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William Larsen: Finding workable solutions

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It is with true sadness that I continue reading the barrage of columns castigating one another for our conflicting views on the current administration.

This intense back-and-forth vitriol further polarizes our community, and it is with some shame that I realize my part in perpetrating such divisive rhetoric. Regardless of how righteous each of us might feel, such mutual animosity clearly will not work to create sustainable solutions to our many problems.

While I cannot conceive myself ever embracing President Trump's policies, I would like to better understand why so many of our fellow citizens do so. My problem here is that I know many Trump supporters who, like Clinton advocates, are caring neighbors, generous community members and honest citizens. And frankly, this astounds me.

I honestly don't get it. To my mind, it is abundantly clear that Trump's policies would bring great harm to millions of our fellow citizens, the physical environment and our country as a whole. This doesn't feel like an opinion, but an observable fact (as opposed to an "alternative fact") based objectively on his rhetoric, personal behavior and proposal to further enrich the 1 percent by cutting their taxes while simultaneously gutting essential food, medical and regulatory services that protect our people and planet. For this reason, I express the following concerns to Trump supporters, and genuinely ask you to consider these issues independently of your pre-established positions. And I promise to do the same.

We need true discussion on these issues. We might start by voicing our fears and needs rather than regurgitating pre-conceived opinions about who's to blame.

1. Health care: The Congressional Budget Office estimates that 24 million Americans will lose their health insurance if the current Republican health care bill is enacted. A full three-fourths of the Medicaid cuts are from the poorest of our fellow citizens (40 percent of those on Medicaid are children). This is unconscionable in any civilized society. Most prominent medical organizations strongly oppose this proposal, including the AMA, The National Cancer Society, the American Nurses Association, the American Hospital Association, etc. Do you actually believe these organizations are arrayed against you in some liberal conspiracy to brainwash you? Is this truly the "American" legacy you want to leave to your children?

2. Global warming: Scott Pruitt, the EPA administrator — along with President Trump — doubts the effect of human activity on global warming, and does not accept that carbon dioxide is a primary contributor. This is in direct opposition to the views of 97 percent of our legitimate scientists, NASA, The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the EPA itself

(Trump's budget cuts the EPA by one third). According to the Nobel Prize winning Panel on Global Climate Change, carbon dioxide is 33 times more contributory to global warming than all natural causes combined. Remember, the 1 percent will vastly increase profits if these vital regulations are eliminated.

3. National defense: We already have a defense budget that is seven times that of any other industrialized country. Why cry weakness in this area and add to our extreme military spending? Here's why: "Follow the money!" Corporate interests are heavily invested in the promotion of war and will hugely profit if this pork barrel raise is approved. If you don't trust your federal government, this one should be easy.

4. Immigration: The "fake news" on this topic has been over the top. In 2006, 1.2 million illegal aliens were arrested trying to sneak into the U.S., but by 2016 that number had dropped to 415,816. Moreover, there has been a 40 percent drop in the arrest of aliens at our border since Trump's inauguration.

Given these facts, do you truly see the need for "the wall" (estimated cost in the billions of dollars)? The extremely conservative Cato Institute determined that the chances of an American being killed by a foreign terrorist is one in 3.6 million; the risk of being killed by a refugee is 1 in 3.64 billion; and by an illegal immigrant is 1 in 10.9 million. In contrast, the odds of an American being killed in this country by an "assault by firearm" is 1 in 25,000.

The president's rhetoric on this issue constitutes the very epitome of "fake news."

We need true discussion on these issues. We might start by voicing our fears and needs rather than regurgitating pre-conceived opinions about who's to blame. Also, it might help to remember that all three of the Abrahamic Faiths — Judaism, Christianity and Islam — agree on the foundational virtues of kindness and charity.

If we can overcome the corrupting power of money in politics, we just might find workable solutions to our multi-faceted crisis.