

**Report of the
100TH ARIZONA TOWN HALL
“Civic Engagement”
Tucson, Arizona
April 22-25, 2012**

INTRODUCTION

The Report and Recommendations of the 100th Town Hall on Civic Engagement is intended to be a document of inclusion. Many Arizonans of all groups are engaging in civic activities in individual ways that may not be formally recognized. Arizonans who are not engaged may face barriers erected by the system, or may not traditionally have had access to political and civic decision-making, and they have become disenfranchised. At all points in this Report, those Arizonans should be actively recruited, invited, and encouraged to participate at all levels to foster inclusion and leverage diversity in civic engagement.

REPORT OF RECOMMENDATIONS

We the people of the State of Arizona, grateful to Almighty God for our liberties, do ordain this Constitution. Preamble to the Arizona Constitution.

“We the people.” The first three words of the Preamble to the Arizona Constitution capture the essence of civic engagement. Civic engagement seeks to connect “we the people” with the governments and institutions we created, and also with each other.

Civic engagement describes how an individual participates in the community in order to improve conditions for others and help shape the community’s future. Civic engagement takes many forms, from individual volunteerism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. It includes efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem, or interact with institutions of representative democracy. Civic engagement encompasses a range of activities, such as helping neighbors or working in a homeless shelter, serving on a neighborhood association or school board, writing a letter to an elected official, or voting. An underlying principal of civic engagement is that all individuals should have the ability and opportunity to participate in these various types of civic acts. Civic engagement is so important to the health of local communities and all of Arizona that the participants at the 97th Arizona Town Hall concluded that one of Arizona’s top priorities must be to promote civic engagement among its residents.

Yet, a 2008 Gallup Arizona Poll found that Arizonans do not feel connected to their communities or to one another. The current political discourse has left Arizonans feeling

alienated and frustrated. But evolving education, media, and technology offer hope for a more civil—and civically engaged—society. Looking forward to Arizona’s next 100 years, it is clear that now is the time to take stock of civic engagement in Arizona and to develop solutions to barriers that impede Arizonans from being civically engaged and from feeling connected with each other and with the governments and institutions of the State.

It is in this spirit that the participants of the 100th Arizona Town Hall, a diverse cross-section of Arizona residents from various communities and walks of life, met for three days in Tucson, Arizona, for facilitated discussions designed to seek a consensus on how best to achieve optimal civic engagement from Arizona’s residents. This Report is the result of their efforts. Although not every Town Hall participant agrees with every conclusion and recommendation, this Report reflects the overall consensus achieved by the 100th Arizona Town Hall.

Defining Civic Engagement

Civic engagement includes more than just involvement with the political process; it also includes how individuals participate in the life of a community, and how they come together for a public purpose that is not solely self-serving.

Civic engagement can take many forms, including: individual volunteerism in neighborhoods, organizational involvement, philanthropy and charitable giving, using social media and voting. It can include efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem, or interact with the institutions of representative democracy.

Civic engagement is important because it emphasizes the responsibility that citizens in a democracy have to participate in the political process, and it breaks down barriers and works towards effectively bridging gaps and fostering diversity to solve problems. Civic engagement helps people improve their own conditions while also making transformational changes to their communities and governments.

Increasing Civic Engagement and Removing Barriers to Participation

Increasing the level and quality of civic engagement are important goals. Dialogue is most effective when it is constructive and respectful, but fierce debate and even protests without proposed solutions may be necessary to bring awareness to an issue and to ensure that one’s voice is heard. There are often barriers to civic engagement, which include time limitations, geographic isolation, and socio-economic factors, all of which can affect the level of individual participation as well as the forms of civic engagement.

Education is one of the building blocks of civic engagement. Educational influence is not limited to formal academic pursuits, but can include older and younger generations informally educating each other about how to be effectively involved in the community.

The motivations for becoming civically engaged may vary and can range from purely survival-based self interest to “communitarian” interest, or more altruistic-based interest. And

while an individual may initially advance a cause for personal interests, the common good can still be advanced based upon the resulting dialogue and action.

In determining how to remove barriers to civic engagement, we need to create opportunities for engagement, which can include nonprofits hosting forums on issues and grassroots advocacy groups conducting community outreach, as well as schools and workplaces encouraging public participation in the community. With the myriad of technological advancements, individuals can be civically engaged without leaving their home or workplace.

Impacts of Civic Engagement

Civic engagement affects us individually, our local communities, and Arizona as a whole. On an individual level, when people become civically engaged, they can gain a sense of personal fulfillment, knowing that they are helping to make a difference not only in their own lives, but also in the lives of others. Sometimes people begin to become civically engaged in order to actualize their own self-interests, but as people become civically engaged and begin to really listen to one another, they can better understand diverse viewpoints and become more compassionate and empathetic. When people feel that their voices are not being heard, they begin to feel disengaged, disconnected, and isolated from others and their communities. But successful civic engagement encourages more civic engagement, so it is important to help people feel their voice is important.

