Polarization & Incivility in American Politics: Is Congressional Gridlock Affecting U.S. State Legislatures?

Texas A&M International University

Nicholas P. Lovrich, Regents Professor Emeritus
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Washington State University

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

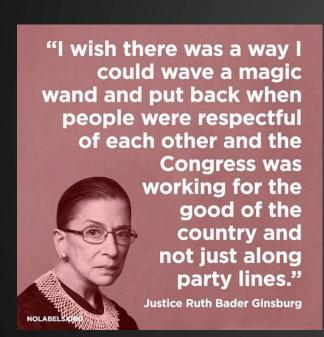
SAM REED

14TH SECRETARY OF STATE (3-TERM) ORGANIZER OF MAINSTREAM REPUBLICANS OF WASHINGTON

STEVEN D. STEHR

SAM REED DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR IN CIVIC EDUCATION AND PUBLIC CIVILITY THOMAS S. FOLEY INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY & PUBLIC SERVICE

ROB BOATRIGHT, CHAIR, DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, CLARK UNIVERSITY DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH, NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR CIVIL DISCOURSE







Bipartisan Agreement that Incivility in Politics is Problematic (2019)

Of Americans Surveyed...

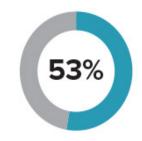
INCIVILITY EXPERIENCES



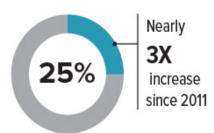
Experienced incivility



Quit paying attention to politics because of incivility



Stopped buying from a company because of uncivil representatives



Experienced cyberbullying

INCIVILITY PERCEPTIONS

75%

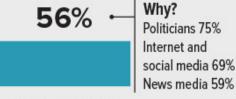
Think incivility has risen to crisis levels



Describe the 2016 presidential election as uncivil



Thinks incivility leads to intimidation and threats

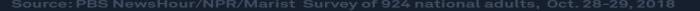


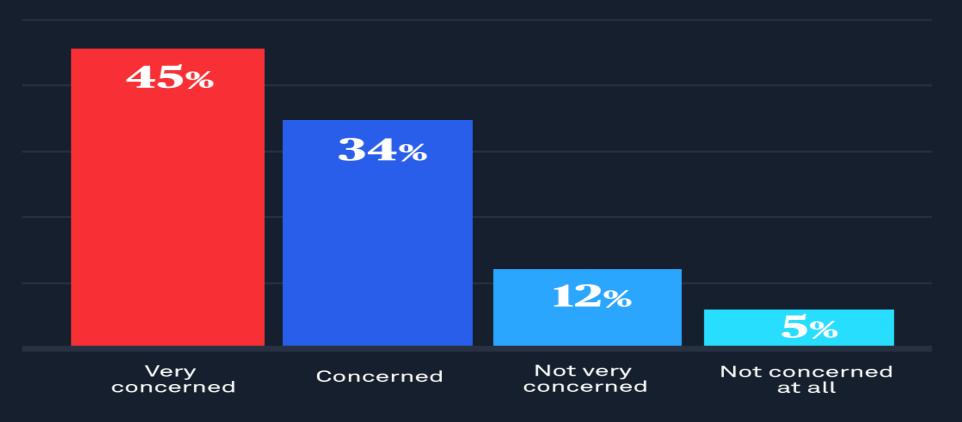
Expect incivility to get worse

get worse

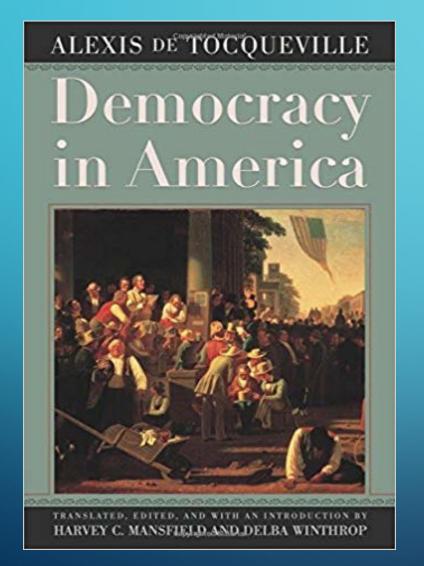
Source: National Institute for Civil Discourse, ICMA, Weber Shandwick, Powell Tate.

Poll: How concerned are you that the negative tone and lack of civility in Washington will lead to violence or acts of terror:



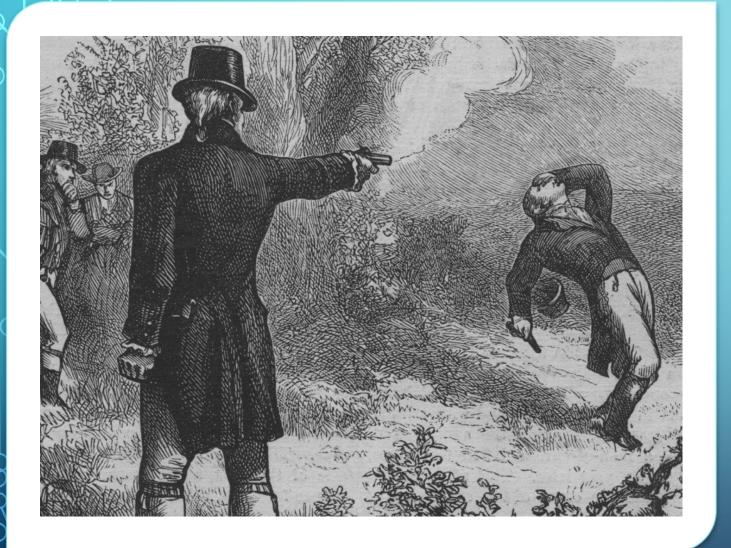


Has Politics Ever Been Civil in the United States? Recurring Cycles of Civility and Incivility a Part of U.S. History

