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National Civic Review

MAKING CITIZEN DEMOCRACY WORK

In This Issue

CARLA J. KIMBROUGH
Los Angeles' "Clean Up, Green Up" Ordinance: A Victory in the Environmental Justice Fight

ASTRAEA AUGSBERGER, MARY ELIZABETH COLLINS, AND WHITNEY GECKER
Best Practices for Youth Engagement in Municipal Government

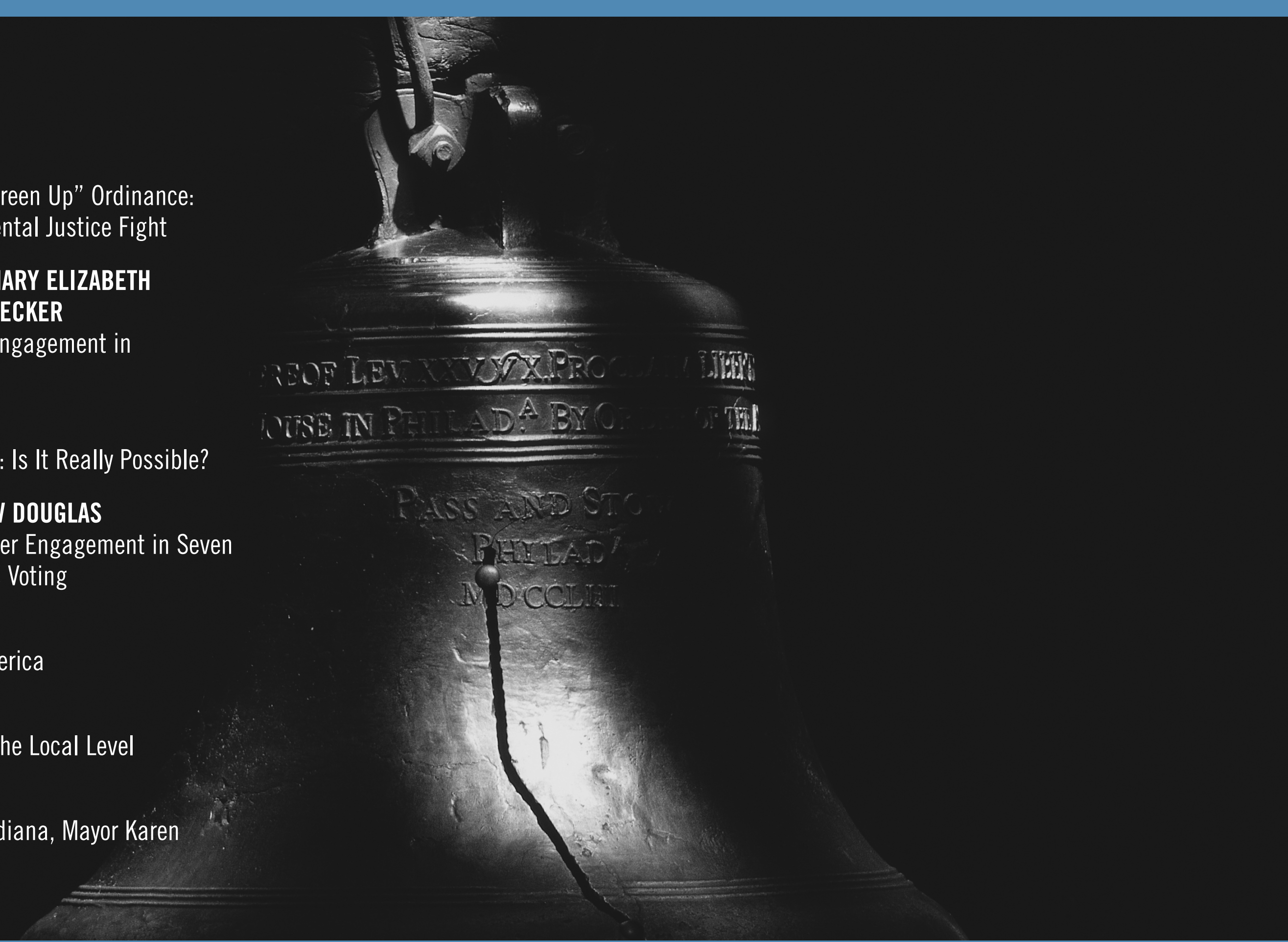
CHARLES K. BENS
Electing Better Politicians: Is It Really Possible?

SARAH JOHN AND ANDREW DOUGLAS
Candidate Civility and Voter Engagement in Seven Cities with Ranked Choice Voting

ELKIN TERRY JACK
Alexis de Tocqueville's America

CARLA J. KIMBROUGH
Engaging Immigrants at the Local Level

DOUG LINKHART
An Interview with Gary, Indiana, Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson



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Contents

National Civic Review Volume 106 Number 1 Spring 2017

Note from the Editor 2
Michael McGrath

Essays

Los Angeles' "Clean Up, Green Up" Ordinance: A Victory in the Environmental Justice Fight 3
Carla J. Kimbrough
Communities for a Better Environment declared war against the pollution that plagues neighborhoods where people of color and poor people live. As part of that declaration, the group became a part of a coalition to fight environmental racism in Los Angeles neighborhoods block by block.

