Across the Partisan Divide

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Michigan State Legislature
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DIVIDED WE FALL
civility
Civitas NOUN / ci·vi·tas / Latin

1 a body of people constituting a politically organized community; state.

2 citizenship, especially as imparting shared responsibility, a common purpose, and sense of community.

civic
civilization
citizenship
civility
Candidus  ADJECTIVE  /  'kan.di.dus / Latin

1 white, very white, innocent, pure, shine.

2 associated to the color white in Christian tradition; can also represent ideas such as purity, salvation, goodness, without guile.

candid  candidate
A system of **ethics** and **civility** that derives moral standards and rules from the observable world and human nature.
"*Civility* is not a tactic or a sentiment. It is the determined choice of trust over cynicism, of community over chaos."
“We may please ourselves with the prospect of free and popular Governments. But there is great Danger, that those Governments will not make us happy. God grant they may. But I fear, that in every assembly, Members will obtain an Influence, by Noise not sense. By Meanness, not Greatness. By Ignorance not Learning. By contracted Hearts not large souls.
“There is one Thing, my dear sir, that must be attempted and most Sacredly observed or We are all undone. There must be a Decency, and Respect, and Veneration introduced for Persons...of every Rank, or We are undone. In a popular Government, this is our only Way.”
1 in 6 Americans stopped talking to a family member or close friend because of the 2016 election.

Reuters/Ipsos poll (Jan 2017)
1960 Presidential Contest: Nixon vs. Kennedy

“I subscribe completely to the spirit that Senator Kennedy has expressed tonight.”
Coercive Power

Fear, threats, punishment, intimidation, bullying
Incivility will make you unhappy, unhealthy and unattractive even to those who agree with you.
Influential Power

Trust, commitment, buy-in, civility
Key Principles for Successful Legislators
Civility is the Foundation to Success

- Civility forges better human connections and leads to better concrete outcomes.
- Civility fulfills the best of what it is to be human.
- Incivility can be enormously costly and painful to us as individuals and as a nation.
“America, at its best, matches a commitment to principle with a concern for civility. A civil society demands from each of us good will and respect, fair dealing and forgiveness.”
“Politeness and civility are the best capital ever invested in business.”
“Civility is not a sign of weakness.”
LISTENING FOR UNDERSTANDING

Listening for Understanding

- Seek to understand another’s perspective, whether you agree or not.
- Enter the conversation with curiosity and an open mind.
- Ask respectful, clarifying questions to learn rather than to undermine.
Seek to see things from another person’s point of view.

See the other person not as a political label but as a fellow American who cares about our state and country.
Recognize that other reasonable, moral people can reach different conclusions.

Recognize that we don’t know everything and we can benefit from hearing different insights from others.
Conscience

- You can understand and respect others’ perspectives while still honoring the dictates of your own conscience.

Empathy and Humility do not mean you agree.
“That’s just not right....Although we are Trump supporters, we love our neighbors and want them to be able to exercise their freedom of speech just like everybody else.”
Make your case on the merits rather than attacking the character, intelligence or judgement of others.
“The attitude that some deserve our contempt is both wrong and dangerously radical.”

Arthur C. Brooks
“And if [some] people have views that are truly worthy of contempt? Remember that their *views* might be, but that no *person* is.”
Because it’s easy to fixate on differences, it helps to acknowledge shared values, aspirations, experience and note points of agreement. Remember we share a commitment to perfecting the promise of American self-government.
“Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belaboring those problems which divide us.”
PUBLIC Relations

- Respond to Constituents
- Accommodate Visits
  
  Make it a “Good Experience”
- Pay Attention
- Remember: You are a Public Servant
MEDIA Relations

- Don’t shun reporters
- Return calls
- Show courtesy “Don’t fight, make it right”
- Prepare short quotes & talking points in advance
- If you don’t know, say you will find out & get back
- Know what is ”off the record”
- Live or recorded?
Legislative Social Events

- Social Calendar
- RSVP
- Guests/partners invited?
- Mixing with association members
- Building relationships with other legislators
- Thank host and association members
- Freeloading
We have before us the glorious opportunity to inject a new dimension of Love into the veins of our civilization.

- Martin Luther King Jr.
Civility
Listening
Empathy
Humility
Conscience
Advocacy
Common Ground

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QUESTIONS / COMMENTS