

The Importance of Civility ~Musings by Julaine K. Appling, President

Civility is the new political buzzword: frequently used and little practiced these days. We heard a great deal about civility in January of this year when Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords (D-AZ) was tragically shot during an open-air town-hall meeting. Many said the shooting happened because of heated political rhetoric—



uncivil, if you will, rhetoric. Politicians, citizens and the media called for a return to civility in politics. And then, Madison happened.

In the wake of the Capitol Chaos, the April 5 elections and the ongoing recall efforts of 16 state senators, we've witnessed things that we've never seen before and perhaps assumed we'd never see in The Badger State. Civility, it seems, was a fleeting notion.

Civility walks hand-in-hand with ethics and morality. It's a hallmark of our civilized society. Our nation and state were founded on Judeo-Christian principles and values. Our notion of civility—defined as courtesy and po-

liteness—is drawn directly from those principles and values.

Many of our laws and the mores we have traditionally practiced are based on the absolute truths espoused in Scriptural principles. Principles such as treating others as we ourselves want to be treated, preferring others before ourselves, respecting human beings because they are created in the image of God, speaking kindly and respectfully—not in anger or derision.

Being uncivil stems directly from a disregard and disdain for such principles. Rather than respect the time-tested, God-given principles for human interaction—whether political or personal, people make themselves the final arbiter of what is civil behavior. In public discourse, that means we are all subject to, quite honestly, the whim of people. If the law doesn't stop uncivil words or behavior and those speaking or acting don't self-monitor, then there are no checks on uncivil discourse or actions.

Our founders understood that self-governing is the prerequisite to making our form of government work. John

Adams said, "Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." Adams understood that moral and religious people self-govern, self-check their behavior—for the good of others and ultimately for the good of society.

I believe what we have witnessed in Wisconsin the last six weeks shows a frightening lack of self-governing—a lack of checking speech and actions in an effort, as the protesters say, "to have their voices heard."

Lack of civility in our politics will not clarify the issues, correct what is wrong, or advance what is right. It destroys trust, demeans people, and further deteriorates the political process that is already, by its nature, rancorous. The more we move away from our Judeo-Christian principles and values, the more we will disrespect anyone who disagrees with us.

Civility must quickly become more than a word in this state and its politics. Here's to self-governing, self-monitoring—a behavior truly in the best interest of all Wisconsin citizens.

Legislative Update

Gov. Walker's budget repair bill, although signed into law, is currently held up by Dane County Judge Maryann Sumi's injunction. The Department of Justice appealed directly to the State Supreme Court to lift the injunction but the Court has yet to indicate if it will take the appeal.

The 2011-2012 state budget is currently in the Joint Finance Committee. For up-to-date information on the committee's activities, visit legis.wisconsin.gov/lfb/jfc.html.

On April 12, Gov. Walker signed Assembly Bill 4, a repeal of the auto insurance mandates established during the last legislative session. The repeal lowers the level of auto insurance coverage required.

WFA continues to advocate for our shared agenda at the State Capitol, including repealing the Healthy Youth Act, modifying divorce reform and protecting life.



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Grassroots Corner ~ by Amy Lewis, Director of Communications & Advocacy

Recall

According to the Government Accountability Board (GAB), 19 committees have filed to recall all 16 eligible State Senators. The Wisconsin constitution stipulates that elected officials must be in office for one year before they can be recalled.

Two committees have already submitted the required number of signatures (1/4 of the votes cast in the last gubernatorial election): the Committee to Recall Dan Kapanke (R-La Crosse) and the Committee to Recall Hopper (R-Fond du Lac). Committees have 60 days from the date of filing to turn in signatures; deadlines range from April 25 to May 16.

A recall petition does not automatically remove an elected official from office—it initiates an election in which voters choose to either retain or reject an elected official. **Recall committees are still gathering signatures and re-election campaigns are organizing for the elections.**

Recount

At the time of print, Supreme Court candidate JoAnne Kloppenburg had not called for a recount. However, despite Justice David Prosser's almost 7,000-vote lead, she is expected to call for a statewide recount. The incredible discovery that the City of Brookfield's votes had not been reported on election night no doubt garnered this election a spot in the history books.

What You Can Do—it's up to you to protect your vote!

☆ **Observe** By law, you are allowed to observe the recount process in your district.

☆ **Document** Familiarize yourself with Wisconsin's *Election Recount Procedures*, available on www.yourwisconsinvote.org, and document the recount process.

☆ **Report** any suspicious behavior to your local political party of preference. The party officials should then report to the authorities.

Regroup

We thought we would be spending this summer working on our legislative agenda and getting ready for the 2012 elections. Boy, were we ever wrong! It's election season all over again.

There are a number of ways you can get involved. We urge you to contact your local political party or citizen action group of preference. If you are new to activism, campaigning or politics in general, we highly suggest that you attend American Majority (AM) Wisconsin's activist training. For event information and registration, visit AM's website at americanmajority.org/wisconsin/. WFC is co-sponsoring some of these events.



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