Best Practices for Youth Engagement in Municipal Government 9
Astraea Augsberger, Mary Elizabeth Collins and Whitney Gecker
There is widespread consensus that more avenues should be created for young people to have input into community decisions. What lessons can be gleaned from a study of multiple youth councils in the Boston metropolitan area.

Electing Better Politicians: Is It Really Possible? 17
Charles K. Bens
How can we elect better politicians and then hold them accountable for making intelligent, well thought out decisions? If we don't find a way of doing these things, we will inevitably lurch from one crisis to another and become a lesser version of the country that once promised every person the chance to realize the American dream.

National Implications of Maine Adoption of Ranked Choice Voting 20
Rob Richie
American politics is reaching a tipping point. Our current system simply isn't working, and all trends suggest it will keep getting worse. Maine shows that voters are ready for change, and reformers are planning city and state campaigns for Ranked Choice Voting across the nation in 2017 and 2018.

Candidate Civility and Voter Engagement in Seven Cities with Ranked Choice Voting 25
Sarah John and Andrew Douglas
Does Ranked Choice Voting incentivize campaign civility? The increasing use of the alternative voting system offers new opportunity to answer that question.

Alexis de Tocqueville's America 30
Elkin Terry Jack
Democracy in America answers the question that inspired the travels of the French nobleman Alexis de Tocqueville in the early years of the republic: Why does the American polity work? His answer might surprise contemporary readers.

Institutions Supporting Democratic Communication Among Citizens 32
Timothy J. Shaffer
Since the earliest years of the republic, democratic practices have been woven into the fabric of our formal and informal structures and institutions. What role have institutions played in cultivating opportunities and outlets for democratic life and expression and create space for citizens to consider topical matters and to become more informed.

Engaging Immigrants at the Local Level 41
Carla J. Kimbrough
Immigration has become a divisive issue at the federal level, but some communities have developed comprehensive plans for immigrant integration. For some cities, creating a welcoming atmosphere for immigrants and refugees is a strategy to address population decline. In others it is one way to harness the economic prosperity that small businesses can bring.

All-America City Profile: Hayward, California 50
David Korth and Dana DeBeaumont
How one city in the San Francisco Bay area is approaching the business of problem solving—by looking at challenges and finding innovative ways of engaging people, associations, and institutions in the solutions.

An Interview with Gary, Indiana Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson 57
Doug Linkhart
NCL President Doug Linkhart interviews the mayor of Gary, Indiana to find out what the city was doing in the field of community policing.

Note from the Editor

The framers never used the word "democracy" to describe the system they dreamed up in Philadelphia in 1787. "Republican" government or in some passages, "popular" government, not "democracy," were the words Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and the others used to describe the new constitutional order.

In fact, during the post-Revolutionary period, more often than not, the words "democracy" or "democratic" were used in a pejorative sense. Edmond Randolph of Virginian, for example, attributed the problems of the post-revolutionary years to the "turbulence and follies of democracy." Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts explained the failure of the loose-knit confederation system by an "excess of democracy."

Of course, this partly a question of semantics. Today, when we refer to a "democratic" system, we usually mean an open society with representative government, competitive elections, a free press and the rule of law, in other words, democracy as opposed to monarchy, fascism, communism, theocracy—you name it.

Historically, however, the use of the word "democracy" in a positive sense corresponded with rising expectations about social and political equality, expectations that were frankly more egalitarian than those of most of the framers. Beginning with the formation of Democratic-Republic societies in the early 1790s, the word gradually worked its way into the American vocabulary as a positive good.

By the early twentieth century we were fighting wars to "make the world safe for democracy." But after the second of those wars, we began to think in terms of "democratic realism." The ultra-democratic ideas or the populists and progressives during the Age of Reform were considered naïve and overly-optimistic. Democracy came to be associated with the competition of interest groups as mediated through a stable, two-party system.

During the 1960s, student radicals began to make a distinction between "representative democracy" and "participatory democracy." In the 1980s, a new group of thinkers began to use a new term, "deliberative democracy." The idea of deliberative democracy is that the public has to be engaged in a certain kind of conversation, the kind that allows ordinary citizens to work through problems by weighing various solutions against one another and considering the trade-offs and competing values.

In recent months, the various meanings of democracy have been lurking in the background as we enter a new phase of conflict and uncertainty in our national politics. How can we even think about a more deliberative form of democracy when the country is so deeply divided along ideological or party lines? Given the checks and balances in the "republican" framework that the framers agreed upon, political success requires a high degree of consensus and compromise. Deliberative democracy (or really any kind of democracy) depends on our ability to have civil conversations, to imagine ourselves or our communities to be working toward common ends.

