



-----Original Message-----
From: Cooper, Rory
Sent: Tue 2/10/2009 5:47 PM
To: Carroll, Conn; Lansing, Gerrit; Tatum, Gray
Subject: Communicating with Integrity

Blog Team:

As the intensity level ratchets up in Washington these days, it can be easy to get caught up in heated rhetoric, hyperbole and name-calling. With the proliferation of the news cycle we live in, it has become common place to see the line crossed in all forms of media. Recently, I, and others, have seen this line start to get fuzzy here at Heritage. I am as guilty as anyone. As we approach the one month mark of our new President's term, it is helpful to consider some of these rules to

live by, as we write or edit on the Blog.

President Obama: He is our President. And when we refer to him, it should be "President Obama", "President Barack Obama" or "the President". Using just his last name or even including his middle name can reflect disrespect for the office he earned in November. This goes for the Vice President, Members of Congress, and Cabinet officials as well.

Name Calling: Liar, Cheat, Criminal, Tax Fraud, etc. We need to avoid these words. We can point out a behavior, but not an intent.

Off With Their Heads: We should certainly avoid calling for people to step down from their jobs, or even down the road, impeachment. Unless Heritage has an official position from the top down that a public official needs to go, we do not need to be the ones to form that rebuke. At a staff level, calling for someone's job is just as bad as someone calling for yours.

Comparisons: "Just like Clinton" or "Much like 'Generic Evil Person'". Unless we are literally comparing a record, let's avoid hyperbolic comparisons.

Intent: "He wants America to Fail", "He has a socialist agenda". Let talk radio do the labeling for us on this one. We need to provide the facts, and let others be the judge.

The Heritage Foundation has a storied reputation of intellectual debate on the Hill. We drive public opinion with facts and analysis. Let's maintain that integrity while we aggressively challenge the policy issues that face us in the coming years. The blog can be the easiest place to lose this perspective. Like I said, I have seen myself get swept up in this pattern, so let's all remain vigilant on future postings and ensure others who post on the Foundry do the same.

If you have any questions, or think something is nearing that 'line in the sand', run it by me, and we can honestly assess which way to go. Also, from now on, all postings that require my edit, including Morning Bell, will be edited in the "Write" portion of Word Press. Do not publish anything until you are 100% that it is ready for prime-time.

Thanks,

Rory

Rory Cooper
Director of Strategic Communications
The Heritage Foundation