

Real World Graduation: Question 89: Cabinet Confirmation

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Question 89

The governor of a certain state desired to appoint a certain man to a position in his Cabinet. It is very important that this person be confirmed by the state senate, because giving this particular person the appointment will serve to unite their political party. The prospective appointee has worked as a lobbyist and used his connections within the state government to influence policy. He also operates a political action committee (PAC), taking in donations from contributors and distributing them to other activist groups so they will have funds to pursue their agendas. He is rumored to have many connections to foreign interests, to some domestic corporations and activist groups that routinely seek special favors from the state government. Some in the media and many citizens have claimed that the candidate cannot be impartial in carrying out his duties if appointed. In order to avoid the negative publicity, the governor and candidate hold a joint news conference wherein the candidate promises full disclosure of his financial and political ties. What is likely to happen next?

- a) The candidate will set up a public-access website and list all the contacts, working relationships, and financial transactions of his PAC over the past twenty years.
- b) The candidate will provide a list of all the contacts, working relationships, and financial transactions of his PAC over the past twenty years to the media that has been most vocal in demanding it, which they may review and publish as desired.
- c) The candidate will hold a series of "town meetings" with all the relevant data on contacts, working relationships, and financial transactions of his PAC for the past twenty years, and answer any questions the public may have.
- d) The candidate will send full documentation to all interested parties, which will contain all the relevant data on contacts, working relationships, and financial transactions of the PAC over the past twenty years.
- e) The candidate will do at least two of the options cited in a) through d) in the interest of honest government.

Answer to Question 89

This is a trick question. None of the suggested answers will occur. "Full disclosure" in this context means that the candidate will provide only as much information as is necessary to secure the confirmation by the Senate. The governor and Senate leaders will first count the number of votes the candidate already will receive without disclosing anything. Then, they will decide what information will satisfy whatever number of Senators whose votes they need; they will pick and choose the least amount to be disclosed in order to get those votes. The data will then be disclosed secretly only to those Senate members. Those Senate members will state that they are satisfied with the information provided, and the candidate will then be confirmed.

Did you actually think a candidate for an appointed office would actually provide the public (taxpayers) with this kind of information? That is not in their interest, and they will do whatever is necessary to avoid it. The candidate will forego the office and withdraw his nomination before he allows any of this kind of data to be released publicly.