

State treasurers: It's time to turn down the temperature and treat each other with dignity



Candles are lit during a vigil in memory of political activist Charlie Kirk at McKiernan Park in Chicago's Mount Greenwood neighborhood on Sept. 11, 2025. (John J. Kim/Chicago Tribune)



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Modern politics have always been messy, but rarely has it felt this angry and this dangerous for this long.

It seems like every debate now turns personal. Neighbors stop talking. Families argue at the dinner table. Even social media feel like a shouting match. It's time to pull back, take a breath and bring some civility and common sense back into the way we disagree.

As state treasurers from opposite political parties, we don't see eye to eye on Charlie Kirk's views. But we are united on this: No American should ever lose their life because of their political beliefs. Disagreements belong at the ballot box, at the debate stage or around the kitchen table — not in acts of violence.

This tragedy hit close to home for us. One us, Daniel Elliott, went to Utah Valley University where the Kirk shooting took place, as does his daughter. She might have been at that event if not for a family gathering that day. It was a sobering reminder that politics aren't just headlines — they touch real families and communities.

Both of us come from small towns. We were raised in families that believed in service — one of us is the son of a volunteer fire chief, the other the grandson of one. We learned early on that you look out for your neighbors, whether you agree with them or not. We approach public service from a place of civility and respect. Both of us believe in public service and giving back. We each have served as county officials and are aware of local needs, and we stand together in condemning political violence in all its forms. We are committed to building communities where disagreements are never settled with bloodshed.

That's the spirit we bring to our work. We may belong to different parties, but we share the same goal: to serve the people of Indiana and Illinois. Our job is to invest state funds wisely, keep risk low and earn strong returns — because every extra dollar we make is one less dollar that needs to come from hardworking taxpayers. That means more money in family budgets for groceries, gas and the everyday needs that matter most.

That also means real savings for schools, towns and families. It means better-funded fire departments, more resources for kids with disabilities through Achieving a Better Life programs and more opportunities for families saving for the future through 529 college and career tax plans — whether your child's dream is college, an apprenticeship or trade school.

We also help entrepreneurs and small businesses grow, creating well-paying jobs for our neighbors. These are the everyday things that matter most: strong schools, safe communities and economic opportunity.

At the end of the day, most of us want the same things — a good job, a safe home, a better future for our kids. We just disagree on the best way to get there. And that's OK. What's not OK is treating fellow Americans like enemies. We can debate without demeaning. We can disagree without dehumanizing.

Our offices can't pass laws to fix the country's divisions. But we can set an example: Lead with respect, work together where we can and remember that behind every vote, every opinion and every bumper sticker is a person who wants to be heard. It's the spirit of our country that must remain intact.

So, the next time you're tempted to fire off that angry Facebook comment, stop and think. Let's all try to turn down the temperature, listen more and treat each other with decency. That's how we make our communities stronger and our country better. Civility isn't weakness — it's the first step toward a stronger America.

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