

Community Comment
July 15, 2016
Sam Pennisi

America's Birthday

I hope you all had a good Fourth of July holiday. This was our 240th celebration of this great experiment in modern democratic government. Of course we are a representative republic but it's still the model that the rest of the world looks to for securing a government of, for, and by the people. Two hundred and forty years is not a long time in relative terms but, so far, it has served us well. Over the years there have been trying times and we are going through one now. There is a lot of vocal discontent as we enter the final stage of the Presidential election cycle. I understand the frustration that many people feel but I think it's misplaced.

The one thing in common with the Trump and the Bernie people is they think the system is broken. The election process is rigged. The wealthy control the puppet candidates. The one percent controls everything. For Trump, everything was bad and rigged until he won the nomination; we think. Bernie people called their own candidate names for finally endorsing Mrs. Clinton. The anger I have seen from both sides is truly disturbing.

Since we have just celebrated the Fourth of July, I would like to offer a different take. First I would remind us that this is a government of, for, and by the people. We have the freedom to vote yet year after year we see dismal percentages of voters actually going to the polls. In my opinion, the right to vote brings with it the obligation to vote. But not just vote, we need to vote like our future depends on it. We need to examine the candidates and the issues seriously and in detail. We need to read and question and analyze the various options. Voting has become an event. We organize and get out the vote but most don't do their homework. We get wrapped up in personality and bravado instead of having real discussions on policies that will take us into the future we want to create. We have parties that seem to command our loyalty over good of country.

In addition, we make running for office a game of gotcha. We overlook ideas in favor of looking at every word a candidate says and things he or she may have done years ago. We can't seem to separate the important qualities from the sound bite screw ups.

Maybe worst of all, we seem to have lost the value of compromise. There are 300 million of us. This is a big and diverse country. We border the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans. We live on the Caribbean Sea. We live in the mountains and the great grasslands. We have great cities and some of the best agricultural lands in the world. We have top rated educational institutions and outstanding national parks. On top of all that, we are the most successful cultural melting pot in the history of the world. We are not one religion, we are all religions. We are not one race, we are all races. We have learned to get along and thrive as a people. We have made it our strength. We are perhaps the most free nation with an economy that is one of the least regulated. Yet, when we needed it the most, we

adopted a sort of socialism to get us through. That's how we won two world wars; together.

Compromise is not just a value, it is an art worth perfecting. It has to be who we are as politicians.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment