



PRSA National Advocacy Framework

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1. “Where PRSA Stands” One-Sheet: PRSA’s Apolitical, Ethics-Driven Advocacy Approach

Our Role

As the leading professional organization for public relations and communications professionals, PRSA advocates for ethical practice, professional standards, and the integrity of the communications field. Our advocacy is rooted in advancing excellence, protecting credibility, and supporting practitioners in an evolving media and information landscape.

Our Apolitical Commitment

PRSA is, and will remain, strictly apolitical.

We do **not** take positions on:

- Political candidates or elections
- Partisan legislation or political parties
- Ideological debates unrelated to communication practice

Our responsibility is to the profession, not to politics. All advocacy activities must remain neutral, nonpartisan, and grounded in professional relevance.

What PRSA Will Speak Out About

PRSA may engage on issues that directly affect the communications profession, including:

- Ethical communication practices, including mis- and disinformation
- Media integrity and access as it relates to practitioners’ work
- Responsible use of emerging technologies, including AI
- Transparency and accountability in communication
- Public policy that materially affects how communicators do their work

What PRSA Will Not Engage In

To protect member trust and maintain neutrality, PRSA does not engage in:

- Candidate endorsements or opposition
- Election commentary
- Partisan or ideological debates
- Issues without a clear connection to professional communication practice

How PRSA Decides When to Speak

PRSA evaluates issues using four guiding criteria:

1. **Direct Impact** on the communications profession
2. **Alignment with PRSA's Code of Ethics**
3. **Professional Relevance** to standards or practice
4. **Nonpartisan Applicability**

Ethical Foundation and Engagement Framework

PRSA's advocacy approach is grounded in the PRSA Code of Ethics, which calls on practitioners to serve public interest through advocacy, honesty, expertise, independence, loyalty, and fairness. These principles guide not only *what* we say, but also *when* silence itself carries ethical and reputational consequences.

As outlined in "*Where PRSA Stands*," PRSA's advocacy is apolitical, profession-focused, and ethics-driven. The following aligns the ethical foundation of the Code with the practical decision-making framework for determining when engagement is appropriate and when restraint best serves the public interest and the profession.

- **Consequence Over Commentary:** PRSA does not comment on ideology or partisan positions. This preserves Independence, a core tenet of the Code of Ethics, while allowing principled engagement when real-world consequences affect professional practice, public trust, or ethical standards. Our focus remains on impact, not opinion.
- **Facts Over Feelings:** PRSA's engagement is grounded in verifiable information, professional standards, and ethical codes...not outrage, speculation, or personal belief. This reflects the Code's commitment to Honesty and Expertise, ensuring that PRSA speaks with credibility, discipline, and clarity rather than reaction or emotion.
- **Long-Term Reputation:** In evaluating whether to engage, PRSA considers not only immediate reactions but also the long-term implications for organizational credibility, public confidence, and the profession itself. Sustained trust supports Loyalty to members and the broader public interest, reinforcing PRSA's role as a steward of professional integrity and ethical advocacy.
- **Strategic Restraint:** Silence remains appropriate when engagement would amplify falsehoods, lack credible grounding, or distract from PRSA's core mission. Strategic restraint reflects ethical leadership, prioritizing thoughtful, measured engagement over

impulsive responses, and aligns with the Code's emphasis on responsibility, fairness, and the public interest.

Our Commitment

Together, these principles ensure that PRSA's advocacy is consistent, principled, and defensible. They affirm that restraint is not avoidance, neutrality is not indifference, and ethical leadership often requires discernment as much as action.

PRSA advocates for the profession, not politics, by applying ethical judgment, professional relevance, and long-term responsibility in every decision to engage or remain silent. We remain committed to ethical leadership, professional integrity, and providing clarity in moments of complexity.

2. FAQ

Q1: Why doesn't PRSA speak out on every major issue in the news?

