



America Can Heal Divisions by Embracing the Same Positive Spirit Engendered During Natural Disasters

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Natural disasters – fires, floods, hurricanes, earthquakes and tornados – have long wreaked havoc in communities across the nation, inflicting tremendous heartache and financial loss for those impacted. But during those difficult times, Americans have always pulled together to help others in need and risen up to what's best for our country.

It's that same spirit, that same selfless pulling together, that voters believe needs to be captured now to heal the growing divisions that have infected our nation.

For the past two years, our firms have conducted bipartisan research, asking voters about their concerns for America. The results are troubling – but not surprising. In addition to believing that our nation is on the wrong track, voters clearly identify political divisions (40%) and racial divisions (28%) as our most serious problems.

Americans realize that our country is headed to a crisis, a time when we are too divided to stand. And, political and racial divisions are seen as the most serious drivers of this crisis.

Voters believe the stakes could not be higher. More than two-thirds (69 percent) agree that if we don't figure out how to disagree without hate, without treating opponents like enemies, there won't be a United States for our children or grandchildren.

Who's to blame for today's divisions? In focus groups, voters blame politicians, the press, as well as social media. The impact of social media drove a lot of discussion, as many realize it fuels sensationalism and discord as people hide behind anonymity.

More important than assigning blame, voters turn towards where the solution comes from: themselves.

How will they do it? They think it can be done by becoming more politically active, making a commitment to voting, listening to others who think differently, and treating people with kindness and respect. By recognizing the shared humanity of those with whom we disagree and accepting the fact that they care for the same core values we do – such as freedom and family (especially our children) – we can take positive steps to begin healing our deep divisions.

Whether out of a religious, spiritual or simple belief in common sense, the vast majority of Americans agree with the admonition that we need to love our neighbors as

ourselves. We are people first, and we are all Americans. Even if we disagree, we need to find a way to do so without seeing someone else's opinion as a threat. Long ago, V.O. Key argued that the American electorate was smarter than they were given credit for – and that is still true today.

Our research, conducted on behalf of Two Paths America, concluded that it's time that elected officials must sometimes break party allegiances and put country over party and come together as Americans – the spirit that awakens when we're responding to pending disasters. If our nation's officials are listening, those times are here.

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