



You know that one family member you can't talk politics with? Now imagine there are 99 of them...

Sometimes it feels like that when I go down to Madison. Gone are the days when Republicans and Democrats could come together to socialize after a hard day of debating on the Assembly floor. In the last few months our state and country have seen partisan divides reach new heights that few could have imagined.

Lately politics is either awkward silence or screaming matches. Hardly anyone civilly discusses the issues anymore and it seems like no one wants to listen to what the other side has to say. Compromise and cooperation have become relics of the past. Coworkers are still nursing wounds from nasty arguments over the presidential election. Families are still sitting in uncomfortable silence around the dinner table. Spirited debates over current issues have been replaced with personal attacks and demonization.

The election is over. It's time to move on.

My number one priority this session is to help bring back bipartisanship. Just as I've done for the past two legislative sessions, I'll be cosponsoring an equal number of Democrat and Republican bills over the next two years. I will look for the best ideas, regardless of the political party. And when it comes to getting my own bills passed, I'll keep working with the majority party like I have before. For me, it doesn't matter whose name is on the bill or if it is followed by a D or an R, just so long as it is in the best interests of my constituents and our State.

Some things are easy to do in a bipartisan manner, like working with a bill's author to make just the right tweaks so that it can get a unanimous vote in committee or on the floor. Some things require a bit more effort, like sitting down with those on the other side to find out exactly where our disagreements begin and end. As a new member of the State Assembly leadership I've already had the opportunity to be part of the negotiations with the Republican leadership over the rules that will apply during our floor debate. I was pleased that we were able to reach an agreement fairly quickly on those rules – including an agreement that we need to put away our cellphones and actually pay attention to the debate.

Bringing back bipartisanship isn't going to be easy. Our state and our nation are deeply divided with fear and anger sometimes overruling common sense. It might even get louder before it gets quieter. But that still doesn't change the fact that working together is the right thing to do.

This isn't something that I can do on my own. It is something that will require a unified effort. We need to work together to fund our schools, fix our roads, create jobs, protect our environment, and promote economic development. This most recent election wasn't so much a



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victory for either party as a message for change. In Wisconsin, that change means we need to work together instead of one side dictating the terms and the other side refusing to engage.

Maybe working in a bipartisan manner won't help you survive that lecture from your great uncle about how wrong you are politically. But it is my sincere hope that by coming together down in Madison, my colleagues and I from both parties can help change the political environment and make some needed improvements in our State. That's a New Year's resolution worth making.