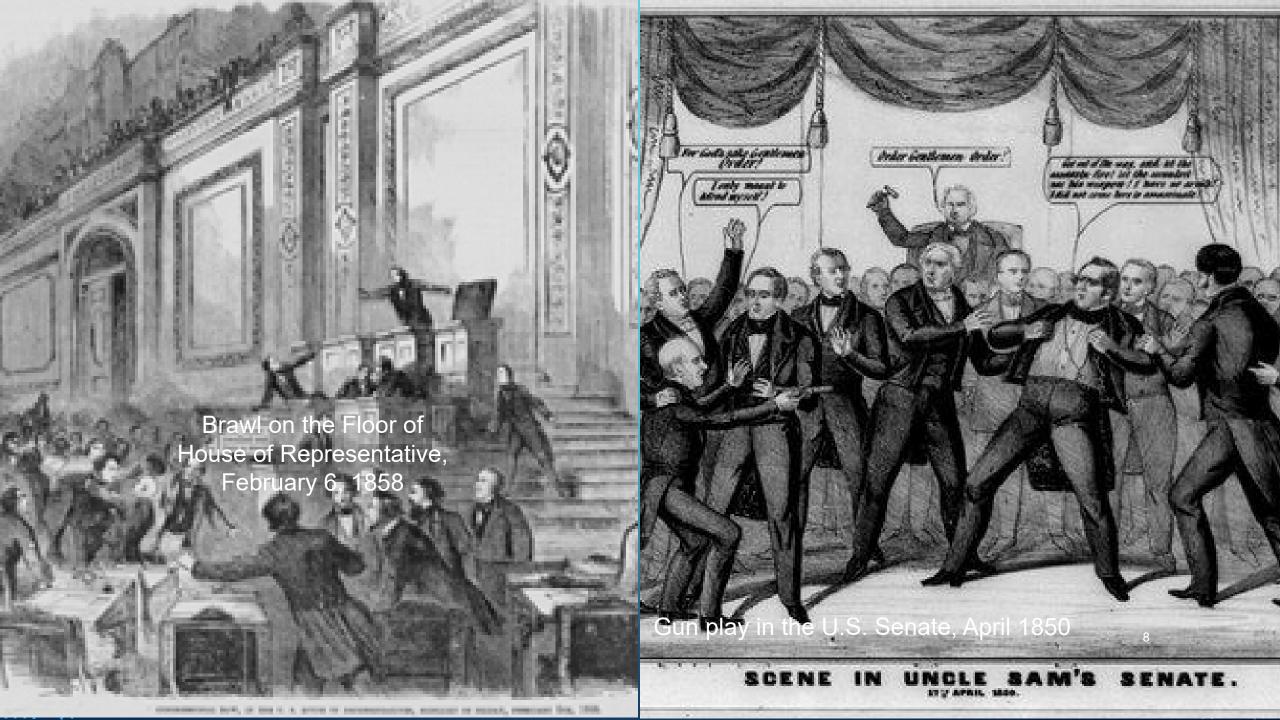


"There is still some memory of the strict code of politeness, but no one knows quite what it said or where to find it."

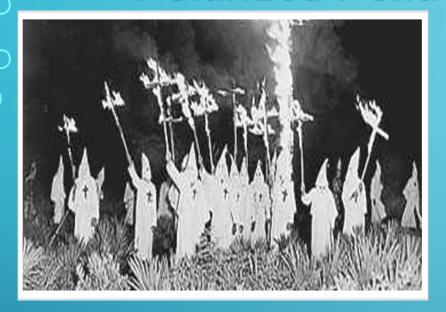
Legacy derives from courtroom decorum and the one-time high percent of legislators who were "lawyers" who crafted legislative rules, norms and traditions of respect, comity & civility



DUEL BETWEEN
AARON BURR AND
ALEXANDER
HAMILTON, JULY 11,
1804



Polarized Politics in the 1920s in America



RESTRICT

ALL

IMMIGRATION!

PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR CHILDREN

AGAINST

Ruinous Labor and Business Competition

THROUGH

UNRESTRICTED IMMIGRATION.

Source: Edward G. Hartmann, American Immigration, Lerner Publications (adapted)

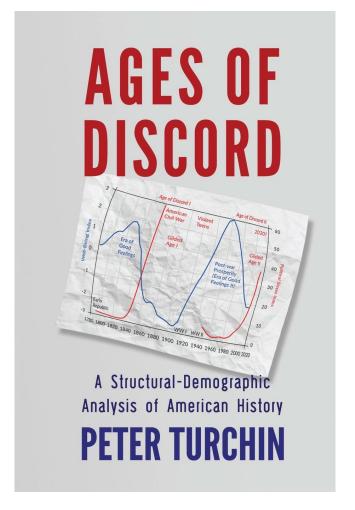




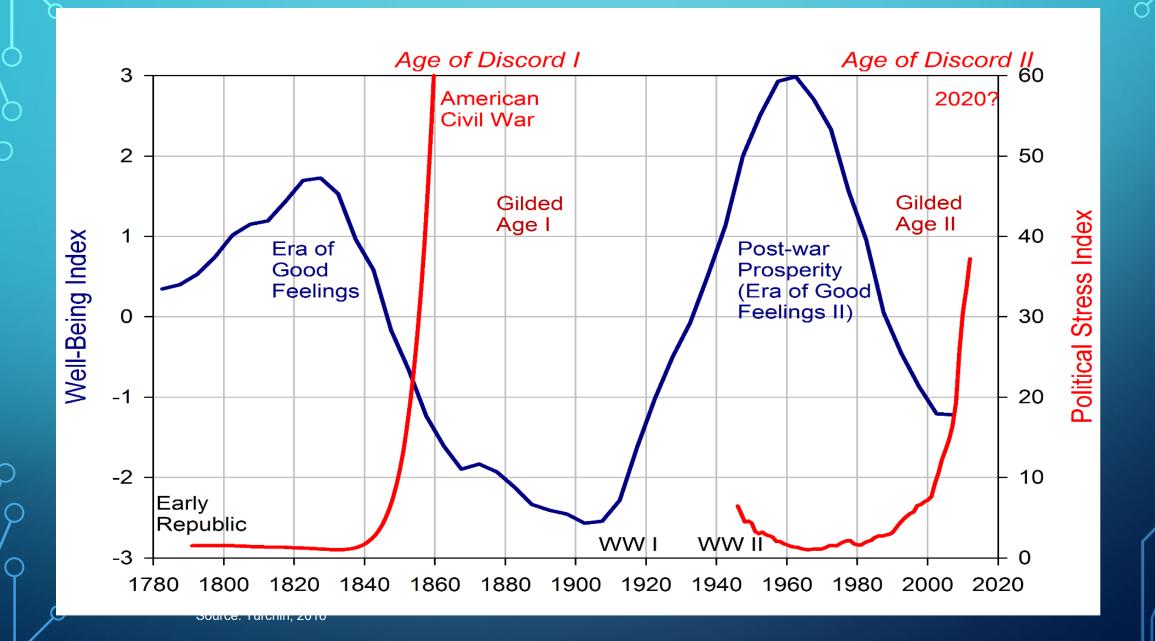


Remember the 1960s?

