



Moving from Campaigning to Legislating



Remarks by **Senator Richard T. Moore**
President, National Conference of State Legislatures

Legislative Effectiveness Committee

Thursday, December 9, 2010

2:45 – 4:00pm

Moving from Campaigning to Legislating

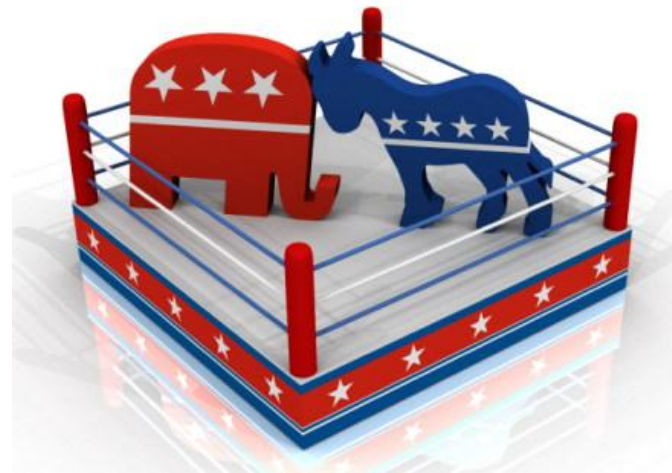


“Can’t they all just get along? Search for civility grows in Washington after mid-terms.”

- *USA Today* / November 19-21, 2010

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“Nasty political mudslinging; campaign attacks and counterattacks; personal insults; outrageous newspaper invective; innovative new forms of politicking capitalizing on a growing technology, all sounds pretty familiar.”



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It's been said that negative political campaigns are “as American as Mississippi mud!”



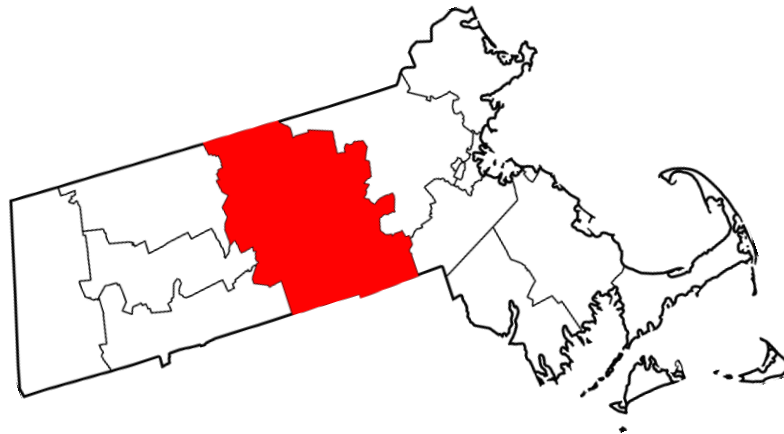
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“In fact, the presidential election of 1800 – the first partisan national election – was an angry, dirty, crisis-ridden contest that seemed to threaten the nation’s very survival. A bitter partisan battle between Federalist John Adams and Democratic Republican Thomas Jefferson.”



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Let me give just two examples of the tenor of state legislative campaigns from my own Central Massachusetts region during the 2010 election cycle.



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“Senator took bribes AND LEFT PAPER TRAIL.”

- *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*/ November 21, 2010

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“Why won’t he tell the truth? Is he really desperate to get elected?”

- Incumbent’s campaign flier

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Moving from campaigning to legislating in cases such as those I've cited might not prove to be easy. Winners and losers in both races seem intent on keeping the fight going and, perhaps, until the next election cycle two years from now.



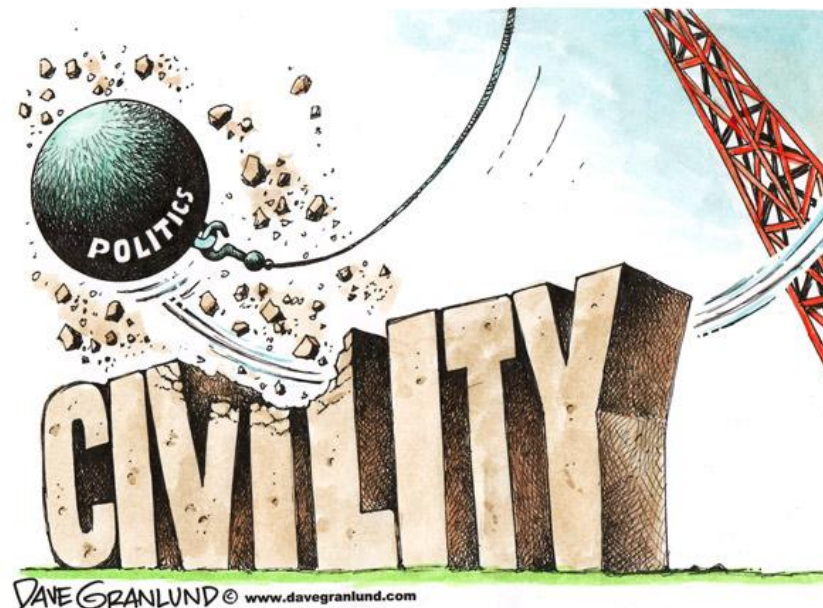
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California (www.fppc.ca.gov) actually provides every candidate with a “Fair Campaign Practices Pledge,” however, the pledge is voluntary.



