



What's Next, Alexandria?

Community Dialogue

Alexandria, VA

November 15, 2012

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National
Institute for
Civil Discourse



Democracy is a conversation

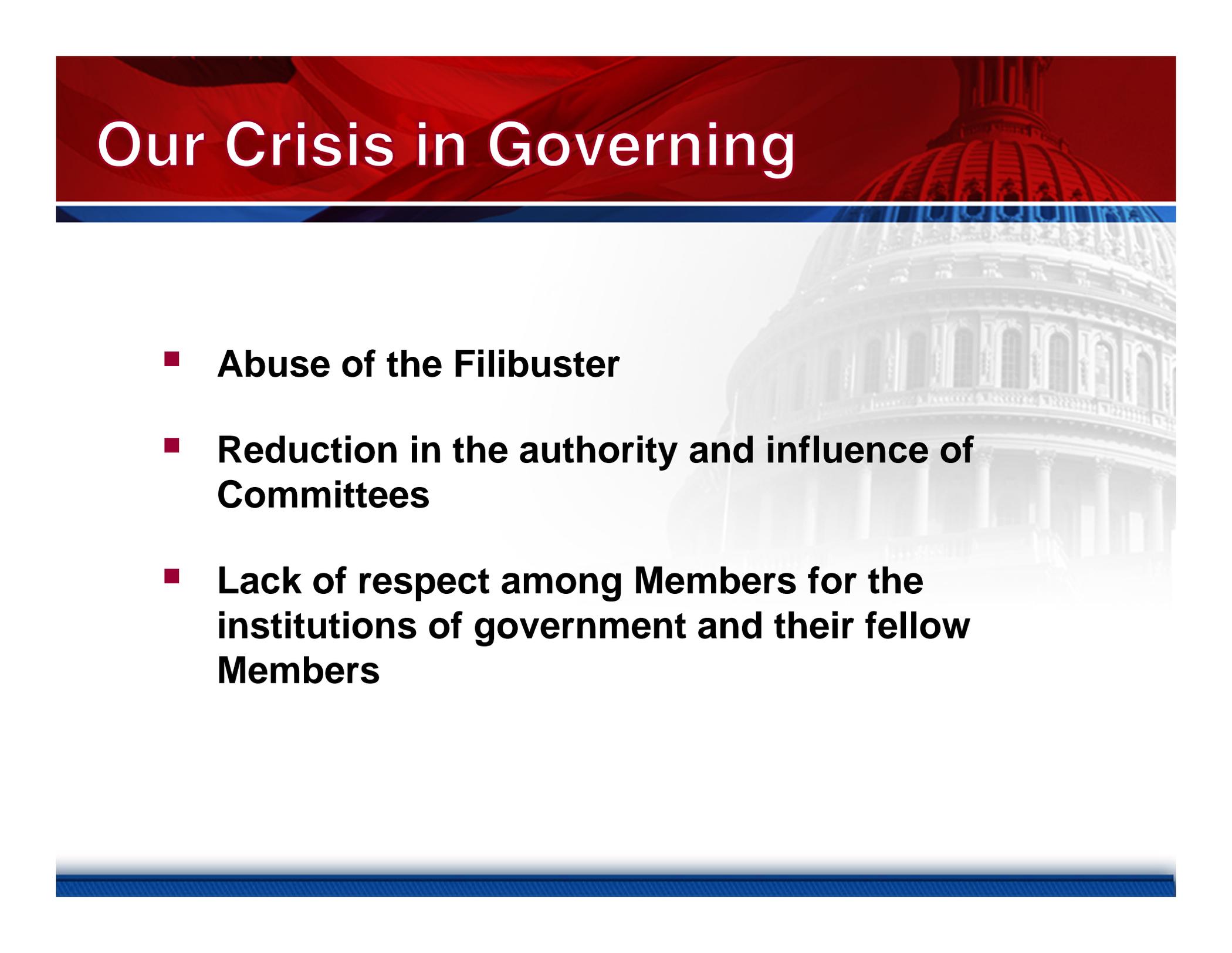
**The quality of the conversation
matters**



