



BRAD PFAFF

STATE SENATOR

Peace, Goodwill, and Civility to All this Holiday Season

State Senator Brad Pfaff (D – Onalaska)

My wish for Christmas is peace on earth and goodwill towards all. A good place to start is bringing civility and community back to our politics.

Politics today is too mean. Too partisan. Too divided. Too angry. It does not need to be like this. Sadly, disagreeing with and debating someone are not enough in today's world. Instead, you have to "own your opponent," hate your enemies, and practice the politics of retribution.

We have tragically seen what this rhetoric leads to—the assassination of Charlie Kirk, the assassination of Minnesota House Speaker Melissa Hortman, the failed assassination attempt on President Trump, and recent violence and shootings on college campuses.

There is too much cruelty and hate in today's politics. It shouldn't be this way.

As a farm boy, with deep roots in the Coulee Region, I firmly believe that more unites than divides us. While there is a time and place for partisan politics, we must improve our civility for democracy to succeed, for our economy to grow, and for our quality of life to improve. We have to see beyond what divides us and seek what unites us. We need to focus on what we have in common, rather than exaggerating our differences.

Civility, to me, is about engaging, listening, and learning to better understand the other person's—the other political party's—interests. Civility is about seeking common ground and finding the good rather than the bad. It is not about retreat; it is not about giving up your principles; it is not weakness. Civility is strength.

As parents, my wife and I raised our kids to be respectful of one another, to share, to say "please" and "thank you." We taught our kids to lead with compassion and have sound judgment, good character, and a level temperament. They learned the importance of being civil to one another and to others.

These values are not unique to the Pfaff family, they are how those of us from western Wisconsin behave. We need more Western Wisconsin values and norms in today's politics.

During George W. Bush's first inaugural address, he said, "Civility is not a tactic or a sentiment. It is the determined choice of trust over cynicism, of community over chaos. And this commitment, if we keep it, is a way to shared accomplishment."

This holiday season, put aside social media and news that seek to divide us and instead join your family and your neighbors and help build goodwill toward all. Let's remember that we are all in this together and that kindness goes much further than hate.