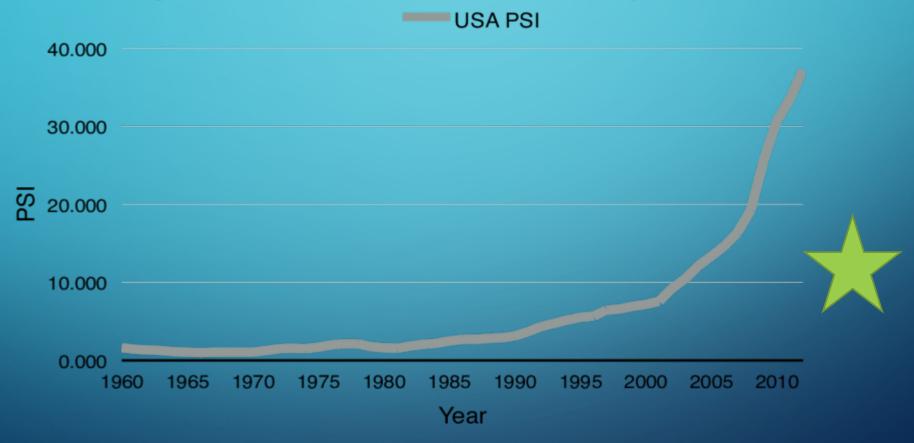




THE CYCLICAL NATURE OF POLITICAL INSTABILITY IN THE U.S.: A VERY WELL DOCUMENTED PHENOMENON



Political Stress Index in the U.S., 1960-2010: Current Condition of High Stress Reflective of a New Cycle of Discord



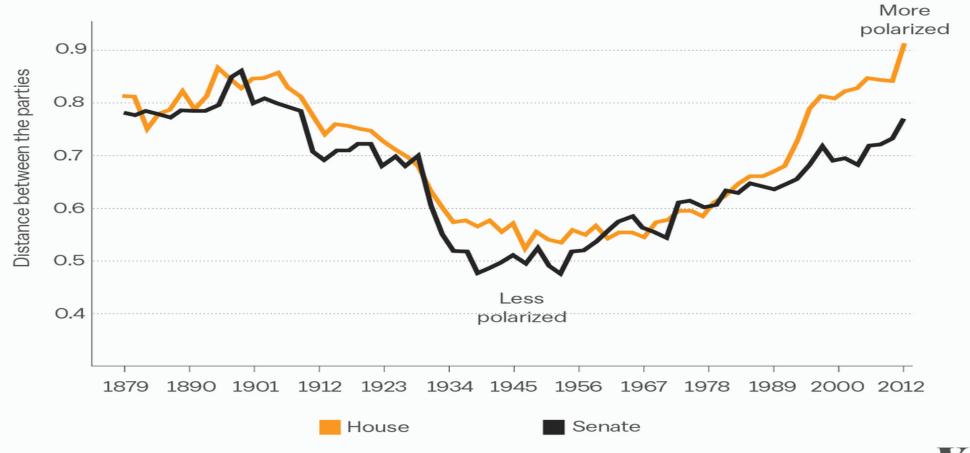
Central Stress-Inducing Factors in Contemporary U.S. Politics

Political Polarization, Declining Trust in Public Institutions, and Declining Economic Well-being – all likely Contributing to an Increase in Contemporary Public Incivility

Increasing Polarization Among the Political Elites

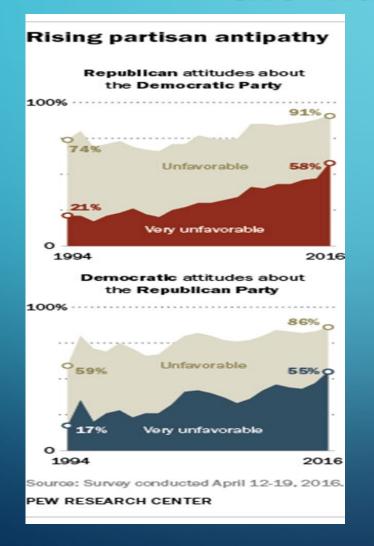
Party polarization, 1879 - 2012

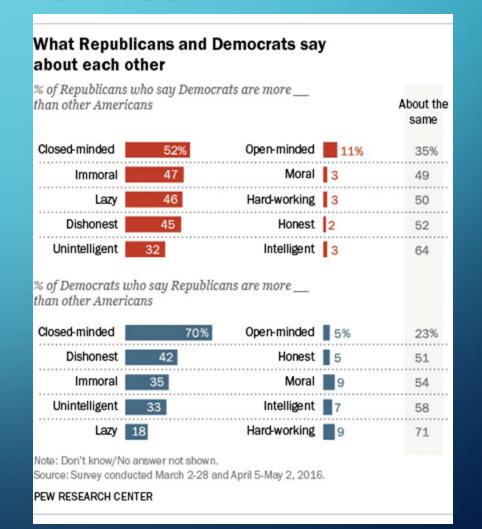
The ideological gap between the Democratic and Republican caucuses





Increasing Political Polarization Among the Mass Publics





Thursday, April 11, 2019 Vol. 68 • No. 15

Serving Joint Base Lewis-McChord and the South Sound military community since 1951.

