

## Conversation Guide: Money in Politics

*Living Room Conversations offers a simple, sociable and structured way to practice communicating across differences while building understanding and relationships. Typically, 4-6 people meet in person or by video call for about 90 minutes to listen to and be heard by others on one of our nearly 100 [topics](#). Rather than debating or convincing others, we take turns talking to share, learn, and be curious. No preparation is required, though background links with balanced views are available on some topic pages online. Anyone can host using these italicized instructions. [Hosts also participate](#).*

### **I. Introductions: Why We're Here (~10 minutes)**

*Each participant has 1 minute to introduce themselves.*

- Share your name, where you live, what drew you here, and what if any changes have you noticed in yourself in your interactions as a result of your participation.

### **II. Conversation Agreements: How We'll Engage (~5 minutes)**

*Setting the tone for our conversation; participants may volunteer to take turns reading them aloud.*

- **Be curious and listen to understand.** Conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking. You might enjoy exploring how others' experiences have shaped their values and perspectives.
- **Show respect and suspend judgment.** People tend to judge one another. Setting judgement aside opens you up to learning from others and makes them feel respected and appreciated. Try to truly listen, without interruption or crosstalk.
- **Note any common ground as well as any differences.** Look for areas of agreement or shared values that may arise and take an interest in the differing beliefs and opinions of others.
- **Be authentic and welcome that from others.** Share what's important to you. Speak from your experience. Be considerate of others who are doing the same.
- **Be purposeful and to the point.** Do your best to keep your comments concise and relevant to the question you are answering. Be conscious of sharing airtime with other participants.
- **Own and guide the conversation.** Take responsibility for the quality of your participation and the conversation as a whole. Be proactive in getting yourself and others back on track if needed. Use an agreed upon signal like the "time out" sign if you feel the agreements are not being honored.

### **III. Question Rounds: Let's Talk!**

*Time will be tracked and we'll gently let people know when their time has elapsed*

#### **Round One: Getting to Know Each Other (~10 min)**

*Each participant can take 1-2 minutes to answer the following question:*

- What is a selfless thing you have done?

**Round Two: Exploring the Topic -- Money in Politics (~40 min)**

*One participant can volunteer to read this paragraph.*

Increasing numbers express concern at the influence of big money in elections, especially since the Supreme Court's Citizens United ruling in 2010, which allowed corporations to spend unlimited amounts of money on our elections. From another perspective, money was always heavily involved in elections – and the voice of everyone in America (including leaders of corporations) should not be restricted in the free marketplace of ideas. What do you think? Is there a problem with money influencing our elections and then influencing the actions of elected officials?

*Each participant will take two minutes to discuss without any interruption or cross talk. After everyone has had an opportunity to share, the moderator will initiate further group discussion.*

- When it comes to money in politics, what is your primary concern right now?
- Do you see money in politics influencing elected officials and policy makers? What specific stories can you share?
- What in your life has been affected by money in politics?
- What would you like to see happen about money in politics?

**Round Three: Reflecting on the Conversation (~15 min)**

*Each participant will have two minutes to share their observations. After everyone has had an opportunity to share, the moderator will initiate further discussion.*

- How might our discussion today lead to more respectful communication?
- What learning, new understanding or common ground was found on the topic?
- Would you like to participate in another conversation series?

**Closing (~5 min)**

- *Give us feedback!* Feedback to [Form to Mail](#) or [Feedback Fillable Form to Email](#)
- *Donate!* Visit our website at <https://lwwuv.org/get-involved>

*Thank you!*