



MADISON CAN SUPPORT TWO DISTINCT GROUPS

GUEST COLUMN

Saturday, July 23, 2005

Dan Guerra Jr. and Ray Allen

The Common Sense Coalition -- a non-partisan and diverse collection of local representatives and individuals from business, building trades and public safety labor unions, non-profits and the general citizenry -- officially came into existence last month.

Our centrist political approach has not only been a tremendous engine for our membership and fundraising efforts -- we represent nearly 5,000 individuals -- it has also captured the attention of this community's decision-makers.

Truth be told, this comes of little surprise to us. Madison and Dane County have been thirsting for a common sense approach to local government for years. You don't need expensive studies or a task force to know that most of us want economic development, good-paying jobs with benefits, diverse leadership, safe streets, clean parks and a "customer service" approach to government.

What has been surprising since our official launch has been the desire by our political neighbors on the far left (Progressive Dane) to join the Common Sense Coalition.

We think it is important for Progressive Dane and the Common Sense Coalition to maintain separate and distinct identities.

Progressive Dane has done a masterful job at organizing the like-minded, identifying the important issues for their constituents, developing candidates and electing some of those candidates. The party and its elected representatives have also been impressive in their ability to set the political agenda for this city.

The problem is there are a great number of individuals, business owners, workers and young people with an interest in becoming tomorrow's leaders who simply don't agree with Progressive Dane's agenda and have been cut out of the process.

The beauty of a forward-thinking community like Madison is that both groups can exist, develop agendas and serve their constituents.

The Common Sense Coalition will be an active public policy group and may in the future take the necessary steps to become more directly involved in identifying and supporting candidates.

So, we respectfully submit to our progressive friends: keep up the good work, enjoy each others' company and continue your organizing and fundraising efforts. Hopefully, we will both succeed in getting more people involved in the political process.

Guerra and Allen are members of the Common Sense Coalition interim executive board. Signing in support of their thoughts are additional members Peter Munoz, Scott Vaughn, Scott Favour, Grant Frautschi and Curt Brink.