

Real Deal

Several election cycles ago, in the midst of a media barrage of highly partisan political ads, my son asked me if I was a Republican or a Democrat. I responded, “Neither, I’m a Libertarian.” He seemed a bit confused at first, but then after some deep thought, he perked up and said, “Oh, so you don’t like anybody.”

I hope that is not the case, but based on the tenor of political debate these days, it is a reasonable assumption. Partisan gridlock in Congress and political attack ads are so common that we all but take them

for granted. We are also witnessing growing phenomena of “eating your own.” That is, Republicans attacking Republicans and Democrats attacking Democrats.

There continue to be more and more liberal challenges to sitting Democrats who are not perceived as being “progressive,” or Tea Party challenges to “moderate” Republicans. Then there are the “intra-party” skirmishes and jockeying for leadership positions as well as

committee chairmanships. And everyone seems to be looking over their shoulders.

The traditional inter-party tension remains at all-time highs and is ramping up as we approach the mid-term elections. It’s getting pretty hot in the kitchen.

NACS is non-partisan. We support members of both parties, as long as they understand and support the convenience store industry’s legislative agenda. Consequently, my government relations colleagues and I spend a great deal of time at political fundraisers from both sides of the aisle — and these tend to be very partisan events. We must sit with smiles plastered on our faces, as the congressional host

lambasts the other party for their extreme views and laugh at the crude jokes made at the expense of their political foes, even when those foes are supported by NACS. It gets old after a while.

But every so often, you witness a glimmer of hope. An oasis in the desert. A lighthouse in the fog. That moment came for me this week from the least likely of places: a Hawaiian luau. This event was in honor of the senior Democratic senator from the Aloha State, Mazie Hirono. Like many members of Congress representing isolated and rural states, Senator Hirono realizes the importance of the convenience store industry to her constituents, so it was my pleasure to be in attendance to support her.

What I did not expect were her comments at the dinner. Rather than prattle on about Republican opposition to the Democratic agenda, Senator Hirono spoke fondly of the Republicans in both the House and the Senate with whom she has been able to successfully work to promote her legislative initiatives. I nearly dropped my fork as she praised House Majority Leader Eric Cantor for his counsel and help.

You just don’t hear this stuff in Washington — let alone fundraisers. And as I looked around the table, there were no fake smiles on the lobbyists’ faces; there was a glow. Everyone was feeding off the sincerity in Senator Hirono’s words.

When Libertarian curmudgeons like me can walk out of a political event thinking there just might be some hope on Capitol Hill, well, maybe there is hope.

Thank you, Senator Hirono.

From Capitol Hill,



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