

Tammy Hall: Threats, abuse should not deter elected officials' meetings with public

It is disturbing that a town hall meeting between an elected official and the people she was elected to serve could end in senseless violence.

It is the town hall meeting that gives citizens the opportunity to work with their government for a better community.

As I write this I am saddened, at how an act of violence by one individual impacts so many. My thoughts and prayers go out to the victims and their families.

Technology has provided us an unprecedented ability to communicate, but we have manipulated this wonder of the 21st century.

Tom Brokaw stated in a speech he gave to the graduating class of Santa Fe College in 1999 some thoughts on the Greatest Generation and where he felt we were politically: “They all recognized that for all of the genius of the American Political system and the framework of laws, beginning with the Constitution, the enduring strength of this immigrant nation has been its common ground, wide enough and strong enough to accommodate all races and beliefs. Now great fault lines run through that common ground. We have allowed it to be so fractured we are in danger of becoming less than the sum of our parts. We have become the culture of cheap confrontation rather than resolution.” I believe this continues to define where we are more than 11 years later. We move unfiltered information at an alarming speed and the responsibility of interpreting this information is left to the recipient.

As an elected official, I have had my share of stalkers and personal attacks through emails, media blog sites, and letters as well as personal confrontations.

There is very little the law can do to provide protection from this type of abuse and threat if I chose to remain accessible in person.

While my personal experiences have concerned me, I am determined not to allow the mindless abuse of communication technology and public forums to deter me from continuing to reach out personally to our community.

The most basic right of an American is to gather in public arenas in our community to look each other in the eye and have a conversation, to invest in shared values and debate rationally and respectfully our differences without fear of personal harm or retribution.

This opportunity provides a framework for both political and community decisions that enhance our quality of life both economically and socially.

I hope that you each took the moment of silence at 11 a.m. on Monday to reflect on how we become more courageous to stand up to those who chose not to be tolerant, that use muckraking as their forum for change and defend despicable means as their justification of the end result.