



January 3, 2011

Sen. Joseph Lieberman  
706 Hart Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Rep. Frank Wolf  
230 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Rep. Sue Myrick  
241 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Sen. Lieberman; Reps. Wolf and Myrick:

On the eve of Barack Obama's inauguration I launched **CivilityProject.org**. As I am a conservative Republican, I asked my friend Lanny Davis, a liberal Democrat to join me in the effort to promote civility nationwide. While this project has met with some success, I am formally dissolving it two years after its inception.

Our only aim in launching this project two years ago was to call people from all races, walks of life, and religious (I'm an evangelical Christian, Lanny is of the Jewish faith) and political persuasions to graciousness, kindness, common decency and respect—civility—toward all people, and particularly those with whom we may disagree.

This simple project was built around a 32-word Civility Pledge which reads as follows:

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.

Thousands of people from all walks of life signed this pledge; many others disparaged it. Then, as you know, on May 27, 2010, Lanny Davis and I sent a personal letter and pledge certificate to every member of Congress and sitting governor—585 letters—inviting them to sign this pledge as we headed into mid-term elections. You three were alone in pledging to be civil. I must admit to scratching my head as to why only three members of Congress, and no governors, would agree to what I believe is a rather low bar.

Now, after investing thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours in this effort I will close it down, though I hope I'll never stop talking about civility and striving to model it. Some have wrongly concluded this project was a call to end partisanship (we support partisanship), to limit free speech (I wouldn't try), to surrender personal beliefs and convictions (I would never do that), or for unity (I submit that civility and unity are not the same thing).

I'm worried about where we're headed as a country on the civility scale. I'd be more worried if I were an elected representative at any level. Here's why (according to recent studies by the Center for Political Participation at Allegheny College and by KRC Research):



- Nearly half of all Americans surveyed late last year said they are “tuning out” government and politics.
- Two-thirds of Americans consider a general lack of civility to be a major problem for the country.
- More than two-thirds said Americans “should be ashamed of the way elected officials acted” during the health care debate.
- And 83% said “people should not vote for candidates and politicians who are uncivil.”

Perhaps one of the most surprising results of this project has been the tone and language used by many of those posting comments on our website and following articles on various media websites about the project. Many of them could not be printed or spoken in public media due to vulgar language and vicious personal attacks. Sadly, a majority of these came from fellow conservatives.

At any rate, as we begin a new year—and a new election cycle—I wanted to take a few minutes to thank each of you for lending your names to this effort, and more importantly, for modeling civility in your daily lives and public service. Happy New Year!

Sincerely,

R. Mark DeMoss

RMD/bj

cc: Lanny Davis