now, stop imagining things altogether and listen up, because this technology? It is available to us *right now* – today.

You see, I used to think stars were nothing more than gravitationally bound accumulations of increasingly heavy fusible elements, but after several weekends doing speed da-

ting in Brooklyn, I've come to learn so much more about their various positions and how those positions govern literally every aspect of our lives. Deployed to great effect by such historical figures as Alexander the Great, Cleopatra, King Hammurabi, Queen Elizabeth, Charles De Gaulle, and even as recently as Ronald Reagan – who was President of the United States (current best country) – the ancient science of **Astrology** reveals information about the future hidden within the seemingly ordinary transit of heavenly bodies.

Is it accurate? Well, the results of my own independent studies indicate astrology is just as accurate and predictive as the most sophisticated ChatGPT output – and the constellation Taurus will never, for example, tell you to make pizza using aviation glue or that

the closest star to the planet Earth is Bass Pro Shops in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. And AI is a \$184-billion dollar industry! Astrology, on the other hand, is completely and totally free to use and so, honestly, at that price, we'd be doing the City a disservice to not even *test* the idea, right?

And so that is what the New York City Conflicts of Interest Board has done. What follows is an actual, good faith attempt to predict the ethics concerns of City employees during the last week of July using only the astrological charts and Chapter 68 of the City Charter. With the sun shifting into the expressive Leo this week, what ethical possibilities and prohibitions will be illuminated for your star sign? Only one way to find out: your actual [Government Ethics Horoscope](#) for the week of July 28th.

GOVT AQUARIUS: You've just *got* to figure it out. With Mercury in Virgo, expect sudden bouts of curiosity and renewed interest in an intellectual endeavor or obligation you thought was beyond your grasp. Whatever the "thing" is, you won't be satisfied until you've turned it over and around and investigated every last nook and cranny – so why not let loose that steely focus onto Chapter 68 of the City Charter? The [City's Conflicts of Interest Law](#) contains all the usual, expected prohibitions (Gifts, Tips, Misuse of City Resources, etc), but dedicated readers will find all sorts of interesting, situation-specific guidance on the Board's [FAQ pages](#). What's a policymaker? What happens if I run for elected office? There's no better time to dig into these topics.

GOVT ARIES: This week is all about passion projects, big dreams, and time for yourself. Have you ever tried kitesurfing? What about subway busking? Is it time to build an esoteric and off-putting obsession with niche mid-century economic theory? I certainly

hope not! But that's the sort of recreational, individualized joy this week is all about – just make sure you aren't using any City resources (like supplies, letterhead, telephone, e-mail, computer, or any equipment), City title, or even other City personnel for your (wonderful, but admittedly) non-City purpose.

GOVT LEO: Home is where the heart is; it's also, in this case, where your most productive week can be found. A family member is quietly considering a change of employment – entering into public service, perhaps? Make sure, before anything, that they know your role as a City employee prevents you from having any involvement in their hiring process. But once that is done, you're well within your rights to send them a few publicly available links from [JobsNYC](#); the City always has room for one more dedicated and ethical public servant!

GOVT GEMINI: The sun shifting into Leo seems to have supercharged your ability to communicate your thoughts, perspectives, and ideas! There's this sudden thirst: you need to get the ideas that are inside your head *outside* your head and into *everyone else's*. Some may find this behavior annoying, but when you're feeling this charged, up there's no better time to call COIB Director of Education and Engagement Alex Kipp at (212) 437-0770 and schedule your agency's next Chapter 68 training! Arguing about the City's ethics law with a harried facilitator is both intellectually stimulating and fun. So dive right in!

GOVT TAURUS: Feeling like you need to strike out on your own? Learn a new skill? Build a new business? I keep hearing about how New York City loves to say *Yes!* to that sort of thing, and the Conflicts of Interest Board is an important part of that process. When you decide to take the leap, and if that

leap involves working for a company that does business with the City, or representing private parties before ANY City agency, give the *Attorney of the Day Hotline* a call at (212) 442-1400 before hopping into that new position. Chapter 68 prohibits City employees from having outside positions with firms that do business with the City of New York (a broad category), and some agencies require permission for all outside jobs.

