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Public Duty: Sworn Testimony of Big Four Audit Partner:

- A. Why is "Public" inserted between "Certified" and "Accountant," is that [the question?] -- I don't know that there's any definition in the accounting literature related to "public." Certified Public Accountant, as I mentioned earlier, is a designation from the AICPA based on meeting those criteria, so I don't know that "public" has any particular meaning today....**
- Q. So as of today, you don't know what "public" means in that phrase; right?**
- A. I don't know.**

Definition of Public

Article II, the Public Interest, ET Section 53:

"The accounting profession's public consists of clients, credit grantors, governments, employers, investors, the business and financial community, and others who rely on the objectivity and integrity of certified public accountants to maintain the orderly functioning of commerce."

Sworn Testimony of Big Firm Audit Partner:

Q. As an independent certified public accountant, do you understand that you have any responsibility to the public?

A. I'm not sure I understand what do you mean by any responsibility to the public? I mean I always viewed myself as being responsible to myself, which is to do a good job. And that would just protect me....

Sworn Testimony of Big Firm Audit Partner:

Q. Do you owe a duty to the public?

A. I owe a duty to do my audits in conformity with generally accepted accounting standards. That is my duty.

Q. Who do you owe that duty to besides yourself and the firm?

A. I think the firm and myself are it.

ET Section 53 - Article II The Public Interest

Members should accept the obligation to act in a way that will serve the public interest, honor the public trust, and demonstrate commitment to professionalism.

.01

A distinguishing mark of a profession is acceptance of its responsibility to the public. The accounting profession's public consists of clients, credit grantors, governments, employers, investors, the business and financial community, and others who rely on the objectivity and integrity of certified public accountants to maintain the orderly functioning of commerce. This reliance imposes a public interest responsibility on certified public accountants. The public interest is defined as the collective well-being of the community of people and institutions the profession serves.

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In discharging their professional responsibilities, members may encounter conflicting pressures from among each of those groups. In resolving those conflicts, members should act with integrity, guided by the precept that when members fulfill their responsibility to the public, clients' and employers' interests are best served.

.03

Those who rely on certified public accountants expect them to discharge their responsibilities with integrity, objectivity, due professional care, and a genuine interest in serving the public. They are expected to provide quality services, enter into fee arrangements, and offer a range of services—all in a manner that demonstrates a level of professionalism consistent with these Principles of the Code of Professional Conduct.

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All who accept membership in the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants commit themselves to honor the public trust. In return for the faith that the public reposes in them, members should seek continually to demonstrate their dedication to professional excellence.