

Civility Pledge

In the current age of extreme political divisions, the Township Officials of Illinois (TOI) is promoting that all Townships adopt the CIVILITY Pledge to bring conformity in townships across Illinois. This voluntary pledge publicly announces a code of conduct that is expected.

The Institute for Local Government defines civility primarily as how people treat each other. Civility involves the way people display respect for others in a group that have differing opinions that they may disagree with. Debate and disagreement play an important role in governance, but the issue is how individuals accept or express such disagreement. The objective of every township board meeting is to focus on the proposed solutions to identified problems impacting the community, not to engage, support, or encourage personal attacks or differing opinions of how to reach supportive decisions.

For decades, Township Government has experienced a fair share of division, and regardless of your political affirmations, disagreement and dislike occurs on both sides. Township meetings experience this and even elevate to physical encounters at times.

With the continued division of political affiliations, the call for a civil society is important now more than ever. This is why TOI is following other units of local governments in Illinois and encouraging the 1426 townships in Illinois to adopt the civility pledge to eliminate such meeting problems.

The civility pledge states that all members will “pledge to promote civility by listening, being respectful of others, acknowledging that we are all striving to support and improve our community, and understanding that we each may have different ideas for achieving that objective.”

The pledge highlights the importance of listening and respecting others. By effectively listening you are allowing an individual's viewpoints to be heard with respect. You may not agree, but practicing a respectful level of civility benefits the meeting for all.

Elected or appointed township officials are held responsible and accountable for developing new ideas to better their communities. The relationships of the board members do build relationships to find solutions for the benefit of the township.

While TOI hopes that the characteristics reflected in this civility pledge are obvious to our members, we hope that all will consider enacting civility pledges by their Township boards for a variety of reasons, as promoting civility and respectful behavior among citizens has several benefits.

Civility pledges can help create a more inclusive and respectful community by encouraging individuals to treat one another with kindness and respect, regardless of their differences in opinion, background, or identity. When working with others on your Township board or with members in the community, we feel these traits are helpful in building trust, respect, and healthy working relationships.

A commitment to civility can also help facilitate conflict resolution and cooperation within your township. When elected officials engage in civil discourse, it becomes easier to address differences, find common ground, and work together on shared goals and possible solutions to problems in a way that fosters trust between members of the public body.

When engaged in civility toward others—your fellow board members, members of the public, electors at an Annual Town Meeting, etc.—stronger community relationships and a sense of belonging among community members can be established and maintained. When people feel respected and valued, they are more likely to actively participate in public discourse and engage in positive social interactions.

Enacting a civility pledge can encourage higher standards of public discourse and debate, which should always be a goal of elected officials in any public body but is especially important in the township form of government. When citizens engage in civil discourse, it can lead to more informed decision-making and policy developments. Working in the township form of government, where a large share of decision-making is through the direct votes of township citizens (electors), civil discourse is a net positive.

Governments that promote civility often enjoy better relations with their constituents. At a time when public trust in government is waning, this is especially important. When citizens perceive their government as respectful and responsive, it can elevate trust and cooperation between the township and the people they represent.

Local governments also have a role in setting an example for the constituents they serve. When township officials adhere to civility, they demonstrate a commitment to respectful and constructive behavior, which can encourage citizens to follow suit.

For this to be enforced, an elected official can call a point of privilege or order as appropriate for the Supervisor to judge and take action about the situation. The Supervisor may request a recess, or expel a member, or community member from the meeting.

Maryann Vazquez- agreed on August 7,2024

Joann Wright - agreed on August 7, 2024

Gerry Galloway agreed on August 8, 2024

Robert Sacks - agreed on August 8, 2024

Susan Howell - agreed on August 11, 2024

Donna Prepejchal September 30, 2029

