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# Ethics & Civility

Mountain and Plains Intergovernmental Audit Forum

*Mark Quiner, Director, NCSL Center for Ethics in Government*

*August 21, 2019*





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## Today's headlines...

- Warren Buffett – interview for intelligence, energy and integrity; if no integrity, don't bother
- New drones will decide who to kill on their own (they can now recognize people vs. machines)
- Facebook's scandal forces marketers to examine their ethics



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## Double Disney Point

- Disney employees are prohibited from using one finger to point or give directions
- They must use 2 fingers to give directions or point
- Known as the Double Disney Point
- History: Walt Disney would walk through Disneyland with a cigarette and so used 2 fingers to give directions or point



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# Quick Exercise

Write down 1 quality a mentor taught you







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# Ethics

- Principles: integrity, trust & honesty; doing the right thing
- Professional and personal standards of conduct
- A system of moral principles



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# Making Ethical Choices Involves:

- Moral judgment and ethical decisions
- Mismatched duties & conflicting claims
- Ethical, legal, practical considerations
- Motive
- Seriousness of issue/offense
- Price tag: career, cost, courage





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# How Do I Make Ethical Choices?

- Do what is best for the most people.
- Follow your highest sense of principle.
- Do what you want others to do to you.
- Pit of your stomach?



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# Your Work Environment

- Identify top ethical value as a Staffer
- Identify top ethical value for your Legislative Staff Office
- How do you apply these values in your job?
- Are these values ever in conflict?
- **Character vs. Reputation**





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# Ethical Choices

- Law-based ethics (“little e”)
  - Right versus wrong
  - Laws, rules, policies, guidelines
  - What *must* we do?
  - Why do good people still make bad choices?
- Value-based ethics (“Big E”)
  - Right versus right
  - No formal guidance - values or principles
  - What *should* we do?
  - Gray areas - can be confusing





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# How do you know if you have a dilemma?

- What “should” I do? – moral compass
- “Mom” or “child” test
- “Headline” test
- Seek colleague’s advice
- Reflect
- Use common sense and experience





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## Legislative Values (examples from states)

- *“High moral and ethical standards among public servants are essential to assure the trust, respect, confidence of the people of the state.”*
- *“No code of conduct, however comprehensive can anticipate all situations ....”*
- *“Laws and regulations regarding ethical responsibilities cannot legislate morality.”*



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## Getting Guidance

- Apply legal and rule guidelines.
- Know your personal and legislative values.
- Get advice from a trusted advisor: staff attorney, colleague, spouse, friend.
- Look for on-the-job lessons.
- Anticipate ethical hot spots.



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## When Faced with an Ethical Dilemma...

- Recognize there is an ethical issue.
- Gather facts and define the problem.
- Can rules or laws solve it?
- If not, what values conflict?
- Analyze your options.
- Act.
- Reflect.





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# Civility

# 70%

**Civility has reached crisis levels**



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# Civility

- NBC just reported a poll which indicated what we thought of 2017? (Rep. vs. Dem.)
- 79% of Republicans thought 2017 was one of the best years!
- 
- 81% of Democrats thought 2017 was one of the worst years!
- 
- We are a deeply divided nation!



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## One definition...

“Civility is about more than politeness, although politeness is a necessary first step.

It is about disagreeing without disrespect,

Seeking common ground as a starting point for dialogue about differences,

Listening past one’s preconceptions, and teaching others to do the same.

Civility is the hard work of staying present even with those with whom we have a deep-rooted and fierce disagreements.”

*Institute for Civility in Government*



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# An Unlikely Friendship

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dMMCVfKP9s>



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## Video Quotes

- “What surprised me was his humanity”
- “Disagree without being disagreeable”
- “We can fight the good fight in the court of public opinion without hurting each other; when we hurt each other, we hurt ourselves”
- “Didn’t change my beliefs, but did change my approach”





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## Your Thoughts?

- Think of someone or some group with whom you have a strong disagreement. (who's your Donna or Bob?)
- Write down 2 things you can do to “bridge the gap”
- When will you do that?
- Good luck!



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IOWA, PASSINGS

## **PASSINGS: Former One Iowa leader Donna Red Wing**





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Watching Red Wing in action, I learned three important lessons.

- First, try to see someone's humanity before you see their identity. The more threatened we feel by others' opposing beliefs, the easier it is to justify treating them badly.
- Second, your political opponent is not your enemy. This is the difference between someone with whom you disagree and someone with whom you are actively hostile.
- Finally, no matter our differences, we can work toward finding common ground.

