



**Comments of Paul E. Almeida, President,
Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO (DPE),
on Behalf of
Professionals for the Public Interest:
Associations and Unions Defending Professional Integrity
May 20, 2009, First Amendment Lounge, National Press Club**

Welcome! Welcome to all of you representing the media, to all our special guests, and to all of you representing participating organizations.

My name is Paul Almeida. I'm President of the Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO. I'm honored to open this extraordinary and exciting event.

On behalf of the 19 national and global organizations that have joined in **Professionals for the Public Interest: Associations and Unions Defending Professional Integrity**, I hope the next hour will give you an insight into how and why we have come together.

Professionals for the Public Interest: Associations and Unions Defending Professional Integrity marks an alignment of professional associations and unions. Its goal is to provide a forum to advocate for allowing professionals to do their work on the basis of expertise, experience, and high standards, with transparency and trust. Achieving that goal means a better quality of life for all of us.

Through education, training, specialization, standards and accountability, professionals serve as guardians of accumulated experience. They are the ultimate pragmatists, continually honing their ability to determine what works and what doesn't. They are also the ultimate performers, whose skills deliver high performance. The collective skills and judgment of professionals offer enormous value in achieving democratic goals.

Over the last two years, these themes brought our organizations together. They brought us to the consensus statement, Defining Common Ground on Professional Integrity, that is in your packets and on the PftPI.org website. They brought us to this common launch ... through extraordinary hard work, patience, and mutual forbearance.

That journey means many thanks are due. Thanks to the people who represented their organizations on the Joint Planning Committee that led to a leadership conference last year. The leaders of these organizations made the Planning Committee into a Joint Working Group to develop next steps. Thanks to the people who served on the Joint Working Group and its subgroups, and to the leaders who shared the vision that brought us to this event. Thanks to you all for your work and direction. Could all of you please raise a hand?

As you can see, Professionals for the Public Interest drew on a far-ranging and talented group. Thank you all.

The diversity that you just saw reflects the diverse organizations that endorsed our consensus statement. Our speakers today will provide a sampling of that diversity. Their comments will suggest just how important a theme defending professional integrity against external pressures has become across a wide range of disciplines.

Today Professionals for the Public Interest launches its website at www.pftpi.org. Included on the website is an invitation: Tell your story. Share your ideas. Find out more.

That invitation focuses on defending professional integrity against external pressures. The ability to do the job right matters to professionals – and to everyone they serve. Do you have a story about defending professional integrity against external pressure? Professionals for the Public Interest invites you to tell it.

Beginning in August, we will have a panel of distinguished judges from the American Library Association, the American Public Health Association, the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers-USA, and the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers. They will select the five most compelling stories. We will announce their selections on Labor Day.

After Labor Day, visitors to the site will vote to select one of the five finalists as most compelling. We will feature that story on the website home page on October 1, 2009. We call the contest Integrity At Work.

The PftPI.org website also invites visitors to share your ideas. A March 9 memorandum from President Obama directed the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy to develop recommendations for strengthening scientific integrity in the Executive Branch. We expect that visitors to the site will contribute to the national conversation that President Obama sparked not just in science, but across the professions.

Also on the PftPI.org website are resources for professionals, policy-makers, and the public. We invite you to visit, to comment, and to share the link.

The theme that we focus on today matters to professionals AND to the public. Do you want your children to learn something at school? Do you want to survive a hospital stay? To fly safely? To breathe the air and drink the water? To have full access to the information that fuels progress in a democracy? If you answer yes, you value the ability of professionals to do their jobs right.

I now have the pleasure to introduce the co-moderator of today's program, Glenn Ruskin. Glenn is the Director of Legislative and Government Affairs for the American Chemical Society. He will tell us why Professionals for the Public Interest is important to ACS. Glenn will then introduce our speakers this morning. After their comments, I will lead the question and answer portion of our program. Glenn.