

THE PUBLIC SERVICE PUZZLER

OCTOBER 2025

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AROUND THE WORLD (of AMERICA): AGAIN

Wow! Last month we asked City employees if they could identify locations based only on a single picture and a fact about the ethics board in charge of that area, and — boy, oh boy — did we get a response. With so many public servants submitting answers, last month's competition was as close as it's ever been, with **Johanna Bjorken** winning the ultimate prize (figurative and literal immortality in the **JONATHAN HOFFMAN + PETER KONTOGIANNIS HALL OF ETHICS AND EXCELLENCE**) *by a margin of just a few feet*.

It wasn't enough, it seems, to simply know the city or state in the picture — some public servants were able to name the exact coordinates where the photographer was standing. Incredible! With all due respect to other municipalities, NYC really does have the most impressive public servants in the world. Also, the smartest. And hardest working. And while we're at it? Handsomest. (And if that assessment sounds like a bit of a conflict of interest — good news! — you're reading the right newsletter.)

Before we get to this month's challenge, let's review the answers from last month:



Elfreth's Alley
Philadelphia,
Pennsylvania

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La Brea Tar Pits,
Los Angeles,
California



Boom Island Lighthouse,
Minneapolis,
Minnesota



Manchac Swamp,
New Orleans,
Louisiana



La Placita de Santurce,
San Juan,
Puerto Rico

NYC CONFLICTS OF INTEREST BOARD

Tricky, eh? But enough of you were able to name all five locations, so this month we're going to make things a little more difficult. Just like last time, we'll show you a picture and tell you a little bit about the area, then it's on you to identify the location of each picture in as much detail as possible and [submit your answer by November 15th](#). Whoever gets closest will be, once more, our winner. So without further adieu:



This location is, um, not at the bottom of the North Atlantic. Which is confusing, given what the above image appears to depict. But I'll tell you what's not confusing: nepotism rules in this state. That's because this state provided a helpful flow chart. There's literally no excuse now for not knowing about the restrictions on promoting or supervising a 4th-degree consanguineal connection in this state. Sorry, grandnieces and great-great grandfathers!

Nepotism Chart



NYC CONFLICTS OF INTEREST BOARD



Well, this looks like a fun location! I'd bet the ethics board for this location promulgates rules like "never waste a lime" and "don't surf a wave if a local's already on it." But then I'd lose my bet. This ethics board is actually quite strict, going so far as prohibiting "public employees, local government attorneys, *and their spouses and minor children* from accepting any compensation, payment, or thing of value" when they know or could suspect that the gift-giver wishes to influence the public servant's official action.

Ladies and gentlemen, this location is for the birds!

(Complaints about this joke may be addressed to my supervisor [here.](#))

It is not, however, for government ethicists, as this

location is governed by no state ethics board. How is that possible, you ask? When you figure out this location, it'll make a lot more sense.



NYC CONFLICTS OF INTEREST BOARD

Here in New York City, of course, we know there's an easy waiver process (available with one-click [right on our website!](#)) that makes getting permission for your second jobs simple. The ethics board



in this jurisdiction makes things a little trickier: you both have to disclose outside jobs, and you also have to disclose any volunteer work you do that involves being given a snack. So if you volunteer to clean up beaches, fine, but do not accept a ride or a sandwich from the organizers!



Last one: back in the old days, there weren't any ethics boards, so you kind of had to wing it. Nowadays, you can just call (212) 437-0707 for the [Attorney of the Day Hotline](#) at COIB.

This location was made famous by a man who didn't have access to the hotline and so acted by his own code of ethics. Didn't work out great in the short term, but you can't argue with the long-term results. Got the answer? Then go ahead and [win this month's Puzzler!](#)

NYC CONFLICTS OF INTEREST BOARD

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 – TLO

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-LORMIL – BUILDINGS

SHIVAJEET CHAKRABORTY – TLO

CHARLOTTE YIH – COMPTROLLER

JONATHAN HOFFMAN – DEP

MICHAEL GREENE – DSS

JACK SHVARTS – EDUCATION

PETER FAHERTY – DOC

JOHANNA BJORKEN – EDUCATION

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