Our Crisis in Democracy

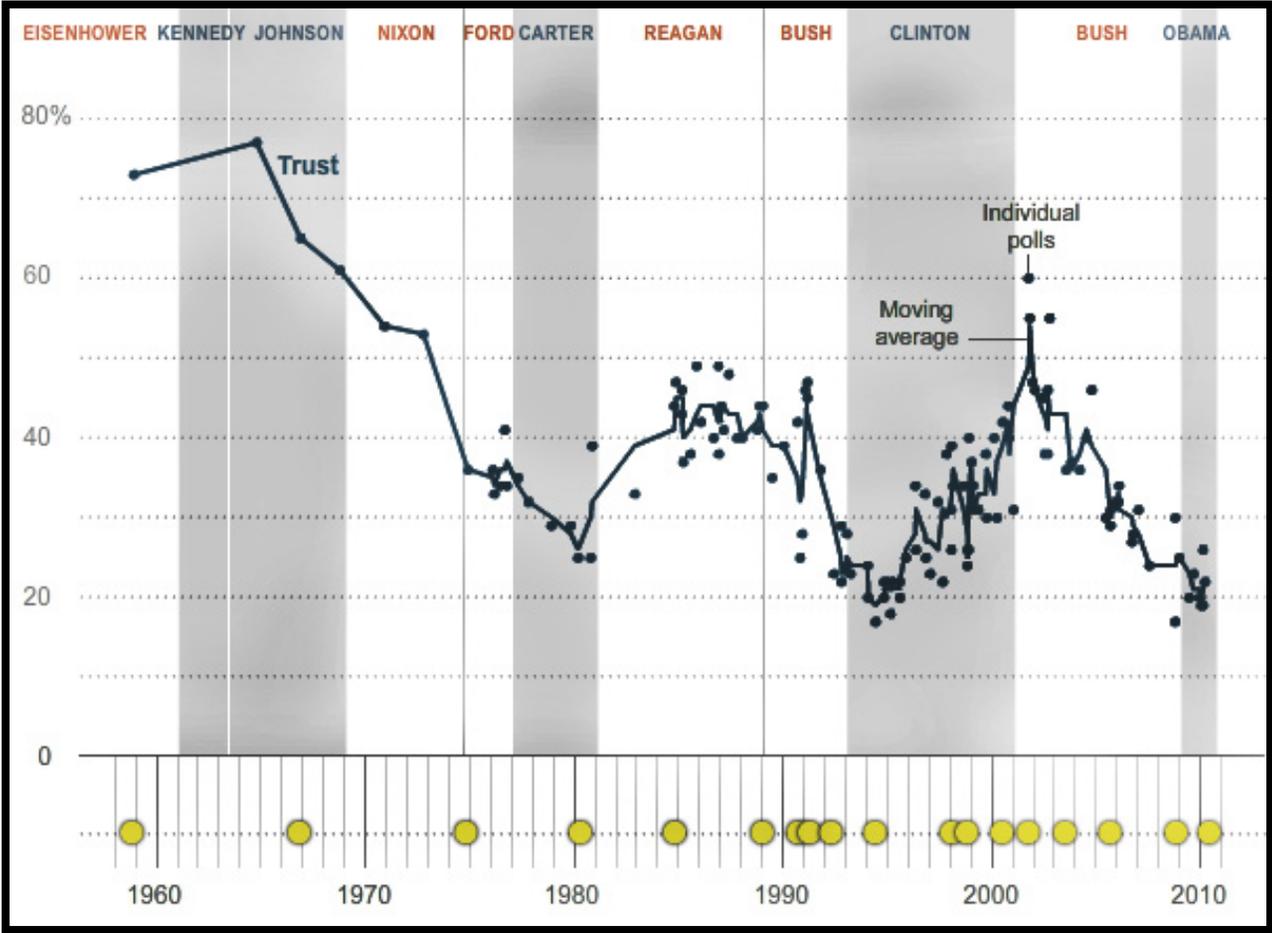
- **Citizens are disconnected from their government**
- **The political system is increasingly polarized and gridlocked, making the toughest issues all but impossible to address**
- **Electoral challenges that reduce participation:**
 - **Partisan redistricting**
 - **Attempts at voter suppression**
 - **Influence of vast sums of money in our politics**

Our Crisis in Governing



- **Abuse of the Filibuster**
- **Reduction in the authority and influence of Committees**
- **Lack of respect among Members for the institutions of government and their fellow Members**

