

The Oklahoma City Declaration

The American experiment has endured for nearly 250 years because it is perhaps the most effective alternative to political violence yet created. American democratic processes provide avenues for issues of public concern to be deliberated. Compromise is compelled, resulting in outcomes that incorporate elements of many competing viewpoints. Minority viewpoints are protected to a reasonable degree. Disputes are resolved through a judicial process. The entire system is governed by written laws, which can only be changed through the democratic process. Political violence is the ultimate rejection of the experiment and it is held accountable.

The American experiment requires acceptance of:

- **Pluralism** – There will always be others who hold different views than you.
- **Compromise** – Outcomes will reflect many views. Your preferences will never be adopted exactly as you desired.
- **Persuasion** – If you want maximum adoption of your views, you must convince more people of their merit. This occurs via political arguments that change minds, not the threat of violence.

The American experiment is an outlier in human history. It has proven so effective, however, that it has unleashed unprecedented freedom, prosperity and innovation upon the entire world. Where there are shortcomings, the experiment contains the means for self-improvement.

In spite of the experiment's success, some Americans have still turned to political violence. They have rejected the realities of pluralism, compromise and persuasion. In the wake of every major instance of political violence, our nation has ultimately recommitted to the experiment. As America's mayors, we make our recommitment with this declaration.

Mayors live the American experiment like no one else. Running a city demands constant action and results. And so, every day, mayors guide our residents through these democratic processes, respecting pluralism, seeking compromise, and using the art of persuasion.

As mayors, we are grateful to serve as stewards of this unique American experiment. We respect its fragility. We understand that political violence not only destroys lives, it threatens the greatest experiment in human history.

As mayors, we lead our residents toward a common purpose. We work across partisan and ideological lines. We are principled but pragmatic. We get things done.

As members of the United States Conference of Mayors, we work shoulder-to-shoulder with fellow mayors from other parts of the country, different genders and sexual orientations, different ethnicities, religions and ideologies. We work together despite being registered with different political parties, or with no political party at all. We embrace our shared experience as mayors, as humans, and as Americans.

As mayors and as members of the United States Conference of Mayors, we believe:

- That political violence in any form is unacceptable and should be met with the harshest condemnation and penalties. We will condemn those who use or condone political violence, and will seek full accountability for their actions, even if their political position was one with which we agreed.
- That even in a pluralistic society, those things we have in common still far exceed those things that make us different. We will seek ways to inject our shared humanity into debates, even when those debates are emotional (*especially* when those debates are emotional).
- That civility matters, because it is a reflection of our respect for our shared humanity. We will refrain from referring to those with whom we disagree by anything but their preferred name, and if they have a title, we will use it.
- That dehumanization is the rhetorical device that has paved the way to the worst atrocities in human history. We will refrain from referring to those Americans with whom we disagree as “enemies” or as “evil” or with terms that imply they are less than human in any way.
- That we each deserve to be treated as individuals. We will refrain from imputing the actions or statements of one person or group to everyone we perceive to be in agreement with that person or group’s political positions.
- That there is no issue within the confines of the American experiment – outside of insurrection or war – that is truly existential, and we will refrain from apocalyptic political rhetoric.

- That truth matters, especially when false information contributes to unnecessary outrage and emotion. We will refrain from spreading false information and will correct and condemn the spread of false information, even when it originates from a person or group whose position is one with which we agree.
- That everyone participating in the American experiment is motivated by the same thing – a better life for all of us. Unless there are serious allegations to the contrary, we will refrain from questioning the personal motivations of those with whom we disagree.
- That not every thought has to be expressed out loud, especially on social media. We will use social media responsibly and with restraint.
- That we are humans first, Americans second, and partisans last.

We invite accountability for having signed this declaration. If someone alleges that we have fallen short of the aspirations we held ourselves to upon signing this document, we will consider and potentially accept their observation, and will seek improvement the next time.

The initial signers of this declaration affirm their support for its contents at the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum, the site of the deadliest act of domestic political violence in living memory. On this sacred ground, 168 people were murdered by a fellow American who rejected every aspect of the American experiment. This scar in downtown Oklahoma City reminds us of the traumatic and tragic outcomes of political violence. With this declaration, we reject political violence and recommit to the American experiment.

SIGNED this 26th day of September, 2025: