



THE DEFENDER

Edition No. 12

August 2026

An Essay on the Harm of Political Tribalism

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Political tribalism can undermine an organization's ability to achieve its goals. When members place loyalty to a faction above the interests of the party, collaboration gives way to competition, and internal divisions become more important than effective leadership. What should be healthy debate often turns into efforts to block, discredit, or undermine those perceived as belonging to a different faction.

Factional conflict consumes time, energy, and resources that should be focused on serving voters and advancing the party's mission. Rather than working toward common objectives, rival groups may prioritize increasing their influence or weakening competing factions. Public disagreements over strategy, leadership, and policy can distract from the issues that matter most and diminish confidence in the party's ability to function.

Tribalism also encourages loyalty-based decision-making. Qualified individuals may be overlooked for leadership roles or candidate opportunities because they are not aligned with the dominant faction or a hostile minority faction that propagates negativity and descent to achieve its goals. This limits the organization's ability to draw on its strongest talent and adapt to changing political realities.

Perhaps most damaging, tribalism discourages innovation. Members become reluctant to propose new ideas or challenge existing assumptions for fear of criticism or political retaliation. As debate narrows and factions retreat into like-minded groups, the party becomes less responsive and less capable of solving emerging challenges. In my experience, lasting success requires members to judge ideas on their merits, place the party's long-term interests first, and work together despite differences.

Political tribalism can hinder innovation and effective governance. When factions prioritize loyalty to their group over the success of the organization, new ideas are often judged by who proposes them rather than by their potential value. This creates an environment where members become reluctant to offer creative solutions, fearing criticism, exclusion, or political retaliation from competing factions.

Efforts to modernize campaign strategies, broaden voter outreach, or adapt to changing political realities are frequently met with resistance from groups that view change as a threat to their influence. Rather than engaging in constructive debate, some factions work to undermine leadership initiatives simply because they originate outside their own circle. The result is delayed decision-making, missed opportunities, and reduced organizational agility.

Constant opposition from internal factions also discourages productive risk-taking. Leaders may hesitate to advance new policies or reforms when every proposal becomes a test of factional loyalty rather than a discussion of practical outcomes. Over time, this dynamic creates echo chambers in which members engage primarily with like-minded supporters, limiting exposure to alternative perspectives and reducing the organization's capacity for innovation.

In my experience, a party achieves its greatest successes when members evaluate ideas on their merits, challenge one another respectfully, and unite around shared goals. Innovation flourishes when constructive disagreement is encouraged, diverse viewpoints are valued, and all factions commit to advancing the interests of the party and the voters it serves.

To move beyond tribalism, leaders and members must commit to open communication, respectful disagreement, and transparent decision-making. Internal debate should be encouraged as a tool for improvement, not treated as a challenge to loyalty. Leadership opportunities should be earned through competence, character, and commitment to the party's mission, ensuring that the most capable individuals can contribute regardless of factional affiliation.

The focus must shift from winning internal battles to achieving shared goals. When members place the long-term success of the party above factional interests, trust grows, collaboration improves, and innovation flourishes. Diverse viewpoints become a source of strength rather than division, enabling the organization to adapt to new challenges and respond more effectively to the needs of voters.

A united party does not require uniformity of thought. It requires mutual respect, a shared sense of purpose, and a commitment to working together despite differences. When every voice is heard and every member is valued, all tribes can contribute to a stronger, more effective organization capable of achieving lasting success for the party and the community it serves.



Defending Faith, Family & Freedom

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HALEY TALKS TRUTH



Getting our Values in Order

by Haley Barkman

2026 Lincoln Day Speech Contest Champion

When you go on the Spokane County GOP website and see that its values are “faith, family, and freedom,” that’s not there by accident. The Republican party, according to the Pew Research Center, are considerably more likely to say that “religion has a positive influence on American life,” and that “religion [should have] a prominent role in government and lawmaking.”

