

scant time for reflection or reasoned analysis. Market forces demand instantaneous information and jarring entertainment values, not sober analysis or wisdom. The news media are more prone to focus on the loudest, the most outrageous, and the most partisan actors. And given the rise of the political consultant class, candidates and campaigns are louder, more outrageous, and meta-partisan. Political consultants have helped create a permanent campaign where politics takes precedence over governance. The political consultants egg on all this for profit, creating controversy where little or none exists so the message, the theme of the day, is played out on TV and the media. They're paid handsomely to cause strife and create conflict in order to raise hackles, money, and attention . . . fomenting issues to suit their agenda. It's all about the message, not the solution, not the negotiation, the debate, the compromise to move forward. It's about who is controlling the message, who is defining the message, who is creating the message, who is keeping the conflict alive often where none existed before the consultant decided one was needed. Is this what keeps us at each other's throats?

Is it talk radio, attack TV? Is it the talk shows, the shout festivals where absolute hyperbole is the only currency? Mean-spirited hyperbole and hyper-partisanship breeds cynicism. Citizens are increasingly cynical about politics and about their government's ability to work. The damage to the ship of state, to the fabric of the nation begs repair. Whose job is it to change course and effect the necessary repairs? I'm not sure I have the answer to that, but I propose that in a room full of policy makers and politicians, men and women who talk to the media, who work in the public arena, who hire consultants, who set agendas, maybe we have a role to play in making things better.

You know, I can say that there are some people in this room, people I consider dear friends, who understand this problem and I believe share my concern. To those friends I say, you and I both know that we disagree very fundamentally on some very big issues but the truth is that we could care less about our disagreements and are more concerned about where we can find consensus and reasons to work and live together to construct a better future. I consider this kind of commitment to trust and open dialogue crucial to maintaining a sustainable society.

And indeed, isn't it about building a better future for our community, for our country, for our children? I say that even on the most intractable of issues, there is room for constructive debate, for consensus building, for the search for some common ground.

President Johnson once said to his Democratic colleague, Gov. George Wallace of Alabama, during the crisis of civil rights in the South: "What do you want left behind? You want a great, big marble monument that says, 'George Wallace: He built.' Or do you want a little piece of scrawny pine lying there that says, 'George Wallace: He hated'?"

The people I know in this room are builders. But we are confronting a world today where hate seems to be a predominant factor in the crisis of incivility confronting our politics.

Where are the rules that govern conduct? What happens eventually after this continuous rancor tears the fabric of our society completely asunder? Can we survive with this tenor . . . taking no prisoners, giving no quarter?

I'm asking these questions because you folks here are blessed with skills, talent, experience and a commitment to a positive public policy. You understand the importance of maintaining and protecting our

commonweal where we strive to serve our clients, our community, our country, and our state. If civil discourse self-destructs, we cannot move on the issues that matter. Think of this as an environmental crisis . . . the environment being our civil society and our very ability to live and work and prosper together.

I don't want to sound pious or preachy here, but if we are to prevail as a free, self-governing people, we must work together. We shouldn't try to destroy our opponents just because we disagree. We have to govern our tongues. The Proverbs tells us, chapter 18, verse 12, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." How we choose to use words—for good or for wrong—is clearly our choice. The health of our democracy depends upon a robust public discourse.

Recognize that I am not saying that conflict in our political life is to be avoided. Hardly so. It is not only proper but necessary for candidates to vigorously debate the issues of our day and examine their opponents' records. Don't let people confuse civility with goody two-shoes niceness and mere etiquette. Civility is a robust, tough, substantive civic virtue, critical to both civil society and the future of our republic. Civility entails speaking directly, passionately, and responsibly about who we are and what we believe. Divisions based on principles are healthy for the nation. Vigorous and passionate debate helps us to define issues and to sharpen positions.

Conflict cannot, should not be avoided in our public lives any more than we can avoid conflict with the people we love. But just as member of a household, as a family learn ways of settling their differences without inflicting real damage on each other, so we, in our politics, must find constructive ways of resolving disputes and differences.

Our work is here. We build from the base. We will foster change first by our example . . . by working together, respecting one another, and negotiating our differences in good faith and with mutual respect. Civility is neither a small nor inconsequential issue. The word comes from the French *civilité* which is often translated as "politeness." But it means much more. It suggests an approach to life . . . living in a way that is civilized. The words "civilized," "civilité," and "city" share a common etymology with a word meaning "member of the household." To be civilized is to understand that we live in a society as in a household. There are certain rules that allow family members to live peacefully within a household. So, too, are there rules of civility that allow us to live peacefully within a society. As we all learned in 1st grade a long time ago, we owe certain responsibilities to one another. Perhaps we spend a lifetime learning how to play well with others. So be it. It is a crucial goal for a civil society. Thank you.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE SERVICE  
OF J.E. "GENE" SMITH

**HON. JEFF MILLER**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 19, 2009

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mr. J.E. "Gene" Smith, a national and community leader who is retiring from almost thirty years of service with the Choctawhatchee Electric Cooperative. Gene spent his career serving others and giving back to our community, and I am proud to honor this dedication and service.

As the son of a gas utility worker, Gene became interested in utility work at a young age. He began his career with Huntsville Utilities in Huntsville, Alabama before moving to another utility job in Jefferson City, Tennessee. By the time Gene was 28, he was manager of a Sweetwater, Tennessee utility. In 1978, he moved to the world of electric cooperatives and went to work as the general manager of Escambia River Electric Cooperative in Jay, Florida. Three years later, Gene moved a few miles east to DeFuniak Springs to work for the Choctawhatchee Electric Cooperative (CHELCO). He has served as Chief Executive Officer and General Manager of CHELCO since 1981.

While at CHELCO, Gene has made a lasting impression on the electric cooperative community. He served on the board of the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation from 1988 to 1993 with two years spent as the board's president. He also served on the board of the National Cooperative Services Corporation from 1995 to 2003 and as a trustee on the PowerSouth Energy Cooperative Board, representing CHELCO since 1981. Gene has been chairman of the Florida Electric Cooperative Association and the National Food and Energy Council Board. Because of his outstanding work on behalf of electric cooperatives, Gene was featured in American Executive Magazine in 2007. In February, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Board of Directors will present Gene with the Clyde T. Ellis Award. This award recognizes an individual who goes above and beyond the call of duty in furthering the principles and progress of rural electrification and the development and utilization of natural resources.

Beyond his expansive career accomplishments, Gene Smith has spent a lifetime dedicated to community service. He serves on the United Way of Okaloosa and Walton Counties, the Board of Trustees of Northwest Florida State College, the Okaloosa County Economic Development Council Executive Committee, and the Rotary Club. He is also a very active member of the All Sports organization which raises money for local youth-oriented non-profit organizations with an emphasis on sports. Local beneficiaries include the YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, and Special Olympics.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress, I am honored to recognize Gene Smith for his service to the people of the United States. He is a dedicated community servant and national business leader. My wife Vicki and I wish all the best for Gene and his family as they embark on this next endeavor in their lives.

W. HAZEN HILLYARD POST OFFICE  
BUILDING

SPEECH OF

**HON. ROB BISHOP**

OF UTAH

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 16, 2009

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, individuals like Hazen Hillyard deserve to be remembered and honored, and that is why I'm happy to sponsor this legislation to name the Smithfield Post Office after him. His life was a hallmark of dedicated public service, at the level