

Who is your Favorite Superhero? IAC Ethics Mini-Exercise

Table Talk: Who is your favorite Super Hero and why? 2 minutes **Ask for a few responses**

We expect our Super Heroes to have a higher moral standard--no abusing their powers for personal gain. Sometimes this is enforced by the authority that granted their abilities, but most often it is self-imposed. Our Super Heroes took a moral stance early in their careers to make sure they never hit the slippery slope to evil-dom. They realized that once a person gets started with potentially bad actions, each subsequent one becomes easier until every line has been crossed.

Whether or not you've seen the movie Spiderman, you may have heard the epic quote, "With great power comes great responsibility". Let's look, very briefly, at this concept as it relates to Ethics in County Government.

In his book, Business Ethics, Archie Carroll discusses the "Iron Law of Responsibility". What is this? Simply stated, this "law" conveys the idea that, in the long run, those who do not use power in the manner in which society considers responsible will tend to lose it. **For Elected Officials, how does that happen? *Anticipated response...Voted out of Office***

The 'Iron Law of Responsibility' states that when power and responsibility become substantially out of balance, forces will be generated to bring them back into closer relationship. **What type of forces could bring back the balance between power and responsibility for us in County government? *Anticipated responses...Public Records Requests, Audits, Media, Watch-Dog Groups, or on a more positive note, continuing education and support from fellow Elected Officials and IAC***

The "Iron Law of Responsibility" suggests that those who fail to regulate themselves will be regulated by others. In the business world, it might mean more government regulations/restrictions. **What does it mean for us? *Anticipated possible response...in the worst case scenario, it means our failure to self-regulate could signal the beginning that descent into bad or even illegal decisions. This could ultimately result in being regulated behind bars. None of us want to go there.***

So to recap, the three components of the Iron Law of Responsibility that we just talked about were: 1) If power is not used responsibly, it will be lost; 2) If power and responsibility are out of balance, forces will attempt to bring them back into relationship; 3) Power and responsibility must be self-regulated...OR ELSE.

We may not consider our positions as positions of power—it sure seems like we get a lot of the 'grunt' work sometimes—but regardless, we can all appreciate the value of balance...and ethics...when it comes to carrying out our responsibilities. **Are there any questions?**