



# Citizens must demand truth

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“Facts do not cease to exist,” Aldous Huxley once observed, “because they are ignored.”

As recent events have demonstrated conclusively, there is a growing tendency among many of our elected officials to see either unintentional or deliberately manufactured perceptions of truth as being synonymous with truth itself.

This characterization of reality is dangerous on many levels, especially within the context of a democracy. History confirms that the first thing autocratic leaders characteristically do when they seize power is impose strict controls on what is considered to be truthful.

When confronted about their inappropriate behavior, politicians should simply acknowledge, apologize and adjust. But as most of us know, this is typically not what plays out when their unseemly words or actions come to light.

What they tend to do is deny, deflect and/or distract.

“Political language,” George Orwell astutely surmised, “is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.”

Think about it. We respect individuals who concede their fallibility and we have contempt for those who see themselves as incapable of making mistakes.

Kennedy was revered when he took personal responsibility for the Bay of Pigs; Nixon was ostracized for Watergate.

The ability to admit wrongdoing – and learn from it – is a fundamental building block of maturity, credibility and psychological stability.

Contrary to the postmodern assertion that reality is subject to individual interpretation, the veracity of any given situation can be objectively determined. The truth is not a commodity to be traded, a strategy to be employed or a marketing ploy to be initiated.

Every citizen in this country has a civil as well as a moral obligation to demand that the truth be actively pursued – and appropriate consequences be levied against those found to be abusing the public trust.

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