GOVT CANCER: This week you may feel your focus shifting to matters of personal gain and income, increasing assets and minimizing liabilities. Expect to feel a sense of accomplishment at the work you've done but an increased desire for recognition. You've never been much of a showoff, but the sun's journey through its home sign will inspire you to get your just desserts. Just make sure you don't violate the City's \$50 Valuable Gift Rule or the prohibition on taking anything of value for performing your official duties. Easy!

GOVT VIRGO: It's a week of introspection for Virgo, as Mercury in Virgo fires up your internal critic. Are you keeping confidential City information confidential? Are you even sure you know what information at your agency has been designated as confidential? You're a Virgo – better triple-check it, just to be sure. And if you're ever unsure? Your agency counsel or the brains on the Attorney of the Day Hotline (212-442-1400) can help you out.

GOVT LIBRA: The emergent sun illuminates your relationships and causes a week of grateful reflection. So, take a moment and appreciate all the friendships you've made! The community around you! All the good work your public service has brought about! As public servants, the role we play in our communities is an important one, and this week you'll find yourself appreciating the im-

pact you and other City employees have made on others. Just don't let your desire to help others cross a line – the Misuse of Position section of Chapter 68 is clear that public servants may never use their City positions to benefit themselves, their close family members, or any person or firm with whom they have a business or financial relationship.

GOVT SCORPIO: This week will bring acknowledgement and attention to your work. Face it: you've been putting in great work, and it's only a matter of time before you're finally recognized for it. Better start preparing now: a possible promotion could mean additional conflict of interest considerations – supervisors within a chain of command are prohibited from having any sort of financial arrangement with their subordinates, for example, and they may never solicit them and take any action politically. There are probably *even more* considerations for supervisors, so right now – before your inevitable success – might be a good time to [review Chapter 68](#).

GOVT SAGITTARIUS: Thinking of traveling? Whether for work or pleasure, Sagittarius is on the move this week. Flying somewhere for work? Make sure the accommodations are no more luxurious and the trip is no longer than is necessary to perform your City duties, double-check that you've disclosed the trip to your agency and received permission, and don't forget that any swag bags or goodies should be refused. As for the coffee and little pastries at the event? The stars and Chapter 68 say you can probably eat those like everyone else. Travel is fun!

GOVT PISCES: As the week unfolds, you'll seek increased validation and self-expression through your regimens and daily activities. You'll do self-care: treating yourself to your favorite coffee, swinging by your favorite nail

salon, inviting your Civil War reenactor friends to the second-biggest cigar shop in the Bronx so you can finally get down to brass tacks, whatever that may mean for you and your situation. It's going to be fun! And if you go on CityShare and realize your little treat comes with a [widely available discount for government employees?](#) You are well within your rights! The Valuable Gifts Rule does not apply to widespread promotions, so go out there and enjoy some discounted, legal fun!

GOVT CAPRICORN: You will not be defeated. Not by setbacks in life. Not by missed opportunities or fake friends or the price of Bitcoin. You are the master of your universe, and you'll manifest that reality by defeating this month's Public Service Puzzler, the City of New York's premiere government-ethics-themed puzzle periodical. Don't believe me? Sure. But then explain [why you're staring at the link to the latest Public Service Puzzler right now.](#)

NOTE: It is worth mentioning that I am relatively new to the science of Astrology, so if after next week you look back and don't remember anything close to these predictions happening, just keep looking harder until it makes sense. Maybe you missed it. And to find out more about the sections of Chapter 68 mentioned in these horoscopes, as always, visit: www.nyc.gov/ethics. Excelsior!



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

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Phone: (212) 442-1400
Fax: (212) 437-0705