Civic engagement also impacts our local communities by fostering pride in our neighborhoods. Civic engagement brings people together who might not otherwise have a chance to share their views and, in the process, humanizes people and their divergent viewpoints. This sharing of ideas need not be formal, and often results from simply “rubbing elbows” with others in your community. For example, parents with young children may meet at a T-ball game and strike up a conversation, exposing all involved to different political, economic, and cultural views. Greater numbers of people working from home poses both challenges and opportunities for local civic engagement. On the challenges side, people working from home may feel isolated; however, they may also be able to spend more time in, and become involved with, their neighborhoods, thereby improving their local communities, fostering an even stronger sense of community, and ultimately encouraging others to take interest in their communities as well.

To ensure optimal civic engagement statewide, individuals need to feel that their opinions matter. Elected officials and other civic leaders need to communicate that everyone has a voice, and that their voices will not be heard in quick sound bites, but rather carefully listened to and internalized. These voices must also include those who are historically underserved in our communities.

Conversely, several factors unique to Arizona pose challenges to effective civic engagement. For example, there is a historical gap between tribal and non-tribal communities that must be bridged by building long-term relationships and commitments. The rapid growth of ethnic, racial, and multicultural communities in Arizona has brought together widely divergent people with vastly different life experiences, which also poses challenges—and

ultimately opportunities—in trying to work together as individuals, communities, and as a State. Sometimes there is a perception that the larger cities prevail over the smaller cities, rural areas, and tribal communities, and we should help ensure that there remains some level of local control and influence. Ultimately, we should embrace these differences and varied backgrounds, not shy away from them, and we should work on including multiple perspectives.

The Roles of Respect and Collaboration

“Many peoples, all Arizonans.” Respect and collaboration are both key to civic engagement. Collaboration is the process that brings everyone together, and respect is the ambience that makes collaboration possible. We must be sensitive to others’ varied needs and backgrounds, and we must actively listen to one another, even when we do not agree.

People from varied cultural backgrounds define respect differently. Cultural competence involves awareness of these different cultural practices of expressing respect. When we do not account for these differences or become hostile, competitive, and reactionary, many people feel like they do not have a safe space to share their ideas, and they may be discouraged from participating. When that happens, we may lose valuable viewpoints and ideas.

Heated discussions and disagreement, however, are not always indicative of uncivil or disrespectful discourse. Even angry protest has its benefits in ensuring people’s opinions are heard. But there is some baseline of civility that we must maintain, such as avoiding pejorative language and physical attacks.

One way to help keep discussions civil is to require participants to be accountable for their words and ideas, and not let them hide behind a veil of anonymity. This is especially a problem online, where digital bullies can derail collaboration and harmonious discourse. After all, it is harder to be disrespectful when you know the identity of the other person. We have found that to be true at the school-district level, where, when parents get to know each other personally, they interact more civilly with each other. Other ways to ensure civility are to find commonalities, engage in a mutual process of give-and take, look for ways to mend fences, and, above all, keep our discussions thoughtful, transparent, and inclusive.

We can teach Arizonans the skills necessary to be respectful and effective collaborators. In fact, we should train our current and future leaders with these vital skills, perhaps by offering a course on courteous communication and disagreeing with respect. Our civic leaders could then “teach” these skills to the public at large by modeling good behavior. Too often though, an atmosphere of disrespect permeates politics and, instead of bringing people together, politics polarizes issues and the people discussing those issues. The solution likely begins with those in power modeling appropriate behavior. The public must take ownership as well by becoming informed, active participants, who are proactive in learning about the issues. These values can then be passed on to the younger generations, who should be informed of the values of civil discourse.

Arizona's involvement with hot-button issues of nationwide importance, such as immigration and border security, pose unique challenges to maintaining civility in discourse. Politicians may feel they need to toe the party line on these polarizing issues, rather than compromising and reaching consensus, and individuals often find it difficult to collaborate with people with whom they disagree. But we cannot simply go through the motions of civil discourse; we must commit to it, even when we are engaging in such divisive topics. And we cannot simply complain about a problem, but must commit to finding a solution.

Motivating Civic Engagement

There is no single factor that motivates Arizonans to become civically engaged, but generally, individual motivation for civic engagement comes from a particular interest in an issue. A variety of other factors that tend to foster civic engagement include the following: dissatisfaction with the status quo, displeasure with the disrespect prevalent in political discourse, anger and frustration, ideology, a sense of joy, feelings of self-satisfaction, altruistic responsibility, personal experiences, cultural or familial influences, a sense of ownership, emotion, professional growth or influence, economic interests, faith and religion, a sense of obligation, opportunities for social interaction, and a response to a perceived injustice.

Fear may stifle civic engagement if some individuals think they could suffer repercussions for speaking their minds on certain controversial issues. Time and financial limitations may also suppress civic engagement.

While there is no legal obligation for individuals to become civically engaged, many have a sense of obligation based upon the principles of democracy and open government. As a corollary of any perceived obligation to be civilly engaged, we need to develop methods by which to foster greater levels of engagement in all demographic areas.

It is up to civic leaders to ensure that the motivational factors are sustained and that, once people become civically engaged, continued opportunities are presented so as to allow for constant engagement. After all, engagement cannot just be reactionary, but should be proactive and continuous.

