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On the eve of the 2012 Presidential election, much can be said of the manner by which each of the political party's campaigns is being waged. The use of the word "wage" is not accidental, as the word is often attributed to the manner by which divergent factions engage in war or in a serious fight to achieve an end. In the course of electing our representatives does our Democracy engage in a form of war? Most certainly, a serious fight! But, is the process new and is it necessary to achieve the end?

George Washington, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson each grappled with the evolution of the party system in our fledgling Democracy and each bemoaned its inevitable proliferation and recognized its necessity, along with the incivility that flowed from it. The election of 1800 should not be lost to the deep recesses of history. It pitted Thomas Jefferson, as the Democratic-Republican, against John Adam, the Federalist. Jefferson sought to reduce the size and scope of the federal government by ending internal taxes, reducing the size of the army and navy, and paying off the government's debt. Limiting the federal government flowed from his strict interpretation of the Constitution. Adams, on the other hand, during his term in office had expanded the army and navy, attacked individual rights in the Alien and Sedition Acts, and assessed new taxes and deficit spending used to support broadened federal action. By a vote of Congress, Jefferson was elected as president.

Much indeed to be regretted, party disputes are now carried to such a length, and truth is so enveloped in mist and false representation, that it is extremely difficult to know through what channel to seek it. This difficulty to one, who is of no party, and whose sole wish is to pursue with undeviating steps a path which would lead this country to respectability, wealth, and happiness, is exceedingly to be lamented. But such, for wise purposes, it is presumed, is the turbulence of human passions in party disputes, when victory more than truth is the palm contended for." George Washington, letter to Timothy Pickering, July 27, 1795. And, George Washington, in a letter to Thomas Jefferson, on July 6, 1796, wrote: "I was no party man myself, and the first wish of my heart was, if parties did exist, to reconcile them."

In 1813, Thomas Jefferson penned a letter to John Adams, in which he stated: "To me... it appears that there have been differences of opinion and party differences, from the first establishment of government to the present day, and on the same question which now divides our own country; that these will continue through all future time; that every one takes his side in favor of the many, or of the few, according to his constitution, and the circumstances in which he is placed."

Fast forward to the polarization of the political process during the 104th Congress (January 3, 1995 to January 3, 1997), in which Newt Gingrich, as Speaker of the House, was pitted inescapably with President Bill Clinton. From March 7-9, 1997, 200 members of the House of Representatives, 165 spouses and 100 of their children attended a bipartisan retreat in Hershey, Pennsylvania (Hershey Retreat) coordinated by The Aspen Institute and funded by a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts. According to its organizers, it was designed "To seek a greater degree of civility, mutual respect and, when possible, bipartisanship among Members of the House of Representatives in order to foster an environment in which vigorous debate and mutual respect can coexist."

The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania prepared a background report on civility in the House for use at the Hershey Retreat. [The Executive Summary of Civility in the House of Representatives, March 1997, can be found on the Annenberg School Home page at: <http://www.asc.upenn.edu/appc/pubs>] That report charted words taken down and requests to take words down from 1935-1996 and mapped calls for a House member to suspend and for the House to be in order from the 99th through the 104th Congress. In March 1998, an update to that report was presented in *Civility in the House of Representatives: An Update* (The Annenberg Public Policy Center Of The University Of Pennsylvania, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, March 1998) (Pew Report). What was found was that following the Hershey Retreat the instances of incivility in the 105th Congress had diminished and references to the Hershey Retreat or attendance by a House member at the Hershey Retreat were effective at reducing vulgarity, incivility and encouraging recognition and correction of bad behavior. The Pew Report on incivility in Congress recommends, among other things, that House members socialize

with one another more often. As the Pew Report put it (in 1998): "It is easier to vilify those one doesn't know. If social contact increases civility, then increasing the number of activities that bring House members of different parties (and their families) together off the floor should encourage a higher level of mutual respect during floor exchanges."

The 105th Congress and the Hershey Retreat are but a distant memory fifteen years later. What has happened? Today, internet-based social media is recognized as a source of incivility because of its indirect and often anonymous interaction (<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/search/examples-of-incivility-in-social-media/>); a malady recognized by the Pew Report afflicting Congress. Are there lessons learned? Is there a place for any lessons learned from the Hershey Retreat in today's partisan charged political environment? Incivility arising from internet-based social media supports the Pew Report's conclusion about face to face interaction, or the lack thereof effecting political civility.

Notwithstanding the evidence of how isolation among partisan members of Congress is counter-productive for civility, not surprising, there is disagreement that is often politicized and polarized along party lines. The subject matter, certainly as evidenced by the Hershey Retreat, the Pew Report, and comments from Washington, Jefferson and Adams, is not new. Very often, those professing to be to the left of the political spectrum are calling for greater civility and those to the right bemoaning the accusation as an attempt to quell the political debate inherent in our Democracy. One commentator refers to the debate as "crybabyism," and in referencing the Pew Report, criticized the Hershey Retreat as a three-quarter of a million dollar "resort getaway for relatively wealthy congressional families..." doubting the value of creating face to face social interaction as a method to reduce incivility. *State of the Debate: The Case Against "Civility"* (The American Prospect, Randall Kennedy, December 2001).

