



The Lost Concept of a Public Servant

[Bruce Bialosky](#) - January 14th, 2013

This is the second in a series on [unions in America](#).

Public Servant is defined in Webster's dictionary as a government official or employee. When I was growing up that perception was accepted on a near-universal basis. Christopher Stevens, our deceased Libyan Ambassador, would fulfill that role in most people's eyes. Certainly members of the military are truly public servants. But because of public employee unions, our former public servants are really at odds with the public.

We have felt that our public employees were against us for a long time as they have used their unionized power to collect massive dues -- through automatic payroll deductions -- to elect pro-union candidates that turn around and give them outsized compensation packages. This has been well-documented in this column and through others in the media, including think tanks like CATO and the Heritage Foundation. Though your state may not allow public employees to unionize, 75% of the states do allow it. Additionally, as of 2009, there are more members of unions amongst our public employees than there are in the private sector. The fact that our public employees are at cross interests to the public is regularly displayed.

This was acutely brought to my attention when I recently went to dinner at a local restaurant. The meters which used to run until 6 P.M. now clock out at 8 P.M. solely to derive more revenue to feed the monster. I arrived at 6:49 P.M. and fed the meter for an hour despite the fact that my wife and I rarely take more than 45 minutes at this dinner spot. As we were wrapping up our dinner some friends walked in and I decided to be cordial and chat with them for a few minutes knowing I was risking a parking ticket in the waning minutes before free parking. Sure enough 4 minutes after my meter expired a parking ticket was delivered. Ok, but it was for \$64. \$64? All I could think of was that our public employees were doing everything to gin up revenue (and at ridiculous amounts) to cover their own excessive salaries.

Authors have documented the dangers of having laws that allow public employees to confiscate private property during drug investigations or other matters and utilize the

proceeds from sale of that property for their own budget. This column has documented how states have moved to take for the public coffers the proceeds of unused gift cards sold by private companies. We have also documented how states have taken private property for their own from unclaimed bank accounts or safe deposit boxes often without properly contacting the true owners.

The point is that there has been a loss of civility because our public employees are now more interested in us as targets for feeding the public coffers than being public servants. **(You probably have many of your own stories which we would love to hear.)** But if there was any doubt in your mind, read the following story told to me by a friend and you will be floored.

He was leaving a post office when he felt a sharp pain down his arm and shortness of breath. He had enough understanding to realize he might be having a heart attack. He was one-half mile from a major hospital and decided he would head straight there. After waiting for traffic to clear he made a U-turn and began heading to the hospital, but he was stopped by a police car. When the officer came over to him, the suffering soul informed the officer he thought he was experiencing a heart attack. He asked the officer to drive him to the hospital knowing that the first minutes of a heart attack can be crucial to survival. The officer spoke only of the poor fellow's U-turn. When my friend insisted his life was in danger, the policeman called for paramedics. As the paramedics were going through their procedures, the officer stood there and wrote the patient a traffic ticket and handed it to him. The paramedics were stupefied.

What happened to civility? What happened to public servants? What happened to common decency? We don't believe these incidents are isolated. We believe they happen every day - multiple times a day. Whether it is regarding filings for permits, sales taxes collections or interactions like my friend, you have to wonder what these people are thinking. We, the public, are hard pressed for monies and feel overtaxed. But our public employees, who make more on average in salaries and benefits than the general public, want to get their bite of the apple no matter what. Yes, our interests are at crosscurrents.

The battle continues. After this column was completed, we stopped in front of a U.S. mailbox. With the car still running we exited the car, put the mail in the box and got back in the car. The entire process took fifteen seconds - no joke. As we got back in the car a parking meter person rode up on a bike and started to issue a parking ticket. We called the Mayor of the City of West Hollywood to see if this is what he thought the mission of his city was in regards to his taxpayers.

That will be answered soon, but it is clear that common courtesy and civility are gone. We are largely at war with our own employees. They are certainly no longer public servants. That term has become passé. We live in a coarse culture where everyone is out for themselves.