■ **Carol Spaulding-Kruse, Des Moines Register**



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- “I’m deeply grieved that my friend is now gone from this world,” Bob says, “but I hope her example of reaching out will challenge others to do the same. I hope it challenges me. I want our commitment to restoring civil dialogue in America to continue as the lasting legacy of the day Donna Red Wing invited me for coffee.”
  - Bob Vander Platts, The Family Leader



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# Rules of Civil Engagement

- Do not interrupt or speak over a colleague when speaking
- Do not allow legitimate critique of policy and practice to become a personal attack
- Recognize that your colleagues were also hired just like you and deserve respect
- Do not ridicule or belittle someone simply because they disagree with you on an issue





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# Suggestions from NCSL's Center for Ethics in Government

- Protect the **integrity** of the institution.
- Be **prudent**.
- Be **responsible** for what you say.
- **Respect** the audience.
- Be **authentic**.



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## Mentor role

- Think of one person you can mentor and teach values, civility, ethics
- Who is that person?
- When will this happen?

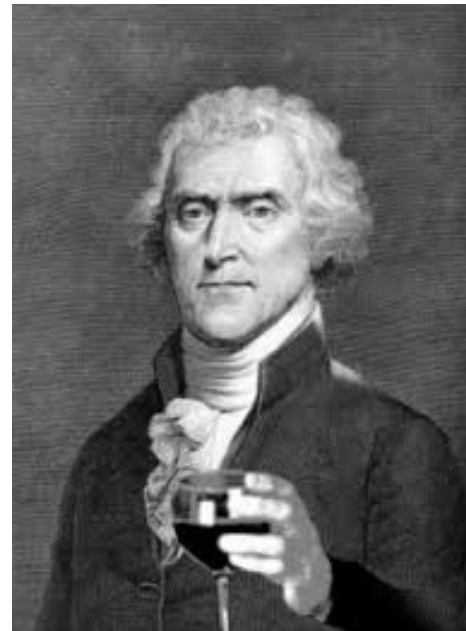


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- "I am sure that in estimating every man's value either in private or public life, a pure integrity is the quality we take first into calculation, and that learning and talents are only the second." -  
**-Thomas Jefferson**





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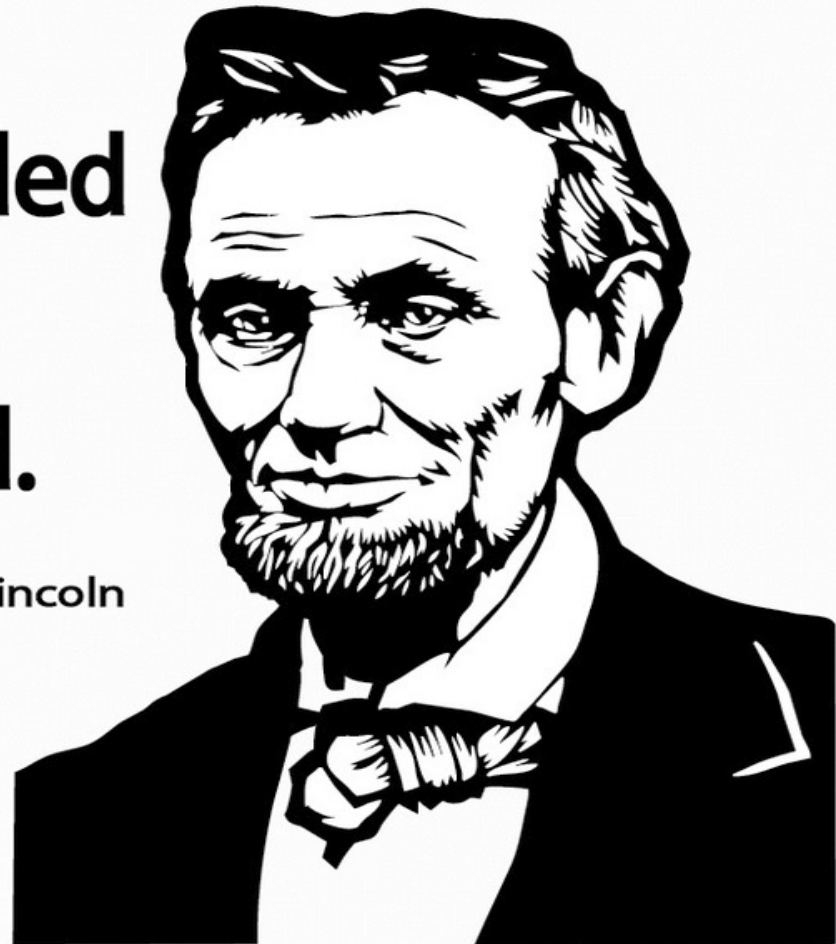
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## Civility....pass it on

**A house divided  
against itself  
cannot stand.**

Abraham Lincoln





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# Do values matter?





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Life goes on....







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And on.....





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