In his book, *Making Democracy Work*, Robert Putnam found that what made regional governments in Italy successful was "social capital," the unseen bonds of reciprocity and trust that are built up over time through participation in voluntary associations. He used the examples of choral societies, soccer clubs and bird watching societies. In his subsequent book, *Bowling Alone*, he worried that the decline of associative life and membership in fraternal groups in the United States was eroding our capacity for democracy.

The contributors to this issue of the *National Civic Review* are thinking and writing about the different ways we may be able to restore our democratic capacities, whether through voting systems reform, municipally sponsored youth engagement groups, ideas about better candidate selection, organizing neighborhoods for environmental justice, local immigrant integration programs and community policing efforts. Others are reflecting on history, revisiting Tocqueville's travels and writing about institutions that have fostered dialogue and discussion.

In the *National Civic Review*, democracy is our main subject, in one form or another.

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Los Angeles' "Clean Up, Green Up" Ordinance: A Victory in the Environmental Justice Fight

BY CARLA J. KIMBROUGH

Instead of fighting discrete battles, Communities for a Better Environment, a California environmental justice organization, declared war against the pollution that plagues neighborhoods where people of color and poor people live. As part of that war declaration, the group became a part of a coalition to fight environmental racism. The strategy focused on executing a ground game—block by block, finding truth and building alliances.

The result of that hard work was new legislation passed unanimously in April 2016 by the Los Angeles City Council and signed by Mayor Eric Garcetti. The ordinance, commonly known as Clean Up Green Up or CUGU, created a way that three largely Latino neighborhoods would begin to see concrete measures for securing environmental justice after years of living in the shadow of industries that polluted air, water, and land.

Called "historic" and "cutting edge," the ordinance creates "green zones" in Boyle Heights, Pacoima/Sun Valley, and Wilmington, neighborhoods that score in the top 25 percent of census tracts deemed as overburdened by California's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment. Some parts of these neighborhoods are in the top 10 percent of the state's most vulnerable areas.

Under this policy, new and expanding businesses must reduce the environmental impact on neighboring residents with buffer areas, landscaping, and other measures. Another measure mandates higher air filtration standards in new developments within 1,000 feet of a freeway. The ordinance also created an ombudsperson to assist local businesses with implementing these new regulations.

This victory took a long time—10 years—and relied on many collaborations. During that decade, community organizations and residents, academic researchers, and foundation officials worked collectively to create a narrative that showed the impact of living among polluters. The groups also used the time to find allies in neighborhoods, including residents and business owners, and in the broader community.

Unending Small Wins Prompted Need for Bigger Change

Darryl Molina Sarmiento, Southern California program director for Communities for a Better Environment (CBE), told part of the story of how CUGU came to be. CBE had been on the battlefield for years, going from one fight against environmental racism to the next.

CBE created toxic tours, which highlight the oil refineries, seaports, recycling plants, and highway traffic that dominate the landscape shared by homes, schools, daycare centers, and ballfields. The group also found people who lived in the neighborhoods and who suffered health ailments, from coughs to cancer.

The group mobilized residents to fight a power plant, force removal of roadway rubble, and demand higher air quality standards. The organization would spend time and resources on one issue, only to be called into battle once again.

"We needed something that was more sweeping," she said of the group's need for a new approach.

So, CBE looked for how the communities they fought on behalf of were affected. The answers were found in the people who have little access to health clinics and gyms, have lower incomes, experience language barriers, and who live in neighborhoods saddled with factors that limit healthy living, such as the nearby factories, highway exposure,

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oil refineries, and other businesses that pollute the environment.

CBE already had established a relationship with Liberty Hill Foundation, a social justice organization that assists grassroots activities related to community organizing. Together, in 1996, they established the Los Angeles Collaborative for Environmental Health and Justice—in short, the Collaborative—that combined academic expertise and community knowledge to fight for healthy living conditions and to study and support the new field of environmental justice.

In December 2010, the expanded collaborative—nine organizations strong—published the 33-page report *Hidden Hazards*.[1] The report added more evidence to the discussion of environmental impacts and offered recommendations to government officials about addressing the hazards of living close to pollution sources.

The report, which was built in part on a ground game, used a process that had been honed over the years. James Sadd, a professor of environmental science at Occidental College, was one of the academic researchers who became interested in environmental justice and, as a result, later became involved in collaborating with community organizers.

Sadd said he owes his interest in environmental justice to two of his students who were enrolled in an interdisciplinary environmental class he taught. One day, the students, who he described as "really smart and kind of courageous," told him that his work in spatial analysis could be applied in the examination of hazardous waste. They asked to do a research project, to which Sadd agreed.

"I had never seen results so startlingly obvious," Sadd said of the relationship between race and income and exposure to hazardous waste.

