
IN MY VIEW: Sweet harmony or bitter discord?

May 18, 2024

Last Saturday and Sunday the North Coast Chorale held our spring performances, and I was happy to be a part of it. This is the least political activity that I am involved with. When I am at practice or performing, I don't think about whether the person next to me is a democrat or a republican. It doesn't matter.

Together the entire group collaborates to produce sweet harmonies. We have agreed on participating and we have the common goal of performing the best that we can. This spring we sang songs from only American composers including a medley from Oklahoma and other beautiful tunes that you may not have heard of.

We finished with a choral version of America the Beautiful and all the singers waved the American flag. It was all very patriotic and served as a reminder to the chorus and the audience that we are all in this together. This commitment to a common purpose can serve as a model of how our political leaders should act.

Divided Congress

I have never commented on national politics in my column because I couldn't see that my opinion would have any positive impact on the disfunction in Washington. I never make blanket statements about all republicans or all democrats for that matter. Everyone is different and should not all be lumped into a single category.

However, there is a raucous caucus of extreme republicans in Congress that seem intent on burning it all down. The republicans have a majority by a thin margin which gives these people outsized power to disrupt. Not long ago they ousted Kevin McCarthy as their speaker and are attempting to expel the current Speaker.

By all objective measures, this has been the least productive Congress ever. They have passed only a handful of bills. Everything is a fight. There was a fight over the basic funding our government. There was a fight over providing aid to Ukraine. There is a current fight to fire Republican Speaker Mike Johnson.

Bi-partisan Success

This is where it gets interesting. Some major legislation has been passed this year through bi-partisan collaboration. Reasonable republicans and democrats have overcome petty squabbles to find common ground in recognition of their obligation to take responsible actions that serve the American people.

I read an interesting article in the Times Standard (5/3/24) which led off with this statement, “Without wielding the gavel or holding a formal job laid out in the constitution, Representative Hakim Jeffries might very well be the most powerful person in congress right now.”

This story highlighted how democrats and the republicans are working together to take care of business. When Speaker Johnson was unable to muster enough republican votes to adopt a budget this year, “minority leader of the House Democrats Hakim Jeffries provided the votes needed to keep the government running.”

Strange Bedfellows

“It was Jeffries who made sure Democrats delivered the tally to send \$95 billion foreign aid to Ukraine and other allies.” This required votes from moderate republicans and democrats to bring this across the finish line. This unexpected cooperation gives me hope that our government will continue to meet our obligations.

This week, “Jeffries with the full force of House Democratic leadership behind him decided his party would help Speaker Mike Johnson stay on the job rather than be ousted by far-right Republicans led by Marjory Taylor Green.” It is highly unusual for one party to protect the leader of another party.

“The decision by Jeffries to lend votes to stop Johnson’s ouster provides a powerful inflection point in what has been a long political season of dysfunction, stalemate and chaos in Congress.” Jeffries is attempting to show that there can be an alternative approach to governing. “We need more common sense and less chaos.”

Local Chaos

I have always held out more hope for cooperation locally between our elected representatives and the agencies they represent. The conflict in Washinton DC looks insurmountable on most days. Occasionally our local conflicts seem unresolvable. The most recent example is the disagreement over the Tri-Agency.

The disagreement between Del Norte County and its Tri-Agency partners, Crescent City and the Harbor District has come to a head. For sixty years Del Norte County, Crescent City and the Harbor District have collaborated through the Tri-Agency Economic Development Authority for the common benefit of the member agencies.

The Tri-Agency Board met on May 2 to discuss the future of Tri-Agency. They agreed to convene a joint meeting of the full governing boards of the City, County and Harbor to discuss the possible dissolution of the joint powers agreement that forms the Tri-Agency. I am disillusioned by their inability to resolve this conflict.

My Mistake

It was pointed out to me that I made an error in my column about the Chamber sponsored Economic Summit that I recently attended. I said that the Elk Valley Rancheria purchased the Martin Ranch. This is what I thought I heard. This should have been the “DeMartin Ranch.” Thank you Jerry for correcting me.

I recognize that in writing 1000 words each week I will inevitably make a mistake. Please feel free to contact me if you think I made a factual error. It is important to me that I provide credible and accurate information. If you disagree with my opinions, you can write a letter to the Triplicate, and they will likely publish it.

Collaboration does not require that we agree on all things. I believe that there is at least one thing we can find common ground on with every person. Respectful debate on disagreements of opinion can be helpful in the process of finding our common purpose. Let’s keep the conversation going.

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