Summary or Sales Pitch?

It's September in an election year. Senator Ramsey asks you, as a legislative researcher, to write a memo about his bill on campaign finance reform that he introduced the previous session. It was a large and complex bill that generated much discussion and much resistance from the lobbying corps, and it died on second reading. The senator plans on introducing the bill again in the next legislative session.

Senator Ramsey says he is preparing for a candidate debate and wants to use the summary in the debate. He suggests that some of the problems with the bill came from the previous bill summary. People misunderstood a statement in the summary that said the bill would require “more detailed disclosure of lobbyist expenditures.” Senate Ramsey thinks that scared a lot of people right off, because it sounded like just another layer of big government bureaucracy. Senator Ramsey asks you to "fix" the summary before sending it over. You interpret this as meaning to leave out that sentence.

Discussion:

- Describe your dilemma.
- What is your duty? To whom is your obligation?
- What ethical values or principles are involved? Which ones are in conflict?
- Should you edit the summary as requested, knowing how it is going to be used?
- Does the campaign use of the memo affect your decision?
- At what point do you cross the line in assisting Ramsey with his election campaign?
- What are your options in trying to serve Ramsey needs without violating the campaigning laws? What do you do?
- What values, policies or rules guide your decision?
**Confidentiality**

You staff the Transportation Committee. Before a committee meeting, you notice two minority party committee members, who are deep in discussion. They invite you to join them. They talk about plans to "spring" some amendments in the committee meeting that day to put the chair in an awkward position. The amendments had been drafted. They were discussing strategy.

Later, when the chair and members all have arrived, the chair of the committee turns to you in private and asks if there is anything she should know before she begins the meeting.

Discussion:

- Describe your dilemma.

- What is your duty? To whom is your obligation?

- What ethical values or principles are involved?

- What ethical values or principles are in conflict?

- Does how you were hired or assigned to the committee affect your decision on how to act? (Either hired by the committee chair or assigned to the committee by your director?)

- What do you do? What values, policies or rules guide your decision?
Legal Gray Areas

You are a research analyst and have worked for a long time with a bill drafter. The committee is considering a bill that creates a state program. Before the meeting, the two of you discuss the bill. You both question whether the bill exceeds legislative power and agree current law is unclear—there is a strong argument to be made either way about the legislature’s authority. You attend the committee hearing and hear the drafter testify that the legislature has the power to create the program and lays out persuasive arguments. This is a change from what the two of you earlier discussed. The committee has no plans to ask you questions.

Discussion questions:

- Describe your dilemma.
- What is your duty? To whom is your obligation?
- What ethical values or principles are involved?
- Which ones are in conflict?
- Is it your responsibility to correct the error?
- What do you do if the committee asks your opinion? Do you contradict the bill drafter?
- Would it make a difference if it is a private meeting and not a committee meeting?
- What should you do?
- What values, policies or rules guide your decision?
A Moral Dilemma

You often do research for Rep. Little. Though the two of you are philosophically far apart, you have no trouble working with him. This time she wants to introduce a bill that creates the crime of terrorism. It would make terrorism a capital crime and require the death penalty. She asks you to research if other states have created this crime of terrorism and what is the penalty.

You have long-held deep personal feelings against capital punishment. You try to do the research and can’t get through it. You sit at your desk and wonder what to do. Your supervisor knows your problems with the issue, but assigned you to Rep. Little anyway. The office is short-handed and your refusal to conduct the research may cause some disruption for your team.

Discussion:

- Describe your dilemma.
- What is your duty? To whom is your obligation?
- What ethical values or principles are involved?
- Which ones are in conflict?
- Should you take a deep breath and agree to the assignment?
- How much should a moral or philosophical perspective affect your job?
- What do you do?
- What values, policies or rules guide your decision?