

Politicians Are Good

by
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Many, perhaps the majority in society hold a pessimistic view toward politics and politicians. Too often, we hear the expression "all politicians are crooks" or "someone must have paid them off". Unfortunately there is no difficulty finding examples that reinforce those beliefs. However, this underlying cynicism of politics reflects the growing trend away from individual responsibility while projecting blame everywhere else, particularly government. Those that cling to this cynicism feed upon the personal failures of others because the pitiable failure of themselves can never find consolation.

When was the last time you heard that being a politician was a noble profession, a selfless calling of courage and conviction? When was the last time that you heard the words "public service" connected to an elected government official? When was the last time you heard the media speak highly of government?

Today, I believe that it is important to begin discussing examples that reinforce hope in our political system, in democracy, in the greatest form of government in the world. It was with reluctance that I accepted being named Chairman of the StrongLand Chamber of Commerce government relations committee several years ago. I was not sure what our elected officials were like but I knew that I had an obligation to find out. I only hoped that I would find good people.

The StrongLand Chamber is widely recognized for its proactive, committed approach to important patriotic duties such as voter registration drives in the valley. In addition, each year, our members make a pilgrimage to Harrisburg to visit our State Representatives and State Senator. Our legislators know that they can expect a visit from us the Tuesday before Thanksgiving without fail. The round trip is long and grueling for one day but the benefits to our members are enormous.

As a participant of these trips each year, it is gratifying to see that people with our chamber are well represented by good politicians like Representatives Joe Petrarca, Jr. and Terry Van Horne and State Senator Pat Stapleton. Each of them in their own unique way demonstrate what is good in government. Joe is the new kid on the block, eager to listen and understand. Terry is the consummate host, familiar with the issues of his constituency with a sense of tough determination. Pat is the seasoned veteran with a gentle manner and smile that reinforces hope in our valley's future.

Do I disagree with these people on some issues? Of course. But I believe that they are each genuine and honest. I also believe that they got into the business of government to serve people and not serve themselves. They are good people who work hard for their constituents.

There is one other politician in Harrisburg we continue to visit each year although the StrongLand region no longer falls within her district and it is this politician's example that particularly bodes well for the future good of Western PA. State Senator Melissa Hart welcomes us every November with an informal, contagious enthusiasm that makes our trips a pleasure. There is no political gain for Melissa to hear our views. She no longer represents us. We are not her constituents. However she listens and interacts with an interest that is genuine and sincere.

You may not agree with Melissa's strong pro-life and school-choice views but it only takes one meeting to know that she is intellectually brilliant and committed to her convictions. It was this lived, faith-filled conviction that lead the Apollo, Vandergrift and Leechburg ministerium's to inquire if she would speak to a humble little breakfast one morning about faith in the workplace.

Melissa had to rise early from the North Hills to get to Walker Catering in Oklahoma Boro by 7:30 AM. I'm sure she had one hundred more important places to be. Fortunately for us, she came. All of us thoroughly enjoyed the ease with which she spoke, her authentic nature and her inspiring stories. I have never seen so many people moved to feel hopeful about our future government.

If you have your doubts about the good in government, meet Melissa Hart. She is cynicism's worst nightmare.



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