NorthwestMilitary.com

The ANGER



STARS STRIPES. JOINT FORCE-BRAVO IN HONDURAS | NEW AIM FOR AF FITNESS TEST

FREE

No more FOX, CNN and MSNBC

MILITARY EXCHANGES TUNE OUT TV NEWS DUE TO 'DIVISIVE POLITICAL NATURE,' AAFES SAYS

By Kim Gamel, Stars and Stripes (Copyright 2019)

INCIVIL DISCOURSE AND POLITICAL POLARIZATION: AN ISSUE FOR THE U.S. MILITARY

Penetration of Incivility into US Churches – NICD Initiative: Definition of Civility

GOLDEN RULE

—2020—

The institute is primarily working with Christian denominations in implementing its program from its Washington office.

Among those that developed **Golden Rule 2020** are the National Council of Churches, National Association of Evangelicals, Presbyterian Church USA, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, American Baptist Churches USA, Mormon Women for Ethical Government, and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Cheryl Graeve, national organizer for the institute, observes that the campaign's title is rooted in the widely held value among religious and non-religious people and Christians and non-Christians of "treating another person as you expect to be treated." She notes that our democracy thrives on the diversity of ideas, but that "We've got to have the will to engage in those different ideas... from a place of common respect and common listening to each other."

SERIOUS LIMITS TO THE GOLDEN RULE DEFINITION OF CIVILITY ARE EVER-PRESENT

Martin Luther King's Warning in Letter From Birmingham Jail is illustrative:

"The Pitfalls of Decorum"

...the white moderate, who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice.

REACTION TO "CAVOURTING WITH THE ENEMY"



LEARNING FROM THE AUTO EMISSIONS TEST GUY

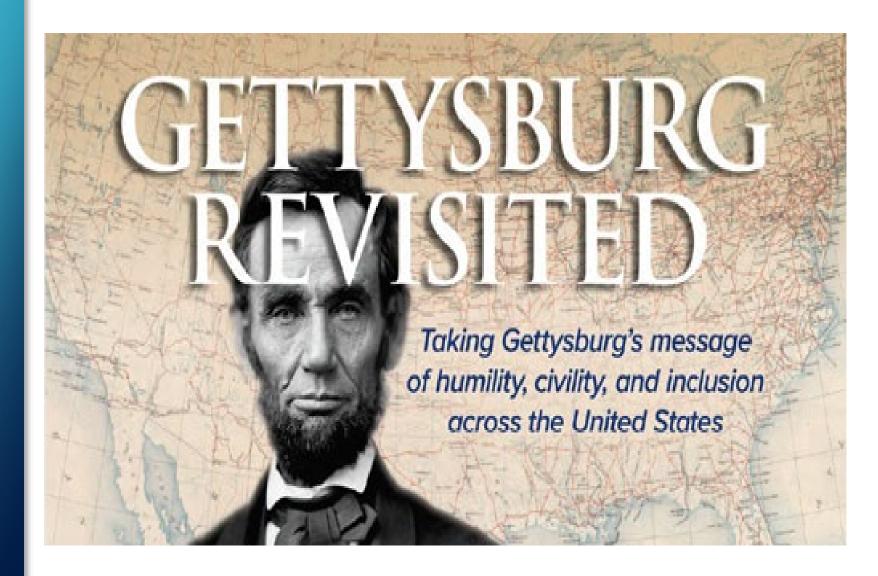
MIKE'S EMISSIONS TEST SHACK STATE STREET, BOISE, IDAHO, MAY 2018

COMPLIMENTS OF GARY MONCRIEF, EMERITUS PROFESSOR, BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY



GETTYSBURG NOUNDATION RECONCILIATION SITE PROGRAM: **WORKING IN BADLY DIVIDED** COMMUNITIES

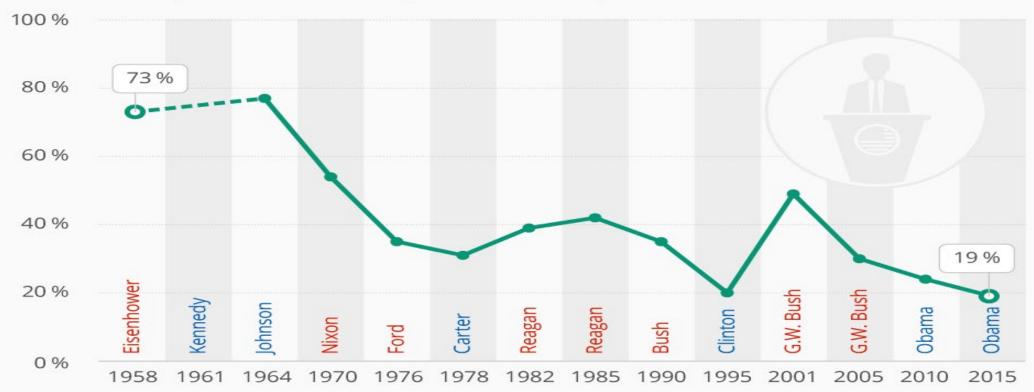
Renewed Relevance of Healing
 Messages and Civil Discourse



Declining Trust in American Political Institutions

Public Trust In The U.S. Government Has Plummeted

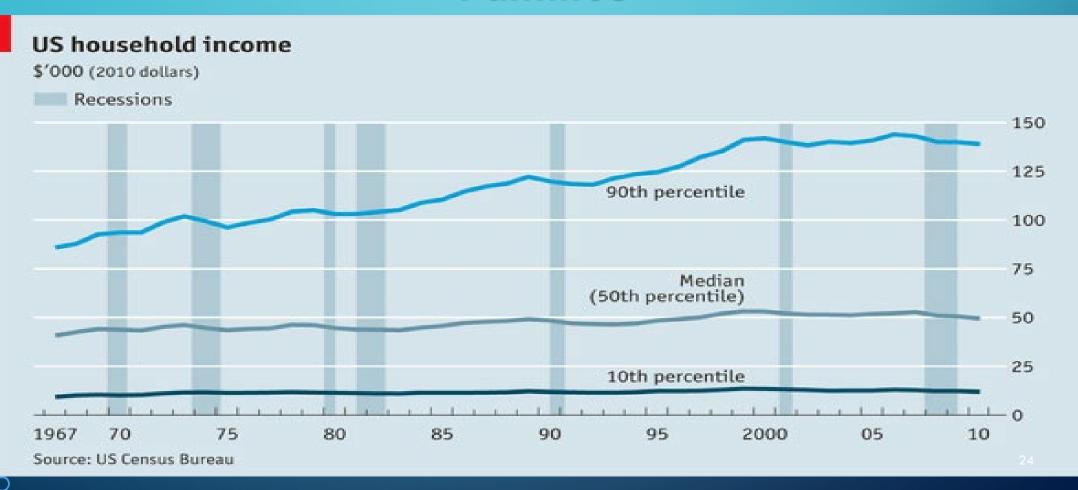
% of the U.S. public who trust the government always / most of the time





