



Declaration of Character

From the Desk of J. Kenneth Blackwell, Ohio Secretary of State:

Throughout my years in public service, I've seen first-hand many of the positive and varied ingredients that combine to give our country its strength and viability.

One of those ingredients—character—stands out above the rest. Character is the cornerstone of American citizenship. And good citizenship is the foundation of community. It is also the foundation of both good business and good government.

Yet today's generation of leaders often lack two fundamental resources. We lack a shared vocabulary of character-building ethics, and we suffer from the absence of support for our role as on-the-job character builders.

No one is perfect, although we've all known a few people who dare to claim infallibility. For the rest of us, there is "UncommonSense," "Uncommon," because sadly, defined ethics are not common anymore and "Sense," because it prevails upon the conscience.

UncommonSense is a tool for learning the language of character. It challenges us to be life-long learners as we pursue character—as we live it, lead it, and pass it on. That's why I recommend UncommonSense as a character ethics model for Ohio's business and government leaders.

I have found UncommonSense to be a rare resource—it gives a clear map of character ethics and at the same time is designed to be easily passed along to others. The sound ethics of UncommonSense create a map to guide diverse people toward a unifying common character culture. But this cannot happen without leaders who are committed to character.

I believe UncommonSense will hold up under intellectually honest investigation. That's why I invite serious study of this document, and I ask every reader to thoughtfully articulate and share with me any critical fault they find with it.

Noble visions, worthy missions and guiding values all require and are validated by character ethics. Thus, a strong character foundation is and always will be the key predictor of true personal health, interpersonal vitality and organizational success.

With this in mind, please consider making your own commitment to character building. By learning and living character ethics—the virtues advocated in UncommonSense—Ohio's leaders can launch a resolution of character building in our great state. Join me.

Sincerely,

J. Kenneth Blackwell

To receive a copy of the unabridged version of UncommonSense or to receive more information about the Ohio Center for Civic Character, call (877) 767-6446 or send an e-mail message to: blackwell@sos.state.oh.us.

UncommonSense*: Our Shared Ethic

"While I will never be perfect..."

1. I will seek **WISDOM**: "Know What is Right"
2. I will strive to demonstrate **INTEGRITY**: "Do What is Right"
3. I will be **COMPASSIONATE**: "Do What is Right...Kindly"
4. I will be **HONEST**: "Speak the Truth with Compassion"
5. I will be **JUST**: "Act on the Truth with Compassion"
6. I will be **ACCOUNTABLE**: "Inspect Myself and Invite My Inspection by Others"
7. I will demonstrate **FIDELITY**: "My Beliefs Will Drive My Behaviors"
8. I will demonstrate **RESPECT** for others: "Treat Others as I would Want to be Treated"
9. I will **KEEP MY PROMISES**: "My Word is My Bond"
10. I will **PURSUE EXCELLENCE**: "Be and Do My Very Best Always"
11. I will **SUPPORT ETHICAL LEADERSHIP**: "Pledge to Our Shared Mission"
12. I will **PURSUE UNITY**: "Diverse People Agreeing to One Team Culture"
13. I will **FORGIVE** others: "Extend Every Grace to All Others"
14. I will **HONOR AUTHORITY**: "I Will Respect the Office...Even When I Question the Officeholder"
15. I will **DEFEND LIBERTY**: "Preserve My Public Rights by Fulfilling My Individual Responsibilities"
16. I will be a life-long **LEARNER and MENTOR** to others: "Seek Truth and Pass It Along"
17. I will practice **STEWARDSHIP**: "Deeply Tend to That Within My Trust"
18. I will **SEEK COUNSEL** that improves my decisions: "There is Wisdom in Many Counselors"
19. I will **EMBRACE TRUTH**: "Truth Without My Accepting It...is Worthless"
20. I will **PRIZE TRANSFORMATION**: "My Own Improvement and That of Others"

**Abridged Version*