

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 59

BY SENATOR BUFFINGTON AND REPRESENTATIVE BROADWATER

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, the nine basic principles are as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby 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.

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

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

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

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES