

H A R L A N R I C H A R D S

April 12, 2017

K. A. E. D. (Kicking Ass Every Day)

KAED sounds like an acronym that an aggressive marketing firm would use to motivate its employees. In the market place, it's all about no-holds-barred competition to increase market share at the expense of other businesses. It implies an attitude of "anything goes" and winning at all costs. It sends a clear message to employees of what is expected of them.

But what if it wasn't a corporation using that slogan? What if it was a governmental agency? Should the EPA have a slogan like that? Or the Supreme Court? What about the Department of Justice?

I heard a little blurb on public radio about a state agency that minted 10,000 coins with the acronym KAED to use in motivating their employees. I assume they spent tens of thousands of dollars on these coins (I'm guessing, I don't know how much it costs to mint coins). For most state agencies, it would merely be an error in judgment - an idea which has no place in a state agency - and a waste of state tax dollars.

But when an agency has a duty to protect its citizens and ensure that we live in a fair and just society, what would happen if its employees took KAED seriously and acted on it? The Wisconsin Department of Justice is the agency that had the coins minted and passed them out to its employees. I wonder how many staff attorneys were encouraged to cross the line between ethical and unethical conduct because of that motto? I wonder how many investigations resulted in prosecutions because of that motto? How many citizens were deprived of their rights because of the zealous attitude generated by staff members trying to KAED?

I want a justice department with a motto which reflects the mission it should have: fairness to all, every citizen counts, protect all children all the time. Something that makes me feel safe and proud of how my tax dollars are being spent. I do not want a justice department that believes in winning at any cost and that the end justifies the means.

Tell Attorney General Brad Schimmel that this is not what we want in our Department of Justice.