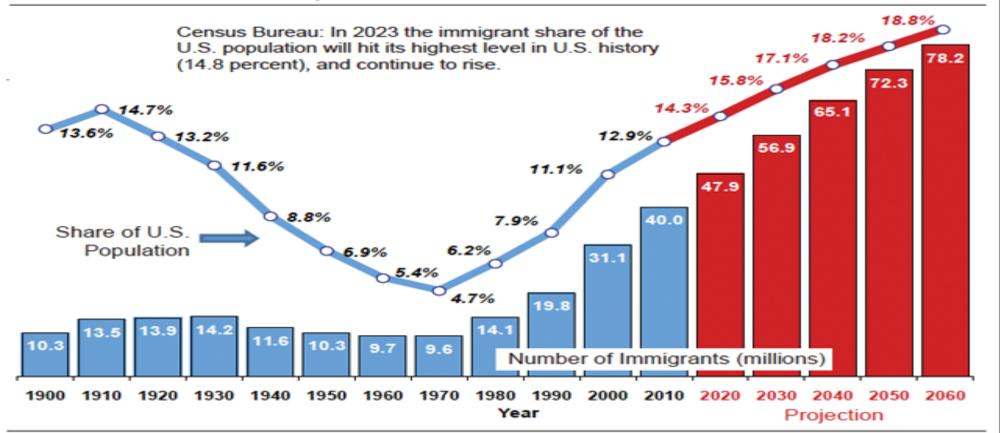


Household Income Nearly Flat for Most American Families



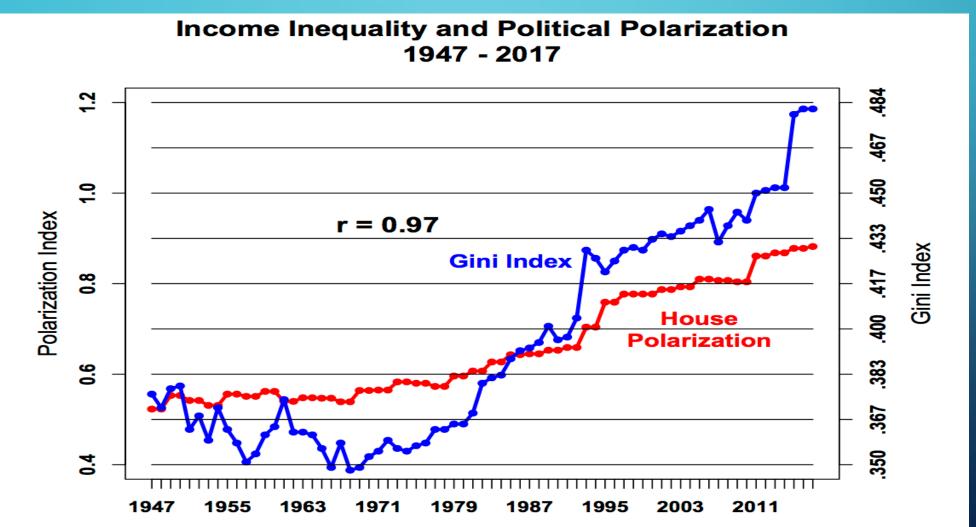
Fear of Increasing Immigration

Figure 1. Number and Percent of Immigrants in the U.S., 1900-2010; Plus Census Bureau Projections to 2060



Source: Decennial censuses for 1900 to 2000, American Community Survey for 2010. Census Bureau population projections released March 2015.

Link Between Rising Income Inequality and Polarization



The Politics of Anger, Fear, and Resentment

A NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

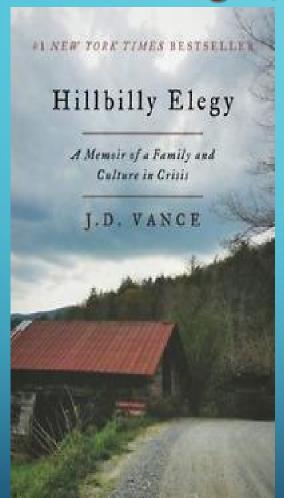
ARLIE RUSSELL HOCHSCHILD

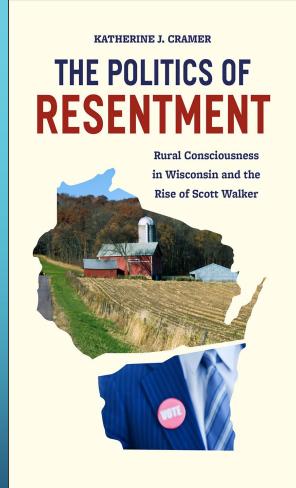
STRANGERS IN THEIR OWN LAND



ANGER AND MOURNING ON THE AMERICAN RIGHT

"Masterly," — Atal Gawande, The New Yorker





IDENTITY

THE DEMAND FOR

DIGNITY AND

THE POLITICS OF

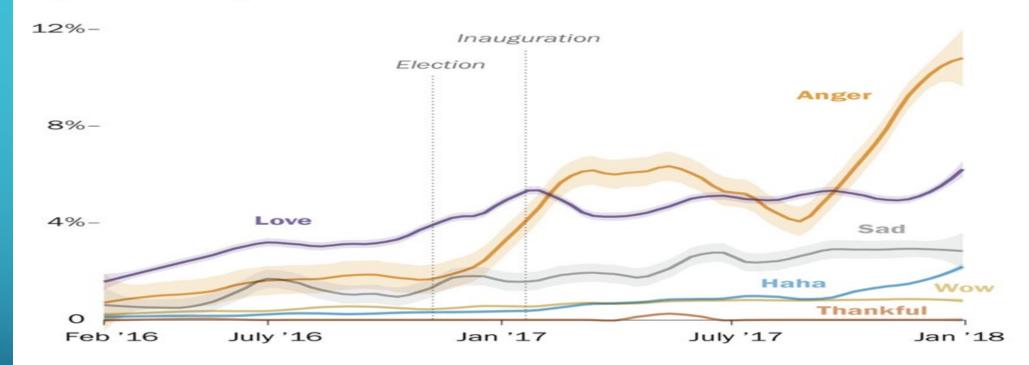
RESENTMENT

FRANCIS FUKUYAMA

New York Times bestselling author

After 2016 election, angry reactions overtook love reactions from the Facebook audience

% of reactions to posts that were ...



