

As a country, we must find common ground to succeed

As an avid reader of the Daily News, I have come to the conclusion that the root of most of our current problems is extremism.

Like many Americans, I believe strongly in the free market. Capitalism has been the most powerful engine of economic growth the world has ever seen.

But in the absence of at least some rudimentary oversight, you end up with Standard Oil, AT&T, and Goldman Sachs.

Moreover, once someone "wins" the competition, free enterprise ceases to be a mechanism for cost containment and instead spawns uniform gas prices and cancer drugs that cost \$100K. Every system needs rules; voluntary compliance has never worked and never will. I also believe unapologetically in the need for some government programs.

Without Social Security, my grandparents would not have been able to survive their later years. They lived paycheck-to-paycheck all their work lives; saving for retirement was not an option. At the same time, social security was allowed to evolve from a "safety net" in the 1930s to a program that put recipients' kids through college in the 1970s.

The free market has limitations. Government programs have limitations. Both are needed. Both can be abused. Neither is perfect. Anyone who has a "you can either give me what I want or I'm going to take my ball and go home" attitude is an extremist. It doesn't matter if you are conservative, liberal, communist, capitalist or anarchist.

Compromise is a necessary part of life, regardless of whether we are talking about our personal relationships, our jobs, or our elected representatives. And I have never bought the "slippery slope" argument; we have always had the capacity to control whatever we create. It's just a matter of exercising the appropriate self-discipline.

Progress inherently depends on finding common ground. Extremism is the real enemy.

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