Pairing Academic Researchers, Community Organizers Became A Strategy

That eye-opening experience led him to become involved in researching environmental justice. He joined a colleague, Manuel Pastor, who had ties to Liberty Hill Foundation, to do such research. Pastor, a professor of sociology and American studies and ethnicity, now works at the University of Southern California where he also serves as director of USC's Program for Environmental and Regional Equity. Through Pastor's work with Liberty Hill, Sadd said they discovered that they, as academic researchers, shared common issues with community groups such as CBE.

Calling community groups such as CBE "important stakeholders," Sadd said these organizations have information researchers could not get anywhere else, and they also helped sharpen the focus of research.

"We think we do better research because of the collaboration," Sadd said. "We found colleagues that we consider equals."

Sadd, though, emphasized that researchers have maintained their integrity as they conduct their work. For example, research may not support a belief for which a community group seeks validation. When that happens, researchers and community groups still enjoy "great mutual respect" and trust, Sadd said.

"We're not doing advocacy research," Sadd said, even though advocacy around environmental justice is "frankly right."

Both data and community knowledge have been key to the success of their work. The researchers had official government databases of businesses and aerial imagery, but that information didn't line up with what community residents knew, and they told him so. Sadd realized that something different had to be done; they had to go out into the neighborhoods and find the truth. The process became known as "ground truthing."

"It was my idea because the community helped me realize it," Sadd said.

Ground truthing started with training the people and then sending out small teams with notebooks, maps, photos, data-entry forms, and portable GPS receivers into designated areas. More than sixty people went street by street in six neighborhoods and documented what occupied the land. They verified and added information.

By the summer of 2008, the teams had finished the neighborhood expeditions. Once all information was collected, verified, and synthesized, the "Hidden Hazards" report featured their findings.

Ultimately, they discovered numerous errors in regulatory databases, and they learned that many more polluters were absent from databases, sometimes due to their smaller sizes. They noted that the environmental impact of smaller businesses clustered in small area can be just as significant as a larger business. Sometimes, the air pollution levels exceeded state recommendations.

Among the pollution sources included in their research were vehicle repair shops, auto body/paint shops, dry cleaners, printing facilities as well as idling vehicles, truck traffic in neighborhoods, and large containers that might hold chemicals.

They also found that these polluters were closer than previously known to "sensitive" areas, such as homes, churches, schools, playgrounds, daycare centers (including in-home daycare), senior housing, community centers, and medical facilities. That means, in some cases, the polluters were actually within the 1,000-feet boundary.

Hidden Hazards *Report Spots Cumulative Impacts, Offers Policy Solutions*

The report, the authors said, added to the focus on "cumulative impacts," which occur when people experience multiple exposures to all types of pollution, either routinely or accidentally, in a geographic area. The impacts also consider the presence of both young and older people and socioeconomic factors.

While the report highlighted the problems, it also suggested solutions. The Collaborative's report featured a review of city planning and land-use tools from academic studies, a few California cities and Cincinnati, Ohio, which the report said passed the nation's first environmental justice ordinance in 2009.

Armed with these examples, the Collaborative next asked environmental lawyers, land-use experts, and health advocates to identify the most promising approaches to deal with cumulative impacts locally.

> "The complex problem of reducing exposure to toxic hazards in our communities can appear overwhelming and intractable to most policymakers and community residents," the report said. "However, we have found the following framework helpful in conceptualizing the problem and identifying the steps that are necessary to lower health risk while moving towards resilient and vibrant local economies." (p. 24).

The framework used a three-pronged approach focused on *prevention* (preventing more hazards in overburdened communities), *mitigation* (cleaning up and reducing existing hazards), and *revitalization* (using economic revitalization approaches and green technologies to transform these neighborhoods into healthy, sustainable areas with jobs). The Collaborative's framework included 11 policy options designed to work together to comprehensively battle environmental problems.

Specifically, the report asked the city to incorporate the various practices. Perhaps the most consequential approach, though, was the recommendation to create special districts—also known as supplemental use districts—that have specific community standards and guidelines to prevent and reduce environmentally hazardous land uses and promote economic development and community revitalization.

The report also called for a screening tool for land-use policy development to identify the most vulnerable areas that already have a significant concentration of hazardous land uses. Another recommendation was to create a zoning designation that temporarily restricts new land uses that threaten environmentally the health and safety of residents.

These policy recommendations were directed specifically to the City of Los Angeles. Sarmiento said the group recognized that city officials had the authority to regulate those businesses, but people were an essential part of convincing local government to act.

"Community organizing is really key," Sarmiento said. "You really have to demonstrate people power."

That power was visible at public hearings and workshops. As the City of Los Angeles began its work

on changing zoning codes, the planning department held evening hearings—6:30 to 8:30 p.m.—in each of the affected neighborhoods, including at a youth center and a senior center. The department also used Facebook to inform and invite participation. Nearly 200 people attended these public hearings.