The Roles of Education in Civic Engagement

One significant way to foster civic engagement is to educate individuals about specific issues and how to become involved. Education can be provided by traditional education institutions like pre-schools, primary and secondary education, community colleges and universities, and on-line learning, but it can also be provided by government bodies, faith-based organizations, nonprofits, and the private sector. Parents should also model and encourage civic engagement at home. Another way to encourage civic engagement is to create better awareness for already existing opportunities for individuals to become involved in the community. Those who are already engaged are also better suited to encourage friends and family to become engaged.

Both formal and informal education play key roles in fostering civic engagement by students by encouraging community service and volunteerism, building confidence and leadership skills, providing a safe and neutral environment to discuss new ideas, exploring how real change can be implemented through civic discourse, rewarding curiosity, and nurturing critical thinking skills. These teachings must begin at an early age, such as in pre-school, where very young children should be taught problem-solving and peaceful conflict resolution.

Formal Education

In the formal education setting, students should be encouraged to take courses such as civics and history. But we need to take care that these are not simply additional curriculum requirements piled onto an already over-burdened system; and we need to make sure that these are not focused on rote memorization where students forget what they have learned as soon as they complete the test. These sorts of civics classes should teach students *how* to think, not *what* to think.

One way to avoid over-burdening the formal education system with additional classes and requirements is to incorporate civic engagement lessons into already existing classes. For example, an English class could provide students with public speaking or mock debate opportunities.

Formal education can help students find ways to make civic connections inside and outside the classroom and explain to students the different ways they can participate in their communities. In helping students make those connections, teachers need to adapt to changing times. Just teaching civics and the traditional recognized forms of civic engagement, such as public debate and voting, may not reflect the reality of today's civic engagement for youth, which includes Facebooking, Tweeting, and texting. Sports and afterschool programs encourage civic engagement from an early age and teach civic skills, and students should be exposed to these opportunities and encouraged to become involved. Universities, colleges, and community colleges also play a unique role in helping young adults and life-long learners to broaden their horizons and explore differing points of view.

Informal Education

Just as learning about civic engagement and finding ways to encourage participation is a life-long process that should not end when a person's formal education ends, learning about civic engagement should not begin with a person's formal education either. Ideally, learning begins in the home, where parents and legal guardians play a role in modeling appropriate ways to interact with each other. Children can also show their parents what it means to be civically engaged. In addition, educational institutions, businesses, nonprofits and other organizations can provide opportunities for practical applications of civic engagement outside of the formal education setting by hosting public discussions or offering leadership programs.

Businesses, nonprofits, civic organizations, and the formal education system need to work together to help young people develop the tools to digest and analyze all of the information being received from myriad sources. Ultimately, a basic goal of both our formal

and informal education systems must be to make our residents well-rounded, civically engaged individuals.

The Role of Media in Civic Engagement

News Media

Media, in its diverse forms, has a dramatic impact on civic engagement, but its role has evolved over the years. The perception at one time, before the 24/7 news cycle, cable television, and the internet, was that print and television media provided its audience with balanced, investigative reporting, factually accurate information, and both sides of a story. Now, it seems that the media manipulates stories and engages in selective reporting to further the network's political agenda or increase ratings. In particular, the sensationalized coverage of the political process is extremely polarizing.

Further, journalists and reporters often times infuse their own personal views and opinions into reporting decisions, thereby skewing public opinion merely by deciding which stories to report. There is widespread skepticism and cynicism toward the majority of information obtained from the media, thereby creating distrust of information obtained from the media, which in turn creates reluctance in individuals to engage civically.

Mainstream media could focus on more positive stories and cover issues that are consensus issues as opposed to reporting on polarizing topics and sensationalized issues. Media outlets should inform their viewers, readers, and subscribers of civic engagement opportunities in the community. We should encourage corporate America and television and print advertisers to support and promote a balanced expression of ideas. As noted by Edward R. Murrow in 1958:

This instrument can teach; it can illuminate; yes, and even it can inspire. But it can do so only to the extent that humans are determined to use it to those ends. Otherwise it's nothing but wires and lights in a box.

There is a great and perhaps even decisive battle to be fought against ignorance, intolerance and indifference. This weapon of television could be useful.

Social Media

Social media plays a significant part in the public's political discussions and actions, and can be a helpful tool in engaging people and sustaining the momentum of an organization or coverage of an issue. However, there can be a lack of accountability when it comes to using social media because users can remain anonymous when they post inflammatory information.

Further, with the 24/7 news cycle, Facebook, Twitter, blogging, and other social media outlets, individuals can be on "information overload" because there are so many news

sources, making it much harder for the conversation to be controlled and allowing for scattered and piecemeal dialogue. The constant barrage of content can render people “numb.”

Social media used responsibly can reignite the public’s interest in the political process as well as other means of civic engagement. Media outlets and their users should be held accountable for the truth of the information they post or report.

As individuals, we should encourage responsible discourse by submitting well-informed opinion statements to media outlets. Users should demand accountability by boycotting media sites that condone slanted or untruthful reporting. Users also need to reward media that provide responsible and accurate in-depth reporting.