The problem I’m noticing isn’t the inclusion of faith in our politics. The problem is when your priorities are out of order. The Spokane County GOP got it right when they put faith at the first value in their list. Unfortunately, the Spokane County GOP is an outlier and not representative of the broader Republican Party.

In his book *Seculosity*, David Zahl writes that politics has become “today’s most popular replacement religion.” The GOP has developed this reputation among Gen Z of being full of people who label themselves Christians but would rather fight over politics than share their beliefs.

One columnist wrote in 2021 that “The problem now is not that people think the church’s way of life is too demanding, too morally rigorous, but that they have come to think the church doesn’t believe its own moral teachings.” Increasingly, we are seeing Republican voters slapping on the title of Christian, but their use of such a title is only a reflection of how they vote, not how they choose to spend their Sunday morning or in their relationships with others.

But faith before politics is better. If we don’t have any faith, what is the foundation? What is the whole point? Why fight for religious freedoms if we don’t have any in the first place?

The Spokane County GOP’s values are as follows: “Faith, Family, and Freedom.” Faith is first on the list, and for a very good reason. The online values page of the Spokane GOP says that “We draw strength and purpose from faith—not as a political tool, but as a moral compass.”

My point here isn’t that we should work hard to make everyone like the Republican party. That’s never going to happen. The question I have for you is, when was the last time you went to church? When was the last time you chose anger at a political rival, instead of prayers for them? For me, the answers to these questions have unearthed places where I need to focus on my faith before my politics. I pray the same thing for you all.



2026 SPOKANE COUNTY GOP CONVENTION

Spokane County GOP Convention

Saturday August 22nd, 9:00 am

Mead Union Events Center

Be Part of Shaping Your Party and Community

SpokaneGOP.com/Convention-2026



LIBERTY'S SENTINEL



"In the beginning of a change the patriot is a scarce man, and brave, and hated and scorned. When his cause succeeds, the timid join him, for then it costs nothing to be a patriot." [Mark Twain]

Samuel Adams - Father of the American Revolution

Samuel Adams stands among the most influential figures in American history. Often called the "Father of the American Revolution," Adams devoted his life to defending liberty. Through his leadership in the Sons of Liberty, his opposition to British taxation, and his role in organizing colonial resistance, he helped transform growing dissatisfaction into a united movement for independence. His tireless efforts laid much of the groundwork for the birth of the United States.

By 1776, the American colonies were engaged in a struggle that would determine their future. As a delegate to the Continental Congress, Adams emerged as one of the strongest voices calling for complete separation from Great Britain. On August 1, 1776, shortly after Congress approved the Declaration of Independence, Adams delivered a powerful address in Philadelphia celebrating American independence and urging the people to remain faithful to the cause of

liberty. His speech reflected both the hardships of the Revolutionary War and the tremendous hope that accompanied the birth of a new nation.

In his address, Adams argued that the colonies faced a clear and unavoidable choice. He declared, "We have no other alternative than independence, or the most ignominious and galling servitude." With British armies operating throughout the colonies, he believed that a return to British rule would mean the loss of the rights and freedoms Americans had long cherished. The statement captured the determination of those who believed that liberty was worth every sacrifice.

Adams also emphasized that the American Revolution was about more than the interests of the thirteen colonies. He proclaimed, "Our contest is not only whether we ourselves shall be free, but whether there shall be left to mankind an asylum on earth for civil and religious liberty." In his view, America represented a historic experiment in self-government. If the Revolution succeeded, it would offer hope to people everywhere who sought freedom and representative government. This message continues to resonate in modern times whenever democratic values and individual rights are defended around the world.

Perhaps the most famous passage associated with Adams's call for independence contains words that still challenge readers today: "If ye love wealth greater than liberty, the tranquility of servitude greater than the animating contest for freedom, go home from us in peace. We seek not your counsel, nor your arms." Adams warned that freedom demands courage and commitment. He believed that comfort and security should never be valued more highly than liberty itself. More than two centuries later, his words remain a reminder that free societies depend upon citizens willing to defend their principles.

