



# Letter from Mayor Tom Hoechst

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Merriam Webster's Dictionary defines "civility" as "a polite act or expression." Synonyms include "courtesy," "pleasantry," and "politeness."

In 2011, the United States Conference of Mayors wrote a Civility Accord Agreement of which I am very proud to support. The Accord includes the following guidelines:

- Respect the right of all Americans to hold different opinions;
- Avoid rhetoric intended to humiliate, de-legitimize, or question the patriotism of those whose opinions are different from ours;
- Strive to understand differing perspectives;
- Choose word carefully;
- Speak truthfully, without accusation, and avoid distortion; and
- Speak out against violence, prejudice, and incivility in all of their forms, whenever and wherever they occur.

Imagine how the condition of this country would improve if our elected leaders followed these principles. The endless gridlock in politics at the federal level is crippling our nation's ability to function responsibly. This creates trickle down effects on our states and local communities, compromising their abilities to function properly. The hate spewing and arrogance, on both sides of the aisle, is damaging the government's ability to effectively govern. Many of our elected leaders have lost their ability to lead. Cooperation, efficiency, and effectiveness are absent from the scene. A lack of moderation, cooperation, and enhanced polarization seem to be the menu of the day in Washington.

You and I, the backbone of this great country, are caught in the middle of a confrontation for political gain, power, and total control. Most of us feel disengaged from the process and lost in a larger scheme of the power struggle of "let's discredit the

other side” and “how can I personally gain from someone else’s misfortune?” In these toughest of times, our leaders are not viewed as the solution but as the problem with little regard for our daily struggles.

I do not envy the extremely tough choices which must be made to correct our ailing economy; however there are answers and solutions available. We as citizens must do a better job of assessing and engaging our elected officials. Do not let biased news outlets, party officials, half truths, distortions, and rumors guide our political decisions. Americans are much smarter than that, when we truly examine issues.

I have always kept an open mind, weighed the pros and cons of a subject, and respected and listened to the other side of the story before making a decision. I encourage everyone to do the same.

Our country has a rich history of leaders that possessed civility. George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, Dwight Eisenhower, and John Kennedy exemplified leaders listening to all sides, evaluating the situation, and then making a decision. With the benefit of history, some of the decisions made by these individuals ended being incorrect, but that does not mean that they acted with intentional malice. They desired a strong, vibrant America and we can still be that country, if we put are minds to it.

I ask that everyone, both elected officials and citizens at large, demand cooperation, respect the views of others, compromise, and adhere to the guidelines listed previously in order to bring civility and common sense back to Washington.

Sincerely,

Tom Hoechst, Mayor City of Alton