The Role of Technology in Civic Engagement

Benefits of Technology

There are many exciting opportunities to use technology to promote civic engagement. Technology allows for instantaneous communication between individuals on an international, national, and local level, which facilitates diverse dialogue, discussion and interpretation about current issues and events. Email, the internet, and social media sites like Twitter and Facebook can also empower individuals who may not normally be involved with public activism to engage civically. Technology promotes greater accessibility to decision-makers and leaders and allows for more direct communication between elected officials and their constituents. Technology can provide a voice to underserved or disadvantaged people who have not previously had a voice in the deliberative process and can create greater awareness of community events. Technology can serve as a direct link between individuals and the media outlets thereby cutting out the middle person. Lastly, technology provides individuals with the ability to “fact-check” information as soon as the information is disseminated, allowing for a more educated community.

Costs of Technology

Although technology may appear to be a way to solve problems associated with money and influence as being the only means by which to effectively engage in free speech, rapidly changing technology also presents challenges. Technology itself can be expensive, such as the cost of iPads, Tablets, Smart Phones, and wireless internet services, and setting up the technological infrastructure may also be cost prohibitive. On an individual level, there will likely be instances where an individual may not be able to afford technological devices or internet access and, as a result, those who are economically disadvantaged may be left out of the process. Arizona has a significant aging population, many of whom may be engaged in the civic process due to retirement and having more free time; however, a large number of senior citizens do not use modern technological advancements and do not access the internet and social media sites.

Technology can also dehumanize or depersonalize dialogue, and technology cannot be a substitute for face-to-face interaction among individuals. While most, if not all, state agencies, counties, cities, and towns have public websites, many of them are not user friendly

and can discourage public participation in the process. The Town of Marana may serve as a model with its recently implemented user-friendly application that allows members of the public to submit questions or comments about the Town and receive rapid responses.

Opportunities of Technology

Technological advances and an increased reliance on technology are here to stay, for better or for worse, and likely will be the most significant factor in changing the shape of civic engagement. Thus, it is recommended that Arizona embrace technological advancements that are both cost-effective and aimed at reaching disadvantaged people. One recommendation is that the state and local government bodies use technology to allow the public to track and provide input and commentary on pending legislation. Another recommendation is that those same governmental agencies broadcast via the internet all hearings, caucuses, and meetings. A third suggestion is to allow citizens and committee/commission members to participate in state public meetings remotely. Finally, citizens should be able to submit testimony at legislative committees without first having to physically register in Phoenix. These technological advancements can allow for expanded participation and increased transparency in the political process.

The Role of Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations play multiple and important roles in civic engagement. People may become involved in nonprofit organizations who might not otherwise think to become involved in government or civic groups. The participation in the nonprofit sector can serve as a point of entry for people to become involved in other civic endeavors. For example, a person might sit on a nonprofit board and then decide to run for elected office. Moreover, nonprofit organizations house institutional wisdom and resources that help people avoid “reinventing the wheel” when it comes to civic engagement. In a more formal manner, nonprofits can encourage civic engagement by sponsoring projects, programs, and events that build civic capital.

The Role of the Arts and Humanities in Civic Engagement

The arts and humanities play an important role in civic engagement. The arts and humanities help develop critical thinking skills and serve as creative outlets. For the consuming public, the arts and humanities educate about social issues in attention-grabbing ways, bring communities together, teach the values of diversity and other cultures, and ultimately promote further discussion, deep thinking, and civic engagement.

Unfortunately, with current budget problems, arts and humanities programs are sometimes cut from school curricula despite their importance as creative outlets for students and for developing well-rounded individuals. Arts and humanities programs and artistic installations may be the victims of defunding both inside and outside the school context because their bottom-line impact on society is not readily quantifiable.

The private sector, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, volunteers, and donors continue to fill the gaps created by this defunding and should advocate for increased public

support. New technology also has a role to play by making arts and humanities accessible on a more economical scale to a wider swathe of people, such as by providing online access to programs and community conversations. Whichever entities step in to promote the arts and humanities, it is vitally important that the arts and humanities continue to thrive because these fundamental programs attract businesses, jobs and tourism; strengthen democracy by encouraging civic pride and civic engagement; and increase the quality of life for everyone.

Resources for Effective Civic Engagement

Resources are critical tools to foster effective civic engagement. The most important resources are:

- A skilled and culturally diverse volunteer base;
- Dynamic leaders and creative decision-makers;
- Financial support;
- Educational programs;
- Nonprofit and faith-based organizational support;
- Accurate databases with voter and volunteer information;
- Voter registration forms and other materials that ensure effective registration of applicants;
- Venues and community meetings spaces suited for collaborative efforts;
- Advanced technological capabilities;
- Mentors;
- Time;
- Reliable and cost-effective modes of transportation;
- Public-private partnerships; and
- Qualitative measurements to determine effective outcomes.

Resource and Geographical Challenges

A lack of time and money impedes effective civic engagement.

With the significant economic downturn over the past five years, public funding for organizations that have traditionally fostered civic engagement, such as nonprofits and educational institutions, has been drastically reduced. Further, private-sector corporate

funding has seen a sharp decline as corporate America's inability to achieve financial targets has reduced resources available to support community initiatives. It is unclear how programs and projects that were traditionally administered by the government are to be administered now that the government no longer funds those programs or projects.