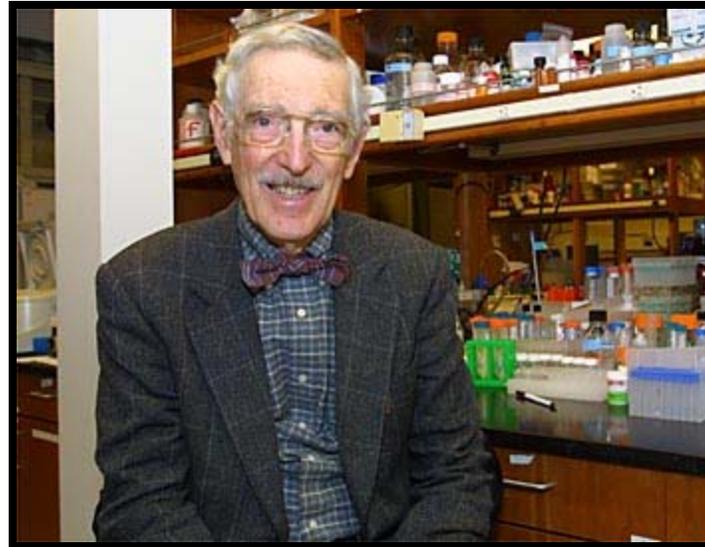
Public Trust in Government



*Pew Research Center, Public Trust in Governance, 1958-2010

**Credibility is gained by the thimble full
and lost by the bucket full.**

*Dr. Bruce Ames
U.C. Berkeley*





Small-Group Discussion

- **As a citizen, what is the best example of something that has broken your trust in government?**
 - **What is the best example of something that has rebuilt your trust in government?**
- 

Unique moment in modern political history

Inside the Beltway pundits and the public articulate the same root causes and desires for solutions





NICD National Survey Results

- **85 percent of American voters report feeling negatively about how elected officials act when they deal with problems facing the country.**
- **Elected officials are not willing to cross party lines and work together (73% “a very big obstacle,” 90% at least “somewhat an obstacle”);**
- **The lack of respectful dialogue (46% “a very big obstacle,” 83% at least “somewhat an obstacle”)**

Current Understanding of What's Needed

- **Broad based democracy reform movement**
- **Build infrastructure to support democratic practice**
- **Need for safe democratic space more serious than ever**



AmericaSpeaks' Purpose



***AmericaSpeaks*' mission is to reinvigorate
American democracy by engaging citizens in
the public decisions that most impact their
lives**

21st Century Town Meeting





Common Ground on Our Fiscal Future

Diverse Group of 3,500 Americans Across 57
Cities Weigh In on Nation's Fiscal Challenges



19 Town Meeting Sites

Albuquerque
Augusta
Casper
Chicago
Columbia
Dallas
Des Moines
Detroit
Grand Forks
Jackson
Los Angeles County
Louisville
Missoula
Overland Park
Philadelphia
Portland
Portsmouth
Richmond
Silicon Valley

3,500 People Across 57 Cities



Video: America Speaks: Our Budget, Our Economy



www.usabudgetdiscussion.org

Quality and Tone of Politics

How satisfied are you with the tone and quality of political discussion in our country today?	6/26
Very Satisfied	1%
Satisfied	3%
Neutral	8%
Dissatisfied	31%
Very Dissatisfied	58%

How satisfied are you with the tone and quality of our discussions here today (at Town Meeting)?	6/26
Very Satisfied	62%
Satisfied	29%
Neutral	6%
Dissatisfied	2%
Very Dissatisfied	1%

Learning & Influencing Each Other

To what extent did the people at your table influence your views about the options?	6/26
A Great Deal	11%
Somewhat	39%
A Little Bit	34%
Not At All	15%

To what extent did you learn something today about the budget challenges our country faces?	6/26
I learned a great deal	51%
I learned a few things	39%
I learned very little	8%
I didn't learn anything at all	3%

Principles for Effective Community Engagement



- **Linked to Decision Makers**
- **Demographic Diversity**
- **Informed Participation**
- **Facilitated Deliberation**
- **Discover Shared Priorities**
- **Clear Recommendations for Action**
- **Sustaining Citizen Engagement**

Linked to Decision Makers



Demographic Diversity



Informed Participation



CITIZEN SUMMIT III: REAL CHALLENGES, REAL CHOICES

Mayor Anthony A. Williams

Dear Citizens,

Four years ago, 2,000 residents of the District of Columbia came together at the first Citizen Summit to launch an exciting and innovative process called *Neighborhood Action*. At the Summit, citizens helped set the District's priorities for the city budget and strategic plan. Two years later, another 2,500 residents joined me at Citizen Summit II to revisit the city's priorities. We have achieved much in the past few years, but we still have a long way to go before reaching our full potential as a city.

