

# What Creates Contention?

- The need to *explain our side first*.  
If they only understood our perspective, they would come to the same conclusion we did.
- Our *ineffectiveness as listeners*.  
Listening is much more than being quiet until it is our turn. It involves a real effort to understand another person's perspective.
- *Fear*.  
Fear that we won't get our way. Fear of losing something we cherish. Fear we will look foolish or lose face. Fear of the truth - - that we might be wrong.
- The assumption that *one of us has to lose* if the other is going to win.

## Mediators facilitate the process by:

- Understanding each participant's perspective through a pre-caucus.
- Increasing and evaluating participant interest in solving the challenge through mediation.
- Setting ground rules for improved communication.
- Coaching participants through the joint session
- Equalizing power (e.g., between persons at different levels of "power" in the chorus.)
- Helping participants plan for future interaction.

# Suggested Ground Rules –

## Disputants shall:

- Direct their comments (and keep visual contact with) the other person involved in the disagreement
- Speak only for themselves
- Use “I” statements
- Speak one at a time
- Talk without putting the other on the defensive or coming across as accusatory
- Listen attentively and make every possible effort to understand what is being said

## Disputants shall not:

- Exchange cynical remarks or insults
- Engage in name-calling or threatening
- Inflate the importance of their opinions by stating that “everyone” or “lots of others” agree with them
- Attribute a higher source of authority or experience to their words

## Mediator shall:

- Enforce the ground rules
- Ask participants for clarification of statements
- Coach participants in properly reflecting the other’s statement
- Not allow herself to be dragged into the controversy