

Bon Mots on Partisanship

It's amazing what you can accomplish when you don't care who gets the credit

George Washington, in his farewell address in 1796, looks like a veritable fortuneteller. He said:

“... to put, in the place of the delegated will of the nation the will of a party, often a small but artful and enterprising minority of the community; ... to make the public administration the mirror of the ill-concerted and incongruous projects of faction, rather than the organ of consistent and wholesome plans digested by common counsels and modified by mutual interests...serves always to distract the public councils and enfeeble the public administration. It agitates the community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms, kindles the animosity of one part against another, foment occasionally riot and insurrection. It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which finds a facilitated access to the government itself through the channels of party passions...”

“How do I know you’re not going to become one of them?” This question comes from people across the economic and political spectrums. “Them” did not have a label attached to it – it did not mean Democrat or Republican or Libertarian or whatever. It meant **DC**. It meant professional politicians who had lost touch. It meant putting blind partisanship ahead of doing the right thing.

When exercised by Party-A, strategic cunning is lauded as a brilliant defense of their core values. However, when it's practiced by Party-B, it is derided as "divisive partisanship."

There is a kind of partisanship that we're experiencing in general in the country. You know, the red and the blue mentality, it's so-called.
Kate Clinton

We simply must look beyond partisan goals and find common ground as Americans. It is imperative that the [Legislators] recognize that partisanship will not serve the . . . people.
Michael Crapo

Partisan - A fervent, sometimes militant supporter or proponent of a party, cause, faction, person, or idea.

-- Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger accused Washington leaders today of divisiveness and partisanship during a speech to the National Press Club in the nation's capital.

He said politics is about compromise, and advised them to take a lesson from California about cooperation.

"It is about give-and-take. Doesn't anyone here in Washington remember that chapter from their civics book?"

Thomas Jefferson - "Good governance is based on good ideas, and good ideas are based on respect for facts, rigor in thinking, rationality in debate and civility in discourse."

This does not mean that issues of governance and leadership are not subject to the push and pull of partisan interests, or even passions. They obviously are and quite properly so in our representative democracy since they are by definition political. Indeed, partisanship is a natural and healthy part of our political system. It is institutionalized in the two-party system.

What do we do about this? [destructive partisanship]

We start by electing leaders who by their example reject this intense, destructive and ideological partisanship.

Second, we create an atmosphere and new institutions that proactively encourage collaboration on projects without regard to party or other partisan, philosophical or religious affiliation.