I've decided to invite residents to join me again this year for Citizen Summit III in our new Washington Convention Center. Citizen Summit III is an opportunity for the public to address the real challenges that face the District of Columbia and make real choices about the future of our city.

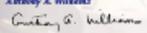
Together, we will look to the future and evaluate the kind of place we want our city to be. We will also discuss the difficult tradeoffs that confront us today as we work to improve our educational system, increase the safety of our neighborhoods, and expand opportunity for all.

The Citizen Summit is America's largest ongoing town hall meeting—a time when our community can come together to talk about the most important issues that impact our lives.

Our goal at the Summit is to conduct a conversation between the District government and residents about our plans for the coming years. The Summit provides a chance for you to make your voice heard in the important decisions that shape the future of our city.

I also want to acknowledge the critical leadership that is provided by the Council of the District of Columbia and our 27 Advisory Neighborhood Commissions. They are critical partners in moving our city forward, and their input today will become a central part of our larger effort to improve the city.

I look forward to your participation at the Summit. Together, we will shape a bright future for the District of Columbia.

Anthony A. Williams

 Mayor, District of Columbia

WASHINGTON CONVENTION CENTER NOVEMBER 7, 2010 WWW.CITIZENSUMMITIII.DC.GOV

PROVIDING QUALITY EDUCATION

A Statistical Comparison

For this city and communities to thrive, neighborhoods must be safe. Building safer neighborhoods requires that the city provide effective...

Option #1: Improve the Quality of Teaching

Why is this option important?
 Research shows that students learn more quickly by high-quality teachers. For the same number of years, students taught by better than the students with low-quality teachers.

Research also shows that hiring delays can cause large urban school districts to lose substantial numbers of high-quality teacher candidates to suburban districts that hire faster.

Where are we now?
 The District has many excellent and caring teachers, and improved recruitment efforts have caused many high-quality candidates to apply for a limited number of openings. Unfortunately, hiring delays have caused many of these candidates to withdraw from the hiring process before they can be offered positions.

What more should we do?
 The District should review its hiring practices in order to attract the most qualified teachers.
 The school system should create incentives for teachers to provide further notification when they are going to leave schools so there will be no vacancies in that quality replacement.

Option #2: Begin the Education Process in Early Childhood

Why is this option important?
 Studies show that children who begin schooling before kindergarten are more likely to graduate from high school, stay out of trouble, and seek higher pay jobs.

For example, in Charlotte, NC, "Smart Start" programs educate children up to age 5. One of these programs, Bright Beginnings, currently serves approximately 1,000 students in 17 classrooms and has significantly improved student performance.

Where are we now?
 The District is ranked second in the nation for the percentage of children centers that are nationally accredited.

While the District currently provides early childhood education to residents who earn up to 200% of the poverty level (over 16,000 children), there is a waiting list of 1,200 children for early childhood programs.

What more should we do?
 Increase funding to early childhood education in order to provide services to the remaining 1,200 children on the waiting list.

Create a program to ensure that the quality of all of the city's child care centers meet national accreditation standards.

Option #3: Provide "Wrap Around" Social Services to Students

Why is this option important?
 In order to focus on learning, children must have their other basic needs met, including nutrition, health, and safety. When these needs are not being met, government programs can attempt to provide support. However, payment does not always result in coordinated wrap-around services. Instead of being delivered in disconnected urban-located facility.

MAKING NEIGHBORHOODS SAFER

A Statistical Comparison

Property Crime per 1,000 Residents

Property crime has fallen 21 percent in the past five years and the District is among better than comparable cities (The Baltimore and Philadelphia, however, the crime rate has risen since 2005).

Homicide Rate Per 100,000 Residents

The homicide rate has dropped by 10% between 1987 and 2008, more than any comparable city. In fact, there was a 33 percent fall from 44.4 in 1987 to 29.5 in 2008, one of the lowest homicide rates in the country.

