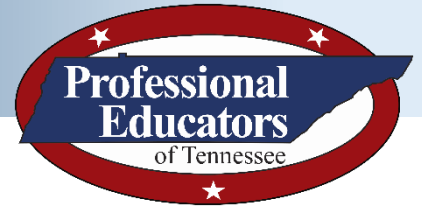


EDITORIAL

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LEADERSHIP STILL MATTERS

Too often in our society people rely on a position or title to earn respect. Respect is not simply generated by a position or title. It often boils down to the character of the leader. Brian Tracy challenges individuals to become “the kind of leader that people would follow voluntarily” even if they had no position or title.

“Leaders who operate from a positional standpoint alone are often unable to look beyond the roles and responsibilities of the title to see how their performance, attitude, and general behavior affect others,” adds Gifford Thomas. Weak leaders often use manipulation to attain influence. This diminishes the trust others place in them, and in many ways leads to questions of their integrity and character.

In 2015 the biggest problem with government was Congress, politics, a sense of corruption, and undue outside influences. At the same time, And now, a 55% majority say that ordinary Americans would do a better job at solving the nation’s problems than their elected representatives. Have those opinions changed? Probably not much.

Patrick Brown writing in [Newsweek](#) points out: “Political leaders, researchers, and commentators will all need to work harder if they want to understand the daily concerns of politically disconnected voters” or “develop an agenda that speaks to them.” Then adds: “I will be the first to admit that such an agenda will not earn headlines, clicks or retweets. It may not even win a primary. But for a “populist” agenda to be more than a noisy veneer on pre-existing preferences, partisans of the Right and Left need to recognize the distance between their favored narratives and the problems that keep working-class Americans up at night.”

In *Strengths Based Leadership: Great Leaders, Teams, and Why People Follow*, Tom Rath and Barry Conchie, and Gallup researchers discovered we need our leaders to offer trust, compassion, stability, and hope. This is why leadership is so critical at the schoolhouse, to the statehouse, and at the White House.

Leadership asks you to invest in the lives of others, and make sacrifices. Leaders must be willing to give up more than the people they lead. Nelson Mandela wrote: “We call them leaders because they go first because they will choose to sacrifice themselves for their people's benefit.” Sacrifice is part of a leader’s job description. They should give their time, recognition, and put the needs of people ahead of their own. This builds trust, loyalty, and confidence.

SUMMARY

Because the majority of the public view elected officials as out of touch, self-interested, dishonest, and selfish, more than ever we need leaders with a strong moral compass who are unafraid to do what is right.

We have all seen more than our share of elected and politically appointed leaders who have used and abused power, especially in education circles. We see contracts steered to political cronies and supporters. Friends and associates are appointed to positions of authority without regard to qualifications or ability. We see blatant corruption at all levels of government. It is easy to just give up and think there is no chance for an honest person to make a difference as long the system is stacked against common people.

I would argue that we can never give up. Loyalty is in short supply in corrupt and untrustworthy systems. In some of the darkest corners of government, the greatest fear is light. Thomas Jefferson wrote: "No government should be without critics. If its intentions are good then it has nothing to fear from criticism."

We indeed live in a world that seems to be easily offended and divided on concerns that do not matter. "In this age, in this country, public sentiment is everything. With it, nothing can fail; against it, nothing can succeed. Whoever molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes, or pronounces judicial decisions," wrote Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln was a man ahead of his time on this issue, he also was a strong leader. Leadership still matters, now more than ever.

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