Note: The chart shows the composition of reactions to the average member's post over time, as a proportion of the total, including likes. Likes, the most common reaction, are excluded from the graph, but included in the calculation of each reaction's share of the total. The shaded regions are the 95% confidence band for the estimated trends.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Facebook posts created by members of Congress between Feb. 23, 2016 and Dec. 31, 2017.

"Taking Sides on Facebook: How Congressional Outreach Changed Under President Trump"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

"GRIDLOCK"

PUBLIC CONSENSUS ON IMPORTANT PUBLIC POLICIES NOT TRANSLATED INTO PUBLIC POLICY IN CONGRESS



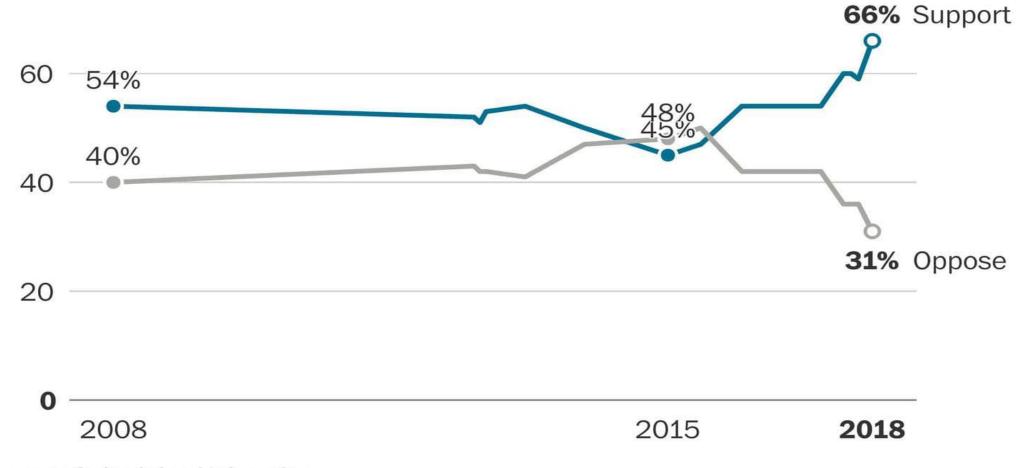
AMONG AMERICANS...

NATION TRACKER

70% support allowing DREAMers to stay in U.S.

MARGIN OF ERROR: +/- 2.6%

Support for stricter gun laws hits 10-year high

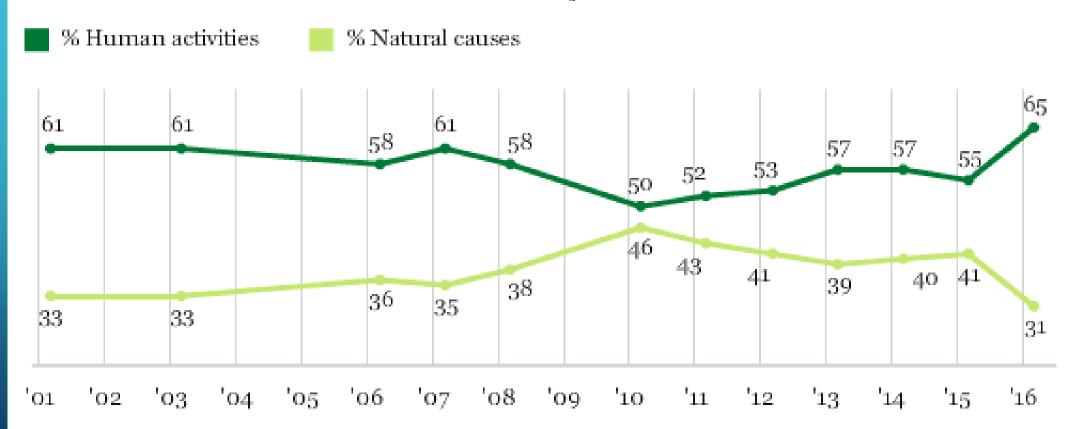


Source: Quinnipiac University

WASHINGTON POST

Perceived Cause of Global Warming

And from what you have heard or read, do you believe increases in the Earth's temperature over the last century are due more to -- [the effects of pollution from human activities (or) natural changes in the environment that are not due to human activities]?

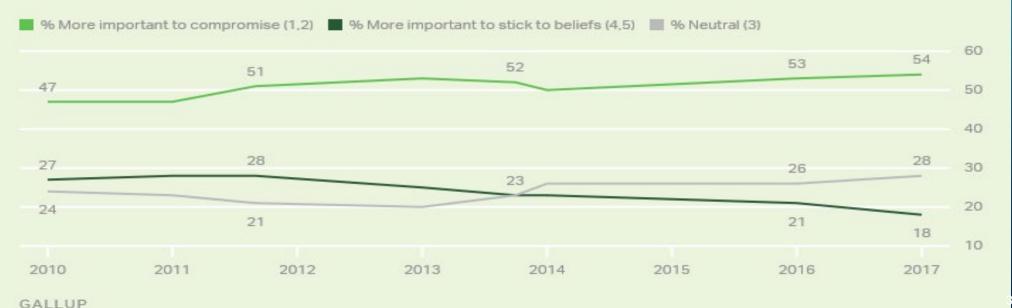


GALLUP'

Majority of Americans Favor Political Leaders who Compromise

More Important for Leaders in Washington to Stick to Their Beliefs or Compromise?

Next, we have a question about the best approach for political leaders to follow in Washington. Where would you rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means it is more important for political leaders to compromise in order to get things done and 5 means it is more important for political leaders to stick to their beliefs even if little gets done?