People are working longer hours than ever before, and time is a precious commodity. Most families no longer have a stay-at-home parent, so finding adequate time to pursue civic endeavors is extremely challenging.

Geographical distances that divide urban communities from rural communities also create a disconnect among Arizona's residents. The geographical distance likely impedes rural residents from engaging in certain forums because of the cost-prohibitive nature of transportation.

Another challenge that can face both rural and urban communities alike is volunteer burnout and lack of skilled and knowledgeable volunteers.

Resource and Geographical Opportunities

Although the private sector may still be feeling the effects of the recent economic downturn and be reluctant to donate significant amounts of money to support organizations and institutions that advance civic engagement, businesses and companies should still encourage civic engagement in other ways. For example, businesses and companies should encourage employees to be civically engaged by providing employees with time off to allow them to be civically engaged.

Arizona has a uniquely diverse population, and this cultural diversity can be seen as a benefit because it allows for well-rounded dialogue and greater collaboration. Faith-based organizations are a resource for delivering information concerning civic engagement and cultivating a volunteer network. Tribal communities are unique places to forge new bonds and partnerships, but need to be approached with a greater understanding for historical and cultural norms.

Arizona has well-established civic-based organizations, and Arizonans should promote collaboration among these organizations to avoid duplicative efforts and competition. Some examples of successful prior or existing alliances and collaborations between such professional organizations include sharing volunteer pools and potential donors, in addition to shared databases and workspaces. There are already existing models for such collaborative efforts among our state agencies, nonprofits, and other businesses and organizations so that we do not need to reinvent the wheel.

Technological advances, such as social media and the internet, allow for people to participate at convenient times and locations. Further, information can be more easily disseminated and face-to-face involvement is not required, thereby allowing for enhanced participation.

Actions to Develop Resources and Address Geographical Challenges

The following action items should be implemented to ensure that resources are available to support civic engagement:

- Unleash the power of the entrepreneurial spirit to encourage civic engagement similar to how for-profit businesses attract customers;
- Utilize available resources and encourage participation in leadership development groups to help nonprofit boards and volunteers learn more about regional issues and civic engagement opportunities;
- Offer free childcare during meetings and civic events;
- Provide for free transportation to community members to encourage attendance at civic events;
- Streamline projects to avoid duplication;
- Develop resources to communicate specific cultural customs;
- Encourage Arizona's politicians and business leaders to promote more national and international businesses to locate in Arizona;
- Continue to have the Secretary of State explore a pilot online voting system;
- Encourage the use of the online petition gathering system for ballot petitions, referenda, and candidates;
- Ensure that government agencies and bodies, businesses, nonprofits, and civic organizations employ bilingual and multi-cultural staff;
- Allow public schools, community colleges, and universities to provide free meeting space to residents and community-based groups and provide funds to subsidize the extra costs incurred by the use of such space; and
- Encourage private institutions and businesses to also provide free meeting space to residents and community-based groups.

Ensuring All Arizonans Become Civically Engaged

Although there is a common perception that certain segments of Arizona's population are less civically engaged than others, we need to avoid over-generalizations because *individuals* in every group are civically engaged, even if other members of the group are not. We must also keep in mind that some civic engagement is less visible, so individuals and

groups may actually be civically engaged, even though the larger population does not see the engagement. For example, certain Native American communities are civically engaged with their neighbors on issues important to them, such as land use and culture preservation, but because this engagement occurs on a community level and results in actions within that same community, outsiders might not know that this sort of collaboration is occurring. We must recognize and value these diverse means of participation.

There are many groups that are less engaged in the traditional forms of civic engagement including part-time residents, youth, refugees and immigrants, domestic violence victims, people with disabilities, rural residents, veterans, different ethnic groups, tribal communities, and those that lack certain resources. These groups have not traditionally had access to political and civic decision-making processes; their voices have not been heard. As a result, they feel disenfranchised. On the other hand, certain groups are seen as being more civically engaged, such as retirees and boomers, who may have more free time in which to help their communities and volunteer. Even these groups and individuals can work on becoming even more civically engaged.

New Americans

To encourage more participation from recent immigrants and naturalized citizens, Arizonans should try to integrate trusted institutions like business organizations, native-language media outlets, religious organizations, and nonprofits to embed civic engagement into their goals and services.

Youth

To encourage more participation from our youth, Arizonans should try to help them make personal connections with issues and with people who are already civically engaged in order to ensure that civic engagement is carried on through generations in every community. After all, young people who are active participants often say that they became involved because they knew someone who got them involved, or their schools or families encouraged them to do so. It is also important to find ways to conform our current notions of what civic engagement entails to how our youth communicates, such as expanding the use of online petitions, emphasizing Facebook and other social media as outreach tools, and reaching out to youth by texting and tweeting.

