

House Bill 881

By: Representatives Campbell of the 35th, Hugley of the 141st, Jones of the 60th, Roberts of the 52nd, and Mitchell of the 88th

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 4 of Title 1 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
2 holidays and observances, so as to designate the first day of the legislative session each year
3 as "Civility Day" in Georgia; to provide for legislative findings; to provide for related
4 matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

6 **SECTION 1.**

7 The General Assembly finds that:

8 (1) George Washington wrote a copy of the *110 Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior*
9 in his school book when he was about 14 years old;

10 (2) A legislative member respects the rights of individuals to hold different opinions and
11 to speak truthfully without accusation or distortion and avoids heightened rhetoric when
12 serving the legislature;

13 (3) A legislative member who demonstrates civility chooses words carefully and
14 understands that his or her actions or communications reflect directly upon the legislative
15 institution;

- 16 (4) Civility requires an acknowledgment of opposing views and the right of others to
17 hold those views. It does not suggest or require acceptance or agreement with those
18 opinions;
- 19 (5) "Civility is claiming and caring for one's identity, needs, and beliefs without
20 degrading someone else's in the process," said Cassandra Dahnke and Tomas Spath,
21 founders of the Institute for Civility;
- 22 (6) The Georgia Municipal Association became the first Organization of Civility, with
23 an inaugural group of 77 cities with the "City of Civility" designation, to encourage
24 elected officials to acknowledge their responsibility in modeling open, free, and vigorous
25 debate while maintaining the highest standards of civility, honesty, and mutual respect,
26 not only with each other but with those they serve;
- 27 (7) Civility includes the following practices:
- 28 (A) Be considerate of others' opinions. It is okay to agree to disagree;
- 29 (B) Manage your emotions. Get curious instead of furious;
- 30 (C) A silent voice is not always a weak voice. Sometimes it is okay not to respond;
- 31 (D) Be kind. Make your point about the issue, not the person;
- 32 (E) Actively listen to learn how to engage respectfully;
- 33 (F) Think about the impact of your actions and not the intent;
- 34 (G) Ask questions to learn. Answer questions with respect;
- 35 (H) Remember to quit taking it personally; and
- 36 (I) Have empathy. Just because you have not experienced it does not mean it does
37 not exist;
- 38 (8) Civility is key to a successful legislative session; and
- 39 (9) The legislators of the State of Georgia desire to embrace civility and manifest its
40 aspiration to practice and support civility.

41 **SECTION 2.**

42 Chapter 4 of Title 1 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to holidays and
43 observances, is amended by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

44 "1-4-27.

45 The first day of the legislative session each year is designated as 'Civility Day' in Georgia."

46 **SECTION 3.**

47 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.