CITIZEN SUMMIT III PARTICIPANT GUIDE

Facilitated Deliberation



Discover Shared Priorities



Clear Recommendations for Action



- Transportation**
1. Rebuild and improve existing system: PATH, link subway lines, accessibility and ADA compliance, finish 2nd Ave. subway, expanded ferries.
 2. Expand transit service: LIRR, NJT, Christown, street transport
 3. Improve Pedestrian Transportation: walking trails, street transport
 4. Reduce Cars and Trucks – bicycle access and other alternative transport
 5. Financial suggestions: commuter tax; congestion pricing; reduce MTA fares

Sustaining Citizen Engagement



Preliminary Report

July 20, 2002 • Jacob Javits Center



More than 4,000 people from New York and the tri-state area gathered on July 20 at the Jacob Javits Convention Center to play a role in rebuilding Lower Manhattan. Over the course of the daylong forum, participants in "Listening to the City" deliberated options for redeveloping the World Trade Center site and considered the critical issues that must be addressed to help people rebuild their lives in the aftermath of September 11 and memorialize those who were lost.

The public conversation was attended by many of the decision-makers and leaders who will ultimately decide the future of Lower Manhattan, including officials from the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the State of New York, and the New York City Mayor's Office and City Council. The results of the forum will be presented to these decision makers to guide their work.

"Listening to the City" is a project of the Civic Alliance to Rebuild Downtown New York, a broad-based coalition of nearly 100 groups committed to devising strategies for the redevelopment of Lower Manhattan. The Civic Alliance was convened by the Regional Plan Association, in conjunction with New York University, New School University and the Pratt Institute. This 21st Century Town Meeting™ was designed and facilitated by AmericaSpeaks®.

Forum participants related to the events of 9/11 and the rebuilding of Lower Manhattan in a variety of capacities:

- 8.9% had a family member who was a 9/11 victim
- 19.7% are survivors of the events of 9/11
- 23.6% lived in Lower Manhattan
- 41.4% worked in Lower Manhattan
- 33.5% were at or near Ground Zero on 9/11
- 21.5% became displaced/unemployed as a result of 9/11
- 6.2% were rescue or recovery workers
- 71.1% attended primarily as interested citizens

Demographics

Participants in the forum came from all walks of life and represented the rich geographic, racial and income diversity of the metropolitan region. These figures are compared below to the official demographics of the region.

Gender	July 20	Region	Race	July 20	Region
Female	53%	52%	African-American	7%	23%
Male	47%	48%	Asian/Pacific Islander	13%	9%
			Caucasian	66%	64%
			Native American	0%	<1%
Age			Mixed Race	5%	2%
19 and under	4%	27%	Other Race	9%	1%
20-34	27%	22%			
35-54	45%	30%	Ethnicity		
55-64	14%	9%	Hispanic	10%	30%
65 and better	10%	12%	Non-Hispanic	90%	69%
Household Income			Geography		
Less than \$25,000	17%	26%	Manhattan	46%	} 47%
\$25,000 - 49,999	21%	25%	Brooklyn	18%	
\$50,000 - 74,999	20%	18%	Staten Island	3%	
\$75,000 - 99,999	14%	12%	Queens	32%	
\$100,000 - 149,999	15%	11%	Elsewhere in NYS	6%	
\$150,000 - 199,999	12%	8%	New Jersey	18%	33%
			Elsewhere	6%	

70
 60
 50
 40
 30
 20
 10
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What infrastructure is needed for a healthy democracy?

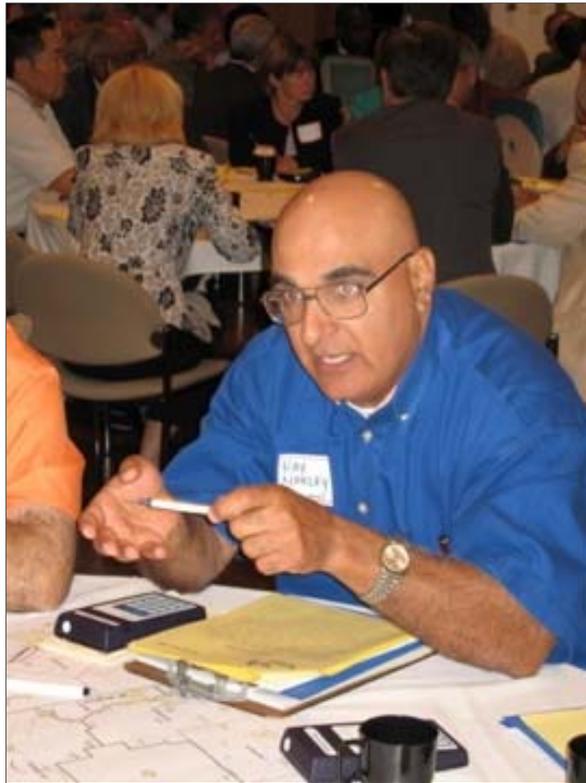
- **Legislative**
- **Human**
- **Organizational**
- **Physical**
- **Technological**
- **Media**
- **Educational**

Legislative Mandate for Participation

Governing body actively promotes public participation, funds it, and receives and acts on citizen input



The Human Infrastructure and...