> Perhaps the most consequential approach, though, was the recommendation to create special districts—also known as supplemental use districts—that have specific community standards and guidelines to prevent and reduce environmentally hazardous land uses and promote economic development and community revitalization.

People power was exerted through a broad-based alliance of environmental groups such as Green LA and Heal the Bay, public health groups such as the American Lung Association of California, business leadership, including Los Angeles Business Council, and representatives of education, government, clergy, labor, and local businesses.

Business and labor played an important but delicate role. Half of the parents worked in oil refineries, and small businesses could be offenders of environmental quality. So, rather than calling for industry to close, the groups rallied for good labor practices that adapted to climate change, Sarmiento explained.

"We want jobs *and* a clean environment," she said.

Foundation Plays Critical Role As Hub, Funder

Community organizers, academic researchers, and even city officials insert Liberty Hill Foundation as they tell the story of CUGU. Liberty Hill provided a critical funding stream that helped with creating community friendly materials, hiring lawyers and consultants who helped draft legislation, and supporting the hire of a city employee—with a $100,000 matching grant given to the city—to evaluate the impact of implementing proposed regulations and standards.

Daniela Simunovic, Liberty Hill's environmental health and justice program manager, said the foundation became a hub for community organizations and helped connect researchers with those organizations. When the focus on cumulative impacts became clear, the foundation also helped analyze what it would take to make the city act on the information, Simunovic said. Hiring a city employee was key, and the foundation raised some of the money through public fundraising appeals.

The foundation held two workshops during which business owners could sign up for program assistance. The foundation also created "Guide to Green," a web-based directory of resources that provide technical and financial assistance to small and mid-sized businesses that want to improve their operations with environmental safety in mind; the guide continues to be updated at https://www.libertyhill.org/news/reports/guide-green-resource-guide. Helping business was important because proponents of the CUGU policies needed support from business and wanted to avoid adversarial positions, Simunovic said.

Hard Work Continues With Clean Up, Green Up Ordinance

When the Los Angeles City Council passed the ordinance unanimously in April 2016, the victories included: signage to deter diesel truck idling beyond five minutes; performance standards that address noise, lighting, landscaping treatments, set-backs; buffer zones of at least 500 feet for new or changing auto-related operations; and enclosures for air emissions from smoke, dust, and fumes.

By July, Daniel Hackney was named ombudsperson, a position authorized by the CUGU ordinance. Hackney said he sees his role as serving somewhat as a liaison and coordinator between the community and the city and its agencies.

He is under no illusions, though. He counts off the challenges: The Los Angeles area is home to two large ports; the city has a lot of ship and truck traffic; neighborhoods with lower socioeconomic residents have inherited the most negative conditions; many jobs are connected with industries that contribute to environmental hazards.

"This is one of the most daunting challenges I've seen," said Hackney, who has worked for the city and with community residents since 1989.

A recent example of the challenge is the report of a dumping site where offenders work in the dark of night. Hackney said he's trying to come up with short- and long-term strategies to deal with the problem. Long term, he's looking at usage of the land. Short term, he's considering how to address the problems of dust and noise. The puzzle begins with identifying the culprit.

Even with the experience he gained in working for the city, Hackney said he's on a steep learning curve. This new role requires him to learn lots of information—fast. He's new to working with regulators and inspectors. He has gone on toxic tours to get a better understanding of the landscape. He's also gathering the best information available for financial assistance, expert knowledge, and management practices so that he is prepared to share information with business owners. Then, he's trying to prioritize the list of businesses—where to go first, which ones have the greatest needs.

"I try to put myself in the shoes of all the players, the stakeholders," Hackney said.

A few months in, Hackney said he is conscious of the urgent need to work with businesses, which he numbered at over 700 in the three neighborhoods. The business owners often receive multiple visits from multiple agencies, at different levels of government, all issuing different directives, he said.

"They feel under siege," Hackney said.

Hackney said one of his goals is to coordinate the visits and unify the message for business owners. Aware of what he called the "inherent distrust," Hackney said he wants to eliminate this "us-them" mentality and build on the concept of partnership. That's the first step of getting buy-in from residents.

"All of the problems are "we" problems; help us identify the solutions," Hackney said of his message to the three communities. "This is a we effort. There's no finger-pointing; there's hand-holding."

As a former neighborhood council liaison for the city, Hackney has seen this approach work before. He shared an example of how the city's Bureau of Sanitation department worked with residents to determine the best way to introduce new recycling efforts. The department did pilot studies with different sizes of recycling containers, went to all neighborhood councils for input and advice, and then, after all the work with community had been done, the department went to city council with its proposal. The old way of governing was that government had all the expertise, Hackney said, but now partnership between government and the community is the way to create buy-in.

"That same kind of approach is the same way to do CUGU," Hackney said.

By the time Hackney completes his first year as ombudsperson, he said, he will probably have recommendations about how to improve aspects of CUGU. In the meantime, he plans to meet with local groups in each of the three communities, briefing the mayor's office and city council with quarterly reports, and searching for victories along the way.