HAS GRIDLOCK & HYPER-POLARIZATION TAKEN PLACE AT THE STATE LEVEL?

• ALAN GREENBLATT'S

JUNE, 2017 ARTICLE IN

GOVERNING POSES

CORE CONCERN

"CHECKS AND
IMBALANCES: WITH A
CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS
CONSUMING WASHINGTON,
STATE LAWMAKERS ARE
UPENDING THEIR OWN
NORMS AS WELL."

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN OUR 50 STATE LEGISLATURES?

TWO NOTEWORTHY STUDIES:

- NCSL 2015-2016 STUDY –
 SURVEY OF STATE
 LEGISLATORS (N=1,620);
 10 STATE CASE STUDIES
- WSU FOLEY INSTITUTE

 STUDY OF 2018-19
 SURVEY OF STATE

 LEGISLATIVE LOBBYISTS

 (N=1,300+); 12 STATE

 "OVER-SAMPLE" CASES

 WITH 30+ RESPONDENTS

THE NCSL STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

SETTING: 2015-16 LEGISLATIVE SESSIONS IN STATE LEGISLATURES

STUDY CONDUCTED PRIOR TO THE 2013 NATIONAL ELECTION

ELECTION ADDED TO THE ONGOING POLARIZATION OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES AND HEIGHTENED PUBLIC POLITICAL DISCOURSE INCIVILITY

HIGHLIGHTS:

- 1. DISTINCTION BETWEEN POLARIZATION, INCIVILITY AND RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING IN STATE LEGISLATURES; PUBLIC INTEREST IS BEING SERVED
- 2. STATES HAVE BEEN AFFECTED, SOME MORE THAN OTHERS, BUT HAVE FOR THE MOST PART BEEN ABLE TO MAINTAIN THEIR TRADITION OF RESPONSIBLE COMPROMISE IN THE INTEREST OF THE PUBLIC INTEREST (hopefulness) 36
- 3. NOTE: GARY MONCRIEF AT BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY INVOLVED IN BOTH STUDIES

THE WSU FOLEY INSTITUTE-SUPPORTED STUDY: 2018-19 NATIONAL SURVEY OF STATE LEGISLATIVE LOBBYISTS

Multiple-institution effort by a team of 22 scholars located at 11 universities supported with funding from the National Institute for Civil Discourse at the Univ. of Arizona and ongoing support from the Thomas S. Foley Institute for Public Policy & Public Service, the William D. Ruckelshaus Center, and the Division of Governmental Studies & Services at Washington State University.

RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS & THEIR UNIVERSITY AFFILIATIONS

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS (AR) - William Schreckhise

UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS (KS) - John Pierce & Burdett Loomis

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY (ID) — Gary Moncrief, Stephanie Witt, Luke Fowler & Jaclyn Kettler

BRADLEY UNIVERSITY (IL) - Megan Remmel, R. Craig Curtis

OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY (OR) - Brent Steel, Leanne Giordono & Claire McMorris

UNIVERSITY OF UTAH (UT) – Christopher Simon

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY (OH) - Daniel Chand

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS and RENO (NV) — John Tennert and Robert Morin

SHIPPENSBURG UNIVERSITY (PA) — Michael Moltz

DUKE UNIVERSITY (NC) – Leslie Winner and John Hood

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY (WA) — Francis Benjamin, Steven Stehr, Christina Sanders, & Nicholas Lovrich

NATIONAL SURVEY OF STATE LEGISLATIVE LOBBYISTS, 2018-19

HIGHLIGHT: MORE PESSIMISTIC VIEW THAN LEGISLATORS REGARDING PROSPECTS FOR GRIDLOCK AT THE LEVEL OF STATE LEGISLATURES IN EVIDENCE AMONG THOSE WHOSE JOB IT IS TO MOVE LEGISLATION THROUGH STATE LEGISLATURES

SURVEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- COMPLETED SURVEYS = 1,200+ (on-line Qualtrics + mail follow-up)
- RETURNS FROM ALL 50 STATES
- AVE. RESPONSES PER STATE = 25+
- OVERSAMPLES (3O+) for AR, KS, ID, WA, UT, CA, NV, IL, IA, OH, PA, OR & NC
- MANY FORMER STATE LEGISLATORS; DIVERSE GROUP, INCLUDING AGENCY LIAISON PERSONNEL, NON-PROFITS, PUBLIC INTEREST GROUPS, ETC. 39
- RICH COLLECTION OF COMMENTS AND COMMENTARIES

HIGHLIGHTS FROM LOBBYISTS' SURVEY

QUESTION: HOW IMPORTANT ARE CIVILITY AND CIVIL DISCOURSE IN PRODUCING GOOD PUBLIC POLICY? [Mean Response]

NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT (1) UNCERTAIN (5-6) ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL (10)

Natl. average 8.34

TEXAS 9.21

WASHINGTON 8.35

WISCONSIN SOUTH CAROLINA

6.9 9.7

QUESTION: WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF CIVILITY AMONG LEGISLATORS DURING THE LAST TWO LEGISLATIVE SESSIONS?

VERY UNCIVIL (1) UNCERTAIN (5-6) VERY CIVIL (10)

Natl. average 5.43

TEXAS 4.64

WASHINGTON 5.98

OKLAHOMA MARYLAND

2.9 7.3

QUESTION: ARE THE NORMS OF FAIR PLAY BREAKING DOWN?

NOT OCCURRING (1) UNCERTAIN (2) OCCURRING (3)

Natl. average 2.56

TEXAS 2.73

WASHINGTON 2.52

MASSACHUSETTS SOUTH DAKOTA

1.6

QUESTION: ARE THERE NOW FEWER OR MORE NON-PARTISAN AREAS?

FEWER (1) SAME (2) MORE (3)

Natl. average 1.61

TEXAS 1.42

WASHINGTON 1.55

INDIANA MINNESOTA

1.3 2.1

QUESTION: DURING YOUR CAREER, HAVE LEGISLATORS BECOME MORE PARTISAN OR MORE BIPARTISAN?

