Ethical Public Leadership

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#InspiringLeaders
Ethics is Not . . .

Just a matter of personal preference
Ethics is Not . . .

What’s best for me
Ethics is Not . . .

Obeying ethics laws
So . . . What is Ethics?

“moral principles for living and making decisions.”

“the study of what we ought to do.”
The Foundation: Values

That is . . .

Whatever it is that we value
And that is relevant/important to consider

‘Moral values’
Broadly defined
The Values of a Public Servant

Not only what we ourselves value personally

Values associated with our role
  The values of our constituents
  Institutional values
  Public goods for which we have special responsibility
The Necessity of Inconsistency

Public servants need to adopt codes of ethical conduct that reflect their *roles*, not just their *personal values*

In this sense, *consistency* between one’s conduct as a public official and one’s private conduct *may not be a virtue*
The Role of the Facts on the Ground

Guide us in determining which of our values should be considered

Determine the decision(s) that must be made

Guide us in evaluating the merits of various options
The Role of the Facts on the Ground

DO NOT determine whether something is or is not valued

DO NOT change the rules
Ethical Principles

Guides to deciding what to do, given our values and the facts on the ground

Methods of applying our values to the facts
Ethical Principles

Character/Virtue

Duty/Obligation

Consequence/Outcome

Care/Relationship
Ethical Dilemma

A difficult choice between two or more alternatives, each of which can be defended plausibly in ethical terms

Struggling with doing the right thing, when the right thing is obvious, is not an ethical dilemma

It is a character test
On Being an Ethical Public Leader

Being ethical can be costly
• Emotionally
• Interpersonally
• Socially
• Economically
• Politically

Of course, being unethical can be costly, too!
On Being an Ethical Public Leader

Your office brings with it unique ethical obligations.

Your office also brings with it a higher degree of visibility and public interest in your activities.

• Which is a form of **power** that you have received.
On Being an Ethical Public Leader

Use the power you have to change the way others see government and politics . . .

. . . and what it means to conduct oneself with honor and integrity
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