

# It Is Time to Embrace Fiduciary Standard: Averitt

By Donna Mitchell      Financial Planning Magazine

May 21, 2012

It is time to embrace a uniform fiduciary standard, Dick Averitt, the chairman of Raymond James Financial Services told a packed general session at its national conference for professional development.

Like what you see? Click [here](#) to sign up for Financial Planning's daily newsletter to get the latest on advisor market trends, investment management, retirement planning, practice management, technology, compliance and new product development.

Pending legislative decisions around the fiduciary requirement for all advisors is not a threatening issue, Averitt said Monday.

Averitt "It is the keystone of Raymond James," said Averitt, who will will serve Raymond James Financial Services as chairman through 2013. He is also vacating the CEO title. Scott Curtis is the new president of Raymond James Financial Services, and the CEO title will remain vacant. "What is scary is how that will be legislated by people who don't understand our business."

Instead, the fiduciary standard is on a path to becoming an ethos to which all financial advisors should aspire, Averitt said. Doctors and attorneys take professional oaths to demonstrate their intent to serve society at large, he said.

"It should not be allowed to become something that gets crammed down on us," he said. "It should be born of a grassroots effort."

Among other major points, Averitt said he was more optimistic that the national debt issue will be resolved, because the national conversation had become more realistic about the need to tackle the problem.

"I believe we are each responsible for making our world into the world we want it to be," Averitt said. "Don't let up because the outcome may eventually be OK. Work to hasten it and shape it."

Averitt's remarks became emotional as he described how he transitioned out of an unsuccessful career as a Merrill Lynch broker, to eventually figuring out that he was not primarily motivated to make money, but to help people. He described a period in his mid-thirties when neither he nor his wife, Sandy were earning full-time salaries, she was in graduate school, and he was still, "dialing for dollars."

"I went through a critical mental flip," Averitt said. "I learned and finally accepted that clients who had money, but who were not properly invested, felt they had a problem."

After he began helping clients solve that problem, he said, professional success followed.