The Power of In/Civility: Engaging in Challenging Conversations Across the University, Community & Nation

Ohio University
Baker University Center
Athens, OH

January 24, 2019

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Executive Director Emerita
Is it possible to resurrect civility amid a tsunami of toxicity?
Democracy is a conversation.
The quality of that conversation matters.
The public is all but unanimous in citing the importance of civility to democracy, with 96 percent of Democrats and 95 percent of Republicans agreeing.

- 75% of us now believe that incivility in America is a crisis
- 83% of the public say incivility leads to intolerance of free speech
- 79% of all respondents said incivility is leading to less political engagement
Future of the Nation increases from 63% in 2017 to 69% in 2018
Current Political Climate increases from 57% in 2017 to 62% in 2018

2017

MOST COMMON SOURCES OF STRESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Future of Our Nation</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Political Climate</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Violence and Crime</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2018

AMERICANS STRESSED ABOUT THE PRESENT
BUT HOPEFUL FOR THE FUTURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Considering the nation’s future causes significant stress</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The current political climate is a significant source of stress</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is the lowest point in the nation’s history they can remember</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree our country is on the path to being stronger than ever</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel hopeful about their future</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Sources of stress reflect two separate questions; the sources of stress listed above were not shown within one list.
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How We Got Here:

- Money in Politics
- Gerrymandering
- Election Rules
- 24/7 News Cycle
- Social Media
- Growing Economic Disparities
- Rising Social Isolation
What about Civility and Protest?

- Civility is NOT weakness
- Protest has always been important in our democracy

Protest + Civility + Respect = Positive Change
THE GOOD NEWS
A MOVEMENT IS BLOSSOMING

Efforts devoted to:

★ Supporting candidates and elected officials who have committed to working in a bipartisan manner to solve problems

★ Reforming the incentives of our political system, including but not limited to:

★ Redistricting reform
★ Electoral and primary reform
★ Ballot access changes
★ Campaign finance reform

★ Advancing bipartisan economic policies to address the structural trends contributing to economic anxiety

★ Promoting cultural and societal changes, including:

★ More civility in political and public discourse
★ Enhanced civic engagement and education
★ New or improved media platforms to give voice to the ideologically homeless
THE GOOD NEWS

A MOVEMENT IS BLOSSOMING

92 Y
All in Campus Democracy Challenge
All in Together
ALLSIDES
American Democracy Project
American Promise
American Public Square
American Sustainable Business Council
Ask Big Questions
Ballot Ready
Better Angels
Big Tent Nation
Bridge the Divide
Bridge USA
Bring It to the Table
Business for America
Center for Civic Design
Center for the Study of the Presidency and Congress
The Center for Technology and Civic Life
Cities of Service
Citizen University
Civil Politics. Org
CivXNow
Common Good
Compassionate Cities
Coffee Party
Common Ground Committee
Congressional Management Foundation
Convergence
The Davenport Institute

Democracy Works
Deploy/US Digital Citizen
Everyday Democracy
Essential Partners
Illinois Humanities
INDEPENDENT VOTING - Committee for a Unified Independent Party
Independent Voter Project (IVP)
InspireU.S.
Institute for Civility in Government (ICG)
Institute for Local Government (ILG)
Institute for Cultural Evolution
Issue One
Issue Voter
Jefferson Center-Thomas Jefferson Inst. For the Study of World Politics
Junior State of America
Leadership Now Project
Listen First Project
Living Room Conversations
Maplight
Mediators Foundation
Millennial Action Project
National Association of Nonpartisan Reformers
National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD)
National Conference on Citizenship
National Foundation for Woman Legislators
National Institute for Civil Discourse (NICD)
National Institute on Money in State Politics
New Hampshire Listens
Niskanen Center
No Labels

Nonprofit Vote
OpenGov Foundation
Open Primaries Participatory Budgeting Project
Pluribus Project
Pro Con
Project on Government Oversight
Public Agenda
Purple America
Reclaim the American Dream.org
ReConsider
Represent.US
RStreet Institute
Serve America Movement
Stand Up Republic
Sustained Dialogue
StudentPIRGs
State Legislative Leaders Foundation
United Citizen Power (formerly Stronger US)
Take Back Our Republic
TechCongress
TheChisel
The Democracy Commitment
Village Square
Voice of the People Inc.
Unite America
US Association of Former Members of Congress
We Do Better
Young Invincibles
The National Institute for Civil Discourse brings people together for civil conversations to find common ground on divisive issues.
Three Target Groups

- Elected Officials
- Public
- Media

Research flows through each group.
A nationwide program facilitated by state legislators for state legislators.
The Network serves as a forum for legislators around the country to exchange ideas and information with other legislators, coordinate actions and receive support.
Signs of Hope: Elected Officials

