



Civil Discourse Concurrence Proposal

January, 2017

“Civil discourse is our ability to have conversations about topics about which we disagree, and our ability to listen to each other’s perspectives.” - NPR Journalist Diane Rehm

“Civil discourse is the forgotten difference between dialogue and confrontation.” – Steve Fehl, Saybrook University

“Civility in our democracy is not about squelching assertiveness, protest, civil disobedience, or rigorous discussion of the issues. Civil discourse and deliberation is a set of attitudes, behaviors and skills that support thoughtful, fact and values-based discussions when citizens and public officials do come to the table to talk.” – LWV Washington’s Civility in Our Democracy Program

Discussion Questions

How was the issue of civility and civil discourse a factor in the 2016 Election?

What roles did the political campaigns, the media (including social media), and voters’ distrust of government and traditional institutions play in creating a climate of incivility?

Did you personally experience examples of incivility related to the recent election?

What instances of incivility in government have you experienced as a League member?

What should be the League’s role in encouraging civility in government?

An excellent panel discussion on civility from October, 2016, Diane Rehm Show, can be found on this audiofile: <http://thedianerehmshow.org/audio/#/shows/2016-10-25/civility-public-discourse-and-the-2016-presidential-election/113871/@00:00>

Concurrence

LWV Clackamas County proposes that LWVOR concur with the Civil Discourse position of LWV San Luis Obispo:

“Promote civil discourse through action and education for all government bodies, staff, and citizens for the purpose of improved public policy decisions and processes. Civil discourse means, at a minimum, mutually respectful, courteous, constructive, and orderly communication.”

“Concurrence” is defined as agreement by League members with a position on an issue reached by a small group of members or by another League. Based on LWVUS precedent, it is not necessary that the “decision statement” or “pre-stated position” follow verbatim the position upon which it is based.

Civil Discourse Studies and Resources

- LWV San Luis Obispo - Civil Discourse Study, 2014, comprehensive one-year study, brochure, checklist, presentation guide, etc. (see pp. 5-8)
- LWV San Diego – “Putting Civility into Action,” 2011-12, League interest group and community presentations
- LWV Washington – “Civility in Our Democracy Program,” 2012-2013
- National Institute for Civil Discourse – a nonpartisan center for research, advocacy, and policy, established in 2011 after the Tucson shooting of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords
Standards of Conduct for candidates, citizens, and media
Standards of Conduct for Debates
- U.S. Conference of Mayors Civility Accord, 2011
- The Sisters Country Civility Project – Sisters, Oregon, 2015
Goals: greater engagement; new tools for building civility, trust, and engagement; quantity and quality of discourse; a highly-connected citizenry

Education/Advocacy Suggestions

- a. Review of Oregon’s Open Meetings Law and the rights/responsibilities of citizens when interacting with government.
- b. Prepare op-ed articles and social media messages on civil discourse.
- c. Prepare a brochure/document and presentation materials to explain guidelines for civility in government with respectful dialogue strategies.
- d. Meet with county commissioners, mayors, city councilors, etc., to ask about existing meeting rules, get buy-in for a civil discourse resolution and/or standards of conduct;
- e. Partner with other organizations to hold community forums on civil discourse
- f. Monitor meetings through Observer Corps and/or follow-up communication.
- g. Youth involvement: work to incorporate civil discourse strategies in the Mock Election curriculum, hold an essay contest on why civil discourse is important, school presentations in conjunction with anti-bullying efforts.

Civil Discourse Resource List (from LWV San Diego)

BOOKS

Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community, Robert D. Putnam, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2000

Reclaiming Civility in the Public Square * 10 Rules That Work, Cassandra Dahnke and Tomas Spath with Donna Bowling, WingSpan Press, Livermore, CA, 2007

Rude Democracy: Civility and Incivility in American Politics, Susan Herbst, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, PA, 2010

Thank You for Arguing: What Aristotle, Lincoln, and Homer Simpson Can Teach Us About the Art of Persuasion, Jay Heinrichs, Three Rivers Press, New York, 2007

The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America is Tearing Us Apart, Bill Bishop, Mariner Books, New York, 2008

True Enough: Learning to Live in a Post-Fact Society, Farhad Manjoo, John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, NJ, 2008

un*Spun: finding facts in a world of [disinformation], Brooks Jackson and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (founders of FactCheck.org), Random House, New York, 2007

ARTICLES

How to Turn Republicans and Democrats into Americans: An Insider's Six-Step Plan to Fix Congress, Mickey Edwards, The Atlantic, July/August 2011.

The Ways of Silencing, Jason Stanley. *The New York Times Opinionator*, June 25, 2011.

The Daily Me, Nicholas D. Kristof. New York Times, March 18, 2009.

LINKS

Arizona Humanities Council -- LWV is part of an alliance of community groups on "Project Civil Discourse" <http://www.projectcivildiscourse.org/>

factcheck.org -- A non-partisan, nonprofit website that describes itself as a 'consumer advocate' for voters that aims to reduce the level of deception and confusion in U.S. politics. <http://factcheck.org>

Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy -- Kansas State University - <http://icdd.k-state.edu/who-we-are>

Institute for Civility in Government -- <http://instituteforcivility.org/>

National Conflict Resolution Center-San Diego --<http://www.ncrconline.com/>

National Institute for Civil Discourse -- University of Arizona will offer venue for vigorous and respectful debate. <http://nicd.arizona.edu/>

Peace First -- AmeriCorps program promoting conflict resolution and civic engagement in grade & middle schools - http://www.peacefirst.org/site/?page_id=32

Sacramento Region Community Foundation -- Community Conversations, Guidelines for Civil Discourse - <http://www.sacregecf.org/doc.aspx?148>

San Diego Deliberation Network -- Our local cohort moving the cause with grace and finesse - <http://sddn.org>

Southern Poverty Law Center -- Teaching Tolerance curriculum - <http://www.tolerance.org/discourse>