A1: PRSA focuses on issues that directly affect the communications profession and align with our Code of Ethics. Remaining apolitical is not avoidance; it is a deliberate choice that protects member trust, organizational credibility, and PRSA's ability to advocate effectively over the long term.

Q2: Is PRSA avoiding important conversations?

A2: No. PRSA engages when professional standards, ethics, or communication practices are at stake. At the same time, we exercise strategic restraint when commentary would be ideological, partisan, or outside our professional mission. Ethical leadership often requires discernment as much as action.

Q3: Who decides when PRSA speaks publicly?

A3: Potential issues are reviewed by PRSA staff and executive leadership using established criteria, including ethical alignment, professional relevance, and long-term reputational impact. Matters may be elevated to the Board when appropriate to ensure consistency, accountability, and principled decision-making.

Q4: Can members advocate independently?

A4: Yes. Members are encouraged to engage independently and express their own perspectives. When doing so, members should not reference or imply endorsement from PRSA or invoke any official leadership or volunteer role. PRSA advocates for the profession, not politics, and maintains a neutral, ethics-driven stance in all organizational advocacy.

Q5: Does PRSA's decision not to comment mean the organization is silent or complicit?

A5: No. PRSA's decisions are guided by ethical judgment, professional relevance, and long-term responsibility, not pressure to respond to every headline. Restraint is not indifference, and silence is sometimes the most responsible choice when commentary would amplify misinformation, lack credible grounding, or fall outside PRSA's professional, core mission.

Q6: How does this framework impact members' and Chapters' ability to comment on local/regional issues?

A6: We strongly encourage individual members to engage in advocacy independently and ethically within their own roles and communities. We also strongly advise that Chapters wishing to address local or regional matters should submit proposed statements or initiatives to the PRSA National team for review to ensure alignment with PRSA standards and to mitigate unintended risks.

3. Sample Response Language for Inquiries (Internal or External)

Purpose: To clarify PRSA's position when asked to comment.

PRSA's role is to advocate for ethical practice and professional standards in communications. We remain strictly apolitical and engage only in issues that directly affect the communications profession and align with our Code of Ethics.

While we do not take positions on political or ideological matters, we apply ethical judgment and professional relevance to determine when engagement or restraint best serves the public interest. PRSA remains committed to supporting communicators through education, guidance, and professional resources.

4. Guidance on Escalating Issues to PRSA Staff

Purpose

To provide clear, consistent guidance on how potential advocacy issues should be elevated to PRSA staff for review, ensuring alignment with PRSA's apolitical, ethics-driven advocacy framework.

When to Escalate an Issue

Leaders should elevate an issue to PRSA staff **only if** it may:

- Directly affect the communications profession or professional practice
- Raise ethical considerations tied to PRSA's Code of Ethics
- Impact on the credibility, integrity, or work environment of communicators
- Prompt external inquiries that reference PRSA's position or role

When *Not* to Escalate an Issue

Issues should **not** be escalated if they involve:

- Political candidates or elections
- Partisan or ideological debates
- General news or social issues without a clear link to communication practice
- Personal advocacy positions of individual members

How to Escalate an Issue

When escalation is appropriate:

- Share a brief summary with PRSA staff (CEO or CCO)
- Include:
 - Why the issue may affect the profession
 - Any relevant ethical considerations
 - Urgency or external deadlines, if applicable
- Do not make a public comment, statement, or social post on behalf of PRSA National while the issue is under review.

Review Process (Internal)

Once received, PRSA staff will:

- Evaluate the issue against established advocacy criteria
- Determine whether a response, guidance, or no action is warranted
- Elevate to executive leadership and the Board when appropriate

5. Closing Key Reminders

- PRSA advocates for the profession...not politics.
- Not every issue requires a response, and restraint is often essential to maintaining trust and credibility.
- Refer media or external inquiries to PRSA staff.
- Use approved language when addressing advocacy questions.
- Reinforce PRSA's ethics-first, profession-focused mission.