

Between the Lines: Rules of Engagement for American Politics

By Randy Sanders
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Something has turned profoundly ugly, even record-shattering in American politics recently.

According to a *Gallop* news poll, this past decade has been the most politically polarizing in our nation's history. Sure, American politics has always been a rough and tumble game, but it's never gotten to this point, where disrespect is so perpetuated, even celebrated! Then there's the unfathomable amount of corporate money that is not only allowed, but encouraged, and thus produces a constant loop of lies destroying an opposing candidate's good name without any regard for consequences.

Even the days when Republican President Ronald Reagan and Democrat Speaker Tip O'Neill fought ferociously over issues by day, yet shared a drink and a few jokes together at night, are a thing of the past. It's difficult to imagine senators from opposing sides simply even dining together anymore.

President Abraham Lincoln warned of this when he accepted his party's nomination saying, "A house divided cannot stand." Sadly, this is the main reason why we can't seem to get our country back on track. Furthermore, it seems there's no end in sight; just ask any of the remaining candidates of the current GOP primaries who are eating their own. What's worse, our children are all watching all this vulgarity with innocent eyes wide open.

In the smash-mouth game America loves so much, NFL Football, even those massive linemen and muscle-bound linebackers show respect for one another. Before, during and after every game, they'll shake hands and follow the rules. Those who disobey are penalized or sometimes even tossed out. Perhaps this is exactly what we need in American Politics, a firm set of rules? And these rules shouldn't just apply to the candidates, but for voters as well. So in honor of the Super Bowl -- and with my tongue planted firmly inside my cheek -- I offer up the new: Rules of Engagement for American Politics.

OFFSIDES: Stay in your own town hall meeting; do not attend an opposing party's town hall simply to yell out nasty things, draw attention to your own arrogant self and incite footage for the evening news.

PERSONAL FOUL: You may run commercials displaying how the other candidate flip-flops on issues, but you may not say anything derogatory or personal in nature, such as a candidate's choice of religion, race or their personal lives, especially involving their family.

ILLEGAL FORMATION: You may not formulate false information and sit in the stands at your kid's soccer games passing on this false information to other people, such as a certain candidate who isn't born in America or a certain candidate who has made millions simply by firing workers.

UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT: Stop putting bumper stickers on your

car telling people that friends don't let their friends vote a certain party other than the one you support. We can all make up our own minds without your input, thank you.

HOLDING: Stop holding all those emails you keep getting from your crazy, extremist friend -- like a candidate you don't support who was raised by rabid jackals, or part of a terrorist plot to get elected and then turn the country into Sharia Law -- and email them to everyone you know or post them on Facebook.

DELAY OF GAME: This is the worst and most lurid of all political penalties: delaying your vote. Remember watching the recent news footage of people in Libya and Egypt being shot down in the street just for the right to vote for their own leaders? In Oregon all we have to do is pick up a pen (black or dark blue ink please) and fill in the circles. Maybe now when we remember our parents constantly telling us "people before us have died so that we may vote" it will illustrate a whole new perspective about this.

Finally, I don't care if you're a conservative or liberal, you're an American and you're a friend of mine. Now let's all roll up our sleeves, follow the rules and let's get this country working again.

Randy Sanders is a photographer and blogger who occasionally writes for Vernonia's Voice.

DEQ Asks Oregonians to Secure Hazardous Material Against Winter Storms

The State of Oregon urges businesses and citizens to secure containers of chemical products and hazardous materials, other loose items and any waste materials that could become storm-driven debris.

The release of toxic materials and hazardous wastes into the environment makes recovery from floods and storms more difficult in addition to adversely impacting the environment and public health. Workers and crews responding to the storms, residents and wildlife can come into contact with these materials. Even a small amount released into the environment can cause widespread damage and harm.

Containers of chemicals and other products should be securely sealed and where possible should be stored in areas that are unlikely to be affected by high winds or flood waters. Move items to higher ground if possible and utilize shelving that will likely remain above the flood line. Loose items (firewood, lawn chairs, garbage cans, etc.) should also be secured to prevent property loss and minimize contribution to flood cleanup debris.

Household hazardous materials include products used in the home that contain toxic chemicals. Products labeled "Caution, Warning, Danger, Poison, Toxic, Flammable or Corrosive" are considered

hazardous. Some examples of materials or wastes that should be secured are: Aerosols, Antifreeze, Auto Batteries, Auto Fluids, Disinfectants, Household cleaners and drain openers, Fertilizer, Fuel containers containing gasoline, lighter fluid, propane, etc., Latex / Oil-Based Paint, Pesticides, Pool Chemicals, Propane Tanks -- less than 30 gallons, Solvents, Tires, Used Oil and Oil Filters.

For more information visit DEQ's website at www.oregon.gov/DEQ and click on the links under "Dealing with Disaster Debris?" Our fact sheets can also help. See Disaster Debris Management and Managing and Permitting Disaster Debris.

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