

August, 2001

## DEPARTMENTS

# Ethics Inquiries

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## When the Editorial Board Calls

**Scenario:** The city manager was nervous about a telephone call she had received from the local newspaper, asking if she would agree to meet with the editorial board for an interview. When she probed a bit further, she learned that the editorial board was seeking background information for the upcoming election and planned to interview individuals from several communities in the region. She was concerned that her participation could be construed as participating in the election process and wondered if she should decline the invitation.

**Response:** It is appropriate for local government managers to meet with editorial boards, particularly when a board's purpose is to obtain background information on city operations. While this information may be used by the editorial board in ways the manager cannot predict, the manager's role is articulated well in Tenet 9:

*Keep the community informed on local government affairs; encourage communication between the citizens and all local government officers; emphasize friendly and courteous service to the public; and seek to improve the quality and image of public service.*

The city manager also can take the opportunity to give the editorial board some background on the role of a professional manager during an election process and can make it clear that she cannot favor one candidate over another.