WHAT DOES “PUBLIC INTEREST” MEAN?

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June 24, 2011 – Point Clear, AL
Dr. Raymond Johnson, CPA

Ethics and Strategic Professional Issues Committee

• Committee Co-Chairs
  • Rick David, CPA
  • Gaylen Hansen, CPA
• Public Interest Subcommittee
  • Raymond Johnson, CPA, Subcommittee Chair
  • Gary Forte, Public Member
  • Chad Singletary, CPA
  • Cecil Wood, Public Member
Assumptions

1. A profession is different from an occupation.
2. As professionals, CPAs have an obligation to behave in accordance with a “social contract” with the public that transcends any employment relationship with a client or an employer.
3. For CPAs in CPA firms, there is an identifiable public that has an interest in a CPA’s work that may differ from engagement to engagement.
4. Every CPA will have times in his or her career when they have to balance their firm’s profitability, with a responsibility to a client, with a differing responsibility to the public.

Key Questions

• As a profession, have we engrained a thought process that helps CPAs identify conflicts of interest?
• What is that thought process like?
Key Questions

- How important is the “public interest” in the average culture within CPA firms?
- Does firm size affect the view/consideration of the “public interest?”

Key Questions

- How important is the “public interest” in the culture for CPAs in industry?
- Do CPAs in industry have the support and tools to recognize conflicts of interest and act in the public interest?
Key Questions

• Is the public well served when CPAs conclude that, if it’s legal, it’s ethical?

Key Questions

• Are there steps that NASBA should take to heighten the awareness of the “public interest” in the work that CPAs do?