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111th KZGN News Talking Points Editorial

By Tom Wiknich

Can differing political positions be argued without people resorting to personal attacks?

First, some comments about last week’s editorial titled: Obama blames “we the people” for Washington gridlock in his state of the union speech. Well, this one stirred up a small beehive. It seems not everyone agreed with me. I say small beehive because the editorial was viewed by 63 people, and only three took issue with my opinion. Now, I know just because more of those 63 viewers didn’t join in, that doesn’t mean they agree with me. I would assert that national polls show 65% of the people disagree with the direction the president is taking us. That kind of supports the ratio of viewers to this editorial who offered no comment.

We posted this editorial in the Facebook forum, and comments started coming in. The sad part of a couple of the comments coming in was more the personal nature of the people that disagreed with me. It seems they didn’t have meaningful points to debate, so they just slammed me personally. Suzzy says she doesn’t respect me anymore. It seems that her main problem with me is that I criticize Democrats more than I criticize Republicans. Well, that probably is true. I guess the reason for that is because we have a democratic president that, in my opinion, is taking the country the wrong direction. I can say this to her though, even though she won’t believe me: If a Republican president was taking the country this same direction, I would be critical of that Republican. It’s not about a political party. It’s about ideology. She has issues with Republicans, and that’s fine. I don’t disrespect her for her opinion and ideology. That is freedom of expression.

Phil and Wally both called me a liar. The problem, I guess, was that they took issue with my opinion/conclusion as to how I interpreted the president’s words. They said he didn’t literally say he blamed us for the gridlock in Washington. After I sorted out their vitriolic attacks, I guess that was their main point. Literally, that is correct. His words in the speech, in my opinion, directed the blame for the gridlock on “we the people”. Here are the president’s words, “but, my fellow Americans, this cannot be my task — or any president's — alone. There are a whole lot of folks in this chamber who would like to see more cooperation, a more elevated debate in Washington, but feel trapped by the demands of getting elected. I know; you've told me.” Those were his exact words.

I took that to mean this: If it’s not his fault, only his regret, or Congress’s fault, because they fear their electorates’ reaction if they compromise, then who’s left to blame? Us, we the people, is my conclusion. Congress won’t compromise, because they fear we the people. I thought that was what representative government was all about. Our elected officials representing us, working for us, and being responsible to us, we the people. Silly me.

Here’s today topic: Can differing political positions be argued without people resorting to personal attacks?

Like I pointed out in the first part of today’s editorial, why is it that people have to resort to personal attacks on people that offer an opinion they don’t agree with? Why do people have to say they don’t respect someone for expressing their opinions? Why do they come out and call people liars for offering their opinion? My editorials are clearly labeled “editorial”. That means they are my opinion on whatever the subject may be. We all read or listen to comments by other people. We are constantly assessing what’s been said or happened. Then, we are forming our own opinion as to what we have read, or heard. Then we respond with our assessment. Will everyone agree with my assessment? Of course not, and that’s ok. My assessment was my assessment. It’s what I believed was said to me. I might add, that I was not alone in people that took issue with the president’s only regret for his presidency. Many shared my opinion that his regret was really a deferral of blame for his failure to be able to bring people together. I expressed my assessment. That should not invoke a loss of respect. That is not a lie. The definition of a lie is: To speak falsely or utter untruth knowingly, as with intent to deceive. People completely lose any sense of humor when ideology enters into the discussion. I have never called my detractors liars or say i lost respect for them

I do respect them for voicing their opinion publically and for having the guts to say what they think. Even when I don’t agree, I think a good solid discussion of the issue is healthy.

Many people will not participate, for fear of being ridiculed by others. Now, that might be the goal of the personal insulters. Their goal may be to silence any opposition to their own opinion, and that is a way to do it. Call people liars, or racists, or bigots, when no such ideology was intended. If you can’t argue with solid points, then many resort to personal attacks. Oh well, enough on the lecture on personal attacks. It’s clear, both sides of many issues are very intense. People should be able to disagree with respect. Last time I checked, the 1st amendment still applies to we the people.

In conclusion, was that a great editorial or not?

I’m Tom Wiknich, and that’s what I think. I’d like to know what you think. If you have any comments about this editorial, or would like to discuss or recommend a topic, I’d like to hear from you. Please email them to info@kzgn.net.