Happy Fourth. And First.*

As this digital edition of the July-August 2018 Municipal Lawyer goes to publication, Americans celebrate our two hundred and forty-second year together under one roof. It is a remarkable union, the envy of many similar partnerships around the globe, and well deserving of pyrotechnic recognition in night skies across the land. Like an old married couple, we are now well beyond seeking divorce; the benefits of remaining in our union far outweigh the detriments of breaking up. We are not moving out anytime soon.

But that doesn't mean we don't regularly fight, often loud enough for the neighbors to hear.

Many of our recurring arguments arise from a specific vow we made on the day we first joined hands: that we would allow one another to freely express our thoughts and practice our religious beliefs (it was implicit that this promise covered times of sickness and health). As with some of the other commitments we made in the glow of a new relationship, this one has generated more than its share of friction over our years together. Today it is as contentious as ever.

We keep saying to one another that we don't want to be told what to think or how to act. Unfortunately, as with many marital issues, this is somewhat of a zero-sum game. We can't both have exactly what we want--but we keep trying. After much squabbling, we have agreed (in an uneasy compromise certain to lead to more late-night yelling), that we won't subordinate our own private religious beliefs, sincere as they are, for the sanguinity of a more inclusive union. We have even exercised our right to remove from our environs a person whose political affiliation offends us—because we can.

As ML's lead article describes, we are now routinely preventing opposing thoughts from being voiced, drowning them out by speaking even louder—and sometimes threatening violence. In one way or the other, we have all been complicit. To be honest, we are tired of hearing messages that offend us, and would rather not even entertain one another's perspectives.

It's time for some serious counseling. On this Fourth of July, let's remember why we got together to begin with.

Best regards-
Erich Eiselt
IMLA Assistant General Counsel and Editor

*Yes, the title is intended to reference, in one literary flourish, America's most important Amendment and July 1—Canada Day. It goes without saying that we also celebrate the union of our most loyal and deeply-appreciated neighbor to the North. Happy Anniversary.