

THE PUBLIC SERVICE PUZZLER

SEPTEMBER 2021

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CAPTION CONTEST



You know the drill — give us a **funny, ethics-related caption** for this image! Submit your caption to contest@coib.nyc.gov by Wednesday, September 29th. We'll feature our favorite in next month's *Public Service Puzzler*.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, COIB! SOLUTION

Marvin shouldn't accept the following birthday gifts:

M: DVD box set from a group of subordinates

Supervisors can't accept gifts worth more than \$10 from their subordinates (even group gifts) because of the official power they have over those subordinates

I: Free paper delivery for providing a reporter with requested documents

Gratuities (any good, service, or favor offered just for doing one's City job) are prohibited, in any amount

S: Gold watch from a distant acquaintance who now works for a City vendor

A gift worth \$50 or more from a City vendor (the social exception wouldn't apply to such an extravagant gift from a long-lost "friend" who's clearly angling for favors)

U: \$40 gift card from a member of the public who's a fan of [COIB Twitter](#)

Another gratuity (see above)

S: Rare fountain pen from a prospective City vendor

The \$50 rule also covers gifts from those seeking to do business with the City

NYC CONFLICTS OF INTEREST BOARD

E: Cash to cover lunch (plus a birthday cake!) from a vendor over whose contract Marvin has oversight
Certainly more than \$50 (if the cake is any good); likely also a **Misuse of Position** to accept, given the fact that Marvin has oversight over this vendor's City business

These gifts would likely be fine for Marvin to accept:

C: Tickets to a Broadway show from Marvin's grandfather Timon
Marvin can accept a birthday gift from his grandfather, even though Timon happens to work for The Broadway League (a City vendor), so long as the gift is **appropriate to the occasion** and **not because of, or liable to affect, Marvin's City duties — even in appearance**

A: Swag pens, calendar, and water bottle from a COIB vendor
Promotional swag has little or no market value and is okay to accept

T: Expensive briefcase from Marvin's supervisor
City workers may accept gifts from a supervisor (or non-subordinate co-worker) in any amount

The prohibited gifts spell **MISUSE** - when a public servant uses their City position to affect the interests of themselves, a close family member, or a business associate. A public servant's acceptance of a gift (even unsolicited) can often constitute a Misuse of Position. (The non-prohibited gifts spell **CAT**, which has nothing to do with the conflicts of interest law, but cats sure are cute.) For more, check out the [Gifts FAQ](#).

MEET HEATHER MURAKAMI

What is your City/office title? Private Secretary, Honolulu Ethics Commission — but if I could, I'd have business cards that read "Workflow Rockstar."

What do you do in your job? A little bit of this and that! A bit of fiscal, a bit of HR, legislative drafting, review, revision, and creation of operating procedures.

How long have you been working for the City of Honolulu? 18+ years, not all continuous. I have only been with the Ethics Commission for six months. The bulk of my City service has been with the City Council.

Name a special interest or hobby (and why you enjoy it) Outrigger canoe paddling – Official Team Sport of the State of Hawaii. I can do it pretty much forever! Children as young as 7 years old and seniors 80+ years old paddle and COMPETE in regattas (like track events, ¼-1½ miles) and distance races (like cross-country events, 6-40+ miles). The field of play is the ocean, and our ocean (the Pacific) is pretty!

If you could work any other job, what would it be, and why? Color Namer, like for paint or yarn. How many ways can you say light green? New grass, cool cucumber, celadon, celery, slice o' lime. Fun, right?

How has your agency and/or job changed in the wake of COVID-19? There is more work from home throughout the City, though the majority of City workers still come into the office. In the Ethics Commission office, most of the staff work from home at least 3 days a week.

