

From The Editor



Like many Americans, although far less than in recent years according to ratings, I watched the Tampa Bay Buccaneers defeat the Kansas City Chiefs in Super Bowl 55 on Sunday, February 7, two days before former President Donald Trump's second impeachment trial started in the Senate. While the impeachment trial threatens to further divide our country, at least for one day a large portion of the country could stand together in a common cause – rooting AGAINST Tom Brady winning ANOTHER Super Bowl. Alas, in case there was ever any doubt, Tom Terrific dashed our hopes with another Most Valuable Player performance and came out on top again, and we could all go back to our corners to start the political brawl again on Tuesday morning.

Even if you're not a football fan, many people enjoy watching the Super Bowl just to see the commercials. One commercial that I felt hit the mark, was the Jeep commercial featuring Bruce Springsteen wearing a cowboy hat and boots, doing ordinary daily chores, with a voice over that talked about the current political divide in our country and about finding common ground.

This message rang true with me, not necessarily because I completely agree with it word for word, but because of the theme. The commercial starts with a chapel in Kansas in the center of the geographic United States, says Springsteen, a place that is always open for people to come and "meet in the middle." "The middle has been a hard place to get to lately, between red and blue, between servant and citizen, between our freedom and our fear," he continues. "We just have to remember the very soil we stand on is common ground. So we can get there. We can make it to the mountaintop, through the desert... and we will cross this divide." The ad ends with the printed words, "To the ReUnited States of America."

I have been working on a piece for the Voice with a similar tone, about finding "middle ground." I started it just after July 4 of this past year, but it keeps ending up back in a folder on my desktop, called "In Progress," – the timing for publishing it just hasn't felt

right.

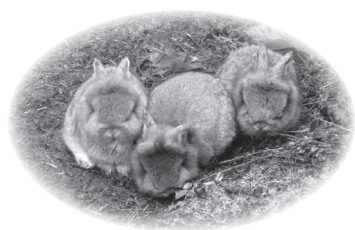
I've dusted off that middle ground article a few times over the last six months, and tried to find the right words to talk about the divide in this country, but each time it still didn't feel appropriate. The distance between the left and the right only feels like it's growing wider, and the frustration stronger. There is so much we all disagree on right now and it felt like too wide a gap to bridge.

We've all heard about the need for "unity" as we try to move forward as a country under a new administration and new leadership, but I think for many of us that word is still pretty loaded. It's hard to consider just shrugging off our differences, shaking hands, and starting to work together after everything we've been through over the last four years. I think we need to take smaller steps and move toward each other with caution. We need to rebuild some trust and repair relationships.

"Now, fear has never been the best of who we are," says Springsteen in the Jeep commercial. "And as for freedom, it's not just the property of the fortunate few, it belongs to us all. Who ever you are, where ever you're from. It's what connects us. And we need that connection. We need the middle."

Maybe Springsteen is right. Instead of focusing on how much we disagree, maybe, instead, we can try to look for places where we do agree – where we can find some semblance of middle ground. There are plenty of things that need fixing – in our community, in our state, and in our country. Things like education funding, wildfire prevention, health care costs, funding for public safety, racial equality, campaign finance reform, election security. We might not agree on the right solution, or the specific policy brought forward to address it. But maybe we can look for a place to start. Let's start by looking for the middle ground.

Scott Laird
Editor and Publisher



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