

TO: Local political leaders and candidates for office

FROM: Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia

We, the Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia believe that our democracy thrives when differing viewpoints can be exchanged with respect; when voices other than our own can be listened to, and heard. Robust, vigorous debate is a hallmark of a diverse society. A frank and civil exchange of ideas helps to inform our decisions and provoke new, constructive ways of addressing issues. However, we live in a time when public discussion and discourse is often increasingly uncivil. As differences devolve into acrimony, dignity is diminished and people holding diverse viewpoints cease listening to each other. Particularly in an election season, these regrettable trends tend to be even more pronounced. It has become more difficult to find common ground. We, as community leaders, have the responsibility to lead others by promoting and maintaining civility in discussions, including and especially those focused on public policy issues. Order relies on the integrity of all people and we, the members of the Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia, hold ourselves accountable for setting a positive example. We ask and challenge those in political leadership to join us in this effort to choose the path that leads away from polarization and towards a unity of purpose that fosters a shared future. This will uphold the dignity of each person, created in the image of God, and our resolve to show respect and to do more good will be strengthened. We call upon you, and all those seeking public office to support this by signing on as your show of commitment to carry out these valued principles of civility and mutual respect.

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