

# Roger Utneher: Wisconsin needs a 21st century state Sen. Tiny Krueger

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Civility is the missing ingredient in politics and government. It will take a 21st century Clifford “Tiny” Krueger to restore it.

Krueger, a Republican state senator from Merrill, served in the state Senate from 1946 to 1983, including several years as minority floor leader. The former Progressive was a respected icon in government, known for civility, compromise, aisle-crossing and bipartisan results.

Tiny Krueger modeled the ability to foster community, negotiate and compromise with civility and decency. He worked for the common good above party. He was one of Wisconsin’s most effective legislators in Wisconsin history because he prioritized civility over partisanship.

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Unfortunately, that is missing today. Gerrymandering, excessive money fueling campaigns and a concentration of power in partisan caucuses have corrupted Wisconsin’s once reputation for clean, honest government.

Wisconsin desperately needs a 21st century Tiny Krueger.

Voters are divided. Forty percent are Trump-embracing conservatives. Forty percent are left-leaning liberals. Future elections will be determined by the middle 20 percent. Neither Republicans nor Democrats will be able to persuade the moderate middle without restoring good-will to our political debate.

Aristotle wrote that without authenticity, expertness and good will, persuasion is not possible. Today, churlish political rhetoric from both parties rallies the left and right extremes and is ignored by the election-determining middle.

Whichever party returns to the kind of political discourse modeled by Krueger will be most likely to win elections in the future. A party advocating fairness, compassion and civility will be more successful than one continuing the carcinogenic pattern of mean-spirited, partisan attack ads.

Krueger was one of Wisconsin's most effective 20th century legislators. He could be again today if politicians from both parties were smart enough to follow his example of civility in our civic discourse.

*-Utneher was Sen. Tiny Krueger's first administrative assistant, owned radio stations throughout Wisconsin for 42 years and founded DoorCountyDailyNews.com. Today he is a member of the Wisconsin Common Cause board of advisors and the Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service board. He lives in Wausau.*