Underrepresented Voices

To encourage more participation from traditionally underrepresented groups, we should provide formal and informal forums for discussion, such as community gardens and community advisory boards. Traditionally underrepresented groups including, but not limited to, rural or isolated communities, Native Americans, Hispanics, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Pacific Islanders, immigrants, veterans, persons with disabilities, seniors, and youth, are to be included regardless of sexual orientation, sexual identity, or gender. We need to make sure we are engaging historically underserved groups about topics important to them. A focus on local issues that uniquely affect underserved groups will galvanize those groups.

To encourage participation from rural Arizonans, isolated Native American populations, or people who are homebound or lack transportation, the key may be as simple as providing a reliable means of communication or transportation. With respect to traditionally underrepresented groups, there are also some significant trust issues that must be overcome. Building trust may not be quick or easy, but it is imperative, and trust can be fostered by engaging these individuals and groups in issues that are important to them.

Town Hall itself presents a unique opportunity to expand civic engagement beyond those who are traditionally involved in such matters by including in these discussions low-income individuals, part-time residents, and laborers.

Engaging All Arizonans in the Political Process

The more informed and empowered a person feels, the more confidence that person has, and the more likely that person is to become engaged in the political process, through voting or otherwise. Conversely, people tend to be less engaged when they do not know what opportunities there are for engagement or when they lack sufficient information to make well-informed choices about their political participation.

But others, although well-informed about the political process, choose to be disengaged. People may also disengage from the process because they feel as though no candidate represents their values and beliefs. These people may be disenchanted with the perception that big campaign donors have direct access to elected officials and, seemingly, to those officials' platforms and messages, while other segments of the population languish with limited access and voice because they lack the money of big donors. However, Arizonans must be reminded that money is not the sole way to influence the political process.

The key to ensuring greater participation in Arizona's political process is education. For example, people who feel that they do not have sufficient knowledge of the issues and candidates to make reasoned choices should be made aware that certain nonpartisan organizations maintain websites that relay such information to the public in an unbiased manner. We need to continue to make efforts to ensure that these websites are easy to navigate and understand.

From a young age, students should be reminded that a single person can make a difference. Those who begin to understand and participate in the political process at a young age tend to remain more engaged as adults. Programs such as Kids Voting play a valuable role in promoting voting and should be in all school districts throughout Arizona. Students should be exposed to Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's I-Civics game, encouraged to run for student government, and provided voter registration information when they are nearing eighteen years old.

Voter turnout must be increased. To do so, Arizonans should consider adopting electronic or online voting to make voting more convenient. Registered voters should also be encouraged to sign up for the permanent early ballot list so that they do not inadvertently miss elections, particularly smaller local elections. Employers also have a role to play in encouraging voting by, among other things, making it easy to take time off to vote.

But voter turnout cannot be increased before some of the core reasons dissuading people from voting are addressed: divisive party politics and our lack of trust in elected officials. People would trust government officials more if there were greater transparency and more moderate voices in politics. To ensure that moderates are better represented in Arizona, the following actions should be taken: consider open primaries, increase the number of competitive districts, raise pay for elected officials, extend choice beyond the traditional two-party system, and encourage Independents to vote in primaries.

The Role of Government in Civic Engagement

Governmental Support of Civic Engagement

Governments, whether at the national, state, or local level, provide the main forum for decision-making on policy issues, and it is imperative that governments engage residents and community members in the decision-making process and foster deliberative democracy. The work of government and its varied roles is often misunderstood in the community, and residents may feel intimidated or less inclined to participate in the political process because of its complexities.

Governmental Obstacles to Civic Engagement

There are many preconceived notions about government that may have a negative impact on whether an individual desires to participate in the political process. For example, some people believe that political bodies, such as the Legislature or city or town councils, have made final decisions before public meetings and hearings, thereby discouraging residents from testifying at these meetings and hearings.

Others maintain that the political process is far too confusing and complex, discouraging public participation and hindering transparency. Some of the established procedures for enacting laws, like the ability to have a “strike everything” amendment to a piece of legislation, allow lawmakers to engage in “gotcha-politics.”

There is often a disconnect between state government and those individuals who live in rural areas because effective involvement frequently requires in-person participation. Lengthy travel time and high costs hinders accessibility for rural residents.

Term limits, once greatly touted, are now viewed as having a negative impact upon the quality of political representation because when an elected official has a grasp on an issue or the process itself, his or her term is up and seeking re-election may be prohibited. Further, term limits provide lobbyists with a disproportionate amount of influence because they may be the main “constant players.”

Governmental Opportunities for Civic Engagement

Government bodies need to use new technologies to effectively engage residents. New technological capabilities should greatly reduce the effects of the geographical distance between rural residents and the larger metropolitan areas, where much of the political

discourse and decision-making ultimately occurs. Further, governmental entities need to adopt best practices for public interaction.

Government officials should be more proactive in seeking feedback from their constituents. In this new era of technology, governmental officials should utilize means such as email, websites, blogging, and social media sites to solicit information from and to communicate with constituents and other members of the public.

