

Opinion: How about more truth in politics?

By Jon Ralston, Las Vegas Sun

In the wake of last weekend's horrific shooting, many observers have weighed in with both trenchant and idiotic takes on what the incident means and doesn't mean.

There has been some wonderful stuff – George Will, the National Journal's Kathy Kiely and Josh Kraushaar, to name a few – along with gigabytes of left and right Jabberwocky. But as I have reflected on the tragedy, while marveling at Rep. Gabrielle Giffords' resilience, my reaction has gradually metamorphosed from disgust to resignation.

As many have observed, Jared Loughner so far seems to be a lunatic who does not possess the intellectual moorings to be classified as a right-wing or left-wing maniac. As partisans on both sides discard their self-editing mechanisms to gain advantage, the issue of vitriol in the political discourse is much less relevant than many other topics. And I don't just mean the obvious ones – a renewed debate over limits that should be allowed so Second Amendment remedies are more difficult to carry out and a rare chance to look at how mental health funding, in Nevada and in the country, needs to be revisited.

Those will happen, they will be ephemeral, little will change. But what is dominating the colloquy now, from Capitol Hill to cable TV to the Twitterverse, are calls for more civility in politics, for a tamping down of incendiary rhetoric that may or may not have created an environment for Loughner to act but supposedly could trigger latent Manchurian assassins. And those calls spectacularly miss the point.

Don't misunderstand: There are careless politicians such as

Sharron Angle who toss out flammable phrases such as “Second Amendment remedies” and “domestic enemies” and “Sharia law,” without any regard to the violence that could spring from the small percentage of potentially unhinged folks out there. I never believed, as did some, that Angle was dog-whistling to the nuts; I just think she doesn’t think.

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