

Public Engagement Pearls—PEP for Political Discourse

Dr. Ronald Silvestri – December 2025

You have to stand for something or else you'll fall for anything.

Words are not violence. Violence is violence.

The first amendment enshrines our right to speak what we believe.

Just because I don't agree with you shouldn't make me your enemy.

Just because my views disagree with yours or hurt your feelings doesn't make my speech "hate speech."

The less speech there is the more violence will be used to settle disagreements.

Iron sharpens iron. Debate sharpens all of our ideas and winnows out the weaker ones.

True diversity includes diversity of thought & requires listening to others with views different from my own.

True inclusion necessitates including those whose views differ from my own.

Listening is not the same as hearing. Listening requires seeking to understand.

God gave us two ears and one mouth. We should use them in that proportion.

We communicate not just by what we say but by our tone of voice and our body language. So watch these too.

As Jesus once said: Take the log out of your own eye before you offer to take the speck out of your neighbor's.

Yet also judge who is worth having a political discussion with and who is simply too close-minded.

Don't retreat from views you don't like. Challenge them with your own views expressed in your own words.

None of us is right about everything always. Look for and acknowledge even the smallest point of intersection of your views with those of an adversary. Try to build even a small consensus, and work from there.

Swears, epithets, hyperboles, and ad hominins are the arsenal of those who have run out of cogent ideas.

Just because you believe something is true doesn't make it true.

Double-check your facts and your sources. Your honesty and content matter in who believes your message.

If you find yourself hating someone, follow Abraham Lincoln and try getting to know that person better.

Don't be afraid to say what you believe on a subject and why you believe what you do. You will be surprised that you are often not alone in your beliefs, and speaking up respectfully may win converts to your position.

Free speech has its limits. One cannot speak out advocating violence against another person.

Though we are free to call someone vile epithets, if those words offend public sensibility, others (e.g., employers) have the right (and responsibility!) to appropriately chastise us. Speech can be legal—and still be offensive.