



CAROL SHEA-PORTER



CONGRESS



Civility, Respect, and Democracy

Although we do need robust debate about ideas and values, respect for the views of others is vital in a democracy. I grew up in a Republican family, and we knew how to disagree without insulting one another. One time when members of Congress were being particularly rude, I spoke on the floor of the House of Representatives to call for civility, and I reminded them that their mothers could be watching them. I also made this point when I introduced H.Res.686, which condemned personal attacks on the honor, integrity and patriotism of those with distinguished military service to our nation and encouraged people to conduct public discourse with civility. Incivility interrupts and interferes with serious discussion and with votes on important or controversial issues. It also turns people away from participating in political debates or entering public service. In other words, it is deeply destructive to democratic ideals and processes and induces cynicism and disgust. As the expression goes, we need to be able to disagree without being disagreeable.

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