

**By SAM HATCHER, CEO & Publisher**

I don't know what caused the man in Tucson to go on the shooting spree he did last Saturday. In a matter of minutes he brought an enormous amount of tragedy and pain into the lives of a great number of people.

Did vicious campaign rhetoric motivate him to the point of committing this attack?

Would he have done this at some point to other innocent people whether in a political setting or not?

Was the Congresswoman selected for this attack because of her political agenda?

We don't have the answers to these questions. We simply don't know.

But what I believe many of us do know is that today's political stump speaking is getting way out of hand.

Former U.S. Sen. **Howard Baker**, a statesman in every sense of the word, told me a couple of years ago when I visited with him at his home in Huntsville, Tenn., that Washington has become too mean spirited.

Sen. Baker, who also served as President Ronald Reagan's chief of staff, as Senate majority leader, and who ran for president himself, told about how years ago he could stand on the floor of the senate and debate issues with Democrats and others who may disagree and then, when the day's session was over, they'd leave together as friends and perhaps have dinner that evening with their wives.

Sen. Baker said they would disagree but do so respectfully. That respect, generally speaking,

## **Respect has fallen from the political stage**

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has been lost. Sharp tongues, 10-second quotes, website displays and radio talk shows that make money by igniting emotions with information that may not necessarily be factually correct or are only half-truths are all culprits undermining our country's well being.

The First Amendment guarantees free speech. But our forefathers never said we had to be ugly or disrespectful when exercising this right. Surely to goodness we can restore respect in our society.

The first step to accomplish this should be to practice the Biblical teaching to "love thy neighbor as thyself."