

Mary Sullivan

120 East Taylor Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85004

575-268-9006

Arizona State University

PO Box 877305 Tempe, Arizona 85287

### Biography

I've lived a life of perpetual motion, from my missionary family's travels to abrupt deportation from Russia, Canada, New Mexico, and now Arizona. My journey led me to excel at a military institute and now fuels my aspiration to become an FBI profiler and mental health advocate.

Scholarships are essential for me to pursue my public service and criminology studies at Arizona State University, against the backdrop of my family's financial challenges.

## Integrity in the Balance: Navigating the Imperfections of Federal Institutions

In an era that prizes transparency and holds accountability in high regard, the integrity of federal government institutions is a subject that demands attention. I approach this with measured optimism, recognizing the inherent challenges and the often-unrecognized integrity that forms the bedrock of these entities.

Starting with the positives, federal bodies are founded upon a robust legal and regulatory structure that champions ethical behavior and transparency. These aren't just formalities; they carry genuine weight. The Freedom of Information Act, for example, empowers citizens with access to governmental records, thus promoting transparency. Ethics committees and oversight groups tirelessly monitor and enforce standards of conduct among officials.

The checks and balances embedded within the federal system serve as safeguards against power abuse and corruption. Although it may be labeled inefficient, this system is vital for preventing power misuse. Even amidst stark political divisions, the capacity for bipartisan actions speaks to the system's enduring strength and integrity.

Yet, it's essential to confront the existing hurdles. The sway that monetary influence and lobbying have on political decision-making and the necessity of campaign fundraising pose questions about the neutrality of our leaders. Partisan interests sometimes take precedence over sound policy-making, which can diminish public confidence.

Nonetheless, such challenges don't spell a wholesale loss of integrity. They signal the need for ongoing vigilance and reform. Systemic issues don't equate to a lack of integrity but rather an opportunity to continually reinforce ethical practices.

Emerging technologies such as big data, AI, and blockchain are propelling new methods for ensuring transparency. These innovations can meticulously monitor public funds and enforce compliance, thereby enhancing accountability and preempting potential violations.

To drive the point home, consider the transformative potential of engaged citizenry enabled by these technologies. When individuals exercise their right to information and participate in the oversight of their government, they invigorate the checks and balances system. It's not just about having mechanisms in place; it's about the people powering them. Public servants are just that—servants of the public—and when the electorate is informed, involved, and impassioned, it compels those in office to maintain a high ethical standard. This dynamic interaction between the governed and the governing fortifies the very foundations of integrity we seek to preserve. It is this active, participatory democracy that ultimately ensures our federal institutions thrive in their adherence to moral principles and accountable governance.

In our dynamic world, with its instant access to information and rigorous public oversight, federal institutions are held to account more than ever. Although they're not infallible, their inherent corrective mechanisms and the vigilant public play a crucial role in upholding their integrity.

In sum, recognizing the imperfections in federal institutions, I hold that their core integrity is preserved. This conviction stems not from a simplistic viewpoint but from an appreciation for the robust frameworks in place to support ethical behavior and responsibility. The way forward is one of attentive refinement rather than dismissive skepticism.