

THE PUBLIC SERVICE PUZZLER

SEPTEMBER 2025

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AROUND THE WORLD (oF AMERICA)

There are many ethics boards in the United States, but the **New York City Conflicts of Interest Board** is the best one. This is not something that is all that hotly debated anymore: I mean, have you looked at [Chapter 68 of the New York City Charter](#) lately? (Please do.) That's where we keep the Conflicts of Interest Law, and [even a quick perusal](#) will reveal a series of carefully considered prohibitions that brilliantly communicate our municipal values to the public. Frankly, other ethics boards can't compete.

Now, some would say that states and municipalities develop their own ethics laws based on the conditions of their particular jurisdiction and the needs of their citizenry. These people would sell you the Brooklyn Bridge if they could; they are what the Ancient Greeks would call "sophists." That said, I will admit that right now some keen-eyed and ethical *Puzzler* readers might be thinking: "It seems like a little bit of a conflict of interest to evaluate the relative strengths of different ethics boards when you represent one of the ethics boards, doesn't it?" It's a great question, but not what you should be focusing on right now. What you should be focusing on is this:

Where was this picture taken? It's hard to say, but you can just tell they make their former public servants endure a two-year ban on compensated appearances at their former agency. For [most New Yorkers](#), of course, it's one year. (As it should be.)



NYC CONFLICTS OF INTEREST BOARD



What about this one? It's a striking location, but unlike COIB and its strict [\\$50 Valuable Gift Rule](#), this place allows City employees to accept up to \$630 worth of gifts per calendar year from any single source. Profligate!



It's a beautiful lighthouse, but can you believe the public servants at this location are only required to attend conflicts of interest training once every three years — and elected officials only once every four years! Here in New York [we require training every two years](#), which is the correct amount of time between trainings.

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Fun fact: the fanboated jurisdiction above has strict laws regarding nepotism. They also have an exception where the rules do not apply to “persons employed in violation of this rule continuously since April 1, 1980.” There’s gotta be a story there, right?



In this jurisdiction, the Executive Director of the ethics board could commit a crime and still hold their government position, provided the crimes of the Executive Director of the ethics board do not “imply moral turpitude.” The City of New York, uh, doesn’t really have a comparable carveout. But we do have [this cool video](#) the Education Unit made.

So, did you figure out the various locations? If so, [submit your five answers by October 15th](#) — **being as specific as you possibly can** — as this month’s winner will **NOT** be chosen at random. Usually, as with last month’s winner, **Kevin Shulman from the Department of Environmental Protection**, the winning selection is chosen at random from among correct submissions. That is not

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how we will choose a winner this time. This time, I will measure the total, aggregate amount of miles your guesses are off from the precise location, and the person with the most precise guesses will be the big winner, joining Mr. Shulman in **THE JONATHAN HOFFMAN + PETER KONTOGIANNIS HALL OF ETHICS AND EXCELLENCE**. Finally: Meritocracy!

LAST MONTH'S ANSWERS by Kevin Shulman (DEP)

“Challenge 1: Switch doors, as you had a $\frac{1}{3}$ chance of being correct on your initial guess and therefore switching gives you a $\frac{2}{3}$ chance of being correct.

Challenge 2: Start by lighting one rope at both ends and the other rope at one end. The first rope will be completely burned after 30 minutes. The second rope has 30 minutes left on it, so if you light the other end as soon as the first rope finishes burning, it will half the remaining time, and the second rope will fully burn after 15 more minutes. When that rope is burned, 45 minutes have passed.

Challenge 3: Let's number the pirates 1 through 5, with 1 being the most senior and 5 the least senior. The distribution will then be as follows:

1: 98 coins
2: 0 coins
3: 1 coin
4: 0 coins
5: 1 coin

To explain why this vote will pass we can work backwards. Supposing all previous votes have failed and only 4 and 5 remain, anything 4 proposes is guaranteed to pass (as the proposer would always vote yes, and ties go to yes), so the following distribution would be the result:

4: 100 coins
5: 0 coins

To prevent this outcome, 5 would accept a proposal which gives them any number of coins. So if 3, 4 and 5 remain, 3 could propose the following:

3: 99 coins
4: 0 coins
5: 1 coin

In order to prevent this outcome, 4 would accept a proposal which gives them any number of coins, and would vote yes along with 2 on the following proposal:

2: 99 coins
3: 0 coins
4: 1 coin
5: 0 coins

Therefore, 3 and 5 would both have to vote yes on any proposal 1 makes that gives them even a single coin in order to prevent this outcome. And so, 1's proposal of

1: 98 coins
2: 0 coins
3: 1 coin
4: 0 coins
5: 1 coin

Will pass 3 votes to 2.”

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THE JONATHAN HOFFMAN + PETER KONTOGIANNIS

HALL OF ETHICS AND EXCELLENCE

LUKE SZABADOS – BUILDINGS

AMY HOM – DFTA

ELISABETH TOPALTZAS – DORIS

CHRISTOPHER LYNCH – LAW DEPT

HUNTER IGOE – LAW DEPT

HEATHER MURAKAMI – HONOLULU ETHICS COMMISSION

MELISSA HESTER – ACS

MARY LANE – FINANCE

KATIE MILLER – TIG

EVA GAMBINO – FINANCE

TOBY SINGER – DEP

ROBERT ROLANDI – FINANCE

JAMES TOBACK – OCME

FLORENCE MALLETTE – FINANCE

SHAWNORA GULLEY – BUILDINGS

MELINDA CALDERON – OCME

IVAN SANTIAGO – DSS

WILLIAM FLETCHER – NYPD

STYLIANI KARPADAKIS – OCME

BERNARD BRAUN – LAW DEPT

NIGEL C.O. MANUEL – BUILDINGS

MICHELE SIMENSKY – LAW DEPT

NANCY SULTAN-IORMIL – BUILDINGS

SHIVAJEET CHAKRABORTY – TIG

CHARLOTTE YIH – COMPTROLLER

JONATHAN HOFFMAN – DEP

MICHAEL GREENE – DSS

JACK SHVARTS – EDUCATION

PETER FAHERTY – DOC

GARFIELD S. SCARDER – SCA

SARAH ROBERSON – PARKS

KIMFA CARRINGTON – DOT

VINCENT RIVELLESE – BRONX DA

YVONNE CHOW – DSNY

SIMONE KING – DOT

ALEXANDER YELLEN – NYCHA

LISA BRANDQUIST – FDNY

KELIAN STANNER – PARKS

PUI CHING – SBS

SANDRA COLLYMORE – FINANCE

JAMES DAVIE JR. – BUILDINGS

ROLANDA OSBOURNE – FINANCE

EUJEAN PARK – SBS

CHRIS K. PAPA – ACS

KATHY TUZNIK – DDC

MONICA DOYLE – FINANCE

DIANA HERRERA – FISA-OPA

MARIE SAMPLES – OCME

LAURA GODFREY – DCA

JOHN RAYALI – FINANCE

TORREY FISHMAN – MOIA

MICHAEL LEVARIO – APPOINTMENTS

PETER KONTOGIANNIS – DEP

EUGENE MASSEY (2X) – DOHMH

CINDY CHEN – DOT

VALERIE WALD – EDUCATION

NOWSHIN FARAH – CB17 BROOKLYN

KEVIN SHULMAN – DEP