Government entities and bodies need to diversify meeting places and times to allow for more active participation from constituents. For example, some city and town council meetings should be held during evening hours to encourage participation from those individuals who are working during the day. Governmental officials should review current means by which public participation is solicited to determine whether these means are effective and, if they are not, implement new, more creative public participation opportunities. For example, interactive television, which gets high participation, should be brought to the civic engagement arena. Government must make more substantive efforts to bring lower socioeconomic communities into the dialogue, as well as implement ways to earn the trust of traditionally underrepresented groups such as the Hispanic community, the LGBT community, youth, and senior citizens. Local governments should encourage “Citizen Academies” to provide civic engagement skills, urge continuing active recruitment of those graduates, and create “Citizen Task Forces” to allow for greater dialogue on public policy issues. Another idea is to sponsor coffee meetings with neighborhood members to ensure that government reflects the pulse of the community it is serving.

Getting There: Setting Priorities and Taking Actions

In light of the above discussions, and to better serve the values and needs of Arizona, the participants of the 100th Arizona Town Hall offer several recommendations for how to encourage an optimal level of civic engagement. The participants of the 100th Arizona Town Hall suggest that all Town Hall participants take these recommendations to their elected or appointed officials, local businesses, nonprofits, and others in order to ensure that our recommendations are considered by as many different individuals and groups as possible. Our recommendations include:

- Take Personal Responsibility. One person can make a difference. It is up to each of us to become involved, to the extent possible, in our communities.
- Involve Post-Secondary Educational Institutions. Post-secondary educational institutions should be encouraged to create centers for civic engagement and to provide continuing education courses that include all levels of government, community planning, civic engagement, and civil discourse.
- Teach Civics Skills and the Importance of Civic Engagement Early. Schools should formally integrate civics skills and the importance of civic engagement in the curriculum. Examples would include teaching conflict-resolution, critical thinking, and active-listening skills, and by encouraging civil interactions, especially during times of disagreement. Learning about civic

engagement should continue as children progress through school by requiring civics and history courses, and by weaving the lessons and issues of civic engagement into the core standards for substantive courses such as language arts and history. The curriculum should include programs like Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's revolutionary I-Civics program, which prepares youngsters to become knowledgeable and engaged citizens. While civics and history should be required, it should not be done in a way that merely encourages rote memorization of facts students soon forget. Just as honors curriculum is recognized by schools on transcripts, if civic engagement is a part of the curriculum, then it should be recognized on transcripts as well. Civics and history should include end-of-course assessments to ensure students comprehend and identify opportunities to apply their knowledge. The Arizona Department of Education should review state regulations for civics education and make changes to ensure that Arizona's requirements satisfy national standards.

- Model Good Behavior. As Arizonans, we are role models. It is our responsibility to model courteous interaction and encourage civic engagement. We should demonstrate by example to our youth the importance of being involved. As students progress in their own schooling, they can teach younger students the importance of civic engagement and civil discourse, thereby reinforcing the lessons they have seen modeled.
- Encourage Young People to Become Involved in Their Communities. Parents and school officials should encourage students to become involved in extracurricular activities, including student government, but also music and drama clubs, afterschool sports, and speech and debate clubs. Schools should also work to create opportunities for students to become directly involved in their communities through internship programs, summer camps, and volunteer projects. Schools should reward students who engage in these civic activities, making it prestigious to be civically engaged and encouraging other students to take action. We should encourage creation of a mechanism for post-secondary educational loan forgiveness in return for significant civic engagement accomplishments.
- Harness News Media to Promote Effective Civic Engagement. Although the current news media can be polarizing, leaders can use the media to promote effective civic engagement. For example, government officials should be encouraged to write articles about the importance of government participation, and municipal organizations should publicize lists of opportunities for people to become involved with their communities. Town Hall participants should also use the media to promote what they have learned and help make increasing civic engagement part of an ongoing dialogue; for example, they should create a series of public service announcements with civic engagement themes for television or radio.

- Harness Social Media to Promote Effective Civic Engagement. Social media is how many people get their news today. Town Hall should evolve its communication strategies and tactics to use current and emerging social media to promote the recommendations of this as well as past and future Town Halls. Our efforts will be interactive so that all community members can participate in the strengthening and accelerated implementation of our ideas. We should create and continually update Facebook and Twitter accounts to spread the Town Hall message. Other businesses and nonprofits should use their social media accounts to educate people about volunteer opportunities and other ways to become involved in the community.
- Encourage Transparency and Accountability for Public Comment. While still protecting our First Amendment rights, we should all take ownership of what we say or write. We should recognize the right of anyone to speak anonymously, but we should encourage people to accept responsibility for their public comments because we believe that vitriolic public comments may discourage others from exercising free speech and engaging civically.
- Utilize New Technology to Encourage More People to Become Civically Engaged. People are more likely to become civically engaged if there are easy-to-use platforms from which to become involved. To that end, the Secretary of State should continue ongoing research on an online voting system; people should be permitted to provide testimony and address issues at the state legislature and other bodies without having to physically register in Phoenix at the State Capitol; television and online mediums should be used to make public meetings interactive; and cities and nonprofits should keep community calendars to promote their events and post on their websites when they need volunteers for particular projects. Town Hall should establish a website (that should be coordinated with other efforts) that would provide information for Arizonans to include (1) a listing of Arizona and national organizations that support civic engagement activities, (2) a resource list of materials, (3) a calendar that lists relevant activities occurring in Arizona, and (4) a speaker's bureau identifying speakers knowledgeable about civic engagement.
- Discourage Sensationalized Reporting. Currently, many news outlets report only one side of the story or otherwise sensationalize the story. Businesses should hold the media accountable by withdrawing sponsorships from biased media. Individuals are also responsible for changing the channel. News media must be encouraged to report a more balanced perspective.
- Participation in Public Service. We need to consider and analyze factors that deter individuals from serving in public office, and once barriers are identified, advocates must work to eliminate those barriers.
- Increase Governmental Transparency and Accountability. More transparency in legislative processes is desired. The legislature should take specific