> The department did pilot studies with different sizes of recycling containers, went to all neighborhood councils for input and advice, and then, after all the work with community had been done, the department went to city council with its proposal.

Another victory is that the idea of CUGU seems to be catching on in other places, Liberty Hill's Simunovic said. In California, the city of Commerce has been creating a green growth corridor, and Long Beach is looking at the CUGU ordinance. Miles away in Minneapolis, people are looking at the ordinance as well, Simunovic said. In Los Angeles, Simunovic said she hopes to see the CUGU spread from its pilot green zones to other areas of the city that need the protections too.

Lessons Gleaned From Clean Up, Green Up

Foundations that might consider this work should recognize that the process requires a long-term commitment, Simunovic said.

"It is important to give multi-year grants as the policy-making process can be very slow and requires a lot of constant follow-up," she said of advice she would offer to foundations that want to support similar work.

For researchers interested in this type of work, Sadd offered some of the lessons he learned. First, researchers should keep an open mind and avoid thinking they understand the challenges without the benefit of talking with community residents; researchers are not the sole experts. Second, researchers should maintain objectivity while consulting with residents, especially in the design phase. Finally, understand that researchers can encourage collaboration and trust between residents and governments and help break down barriers of mistrust, he said.

"No one has it all figured out. I think it's tough for the city to do things differently," Sadd said.

The city had to identify its own process to create change, Sadd said. Sometimes the fact that government has smart, capable, and skilled people gets lost as the community fights for change.

"We were able to soften hardened positions," Sadd said. "I think we were helpful."

Like others, Sadd gave credit to Liberty Hill Foundation for the success of CUGU. The foundation, he said, has tremendous professionals who really understood how to facilitate change and how to navigate the complexities of policy development. The process of moving from recommendations to policy requires substantial—and not always pleasant—time, he said. As researchers, their goal was to develop an approach to data analysis that would allow them to identify, understand, and characterize the problems so that others could see them as well.

CBE's Sarmiento said to pass such legislation, it is also important to find members of city council to propose and defend legislative proposals.

"You really need to foster a champion," she said.

Note

1 Los Angeles Collaborative for Environmental Health and Justice, *Hidden Hazards* (Los Angeles: Liberty Hill Foundation, 2011). https://www.libertyhill.org/news/reports/hidden-hazards-call-action-healthy-livable-communities.

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Best Practices for Youth Engagement in Municipal Government

BY ASTRAEA AUGSBERGER,
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AND WHITNEY GECKER

The role of citizen participation is widely understood to be crucial for effective democratic governance. Youth are citizens too but their participation in government, while often thought to be a good idea, is not widely practiced and understood. Several arguments have been advanced to underscore the importance of youth involvement. First, youth may benefit from participation in government process. Often identified under the concepts of civic engagement and positive youth development, benefits that accrue to the young person include feelings of empowerment, competence, and connection. They gain information about their options and rights, develop decision-making skills, develop an understanding of decision processes, and gain a sense of control in these processes. Thus, participation may also enhance young peoples' interests and propensity to engage in community service, political action, or other forms of public engagement. For some, it may facilitate career interest and development in public service. Second, the community may gain from youths' participation. Youth can provide relevant information that leads to better-informed decision-making, particularly, in regard to policies that affect young people. Third, as a matter of social justice, youth have a right to engage in decisions that impact their lives. Even in the absence of other measurable beneficial outcomes, the process of including youth is central to a well-functioning democratic institution.

There is widespread consensus that avenues should be created for young people to have input into community decisions. Yet there remains limited information about the strategies for doing so. In this article we focus specifically on youth councils at the municipal level and report on best practices gleaned from a study of multiple youth councils in one metropolitan area.

Background

As discussed above there are many good reasons for engaging youth in government. There are challenges to this practice, as well, many of which are attitudinal. As Kathryn Frank has suggested, problematic views held by adults may serve as barriers.[1] These include: developmental views (youth lack the knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors, and social connections of adults), perceptions of youths' vulnerability (youth are both in need of adult protection and can be co-opted by adults and thus cannot participate independently), and legal views (because of their age they are not full citizens and at best can be trained in civic engagement but do not yet have full authority to contribute to decisions). These various messages about youth that are widespread in society create an environment in which some adults are unable to see the capacities of young people.

Shepard Zeldin and coauthors have identified "countervailing trends" within some policy structures that view youth as assets with capabilities to make clear and sustained contributions.[2] They cited examples from the National Governor's Association, the State of Vermont Agency of Human Services, and the role of private foundations in encouraging the development of strategies for youth engagement. Those adults that interpret the abilities of youth as potential resources reflect a positive youth development approach.