The speech also expressed Adams's confidence in the American people. He praised a nation founded not on privilege or inherited rank, but on the consent of its citizens. He envisioned a republic where public service and dedication to the common good would matter more than wealth or family status. This belief in self-government became a cornerstone of the new American nation.

Samuel Adams lived to see the independence he had long championed become a reality. His leadership, perseverance, and unwavering commitment to liberty helped guide the colonies through their greatest crisis. The themes of his 1776 speech, freedom, self-government, individual rights, and civic responsibility, remain central to the American experiment today. More than simply a revolutionary leader, Samuel Adams was a visionary patriot whose voice helped inspire a nation and whose words continue to remind future generations that liberty is both a blessing and a responsibility.



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2026 SPOKANE COUNTY GOP PLATFORM

PREAMBLE

We, the members of the Spokane County Republican Party, affirm that the United States of America is one nation under God, founded upon the self-evident truths proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence: that “all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, including Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.”

We believe that the Constitution of the United States was established to secure those God-given rights, limit the power of government, preserve individual liberty, and protect the sovereignty of the American people.

We further recognize the principles of the Washington State Constitution, which affirm that all political power is inherent in the people and that government exists by their consent to protect and maintain individual rights.

Guided by faith, family, freedom, and personal responsibility, we embrace an America First vision that places the interests, security, prosperity, and constitutional liberties of American citizens above all other political considerations.

We believe that strong families, vibrant communities, free markets, secure borders, equal justice under the law, and a limited, accountable government are essential to preserving the blessings of liberty for future generations.

We are committed to protecting the sanctity of human life, defending religious freedom, safeguarding private property, supporting the rule of law, strengthening national sovereignty, and preserving the rights guaranteed by our federal and state constitutions.

We believe that government is most effective when it is closest to the people, constrained by constitutional limits, and faithful to its duty of protecting the freedoms bestowed by God.

With gratitude for the sacrifices of those who founded, defended, and sustained our Republic, we dedicate ourselves to advancing policies that strengthen America, uphold our constitutional heritage, and secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity. Under God, we pledge to preserve and restore the principles that have made America the greatest beacon of freedom and opportunity in the history of the world.



LAUNCH, LEARN, LEAD

Over Fifty Years of Changing Hearts

Now Accelerating a Culture of Life Across Washington



The inaugural **Culture of Life & Love Summit™ & Arts Festival**, presented by **HLW's Life & Love Network™**, proudly featured the organization's first statewide Oratory Contest, bringing together young leaders who are passionate about building a culture that respects and protects every human life.

This year's top prize of \$1,000 was awarded to Mary Crosby, of Skagit Valley. Mary is no stranger to the platform. Having previously competed at the national level through another pro-life

organization's oratory program, she has demonstrated both a gift for public speaking and a commitment to advancing the cause of human life.

Mary credits her parents with intentionally raising their children to value effective communication and public speaking. Inspired to use those skills for a meaningful purpose, she actively searched for pro-life speaking opportunities and found HLW's inaugural statewide Oratory Contest—the very opportunity she had been looking for.

Homeschooled and eager to continue serving the cause of human life, Mary plans to join **HLW's Life & Love Network™** as an intern beginning this July, becoming the organization's second intern this year. Her enthusiasm for learning and serving reflects the next generation of leaders we are committed to equipping.

This year's contest marked the beginning of an exciting new tradition. While the 2026 competition was our first statewide event, plans are already underway to expand the program. Beginning next year, Washington contestants will have the opportunity to advance to national competition.

We believe young people have tremendous potential to shape the future through thoughtful, persuasive communication. If you know a student between the ages of **16 and 18** who enjoys public speaking and desires to make a positive impact, we encourage them to participate in next year's Oratory Contest



For more information, please contact **Evangelyn Wendell** at Evangelyn@humanlifewa.org.

HLW's Mission is to inform and inspire the public about life-affirming options, fostering a culture that cherishes every individual, regardless of age or circumstance



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