measures to increase transparency, including 72 hours advance notice of any revisions to bills to ensure the public has sufficient opportunity to review and digest legislation. This advance notice should be increased to seven days with respect to the state budget. Legislative hearings and meetings should not only be streamed over the internet, but also televised. Websites should be maintained where Arizonans can rate their elected officials and otherwise have constructive dialogues. In addition, initiatives and referenda, and any communications from elected officials should be in clear language, understandable to all, and should be disseminated in a way that is accessible to everyone regardless of language barriers or disabilities. There should also be increased transparency in campaign finance and lobbying expenditure disclosures.

- Change Our Voting System. Town Hall encourages the adoption of election reform that facilitates increased voter participation in both primary and general elections. The proposed open primary system may be a significant and positive step forward in accomplishing that goal.
- Make Politics Less Polarizing. State and local government officials must work on keeping their disagreements civil. To that end, officials should be required to take a course of civil discourse, which could include a discussion of “constructive confrontation” principles and discourage negative campaigning. Moreover, Arizonans should express their disapproval of ugly exchanges in the political process.
- Promote Civic Engagement Among All Segments of the Population. Town Hall can take a leadership role here, working to become more inclusive of the State’s diversity. To ensure that more people have the means to attend Town Hall, Town Hall needs to expand its scholarship program to help students and others in need to attend this event. Civic education organizations should collaborate to create a civic engagement directory that can be maintained online, and which details the varied ways people can become civically engaged. These civic organizations should offer or expand training to neighborhood associations, civic organizations, and other community organizations on the theory and skills of civic engagement. These civic organizations should contact the various leadership organizations in Arizona and recommend the leadership groups include training and curriculum on civic engagement.
- Reach out to People. People often become involved in projects because they were asked. Therefore, each of us needs to reach out and ask other Arizonans to become involved in their communities and the state. Ultimately, this sort of personal involvement and mentorship will encourage others to become engaged.
- Publicize Groups that Encourage Public Participation. Many groups around Arizona encourage civic engagement, help people become more

knowledgeable about civic issues, and study difficult social issues and suggest solutions. Many Arizonans do not know about these civics resources, and grassroots and other campaigns should be undertaken to raise awareness about these valuable resources.

Steps to Incentivize or Implement Action

Participants in the 100th Town Hall request that an agency with expertise in civic engagement convene Arizona's civic engagement experts to collaborate in developing a plan to create a Civic Engagement Roadmap in Arizona.

The roadmap should address the following: (1) starting-up and rolling-out implementation at the state and local level; (2) identifying and coordinating current civic engagement resources, opportunities, and best practices; (3) identifying funding sources for the Roadmap's implementation and sustainability; and (4) providing technological resources to support the Roadmap's implementation.

Town Hall participants and other concerned community members encourage the use of a code of civil discourse by the Executive Branch, the Legislative Branch, public universities, colleges and schools, and county and local governments. Members of the public, elected officials, government employees, and students should be encouraged to adopt the code as "best practices" and promise to follow the principles of civic engagement set forth in the code.

Promoting the 100th Arizona Town Hall Recommendations

To ensure action is taken with regard to the recommendations set forth in this Report, participants at the 100th Arizona Town Hall have committed to return to their communities with a renewed passion for encouraging and inviting friends, families and coworkers to be civically engaged. Each participant has made a personal commitment to communicate the results of this Report with community decision-makers and government officials. Participants will share this Report with all community organizations with which they are involved and leverage their influence to enlist organizations to take action with regard to the recommendations contained within this Report.

To commemorate the 100th Arizona Town Hall and to make a further commitment to civic engagement, Arizona Town Hall participants have agreed to fund an Arizona Town Hall Scholarship to be awarded to a person who cannot afford to attend an Arizona Town Hall. Arizona Town Hall participants have agreed to adopt at least one action item and make it a priority in their lives over the next year, and encourage any business, nonprofit, community organization, or other group that believes in the importance of civic engagement to place at least one of the action items on its agenda to accomplish in the next year.

It is further recommended that Arizona Town Hall participants should strongly encourage corporate donors and foundations to support civic engagement activities outside of, and in addition to, their normal nonprofit funding efforts.

Civic engagement has, historically, been the hallmark of a great society. From ancient times to the current day, civic engagement has been critical for a vibrant, productive, and enlightened society. The members of this 100th Town Hall call on all Arizonans to embrace the concepts of civic engagement and practice the best aspects of this positive political philosophy.