

Excerpts from COMMON GROUND by Cal Thomas & Bob Beckel, Harper-Collins, 2007.

“At the beginning, we promised to put polarization on trial.” (Thomas & Beckel)

“As we go forward, ... distrust and resentment must be left behind.”
(Editorial, NEWTOWN BEE 4/4/08)

Five Common Ground Governing Principles:

1. There must be agreement that a problem exists, and agreement on what goal needs to be reached to alleviate the problem.

Example:

Raleigh, North Carolina has 5 public school districts. Class size in District 1 is 30; District 2 has class size of 50.

Problem:

Agree these 2 districts must be brought into line with the others 3 districts.
Agree that a problem exists.

2. For a controversial issue to be resolved in a common ground climate, it must contain elements of the historical orthodoxy of both parties.

Example # 1:

Banning handguns

Conservative: An absolute right under the Second Amendment

Liberal: The 2nd Amendment is no longer valid – ban all handguns except those in the hands of the police and military.

“On issues like this, where consensus is improbable, it is best to back off.”

Example # 2:

Poverty

Conservative: “I don’t believe we can afford to launch another federal program. ...Our only hope is to bring the private sector to the battle of poverty, while ending those programs that have clearly failed...” (p. 227)

Liberal: “The federal government must continue to play a major role in alleviating poverty in this, the wealthiest country in the world. ...Government can’t walk alone on the path to ending poverty; neither can it walk away from the problem and leave the burden totally to charities or the private sector. (p. 226)

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“Any successful antipoverty program...must involve government and the private sector.” (p. 227)

3. The chances for consensus on a solution increase dramatically when fresh ideas to address the problem are brought to the table. (and new people)

Example:

Poverty

On most controversial issues, both parties return over and over again to old solutions they have been wedded to for years.

New Idea:

Muhammad Yonus, a banker, promoted a fresh idea of microloans (as small as \$100 to start a small business in Bangladesh) Awarded the Nobel Prize.

Conservative: Government must not be involved – likes the private sector initiative

Liberal: Expand the program, lower the interest rates, government should guarantee some loans

Solution: The solution must contain some aspects that both parties can reconcile with their values.

4. A common ground strategy for governing must be provided with the maximum possible amount of political cover.

Example:

A Federal Minimum Wage Increase was overdue because none had occurred in ten years.

Conservative: Accompany the wage increase with a tax break for small businesses that would be impacted by the wage increase. (p. 231)

Liberal: Provide a substantial minimum wage increase.

5. Do not pick fights where the other four common ground governing principles do not and cannot apply.

Example:

Abortion and Gay Rights

Further help: Get a second opinion from non Democrats and non Republicans.

V. ANIMAL CONTROL VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS

(New A. under requirements and re-letter the rest, or as a preamble after *guidelines*.)

- A. Individuals who volunteer to interact with animals at the Animal Control Facility must be members of an organization or organizations. Such organizations shall submit rosters of volunteers and all forms required by this policy, signed by the volunteers, to the MACO. The MACO shall submit copies of said rosters and forms to the Office of the First Selectman. All such organizations shall have liability insurance of an amount required by the Financial Director and shall submit a Certificate of Insurance to the MACO naming the Town of Newtown as an additional insured. The MACO shall submit said Certificate of Insurance to the Office of the Financial Director and a copy to the Office of the First Selectman.

Herb Rosenthal wanted to clarify that at the BOS meeting of Nov. 16th his intention, with the motion regarding the Animal Control Facility Policy was to add the paragraph to the policy along with any further changes that needed to be made in the policy based on his modifications regarding volunteers working with the animals vs. volunteers doing maintenance work.