

THE PUBLIC SERVICE PUZZLER

OCTOBER 2024

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A FRIGHTFUL LOGIC

A spectre is haunting the *Public Service Puzzler* — the spectre of “logic games.” This much is apparent to all who have read this publication over the past few months: that the dread ghost of logic has arrived, over and again, to a once-delightful, sumptuous feast of low-stakes caption contests, cross-words, and word searches.

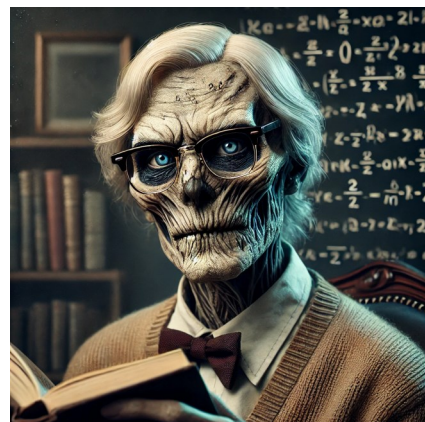
So far gone are the days of sitting with one’s pen and drafting up a funny, municipal ethics-related quotation for an equally municipal ethics-related cartoon that just this past week, a man — a New York City public servant, having met his every obligation under [Chapter 68](#) for almost two decades of service — reported to me that he needed to open *Microsoft Excel* in order to solve the latest *Puzzler* challenge.

I am someone who can sit through nearly two-thirds of the popular 2000s horror film *The Ring* without getting scared, but believe me when I tell you that man’s admission left me shook. Had it really gotten so bad? Clearly, something needed to be done. And so today, on none other than All Hallows’ Eve, we shall exorcize this ghost of logic from the *Public Service Puzzler* once and for all. We will defeat the tyrant logic of this month’s puzzle and, once we do (by [submitting our answers here](#) before the 15th of November), I believe the puzzle that greets us in November will be as refreshing and breezy as a brand new dawn. It might even be cause to *give thanks*, if you know what I mean.*

Anyway, to this month’s brain-breaking enigma!

The Strange Brew

The day each and every New York City Public servant looks forward to all year has arrived: Conflicts of Interest Training Day. You say a little prayer of thanks to the wise supervisor who must have [scheduled such a good date and time](#) for the training by contacting Alex Kipp early, and off you go to the Training Center, ready to learn about your all your favorite topics within the admittedly narrow scope of municipal ethics laws. But there’s a catch: when you arrive and sign your attendance sheet, you aren’t sure where to hand it in! Another trainee points out three lanyard-wearing, facilitator-looking guys standing by two big coffee urns. One is from the COIB, sure, but which one? You know there is also a trainer from the Department of Investigation here, and one Cybersecurity Instructor.



This is an AI recreation of “a zombie who loves logic.” It cost the energy of ten nuclear bombs to create this.

*Thanksgiving. The next *Puzzler* is going to be Thanksgiving themed. It’s going to be like a picture of a turkey arguing with a pilgrim and you’re going to have to write a caption. Like 90% certain on this, just giving you the heads up.

NYC CONFLICTS OF INTEREST BOARD

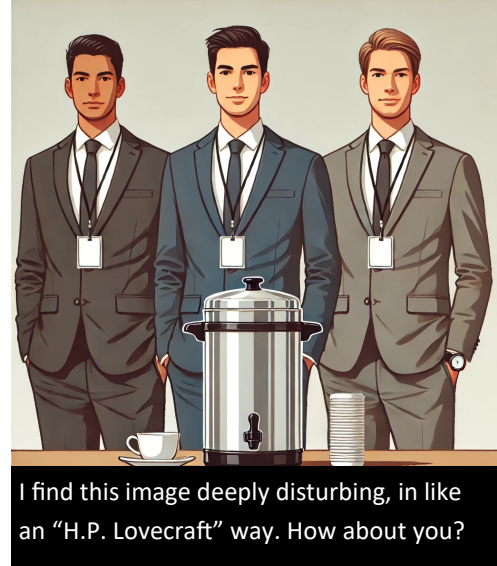
The other trainee explains that it gets worse: due to budget cuts, the usual coffee has been replaced with two flavors of **ACCURSED COFFEE** — one that makes the drinker only tell lies, and another that forces the drinker to tell the truth. (Yes, it's one of those situations.) We know that each lanyard-wearing trainer drank just one cup of coffee, and we know the trainers know which coffee each of them drank. But somehow, this doesn't feel helpful when we approach the trio and ask who the COIB trainer is:

Trainer #1: "Oh, Trainer #2 is not both a lying-coffee drinker and a COIB trainer."

Trainer #2: "Either Trainer #1 drank a lying-coffee or I am not the COIB trainer."

Trainer #3: "The COIB trainer drank a lying-coffee."

You shake your head. If only finding the COIB trainer and turning in your attendance sheet was as clear and readily understandable as the wonderful Frequently Asked Questions resources the COIB makes available on their website. They really do a [great job putting Chapter 68 into plain language](#) over there, you think, before snapping from your reverie to the matter at hand: can you identify the COIB trainer and hand in your attendance sheet? How?



Send in your answers by November 15th and, if selected, you could join ethics luminaries such as **Cindy Chen** from the Department of Transportation — last month's *Puzzler* champion and latest addition to the JONATHAN HOFFMAN AND PETER KOTOGIANNIS HALL OF ETHICS AND EXCELLENCE! Here's how Cindy reached the solution to last month's puzzle, in her own words:

Step 1 (weighting #1): I put 3 coins on each side (total of 6), and then see if they balance. If they do, I know that the forged coin is in the other 6 that I've set aside, and my next rebalancing will focus on those 6 coins instead of the initial 6. If the scale doesn't balance with the original 6, I can stick with those 6.

Step 2 (weighting #2): I now put 2 coins on each side from the 6 coins that I've determined contain the forged coin (4 in total). If the scales balance, I know that the forged coins are among the 2 that I withheld. Alternatively, if the scales don't balance, I know that the forged coins are among the 4 on the scale.

Step 3 (marker): If the forged coin is among the 4 placed on the scale, I write in red marker an "L" or "H". I write "L" on the coins that are lighter, and an "H" on the ones that are heavier. This helps me identify that among the 2 "L" coins, one of them is forged.

Step 4 (weighting #3): If I know the forged coins are among the 2 coins I had withheld (because the scales balanced in the second round with the 4 other coins), then I put 1 coin in each (from the remaining 2) and see which one is lighter, and the lighter one is my forged coin. Tada!

Tada, indeed, Cindy! And good luck to everyone on this month's Public Service Puzzler!

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