MORE PARTISAN (1) UNCERTAIN (4) MORE BIPARTISAN (7)

Natl. average 3.26

TEXAS 3.0

WASHINGTON 2.77

NEVADA MARYLAND 4.6

QUESTION: COMPARED TO TEN YEARS AGO, ARE LEGISLATIVE LEADERS MORE OF LESS CIVIL?

LESS CIVIL (1) UNICERTAIN (5) MORE CIVIL (9)

Natl. average 3.89

TEXAS 2.93

WASHINGTON 3.24

MAINE NEW MEXICO

2.7 5.2

2

QUESTION: ARE LEGISLATORS REFLECTING THE POLARIZED ENVIRONMENT OF THE U.S. CONGRESS?

STRONGLY AGREE (1) AGREE (2) DISAGREE (3) STRONGLY DISAGREE (4)

Natl. average 1.81

TEXAS 1.5

WASHINGTON 2.06

KENTUCKY HAWAII

1.2 2.3

QUESTION: COMPARED TO THE U.S. CONGRESS, TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU FEEL PARTISAN POLARIZATION IS TAKING PLACE IN YOUR STATE LEGISLATURE?

MUCH LESS POLARIZED (1) SAME (3) FAR MORE POLARIZED (5)

Natl. average 2.29

TEXAS 2.71

WASHINGTON 1.91

MARYLAND OKLAHOMA
1.5 3.1

QUESTION: DOES A DECREASE IN LEGISLATORS' RESPECT FOR LEGISLATIVE TRADITIONS, NORMS AND CUSTOMS CAUSE INCIVILITY?

STRONGLY AGREE (1) AGREE (2) DISAGREE (3) STRONGLY DISAGREE (4)

Natl. average 2.25

TEXAS 1.86

WASHINGTON 2.45

ALASKA MASSACHUSETTS

1.7 3.0

QUESTION: WOULD REACHING ACROSS THE AISLE AND VISITING OTHER LEGISLATORS FROM THE OPPOSING PARTY IN THEIR LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT PROMOTE CIVILITY?

POOR IDEA (1) UNCERTAIN (3) EXCELLENT IDEA (5)

Natl. average 3.70

TEXAS 3.62

WASHINGTON 3.96

NEW HAMPSHIRE INDIANA

2.9 4.3

TEXAS LOBBYISTS COMMENTS

MOVING FROM CENTER TO EXTREME

THE TEXAS LEGISLATIVE BODY IS MOVING FARTHER AWAY FROM THE CENTER INTO EXTREME POLAR OPPOSITES WITH VERY LITTLE ROOM TO NEGOTIATE ON KEY ISSUES EXCEPT THE STATE BUDGET.

WELL FUNDED OPERATIVES IN EACH PARTY PULLING MODERATES OUT OF THE EQUATION.

OPENNESS TO ANOTHER'S VIEW

OUR CULTURE IS NO LONGER INTERESTED IN UNDERSTANDING WHAT ANOTHER PERSON HAS TO SAY. THEY DON'T ENTER THE DISCUSSION WITH THE INTENT OF LEARNING ANYTHING.

THEY DON'T PURSUE POLICY ISSUES WITH THE INTENT TO FIND A SOLUTION, THEY FIND A "SOLUTION" THE LIKE AND LOOK FOR A POLICY ISSUE THAT THEY CAN USE TO PUSH IT THROUGH.

TEXAS LOBBYISTS COMMENTS

TRIBALISM

PROTECTED. THIS CAUSES THEM TO VIEW EVERYTHING FROM THE OPPOSING SIDE AS WRONG SIMPLY BECAUSE IT COMES FROM THE OPPOSING SIDE.

WE HAVE TO END OUR CULTURAL LOVE AFFAIR WITH TRIBALISM, VIEWING OURSELVES FIRST AND FOREMOST AS A MEMBER OF A PARTICULAR GROUP, RATHER THAN AS AN INDIVIDUAL.

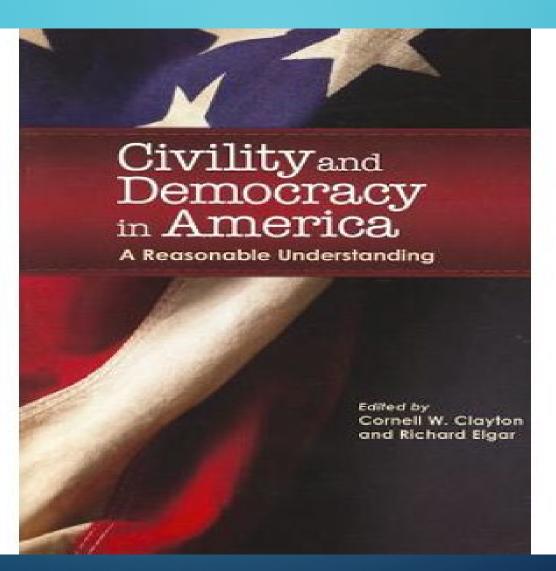
I DESPISE BEING REFERRED TO AS A "SPECIAL INTEREST". THIS IS A TERM USED BY THE LOSING SIDE OF ANY DEBATE IN AN ATTEMPT TO SHAME THEIR OPPONENTS WHO WON THE DEBATE. IN OUR COUNTRY, EVERYONE HAS AN INTEREST AND NONE ARE SPECIAL.

NEED TO FOCUS ON WHAT IS BEST FOR ALL

ADOPTING GROUP MENTALITY, ..., PRODUCES THE PREDICTABLE EFFECT THAT PEOPLE SACRIFICE OTHER VALUES THEY MIGHT OTHERWISE PRIORITIZE IN ORDER TO FURTHER THE INTEREST OF THEIR GROUP.

FINDING THE "BEST" SOLUTION OR IDENTIFYING THE TRUTH COMES SECOND TO FURTHERING THE INTERESTS OF YOUR GROUP BECAUSE YOUR IDENTITY IS DETERMINED BY YOUR GROUP AFFILIATION.

FURTHER READING: WSU PRESS



KEY TO CHANGE CANDIDATES FOR PUBLIC OFFICE AND THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF CIVIL DISCOURSE

UTAH 2020 GOVERNORS' RACE



THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

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The Thomas S. Foley Institute for Public Policy and Public Service

