

Self-censoring not Iowa way nor should it ever be

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August 11, 2020

I was having an e-mail discussion with a good friend recently and realized something I am appalled about that I felt a need to share.

America has become sharply divided to a point that my fellow Americans are self-censoring according to a survey completed by the CATO Institute. I find that unfathomable. Iowans have always prided themselves on the ability of self-expression and an ability to speak their mind and for that to be backed up in our Constitution in the First Amendment to the Bill of Rights.

Now, I can already hear it in my mind with people saying, “Yeah, it’s Trump’s fault,” and others are saying, “Yeah, it’s Pelosi’s fault.”

The truth is it’s been building for years. That is why a populist candidate who is willing to fight back won the presidential election nearly four years ago.

This division is nothing new as the United States has always had sharp divides even to the point of dueling in the early days of this great country, but I don’t recall a time where 62 percent of Americans say the political climate prevents them from saying things they believe because another might find what they say as offensive or they were scared to share their belief.

To make this division even more stark, 50 percent of strong liberals support firing Trump donors and 36 percent of strong conservatives support firing Biden donors. It’s no wonder that 32 percent of the respondents to the survey worry about missing out on job opportunities as a result of their political opinions, and this is across the spectrum of voters who believe this.

I am sorry for the intense few paragraphs of figures, but I felt it was necessary to make a point. Today in Iowa, citizens feel the need to stay quiet instead of voice their political opinion because they fear the repercussions. I served our state and country for 25 years in the Army and served almost three years of that 25 in combat zones across the globe. I did that because I believe in this country and state. Our state is more than a group of lawmakers, a governor and judges in black robes. Our state is first an ideal; a value. We value freedom in this state, or at least I thought we did. We value rule of law in this state because that is what guarantees our freedoms. Finally, we value one another in this state because that is what makes us strong.

One of my favorite quotes from President Ronald Reagan sums up many of our Founding Fathers’ philosophies. Reagan said: “Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn’t pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our

children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free.”

To me this self-censorship is a step in the direction of simply giving up a freedom. Eventually, if unchecked, we will forget how to use this freedom and it is lost to us. I urge people to keep your differing viewpoints, but I also urge you to accept others as being different. In the process you don't have to accept the other person's view as correct, but you should accept their right to having that viewpoint.

I have seen and heard the cruelest and most vile statements from people in recent times in response to a view. That is simply wrong.

I am honored to be your state representative, every day. As your representative, though, I take our state motto seriously and when I see and hear that people are limiting their speech because they are fearful of what the consequences would be it is a serious issue to me.

Our state motto is “our liberties we prize and our rights we will maintain,” and I urge you to think of this as you go about your day and protect one another's liberties and rights along with me. They might be all about division in Washington, D.C., but here in Iowa we are different; we are Iowa nice and look out for one another.