But, must our Democracy, with its advocacy of adverse and diverse opinions and even ideology, necessarily be without civility to achieve its goals? Is political civility and partisan politics mutually exclusive?

Fifteen years after the Hershey Retreat, fourteen years after the Pew Report, and ten years after Randall Kennedy dismissed the effectiveness of the Hershey Retreat and coined the rise of crybabyism, the Political Science Department of the University of Pennsylvania published a study of the root cause for Congressional inability to effectively govern: "Over the past 35 years, personal relationships have declined among members of the United States House of Representatives. In the aftermath of the Watergate scandal, polarization and partisanship have risen on Capitol Hill, only to be exacerbated by the impact of Newt Gingrich and the 1994 Republican Revolution. As a result of this increased polarization and partisanship, members of Congress are less able and less willing to forge the personal relationships that are necessary for Congress to function. These relationships make Congress more effective as an institution and result in the body passing more productive legislation. In the absence of these close social bonds, Congress is less effective and does not function the way that it ought to." [*Bringing Down the House: The Causes and Effects of the Decline of Personal Relationships in the U.S. House of Representatives*, College of Arts and Sciences CUREJ - College Undergraduate Research Electronic Journal, Evan M. Philipson, April 2011]

Mr. Philipson's report is a thorough and comprehensive report of the failure of members of Congress to effectively engage in the social networking so important in politics and recognized as imperative to business success, "offering four practical recommendations that can be implemented to reverse the decline of personal relationships in the House. They are: redistricting reform, return to a five-day workweek, campaign finance reform, and decentralization of the power of party leadership."

But, it is offered that a fifth solution lies much closer at hand and one that is less stressful to Congress as an institution and its members as individuals: the study of the past events in the development of Congress as an institution and of our Democracy as a means of governance – history. History's lessons are an important ingredient in civility, regardless of your political leanings. It goes along with the oft forgotten edict to "respect your elders," not only because of their age, but because of the lessons that may be taught; a measure of civility that seems to be lost in the rush of our 21st Century society and Congress.

Surprisingly, the need for an historian was not lost on the Subcommittee on Rules & Organization of the House that from April 17, 1997 – May 1, 1997, convened to discuss the Hershey Retreat and the findings of Pew Report. The Subcommittee expressly recognized that the turnover of members of Congress gives rise to the loss of institutional memory and historians. No doubt that since the Hershey Retreat of 1997, much of Congress' membership has left the institution and with them taken the memory of social and political bipartisanship. "At the commencement of the 112th Congress (January 3, 2011), the average number of years of House service for Representatives was 9.8, or just less than five terms. The average number of years of Senate service for Senators was 11.4, slightly less than two full Senate terms." (<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42365.pdf>)

The average current member of Congress is not privy to the experience of the Hershey Retreat,

knows little or nothing of it, and seems only answerable to central party leadership, partisan politics, and wholly lacking of institutional memory. All too obvious, they are not only doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past, but are not even cognizant of the debate of their forefathers upon which the Democracy has evolved or current issues emanate.

The history of partisan politics and the resultant incivility should not be dismissed as irrelevant. The conduct of our elected officials mirror (both inside and out) society in general. And, so, how our elected officials treat one another will undoubtedly influence how we each treat one another. Whether it is parents and children, athletes and spectators, teachers and students, employers and employees, or moderators and debaters, so too our elected officials must ascend to their social responsibility and promote civility.

It is not to say that partisan differences and ideology should be abandoned, as certainly they should not. Where would our Democracy be if Adams or Jefferson had done so? What is important in our "instant information" and 24-hour media environment are that the manner and method by which ideas, opinions and differences are discussed, promoted or fostered, should be with respect for disagreement and differences of opinion. Debate does not equate to berate! Although Randall Kennedy may decry the monetary cost, the addition of a Hershey Retreat every 6-8 years (within the variance of the average term of service) to promote institutional memory and civility is well worth the cost; certainly less expensive than going over the "fiscal cliff."

It rests upon the shoulders of each citizen to exercise their franchise to vote. It is critical that each vote is cast, regardless of the press of time. Each vote should be accompanied by an inquiry into not only the ability but the commitment of each candidate to engage in a civil discourse of the issues facing our Democracy. Commitment to the party and its ideological dictates is not Democracy as Washington, Adams and Jefferson envisioned, but certainly warned. "To uphold and defend the Constitution" is the vow of office that implies to uphold and defend the historical and institutional memory upon which our Democracy is premised, regardless of party affiliation or third party vows to act in concert in a certain manner; neither of which are embodied in the Constitution. Can your member of Congress take a vow of civility in the furtherance of the Constitution and our Democracy? If not, taking the vow of office would not be truthful or honest, and must not be an option offered to them. Exercise your right to vote wisely!

"There is nothing which I dread so much as a division of the republic into two great parties, each arranged under its leader, and concerting measures in opposition to each other. This, in my humble apprehension, is to be dreaded as the greatest political evil under our Constitution." John Adams, letter to Jonathan Jackson, October 2, 1789.

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