

2015 Regular Session

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 59

BY SENATOR BUFFINGTON

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT. Recognizes and supports opportunities for civil discourse and discussion of the Nine Simple Rules.

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To recognize and support opportunities for civil discourse and discussion of the Nine Simple Rules, as suggested by Dr. P.M. Forni of Johns Hopkins University.

WHEREAS, public discourse in society today appears to be lacking in respect and deteriorating to an unacceptable level of partisanship, name-calling, shouting, and rudeness; and

WHEREAS, it is important to understand that all Louisiana citizens should familiarize themselves with rules or suggestions which have been adopted for use in many communities, including both Shreveport in Caddo Parish and Covington in St. Tammany Parish; and

WHEREAS, the fast-paced, electronic, global society of texts, tweets, social media, and electronic communication, generally, has affected the ability of Americans to truly listen and talk to one another; and

WHEREAS, Dr. P.M. Forni of Johns Hopkins University identified certain principles in his 2003 book entitled *Choosing Civility*, aimed at helping individuals and citizens to restore civility in public discourse; and

WHEREAS, while civility involves both politeness and courtesy, having a civil discourse is a fairly simple idea that means being respectful and seeking an understanding

1 of the other participant in a way that honors their position; and

2 WHEREAS, elected officials, businesses, students, civic organizations, and churches
3 can lead the way in these efforts to model the behaviors of civility; and

4 WHEREAS, it is especially important in a democratic society to encourage as many
5 voices as possible to speak and take part in public debate in order to be inclusive and to
6 encourage the making of wise decisions; and

7 WHEREAS, in the United States the *Speak Your Peace* civility initiative is a
8 grassroots effort, emanating from the principles in *Choosing Civility*, and encouraging
9 citizens to take the pledge to agree to abide by these principles; and

10 WHEREAS, civility crosses all boundaries of gender, race, ethnicity, social class,
11 and age in that every person and every group deserves and should seek respect; and

12 WHEREAS, the nine basic principles that most learn as children should be employed
13 as adults and will foster a return to civility and productive public and community meetings;
14 and

15 WHEREAS, the nine basic principles are as follows:

16 (1) Paying attention. All should pay attention to the words being said, the body
17 language and facial expressions in addition to the environment and extenuating
18 circumstances in which a person is expressing his opinion.

19 (2) Listening. Audiences should not listen merely in order to respond, but to truly
20 understand what is being said, the true intent of the speaker and the perspective from which
21 the other person is talking. One may ask questions, but never interrupt.

22 (3) Being inclusive. One should always use language that the entire audience will
23 understand. It is effective to invite and welcome others into the conversation.

24 (4) Do not engage in gossip. One should not speak poorly of another who is not
25 present, including repeating derogatory information in that person's absence. When others
26 engage in gossip, discourage such comments and remind others that this kind of talk is not
27 productive, nor is it necessary.

28 (5) Show respect. Active listening demonstrates respect. Treat others as you would
29 want to be treated. Calling names and making judgmental comments are disrespectful and
30 should be avoided. Negative facial expressions should be avoided.

1 (6) Be agreeable. As a listener, look first for those points on which one can agree
2 with the speaker and affirm those before moving on to aspects where there is disagreement.
3 It is acceptable to disagree.

4 (7) Apologize. One should be the first to admit when one has misunderstood, made
5 a mistake, or spoken in haste. An apology is not a sign of weakness, but the beginning of
6 healing. Be empathetic, genuine, and sincere in all comments.

7 (8) Give constructive criticism. Listeners should always stay focused on the issue
8 at hand. Do not be patronizing or condescending in comments to the speaker. One can
9 present suggestions in the form of a question, encouraging the group to explore the topic
10 fairly.

11 (9) Take responsibility. One should own and accept responsibility for one's
12 behavior, words and effects on any listeners. One must control one's own behavior and not
13 speak for someone else. Make comments to the group, not after the discussion to one or two
14 people privately. Do not repeat hearsay and confirm facts before passing them along to
15 others.

16 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby
17 recognize and support opportunities for civil discourse and discussion of the Nine Simple
18 Rules, as suggested by Dr. P.M. Forni of Johns Hopkins University.

19 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, as elected officials in the state of Louisiana, the
20 members of the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana
21 hereby encourage, urge, and request every legislator to agree to abide by the principles of
22 civility as outlined in the *Speak Your Peace* initiative.

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana will encourage all
24 citizens to speak up, to become involved in government and in public debate and to request
25 that individuals, businesses, churches, schools, local governments, and civic organizations
26 adopt similar resolutions in support of the principles of civility and incorporate these
27 principles into their everyday life and work.

28 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Rev.
29 Lindy Broderick of the Greater Shreveport Chamber of Commerce.

The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Mary Dozier O'Brien.

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| | DIGEST | |
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