

Civil discourse

Many Americans believe our democracy is threatened because we neither respect nor listen to one another; intense distrust and animosity have apparently replaced meaningful engagement.

Recently, several letter writers have pointed out the lack of respect in our political discourse. As part of our commitment to diversity and inclusion, the League of Women Voters Henderson County promotes civility in all of our communication as the only way for us — families, communities, states, nations — to understand each other. It's impossible to converse when name-calling, insults and vilification replace dialogue.

The National Institute for Civil Discourse (nicd.arizona.edu) offers guidelines for respectful communication with people with whom we disagree politically. Some of these are: looking for areas of agreement, using precise and truthful language, and listening patiently with genuine curiosity to understand another's point of view.

At the same time, we should avoid: questioning the beliefs, values or patriotism of others; using inflammatory namecalling; interrupting; making sweeping generalizations; attacking the character of others; and demonizing those with whom we disagree.

While not easy to follow, these guidelines can show us a way forward as one people working to find solutions to shared challenges; these guidelines can help us heed our "better angels."

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