

# Compliance & Ethics *PROFESSIONAL*



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**Meet Paul Fiorelli**  
Co-Director of the Cintas Institute for  
Business Ethics at Xavier University

# Funding the Ethics Resource Center or concrete toilets, beetle mating habits, and sperm freezers



By Roy Snell

The Ethics Resource Center (ERC) is a 501(c)3 dedicated to the research and advancement of high ethical standards and practices in public and private institutions. In my 15 years of working in the Compliance and Ethics field, I know of no other non-profit organization more dedicated to, or more effective at, advancing business ethics. The fact that they have been doing this for 89 years is nothing short of astonishing. For the last 10 years, the press, the public, and the politicians have become fed up with workplace ethics. The ERC has had a 70-year jump on all of them and all of us. A lot of funding in this country goes to some very strange causes. I advocate for funding the ERC and, in particular, their National Business Ethics Survey.

The ERC has demonstrated astonishing foresight. Here is the great irony: Our country would rather fund the purchase of concrete toilets, turtle crossings, sperm freezers, and study the mating habits of beetles than

support the ERC. It is very strange that millions are spent on things so much less important than the work of the ERC. The ERC is an adequately funded organization; however, given the importance of their work and mission, we as a society could do much more.

A law recently passed allowed a group permission to issue bonds for the construction of an Arizona Diamondbacks training facility. We apparently think it's more important to support a spring training camp for a baseball team than to support the advancement of ethical practices in business. Instead of supporting the funding of an ethics organization, we support an organization that one might say is ethically challenged.

According to Wikipedia, the baseball commissioner's office announced that it would suspend a Diamondback player for 50 games for violating baseball's Joint Drug Prevention and Treatment Program, effective if he chooses to come out of retirement. He retired shortly after the story

broke. The Diamondbacks mascot was fired for a DUI, and ESPN reported that, just four days after the Diamondbacks introduced their new manager, he was fired, following revelations he had been arrested twice and struggled with financial problems. I believe that the ERC would probably suggest background checks prior to the employment of senior executives (and possibly mascots). Salem-news.com reported that police detectives in Salem, Oregon arrested a Diamondback minor league player on charges of rape in the third degree. He allegedly met the 15-year-old female victim following the baseball game at Volcanoes Stadium. The *Washington Post* reported that an Arizona Diamondback infielder was put on the restricted list without pay, a day after he was arrested for allegedly assaulting his wife. The *Los Angeles Times* reported a Diamondback player was arrested outside a Pittsburgh nightclub and charged with assaulting two women and

punching a parking attendant. I'm guessing that after the first or second assault charge, the ERC would probably suggest education for all Diamondback employees. That is not all; a number of Diamondbacks have been caught stealing... second base. Although it is not an ethical issue, it does indicate that they have need of a better decision-making process before they choose to steal. At a minimum, the Diamondbacks appear to struggle with hiring. Maybe they should hire the ERC.

Most of these reports are allegations against wrongdoing. My research of the Diamondbacks indicates that they seem to respond quickly and swiftly to wrongdoing. To their credit, they seem to be strong on discipline; however, they appear to be a little weak on prevention techniques. My guess is that it might be one of the better systems in baseball. Unfortunately, that is not saying much. The ERC promotes ethics in the workplace. The Diamondbacks play baseball and might be considered ethically challenged. This is so frustrating.

If you are in a position to support the work of the ERC, I would suggest contacting them. Their president, Pat Harned, is one of the most dedicated and competent CEOs I have ever met. The ERC is among our greatest unsung heroes. There are a number of ways to engage the ERC. If you are not impressed with the funding I have

mentioned, there is something you can do about it, and you can do it today.

What is more important: turtle crossings, mating habits, sperm freezers, or workplace ethics? I am sorry. I don't get it. I don't buy it. I don't agree with it. If I were in a position of authority, I would immediately apologize and correct the problem. I would fund the ERC over any of these other choices. Our organization has worked with the ERC, and we would recommend them to any organization that is actively involved in analyzing and improving workplace ethics. I would repeal the sperm freezer, beetle mating project, and the turtle crossing funding. I would fund the money to the ERC before I would fund most of this nonsense. I would specifically fund their National Business Ethics Survey. If you are interested in helping the ERC, I would contact Pat Harned at [pat@ethics.org](mailto:pat@ethics.org) or phone her at (571) 480-4422.

I will leave you with some other projects our society has decided to fund:

- \$1.15 million to install a guardrail for a persistently dry lake bed in Guymon, Oklahoma
- \$9.38 million to renovate a century-old train depot in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania that has not been used for three decades
- \$6 million for a snow-making facility in Duluth, Minnesota

- \$356,000 for Indiana University to study childhood comprehension of foreign accents compared with native speech
- \$3.1 million to transform a canal barge into a floating museum that will travel the Erie Canal in New York state
- \$1.3 million on government arts jobs in Maine, including \$30,000 for basket makers, \$20,000 for storytelling, and \$12,500 for a music festival.

All funding projects discussed in this article were reported by the *Washington Examiner*. \*

If you have any questions that you would like Roy to answer in future columns, please e-mail them to: [roy.snell@corporatecompliance.org](mailto:roy.snell@corporatecompliance.org).

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