46 Bipartisan Freshman Members of Congress
Pledge to Civility, January 2018

@RepMikeJohnson
@RepAnthonyBrown
@RepBarragan
@RepJimBanks
@RepDonBacon
@RepArrington
@RepRaskin
@RepTedBudd
@RepCarbajal
@RepLizCheney
@KYComer
@RepValDemings
@RepCharlieCrist
@RepJohnFaso
@DrNealDunnFL2
@RepBrianFitz
@RepDrewFerguson
@Rep_Matt_Gaetz
@Rep_Tom_Garrett
@RepJoshG
@repdavidkustoff
@RepJayapal
@RepRoKhanna
@RepBrianMast
@CongressmanRaja
@RepBRochester
@RepAllLawsonJr
@RepJimmyPanetta
@RepMarshall
@RepJackyRosen
@RepSmucker
@RepTomSuozzi
@RepOHalleran
@ClaudiaForNY22
@RepDarrenSoto
@RepRooney
@Scotttaylorva
@RepRutherfordFL

COMMITMENT TO CIVILITY
Incoming Members of the 115th United States Congress

As new Members of the United States House of Representatives and as individual citizens we recognize the gravity of the responsibility we have been given and the significance of this moment in the history of our extraordinary country.

America remains the most free, most powerful and most prosperous nation in all the world, and yet we face significant challenges. Among these challenges has been an increasing division in and coarsening of our culture fueled too often by the vitriol in our politics and public discourse. One result has been a loss of trust in our institutions and elected officials.

We believe there is a better alternative.

Although we represent both political parties and a wide range of individual views across the political spectrum, our common and sincere aims are to serve the needs and interests of the American people, to work with one another and the leaders of our respective parties to encourage greater confidence in our institutions, and to set an example of statesmanship for the younger generations of Americans that will follow.

To this end, we are dedicated to showing proper respect to one another and all others, encouraging productive dialogue, and modeling civility in our public and private actions. While we may vehemently disagree on matters of law and policy, we will strive at all times to maintain collegiality and the honor of our office.

We believe that a leader can be cooperative and conciliatory without compromising his or her core principles, and we will remember that our political rivals in Congress are not our enemies—but rather our colleagues and fellow Americans. We also believe that maintaining a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation will help make government work more efficiently and effectively, help build consensus and restore the public trust, and, ultimately, serve as a positive influence on society at large.

For all of these reasons, we hereby pledge our names to this Commitment to Civility on this 10th day of January, 2017, in Washington, D.C.
2018 Revive Civility Initiative

• Deep dive in 4 states: ME, OH, IA, AZ

• National state & local partners:
PROCLAMATION

City of Tucson • Office of the Mayor

WHEREAS, civility reduces, rudeness, ridicule, and lack of respect for the open exchange of ideas; and

WHEREAS, civility improves our well-being, restores trust, and encourages Americans to participate in building a brighter future for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, civility assists in the process of working together to create lasting solutions to our most pressing challenges, while fostering respect among opposing groups; and

WHEREAS, community members should feel comfortable and respected while exploring worldviews outside their own; and

WHEREAS, The University of Arizona’s National Institute for Civil Discourse headquartered in Tucson and Washington, D.C., was created for the purpose of reviving and restoring civility to achieve a higher quality of public discourse;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Jonathan Rothschild, Mayor of the City of Tucson, Arizona do hereby proclaim May 2017 to be

REVIVE CIVILITY MONTH

In this community, and encourage all our citizens to exercise civility and respect toward each other.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City of Tucson, Arizona to be affixed this 1st day of January, 2017.

Jonathan Rothschild, Mayor

ATTEST:

Roger Randolph, City Clerk
Working with Citizens
Initiative to Revive Civility
Unlikely Friendships

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dMMCVfKP9s
Step One:

• Set up the conditions for people to listen for understanding
• What in this person’s life experience has led them to this choice or this belief
Core to Being Able to Do this Work:

• We have a fundamental obligation to see our common humanity across our differences.
Core to Being Able to Do this Work:

• We need to trust those on the other side as fellow travelers rather than as enemies.

• We have to enter the conversation as a two-way street: my mind could be changed as well as yours.
1. **Text CIVILITY to 89800**

   Gather in groups of 3-5 with one cell phone. Text CIVILITY to 89800

2. **Follow the text prompts**

   Groups move through the texted script at their own pace.

3. **Be part of the change**

   As a group, you might discover new ideas and perspectives – and be well on your way to engaging in a respectful dialogue.
DIVIDED
WE FALL

TEST WEEKEND

September 7-9, 2018
Double Edge Theater
Ashfield, MA

New Voice Strategies

National Institute for Civil Discourse
A nonpartisan center for advocacy, research and policy
Five Things We Can Do to Promote Civility

1. Develop civility intention and mindset--take pledge

2. Improve listening skills--principles of listening; use of restatement

3. Engage in self examination and reflection--how do you treat those with different views?

4. Talk with someone of different views--tips on how to do that

5. Promote civility online--examples of what to do and not to do
fresh-squeezed DISCORD

refreshing CIVILITY
“We have to face the fact that either all of us are going to die together or we are going to learn to live together. And if we are to live together, we will have to talk.”

Eleanor Roosevelt
American politician, diplomat, activist and former First Lady of the United States of America
“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of identity. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live the narrow, provincial “outside agitator” idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.”

Martin Luther King
Letter from Birmingham Jail
1963
Thank You!

Questions?

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