Americans need unity, not discord

By The Associated Press
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Americans have disagreed heatedly about politics as long as our country has been independent. In the wake of President Barack Obama's re-election, people in several states including Nebraska have signed petitions calling for secession.

While it's encouraging that no one of prominence, particularly in Nebraska, is advocating this effort, calls for secession are a lazy way of dealing with political disagreement. If anything, our country already suffers from far too much political segregation.

One of the country's problems is that so many Americans are walling themselves off into echo chambers where they immerse themselves in only the political rhetoric and "facts'' that validate their own preferences.

In 1976, just over 26 percent of Americans lived in "landslide counties,'' where either the Democratic or Republican presidential nominee won by 20 percentage points or more.

With last week's election, the figure is around 52 percent. No wonder this is becoming a nation where so many people of differing political persuasions prefer to talk past each other rather than engage in serious, productive discussion.

Even if individual states split off and created their own little republics, political disagreement wouldn't go away. That's certainly true in Nebraska. President Obama received 37 percent of the statewide vote on Nov. 6, from 289,000 people. Although a minority, it's still a significant portion of the state's population.

Look at Nebraska's history. The state was settled in considerable measure by Union veterans. They saw the costs of secession up close. Hundreds of thousands died because of secession.

Flippant talk today about splitting up our nation disrespects that heritage and the sacrifice made to ensure what our founders, after the American Revolution, called our "Perpetual Union.''

Nebraska's state capital is named after Abraham Lincoln, who devoted enormous energy to holding the nation together.

We'd be far better off today if the public and our elected leaders spent as much time trying to hold us together as they do trying to pull us apart.