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Our campaign finance, elections and ethics laws may be a place to look for ways to promote civility in campaigns that would help to promote a better atmosphere for legislating.



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“Fair” practices include: criticism of a voting record, criticism of a policy position, comparison of candidates’ experience, questions about leadership ability, and debate of tough issues.

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“Unfair” practices include: personal attacks, rumors and innuendo, distortions and lies, unsubstantiated charges of misconduct, and assertions that candidates are qualified or unqualified based on ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, religious beliefs, or physical condition.

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“One of the things I most admired about President Reagan was his ability to disagree without being disagreeable... While President Reagan and Speaker Tip O’Neill had sharp political differences, they never had sharp words. Their arguments were never nasty. They were never personal. At the end of the day, their battles shifted from policy to who could tell the most outlandish story or the funniest Irish joke. It is an example that all of us, I believe, should do a better job of following.”

- Massachusetts Congressman Jim McGovern (D-MA 3)

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“Sitting with those with opposing views, negotiating in good faith and attempting to reach solutions is often vilified by hard-liners on both sides of the aisle. Reaching solutions is not the goal for many today. Rather, it is to draw sharp distinctions and scoring partisan political points, even if that means that problems confronting our country go unsolved. Perhaps, that is why the public is so dissatisfied and angry with incumbents of all political persuasions, especially those in charge.”

- *U.S. Senator Susan Collins (R-ME)*

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A 2002 survey conducted for the Institute for Global Ethics reported that 86% of the respondents thought that attack-oriented campaigning is unethical, and 82% said that such attacks make citizens less likely to vote.

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KRC RESEARCH

Two out of three Americans, according to an April 2010 survey by KRC Research, consider a general lack of civility to be a major problem for the nation, and 72% think that poor behavior has gotten worse in recent years.

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KRC RESEARCH

Some 83% of those polled said, “People should not vote for the candidates and politicians who are uncivil.” Nearly half of all Americans say they are tuning out of government and politics, 46% are tuning out of media commentary and 38% are tuning out of news coverage.

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By promoting civility in legislative business, constituent meetings and, even, in the political campaigns, state legislators can help to restore collegiality and build consensus for addressing the real problems facing our states and nation.



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Former Congressman Jim Leach, who chairs the National Endowment for the Humanities (www.neh.gov) has launched a nationwide speaking tour to promote civility, so far visiting 40 states.



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The Institute for Civility in Government (www.instituteforcivility.org) is a grass-roots, non-partisan, non-profit organization that is building civility in a society that all too often seems tilted toward uncivil speech and actions.

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There is another effort begun in 2009 called the Civility Project
www.civilityproject.org



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“Civility Pledge”

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

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Council on Governmental Ethics Laws (COGEL)

“If we want to make the transition from campaigning to governing more smooth so that finding solutions to the serious issues facing our states and nation; we need to put country above party and personality. We don’t have to agree, and probably never will, on every goal or on every means to achieve our goals, but we need to work together for the benefit of those we are elected to serve.”

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Athenian Oath

We will never bring disgrace on this our City by an act of dishonesty or cowardice.

We will fight for the ideals and Sacred Things of the City both alone and with many.

We will revere and obey the City's laws, and will do our best to incite a like reverence and respect in those above us who are prone to annul them or set them at naught.

We will strive increasingly to quicken the public's sense of civic duty.

Thus, in all these ways, we will transmit this City, not only not less, but greater and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us.

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“Two roads diverged in a wood and I...I took the one less traveled by...and that has made all the difference.”

- Robert Frost, *The Road Not Taken*

I believe that we can make a difference.

Senator Richard T. Moore

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