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“To ethics or not to ethics...that is the question.”



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President Obama signed into law an Executive Order outlining his expectations of each appointee in every executive agency–

Excerpts:

“Section 1. Ethics Pledge. Every appointee in every executive agency appointed on or after January 20, 2009, shall sign, and upon signing shall be contractually committed to, the following pledge upon becoming an appointee:”

"As a condition, and in consideration, of my employment in the United States Government in a position invested with the public trust, I commit myself to the following obligations, which I understand are binding on me and are enforceable under law:”

[The order addresses: Gift bans, post–employment restrictions (during and leaving government service) and one’s commitment to make hiring decisions based on the candidate’s qualifications, competence and experience.]

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Secretary Salazar issued a memorandum, dated January 26, 2009, echoing President Obama's commitment to high ethical standards.

Excerpts:

"I am confident that employees at the Department of the Interior aspire to the same level of personal and professional integrity in the pursuit of our remarkable and special missions. I expect all employees—both career and political—to adhere to all ethics laws, regulations, and guidelines applicable to employees of the Department of the Interior."

"The American people whom we all serve have a right to expect that all employees of the Department place loyalty to the Constitution, public laws, and applicable ethical policies and principles above private gain. We fulfill this trust by adhering to our own standards of personal and professional integrity as well as specific ethical regulations, and by being fully accountable for our conduct."

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What is ethics?

10 Minutes.



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Ethics is–

The discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethics>)

The rules of conduct recognized in respect to a particular class of human actions or a particular group, culture, etc.: medical ethics; Christian ethics. (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/ethics>)

The study of the general nature of morals and of the specific moral choices to be made by a person; moral philosophy (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/ethics>)

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Choices

Morals

Obligation

Good and Bad

Good and Bad

Rules of Conduct

Morals

Choices

Obligation

Morals

Rules of Conduct

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Operational Definition

Ethics is a set of rules designed to assist employees make good decisions or choices in the performance of their BLM assigned duties and responsibilities, in order to carry out the mission of the Agency in a manner that does not call into question the integrity or the delivery of BLM programs and services.



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Why do we have ethics laws and principles?

“To ensure that every citizen can have complete confidence in the integrity of the Federal Government...”

“Public service is a public trust. Each employee has the responsibility to the United States Government and its citizens to place loyalty to the Constitution, laws and ethical principles above private gain.”

(Taken from *Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, Part 2635.101 (a)*)

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The *Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch* provide guidance and assistance for employees in the areas of:

Gifts from Outside Sources	(Subpart B)
Gifts Between Employees	(Subpart C)
Conflicting Financial Interests	(Subpart D)
Impartiality in Performing Official Duties	(Subpart E)
Seeking Other Employment	(Subpart F)
Misuse of Position	(Subpart G)
Outside Activities	(Subpart H)

“You have to be committed to your own betterment.” (Popi)

Rules won't stop an individual if he or she already determined to break them.

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Question: What does it take to have a strong ethics program? Eliminate the falsehoods and fables that surround ethics and achieve understanding.

True or False.

- You have to be nice to be ethical.
- Ethics is only for the weak.
- Ethics is only for the morally fit.

- Ethics rules apply to me only Monday through Friday.
- Ethics rules and principles don't apply to me once I leave Federal service.
- Ethics rules and principles are common sense.
- People who are honest don't need ethics rules.

- I can participate personally and substantially in a particular matter for the BLM, even if my outside, non-Federal employer has an interest in the matter.
- I can participate personally and substantially in a particular matter for the BLM, even if an organization that I am active in has an interest in the matter.

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Question: What does it take to have a strong ethics program?

The Assistant Ethics Counselors (AECs) that I have spoken to have shared the following:

“From my perspective, Ethics Reps would benefit by receiving ongoing training and updates concerning recurring topics or trends. Also, state or regional training would be beneficial to those working in the trenches.”

“These outside activity and work requests are the main workload for my ethics responsibilities. Some guidance on how to approach them in a methodical manner would help.”

“I 'd really appreciate some written guidance on the proper functioning of employee associations. They have much leeway and I feel that ethics counselors have little guidance...”

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The Assistant Ethics Counselors that I have spoken to have shared the following: (Continued)

“What would help if all or the most critical situations and questions could be posted on the website so we could learn from others experience... If we could come up with a fun, informational training module that would provide our employees with the basics and also meet the supervisor requirement, I feel that would be beneficial.”

“I think more staff dedicated to nothing but ethics and the establishment of full-fledged ethics office would ... strength[en] the ethics program and give it a firmer hold within the bureau (it might be taken more seriously)”

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Vision

Your roles as HRO and C-C-I

Commitment

Consistency

Investment

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Vision

The Role of the HROs and Commitment-C-I

Commitment – “If you aren't going all the way, why go at all?” Joe Namath

Strategy – Your greatest resource is your existing AEC. Make a commitment to allow your AEC to work on ethics matters about 35% of time (or more).



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Vision

The Role of the HROs and C-Consistency-I

Consistency – “Ethics is a journey.” C. Butcher

Strategy – Build the knowledge base of the existing AECs.

There is no such thing as an overnight ethics wonder!



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Vision

The Role of the HROs and C-C-Investment

Investment – “You can only get back what you put in.”

Strategy – Devote the necessary resources to your AECs like time, materials, and personnel (assistance).



“You can always tell where your resources are being devoted because those areas will be the most fruitful.”

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Vision

BLM Ethics Program Vision – My Goal

- Develop Useful Tools for Assistant Ethics Counselors (Web based)
 - Training modules in collaboration with the National Training Center
 - Presentations (Usable, Teachable, Adaptable)
 - Advisory Opinions (Redacted)

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Vision

BLM Ethics Program Vision – My Goal (Continued)

- Develop Useful Tools for Assistant Ethics Counselors (Web based)
 - Resource Materials (Online Library)
 - Outside Employment Forms/Procedures (Develop Standard Operating Procedures)
 - Standards of Ethical Conduct
 - Supplemental Regulations
 - Non-Federal Travel Assistance Forms and Guidance
 - OGE Form 450 (Confidential Financial Disclosure Form)
 - SF278 Form (Public Financial Disclosure Report Form)
- Develop new employee ethics training modules (with NTC)
- Develop a post-employment informational packet for retiring/exiting employees

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Vision

The Department of the Interior, Departmental Ethics Office is sponsoring ethics training in Denver, Colorado for AECs, June 8–12, 2009. Contact Margaret A. Triebisch, Department of the Interior, Ethics Office, 1849 C Street, NW, Room 4251 Washington, DC 20240 (202) 208–3387

Office of Government Ethics provides free training in Washington, D.C. as well around the country. Check out their calendar of events at www.oge.gov. U.S. Office of Government Ethics, 1201 New York Avenue, NW., Suite 500, Washington, DC 20005

BLM AEC Training (for new and existing AECs)
June 17, 2009, September 16, 2009, and December 16, 2009

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“If you continue to do what you have always done, you will continue to get what you’ve always got.”