Viewpoints on Civil Discourse

“Come together, in open dialogue, to discuss the great issues of our day, learn from each other, and work to move our society forward.”
UC President Janet Napolitano

“Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the ability to cope with conflict by peaceful means.”
Ronald Reagan

“Honest disagreement is often a good sign of progress.”
Mahatma Gandhi

“Differences of opinion lead to inquiry, and inquiry to truth.”
Thomas Jefferson

We invite you to join the League of Women Voters to promote Civil Discourse as an essential way of life for a thriving democracy.

LWVSLO.org

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New and Improved Methods for
Civil Discourse in the Public Arena

“With malice towards none, with charity for all ....”
Abraham Lincoln

Effective Ideas & Solutions

EASY TO USE

“Good governance is a clash of ideas and values in the political arena. We need to listen to our opponent’s arguments and look for areas of common interest. ...if we are to govern this country effectively.”
Brent Milward, National Institute for Civil Discourse
10 Simple Rules for Civil Discourse

A Presiding Chairperson sets the tone of a meeting...

1) Leads by example and encourages others to do the same. Shows respect to all in actions, body language, and speech.
2) Encourages open spirited debates on all facts by contending parties.
3) Provides adequate time for public comment.
4) Actively listens. Thanks speakers and, where appropriate, acknowledges public input.
5) Speaks truthfully without distortion.
6) Never comments on the motivation of a speaker.
7) Limits discussion to merits of issues. Explains the rationale and evidence to support opinions and conclusions.
8) Promotes rules publically. Gives a brief reminder before meetings.
9) Enforces the rules. Allows no disruptions of a meeting. Allows no slanderous, profane or negative personal remarks.
10) Regularly reviews/updates rules (city/county codes, codes of ethics, Robert’s Rules, Brown Act, pledges).

...and ensures fair treatment with Rules of Order and Decorum

“Civil discourse makes a difference for the good so we can have an environment that calls people to government service. We owe it to our democracy and to every young person who will inherit it.”

J. Mullen, Allegheny College

Civility vs. Free Speech

It means be tolerant. Listen, don’t interrupt. Refrain from sarcasm. Be respectful. Speak in modulated tones. Stick to the issue. Recognize there are two sides. Avoid labels.

Tip: To prevent shutting down conversation, choose civil words. Civility increases your chance of being heard.

Civility: Not Just Politeness

You may have the right to say what you want but there is no need to say it in an inflammatory or insulting manner.

“...we can only exercise our right to free speech insofar as we feel safe and respected in doing so, and this in turn requires that people treat each other with civility.”

J. Mullen, The Importance of Civility in Public Discourse

Tip: Attack the message, not the messenger.

The Spectrum of Bad, Better, and Best Ways to Communicate