Engaging youth in government can take many forms. Our focus is particularly in regard to community governance through active citizenship and civic engagement. Barry Checkoway and Adriana Aldana recently provided some conceptual organization to youth civic engagement and identified four forms: citizen participation, grassroots organizing, intergroup dialogue, and sociopolitical development.[3] Our inquiry falls most clearly within "citizen participation" in which the basic strategy is

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to "participate through formal political and governmental institutions."[4] Youth councils are identified by Checkoway and Aldana as one of the engagement activities within "citizen participation". These councils are an important example of "engagement in community governance" (i.e., forums within local public systems "where youth are meaningfully involved in significant decisions regarding the goals, design, and implementation of the community's work"), according to Zeldin and coauthors.[5]

> Disseminating best practices is a necessary step to provide useful knowledge to the numerous municipalities—small, medium, and large—that want to engage youth in this way.

Despite its perceived importance to youth, community, and society, the practice of youth engagement in community decision-making has been slow to institutionalize. Disseminating best practices is a necessary step to provide useful knowledge to the numerous municipalities—small, medium, and large—that want to engage youth in this way. Cognizant of the numerous challenges facing young people in contemporary society, greater attention to establishing and sustaining youth councils may provide a key mechanism for fully engaging youth and tapping their expertise to enhance a city's commitment to youth.

Methods

The study employed ethnographic methods including phone interviews with adult stakeholders, in-person interviews with youth council members, observations of youth council meetings, and a review of documents (e.g., mission statements, website information, and meeting minutes). The Boston University Institutional Review Board approved the study protocol.

Sample Recruitment

The adult sample consisted of 24 stakeholders from towns/cities in the Boston metropolitan region. We began by developing a list of towns and cities in the Boston area (n = 85) and searching their websites for information pertaining to youth councils, youth commissions, or other youth bodies attached to city governments. We contacted those with information via email, letter, and/or phone providing study information and requesting a phone interview with the adult contact to the youth council. We also contacted the mayor or town manager of each town/city requesting information as to whether they have an operating youth council. Additionally, we asked interview respondents if they knew other youth councils in the Boston region and followed up on these leads. From these efforts, we identified a total of 36 operating youth councils. We interviewed respondents from 24 youth councils, representing a 66 percent response rate.

The youth sample consisted of 27 members of one municipal youth council in Boston. Youth members are appointed by the mayor and are charged with representing youth across the city. They perform multiple activities including attending large council meetings, sub-committee meetings, holding office hours, and conducting outreach within their communities. The manager of the youth council assisted in recruitment of the youth sample by providing the authors with the schedule of office hours where youth would be present.

All three authors attended the initial youth council meeting at the start of the year (September) to describe the study, answer questions, and distribute consent forms. Then, the authors alternated attending office hours approximately three days a week from October 2015-December 2015 and interviewed youth who were present. A total of 27 youth were interviewed.

> They perform multiple activities including attending large council meetings, sub-committee meetings, holding office hours, and conducting outreach within their communities.

Data Collection

Twenty-four adult stakeholders involved in the operations of each youth council participated in the phone interviews. The interviews were conducted

by one of the three authors and lasted between 30 minutes and one hour. The authors used a semi-structured interview guide focused on the youth councils' origin, development, and structure; the recruitment, selection, and roles of youth; and the impact of the youth council on policy, programming, and practice. The authors wrote detailed notes during the interview and typed them up for analysis.

Twenty-seven youth council members participated in the in-person interviews. The interviews were conducted in-person by one of the three authors in a private room at the City Hall. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. Prior to the start of the interview, the authors reviewed the consent form and answered questions about the study. The authors used a semi-structured interview guide focused on the recruitment and selection process, experiences participating in council activities, impact of participation on youth, and perceptions of city government. All interviews were audio recorded and electronically transcribed for analysis.

The authors observed seven youth council meetings between October 2015 and May 2016. All observations took place in a large room at Boston's City Hall. The meetings generally lasted two hours, from 5 to 7 p.m. The authors used a pre-designed coding form to document information including the number of participants, the agenda items, the level of youth engagement, barriers to participation, and strategies used by the leader to engage youth. In addition, the authors took detailed handwritten notes of the physical space and interactions among members. One final data collection activity was the ongoing review of publicly available youth council documents, including mission statements, agendas, and meeting minutes.

All data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The authors began by reviewing select interview transcripts in depth and coming up with initial codes, which were reviewed and discussed by all authors during multiple research meetings. Then the authors applied the codes to additional data (interviews and observations) and expanded upon the codes. Finally, the authors came up with seven overarching best practices described below.

The authors took steps to reduce researcher bias and ensure quality data. First, the authors analyzed and triangulated multiple data sources including interviews, observations, and documents. Second, the authors met regularly for peer debriefing sessions throughout data collection and analysis to compare and contrast their findings. Third, the authors wrote memos about the data to define, develop, and revise the codes, and contrast them with the existing literature.

Findings

In this section we report the best practices we identified through our data collection and analysis. For each practice identified we provide a description of the information that led us to identify these as key practices with reference to specific cities/towns and interview subjects. To protect confidentiality we identify the cities/towns with a letter (e.g., "A") and youth interview subjects with a number.

