



How it looks is not always how it is

Posted: Tuesday, July 6, 2016

“Due process is denied when the law does not give due notice of what behavior is prescribed,” George Will notes in a column appearing in Sunday’s Daily News.

“As political puritans pursue ever-more-perfect civic hygiene, and progressives pursue ever-more-comprehensive government,” he continues, “the crusade against ‘corruption’ expands to cover a multitude of sins.”

Ostensibly, Will’s comments were in reference to a recent ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court on the corruption charges brought against former Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell, but I believe they are indicative of much more systemic problems currently plaguing our country.

When it comes to protecting the freedoms guaranteed by our Constitution, being clear and precise is essential. Unless ‘corruption’ is carefully and explicitly defined, the danger exists that virtually anything can be construed as an abuse of power.

In Kentucky, we are all too familiar with nebulous accusations that tend to be politically motivated – seldom is there ever an earnest quest to arrive at the actual legitimacy of the indictment.

Unless a quid pro quo association can be unequivocally demonstrated between giving somebody something and receiving something in return, then any allegation of malfeasance is inherently suspect.

The appearance of wrongdoing does not necessarily mean any illicit behavior has taken place. Increasingly in our society, how it “looks” is considered synonymous with how it “is.”

If I am accused of some transgression, it is the responsibility of those making the accusation to definitively and beyond a reasonable doubt prove I actually engaged in the referenced indiscretion.

As we celebrated our nation’s independence, I was reminded of one of my favorite quotations, “Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty,” which is inscribed on a monument outside the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

Never has this profound truth been more applicable than it is in 2016.

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