



Timothy A. Braaten
Executive Director

TEXAS COMMISSION ON LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER STANDARDS AND EDUCATION

COMMENT ON OUR PROFESSION

Article Date: August, 20 2010

LOL

I don't know what LOL is in texting lingo, but it is Lack of Leadership for TOG, "this old guy." LOL, lack of leadership, is all too common in our society. Organizations that lack leadership stagnate and eventually fail. Governments that lack leadership also fail in their responses to community needs and to both natural and man-made disasters.

I've recently taken interest in watching government's response to several crises, and what I believe I've witnessed is a naturally occurring apprehension, but unacceptable and inexcusable procrastination, delay, and worst of all, posturing for the inevitable blame game. Nothing was more obvious of this LOL (lack of leadership) than the response by New Orleans leadership to Hurricane Katrina. Apprehension was natural, but the procrastination, the resultant delay, and the unproductive blame game were simply demonstrations of LOL – lack of leadership.

One doesn't need to look to Louisiana to witness LOL. One can see it almost daily here in Texas. When a crisis occurs, we unfortunately often witness unproductive posturing rather than leadership. We see people making the crisis a political issue and attempting to capitalize on a tragic event rather than lead and serve the community. Rather than a display of leadership and a pursuit of the common good, we witness gamesmanship and selfish distortion of the facts.

Someone might respond to this assertion by saying, "What's the big deal? Politics are everywhere. Politics are about the unequal distribution of limited resources. You can't change what is so embedded in our democracy." This is all probably true, but organizations and governments that

lack leadership almost always fail over time. They don't possess, nor do they communicate, a vision. They don't possess strong values and ethics. Worst of all, they lack leaders with the character necessary to lead effectively. Character flaws always are exposed over time, and result in actions that are either illegal or so overwhelmingly morally wrong that decay comes from within. Just look at Enron and Arthur Anderson, the leaders of mortgage companies, and governmental leaders who leave office because of ethics and integrity violations. Look at the recent scandals in the states of Illinois and South Carolina.

When you see or hear about a crisis, watch the actions of those who are supposed to be in charge, who are supposed to lead us through these crises. Do you witness posturing and blame, or do you witness leadership? Every crisis provides this human laboratory to learn about effective leadership or the opposite - LOL. No one wants to see a crisis, either naturally occurring or man-made, but when a crisis occurs, we can witness leadership at work - sometimes good, sometimes bad. Are you prepared to lead?