

May 27, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

“Americans are fed up with incivility in politics,” according to a recent *USA TODAY* story about a new study by the Center for Political Participation at Allegheny College and a survey about political civility conducted by Zogby International. Among the findings: a majority say they’re “turned off” when politics become “rude and nasty,” and 95% say civility in politics is important for a healthy democracy.

Ours is a most unlikely friendship. In fact, conventional wisdom would not have us speaking to each other, let alone being friends. One of us is a Republican, a political conservative who was a staunch supporter of Mitt Romney in the recent presidential primaries (voted for John McCain), and an evangelical Christian. The other is a Democrat, a political liberal who served as Special Counsel to President Bill Clinton and was an ardent supporter of Sen. Hillary Clinton’s presidential run (voted for Barack Obama), and is of the Jewish faith.

As dissimilar as our religious and political beliefs and opinions are we became fast friends around a shared conviction about the importance of trying to change the polarizing political culture that has become all too common in recent years, and instead, to promote civility as a staple of American politics and life. Together, we launched **CivilityProject.org** on the eve of Barack Obama’s inauguration over a year ago.

CivilityProject.org is a call to people from all races, walks of life, and religious and political persuasions to graciousness, kindness, common decency and respect—civility—toward all people, and particularly those with whom we may disagree. Now that thousands of people across the country have embraced and taken the **Civility Pledge**, we would like to challenge every governor and member of Congress, regardless of party, to lead by example and sign this simple 32-word pledge. It reads:

1. **I will be civil in my public discourse and behavior.**
2. **I will be respectful of others whether or not I agree with them.**
3. **I will stand against incivility when I see it.**

Recognizing this effort already has its critics, on the left and the right, let us be clear about what CivilityProject.org is *not*. It is not a call to surrender personal beliefs, convictions or ideology about anything. It is not a call to limit or regulate free speech. It is not even a call for unity or an end to partisan politics; for there is nothing wrong with partisan politics, if it is defined as rigorous but civil, honest debate on the issues of the day. Such debate informs and breathes life into our republic.

If you agree with us, we would like you to make a public commitment to greater political civility. We are sending this letter to every sitting U.S. governor, senator and representative and ask that you do three things:

1. Sign the pledge and return the enclosed response form to us.
2. Send a copy of the pledge to any candidate challenging you in your next election bid. (You may use the enclosed form or download the form from the website.)
3. Do your best to abide by the pledge and encourage more civility in our society.

With regard to the last point, please understand we and others involved in this effort are not claiming perfection or moral superiority in the area of civility. All of us have, from time to time, been carried away by our own opinions and convictions and overstepped reasonable boundaries of civil disagreement. But, we are pledging to do better and believing that together we can change an increasingly disturbing tone in American political life.

Our website, www.CivilityProject.org, will record the response of every governor and member of Congress so your constituents and others across the country will know if you support these three simple pledge points. Challengers who sign and return the pledge to us will be recorded on the website as well.

Os Guinness is the author of *The Case for Civility: And Why Our Future Depends on It*. Speaking last fall at Duke Divinity School, Guinness offered this perspective on civility. "Classically, civility is a republican virtue, with a small 'r,' and a democratic necessity, with a small 'd.' It is the only way you can have a diverse society, freely but civilly, peacefully."

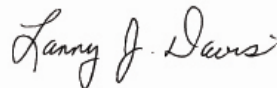
In his book *Civility*, Stephen Carter writes, "Rules of civility are thus also rules of morality; it is morally proper to treat our fellow citizens with respect, and morally improper not to. Our crisis of civility is part of a larger crisis of morality." Today, we respectfully and humbly invite you to join us in forging a more civil America.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



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Founder, CivilityProject.org



Lanny Davis
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Enclosures: Civility Pledge response forms