



Civic Action

A monthly update from the National Civic League

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Post-Election Imperative: Harness the Power of Community

By Doug Linkhart, President of NCL

This year's presidential campaigns revealed deep divisions in our nation regarding race, gender, nationality and other factors. These divisions seem to get worse with each new police shooting and act of terrorism. On top of a growing economic divide, these differences are reminiscent of the racial divide in 1968 that a presidential commission warned would "threaten the future of every American."

Now that the election season is over, and whether your presidential candidate won or lost, it's not time to rest on our laurels or drown our sorrows. It's time to continue to show the courage to change what we can, which is generally that which is closest to us: our community.

We know of many stories that never seem to make the headlines, stories of communities lifting themselves up by showing this kind of courage. One such story was in Minnesota, where voters elected [America's first Somali American legislator, Ilhan Omar](#), a 34-year-old woman who arrived in the U.S. twenty years ago. Other examples of communities leading the way include Los Angeles, where voters approved [\\$1.2 billion in bonds to fund housing and services for the homeless](#), and in Suffolk County, New York five communities extended the [Community Preservation Fund](#) until 2050 - the fund has already helped preserve 10,000 acres of open space and the extension allows for more money to focus on local water quality as well. .

The presidential commission noted earlier, the Kerner Commission, proposed that, to avoid the creation of "two societies," communities build better relations between police and other governmental agencies and their residents. While there has been a lot of conversation about this issue at the national level, it's local communities that will be at the forefront in finding solutions, often with citizens leading the way.

There's a well-known quote by Margaret Mead, who once

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said, "never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world, indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." It's time to gather up your group!

Here are three of many sites that post ideas for helping your community and changing the world:

<http://www.signupgenius.com/nonprofit/community-service-project-ideas.cfm>

<http://www.createthegood.org/campaign/communitygetinspired>

<https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/kindness-ideas>

Can government create deliberative forums and dialogues?

Author Timothy J. Shaffer explores a long forgotten experiment in democratic discourse launched by Department of Agriculture officials during the Great Depression in the latest issue of the National Civic Review. "What can easily be lost in the retelling of these initiatives was the degree to which local knowledge and experience was valued alongside technical expertise from the USDA and how citizens were recognized as civic actors with their own agency," writes Shafer, an assistant professor at Kansas State University. [Click here to read a free article from the National Civic Review](#) on this fascinating experiment in deliberative democracy.

Learn how to Measure Summer Learning

Want to learn more on measuring your success in summer learning? Join the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading on Wednesday, November 16 at 3p ET/2p CT/1p MT/12p PT for their November webinar on measuring your investments and programs around summer learning.



Leslie Gabay-Swanston from the National Summer Learning Association will provide guidance on the criteria for measurable progress in summer learning. The GLR Campaign's framework for success will be discussed, as it will be used to identify communities for this year's Pacesetter Honors. Ron Fairchild, director of the GLR Support Center, will also outline the structure of the awards process and be available to answer questions. [Register now.](#)

National Civic League | 303-571-4343 | aac@ncl.org |
190 E. 9th Ave. Suite 200
Denver, CO 80203

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