

## **Civil Engineering: Ethics and Public Policy**

Daniel O. Wong, Ph.D., P.E.<sup>1</sup>  
Director, Texas Board of Professional Engineers  
CEO, Tolunay-Wong Engineers  
Houston, Texas.

### **Abstract**

Civil Engineer has always been engaged in projects that relate intimately to public use and public safety. The ethics of Civil Engineer becomes paramount as the health, safety, and welfare of the public depend on the Civil Engineer's performance. License and enforcement by the State Board of Professional Engineers are good measurable and effective means to frame the professionalism and ethical behavior of Civil Engineer. Public surveys consistently depict a high ethical image of Civil Engineer. Since the projects of Civil Engineer are typically used by the general public, it may make sense to have Civil Engineer, who has high ethical standards, to participate in the public policy discussion. However, the difficulty of Civil Engineer's engagement in public policy domain lies in the conflict between the accuracy nature of Civil Engineer and the non-exact, neither black nor white nature of the public policy arena. Better engineering judgment not only in technical matters but also in public policy matters is required for a Civil Engineer to become an effective public policy maker. Such better engineering judgement can be achieved by more training of Civil Engineer in finance, psychology, management, skills in negotiation and debate, and emotional intelligence.