

The Ethical Dilemma is Mayor Miller

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Given an opportunity to offer an op-editorial segment on Lubbock's KCBD television news Tuesday, Lubbock mayor David Miller addressed what he termed an "ethical dilemma".

Miller, in attempting to explain why he broke his campaign promise and supported a tax increase, demonstrated both his problem with ethics and his arrogant attitude towards voters.

Let us begin with Miller's problem with ethics.

In his KCBD commentary he chose to mislead viewers about what his campaign promise was, no doubt trusting they will not remember specifics.

Here is what Miller said to KCBD's audience:

QUOTE: "As you all know by now, I made the statement during the campaign for mayor, that I thought we could stay with the current tax rate, and grow the revenues for the city based on, both the growth of the city, as well as increase in appraisals."

He is reframing his campaign promise to something very different from what it was. He now says that his promise was to "stay with the current tax rate," meaning keeping the rate the same, and "grow the revenues for the city based on, both the growth of the city, as well as increase in appraisals."

Keeping the tax rate the same was *not* Miller's campaign pledge. His pre-determined, scripted, and delivered in a slick television and radio commercial campaign promise was:

"Lubbock will continue to grow, that's the good news. But there's even more good news. As your mayor, I will work to use that growth to reduce your city property tax burden and put more of your hard earned money back where it belongs – in your pocket."

Now after breaking his promise to Lubbock voters, Miller has conveniently rephrased his promise from working "to reduce your city property tax burden and put more of your hard earned money back where it belongs – in your pocket." To this much less definitive pledge: "I thought we could stay with the current tax rate, and grow the revenues for the city based on, both the growth of the city, as well as increase in appraisals."

A pledge to actively work to reduce property taxes is very different from a pledge to keep tax rates the same, and get more money for growing city government from increasing appraisals and community growth.

Miller went on to say that he believed his now changed pledge was "true at that time based on discussions with the CFO of the city, the financial officer, the city manager, and other city council people."

But, Miller says, after studying the budget in earnest, he found things such as our streets not being maintained properly; that our parks were not well maintained; short staffing in the building inspection department, and; the animal shelter short on funds.

Before we get to Miller's extreme arrogance and self-justifying comments, let's examine his claims about finding things wrong that he could not have foreseen during the campaign.

First, no access is needed to city hall or other council members to see problems with street or park maintenance. A person can simply open their eyes and look around – and certainly someone who ran for mayor of a large city would be aware that these major public assets are among the chief responsibilities of the city he sought to lead.

Second, Miller made a big issue both publicly and privately about keeping criticism of city staff private, but on the other hand, holding those officials to high standards of performance.

Now Miller claims to have been advised by the "CFO of the city, the financial officer, the city manager," and others, a few short months ago that all was well, and that he could lower our property taxes and rely solely on growth for needed revenue increases. If true, where is the holding-of-the-feet-to-the-fire of those city officials? He promised to hold city staff to strict performance standards.

Based on his claims in the KCBD editorial, as well as on interviews with KFYO radio and the KFYO news staff, it is only logical to conclude that the CFO of the city, the financial officer, and the city manager, are either: One, incompetent and were unaware of all of the shortfalls in staffing and maintenance of the city just a few months before budget time, or; Two, those officials intentionally mislead Miller during the campaign.

Why is he not holding the city staff, which, by his own scenario, is dishonest or incompetent, accountable? He did tell the Lubbock Avalanche-Journal that one of his biggest surprises in taking office was the honesty of people in city hall.

Not only has Miller broken his campaign promise to work to lower your property taxes, in attempting to climb out of the political hole he has dug for himself, he has gone on television and lied to the public as to what that promise was.

He also made promises to set high standards for city staff and to hold them to those performance standards but now seems unwilling to do so. They either were without basic knowledge required for their jobs earlier this year, or they specifically lied to him in the campaign based upon his claims. If either is true, hasn't he pledged to act upon it?

Now to what bothers many most about Miller: his smug and arrogant attitude towards those who question or disagree with him.

Wrapping up his commentary on KCBD Miller said: "So here's the dilemma: Do I stick with a campaign pledge that I made? Or do I do what's right for the citizens? Let me tell you that every

time, I'll choose you, the citizens, rather than my own political welfare. And if that means I wasn't able to stick to that campaign pledge, so be it."

On KCBD, and earlier with KFYO's Rex Andrew, Miller has purposely framed his breaking of a major campaign promise as an action which deserves our respect. In self-justification, he smugly declares that he broke his campaign promise, which he is also now attempting to re-word, to do what is right for the citizens of Lubbock.

What Miller doesn't seem to understand, or be willing to consider, is that it was to those same citizens, that he made the promise to work to lower their property taxes. And based upon that promise and others, those citizens voted for him to serve as their mayor. All later votes and decisions are made possible only from the power invested in him by those voters.

To turn around and say that doing the opposite of what he promised to do for Lubbock citizens is deserving of respect, and in their interest, is claim worthy of the great self-centered liar himself: Bill Clinton.



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