

Isabel Leaves Us on High and Common Ground

Isabel made her visit. She was no lady. A storm greater than any of us destroyed, but it did not defeat all of us. Just like 9-11, it really doesn't matter if you are a Democrat or a Republican today. We're all neighbors, Virginians and Americans. United we stand. In God we trust.

As much as is required to recover, I'm confident that we will find the capacity to build back better. Surely, our will is greater than the setback from the loss of material possessions. Hopefully, our community will persevere without injury or loss of life.

Some families lost their homes, many families lost their possessions and many more had property damage. Businesses were hurt. Yet, I believe, everyone - even those who lost the most - are grateful that no life was lost.

Doesn't that speak to our values - sacred life, injury, then property? Among property there are memories like photos/videos, sentimental values and then stuff - no matter the price. Is there a difference here between Conservatives and Liberals? I hope not.

We have much to applaud in our civil servants. The police, fire fighters and emergency medical personnel left their loved ones to serve us all. City/County, Commonwealth and Federal Governments will all do their part to help in the recovery. Their roles are clearly defined. It's the earnestness and dedication of their performance of duty of the officials that makes them so appreciated. Again, we have much to be grateful.

One good that comes from this devastation is the sense of good will among citizens. There is the realization that we don't live in a cruel or heartless community. Our officials, our bureaucrats are our neighbors and they care. Our public servants serve. The workers in companies that provide us power - under government regulations - and other utilities like cable - make personal sacrifices to bring our services back.

What more can be done for those who lost the most? The Daily Press and Red Cross have funds. Will there be a fund for each community's folks? Here is where Conservative Republicans and Liberal Democrats may differ about what to do in the future. Or, maybe not.

Individuals have a personal responsibility to carry insurance. For those who don't or don't have enough, the General Assembly should create communities of common interests as multiple safety nets - before you get to a government agency.

First, every extended family should be able to share their resources and discount every penny they provide for relief from their taxes. Dollar for dollar it's more efficient by a factor of 5 than going through government.

Second, church families, community of faith, should be the second safety net - and they are already for many folks.

Third, communities of co-workers - like credit unions with new capabilities - and neighborhoods organized into credit union-like legal entities should be able to operate tax-free to pool resources and provide relief, loans, etc. for individual members. These should be the third and fourth safety nets.

If a person has none of these - in the future if the legal entities are created - then a welfare agency of the Commonwealth or a Federal agency - for a loan, etc. - should be the fifth safety net.

But, this is a vision for the future. For today, we must deal with the helping

agencies as they are. I know our churches will step up to provide real assistance.

Speaking of unity, there's more common ground for Conservatives and Liberals. We are worried about the Patriot Act of 2001 and its follow up - Franken Patriot-stein 2003. Internal security against terrorism shouldn't cost us our essential liberty. Our vigilance alone will keep us free. No one else will protect your freedom in our homeland for you.

It's one thing to go through the feel-good security inconveniences at the airport. The TSA is an expensive Federal jobs program that raises the bar a few inches for terrorists. The TSA is not a threat to your Constitutionally-protected, God-given individual rights.

But, whoa, the Patriot Acts potential abuses to your freedoms for illegal search, seizure, fair trial, cruel and unusual punishments and free assembly, worship, and speech are serious. If freedom can be abused by people in power it will be.

Isn't that quite the irony? It sounds like criticism of the people in local and higher government who work so wonderfully – our neighbors who share our burdens and our joy. Nope. We should be thankful for all that is good in our government – that represents the best in us – today. We need to be certain that no government gets too powerful, because sooner or later it will represent the worst of us. Power will be abused. Individuals, we, will lose freedom.

Here's to our common cause. Recover – even better than before Isabel. Stay free.

James Atticus Bowden