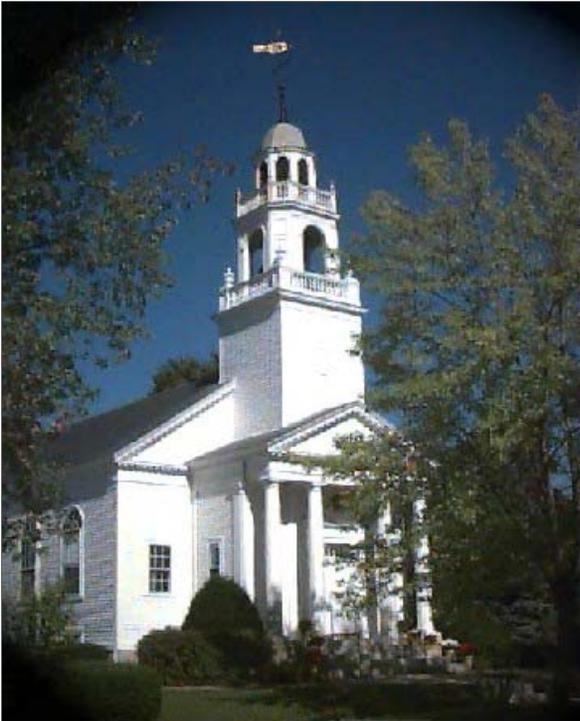
- **Skills: process facilitation, conflict resolution, deliberative democracy**
- **Network of facilitators needed in every community**

The Organizational Infrastructure to support it

- **Mediating organizations needed**
- **Must have trust and confidence of the public**



Safe, Accessible Physical Spaces



- Space in community where everyone feels safe
- No one party dominates the space
- Common or public square



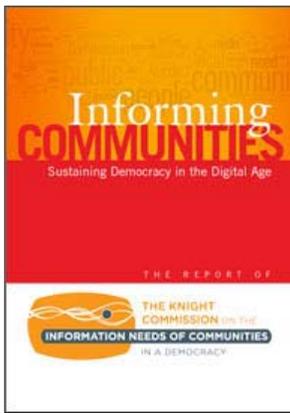
The Necessary Technology

- **Commitment from nation or region to provide every person with broadband Internet access**
- **Commit as a society to imparting the skills necessary to use the Web**



A Trustworthy, Fact-based Media

- Free flow of information is critical to the core of democracy
- Need to teach media literacy
- Technology, especially broadband, is changing the ways people access and process information



**The Knight Commission Report on
the Information Needs of
Communities in a Democracy**

www.knightcomm.org

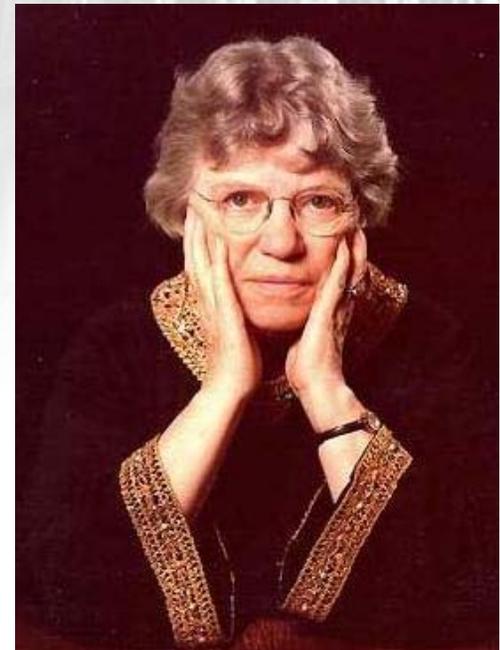
Robust Civic Education



- **One must learn to be good citizen**
- **Counteract damaging effects of political campaigning, ineffective media**

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead



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