1. Develop the youth council relevant to the local context

As one respondent noted, there is no "one right way to do a youth council" (X). Each youth council should be relevant to the local context, the current mission, and the developmental phase appropriate to the body. The respondent further noted that she had "a binder full of information to start a council but you have to realize the population and group you work with and need to tweak the way you work."

Our research identified complex historical development to most of the youth councils. They originated in various ways. Often there was a community crisis; teen drug use or suicide were most frequently mentioned. Some were started within the government by the mayor or council members; others were started by "concerned citizens." It is important to note that none were reported to having been started by youth themselves.

The exact reason and timing for the start of the council is often murky. Several youth councils are long-standing—as long as 50 years. Others are fairly recent. The existing councils have not always had a continuing existence. Respondents in some

towns identified that the youth councils started, “fizzled out” at some point, and more recently were reconvened. We also found that when we contacted identified youth councils we were informed that five were no longer in operation. Clearly, youth councils run a risk of fading away and concerted attention (to structure, funding, and staffing) is needed to avoid this risk.

Several examples were provided regarding the ongoing development of the council. In regard to both the initial start of the council and its on-going development, issues of community crisis, leadership, and funding were noted factors. Like most community-based entities, on-going commitment by a person or persons is needed to steer the course of the group. Funding can be part of the ability to provide leadership. Some respondents discussed the movement from a volunteer position to a paid position; this provided more stability.

Additionally, the data showed that youth councils continually engage in a process of development. Many respondents expressed ongoing reflection about the strengths and weaknesses of their councils. Also, the councils must be adept at responding to both changes in the community (political leadership, community problems identified by data or crises), potential opportunities (particularly around funding), and the expressed needs of the members (particularly youth). Youth members cycle off these councils; for developmental reasons they do not stay more than a couple of years. Hence, the focus of activity and the overall character of the work of the group should be reflective of the members in order to have a sense of engagement and ownership.

2. Align mission, structure, and activities of the council

While many different forms of municipal youth councils exist, a well-functioning council with potential impact requires alignment of mission, structure, and activities. These, too, can be fluid but as missions change, so should the structure and activities. Our research identified a four-level continuum of adult-centric → youth-centric practice. Several components distinguished placement on the continuum: (1) youth membership, (2) youth decision-making, (3) youth initiative, and (4) youth leadership. All of the councils had mechanisms to include youth voice, but the degree to which youth shared power with adults appeared to be linked to the structure of the council. Structures that were more youth-centric provided youth with more power than those that were adult-centric. Other factors included access to the mayor or city manager and voting privileges on the council. Youth-centric councils embodied most or all of these characteristics: membership was a majority youth; youth made decisions; youth decided what issues to focus on; and youth held leadership positions. Youth-centric councils also had adult allies that provided education and guidance to youth council members. We identified three councils that fell into this category. The adults that supervised these councils were hired by the municipality to do so; they would provide support, encouragement, and information in order to help the young people succeed. These councils had the necessary structural support and capacity—often existing as stand-alone entities employing a youth development framework.[6]

While youth development specialists (like ourselves) favor youth-centric models, they might not be the appropriate model for a specific locality at a particular time. As noted above, in all cases adults started the idea of a youth council. They are, therefore, very unlikely to begin with a fully developed youth-centric structure. Rather, there was evidence that several councils progressed over time toward a youth-centric model. The respondent from town Y, for example, suggested that the adult leadership of the youth council identified the need to include more students and moved to rebalance the adult/youth ratio.

We identified a wide range of activities in which youth councils are engaged: holding meetings, education and prevention activities, youth summits, recreational activities, community service, community assessments, counseling, and policy-specific actions. Some councils held meetings that were formal, clearly following governmental procedure, with agenda, minutes, and sub-committees. Other councils had meetings with less formality. These were more obviously youth-centered and focused on youth development programming rather than governmental procedures.

Other than holding and participating in meetings, educationally focused prevention activities were the most common activity. Some of the councils received funding from the State Department of Public Health or federal funding through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Such funding would, obviously, drive some of the education and prevention activities in which youth councils engaged. Youth development approaches, including those aimed at engaging youth in community initiatives (such as serving on youth councils) may be included in substance abuse prevention activities. Yet, the essence of youth development strategies and the promise they hold require that they are not solely problem-focused. Funding may be important, but a council solely focused on substance abuse prevention (or other problem) may lose its overall orientation toward broader engagement in governance. Many of the councils had this nonproblem focus to their activities. Thus external funding is neither good nor bad but should be pursued purposefully and requires alignment with council mission, structure, and activities.

3. Get support from adult allies

We identified two types of necessary adult support in the successful functioning of youth councils. The first is that of political leaders within the municipality, typically the mayor or city manager. Good leadership among political officials did not require specific youth-related expertise, but these leaders needed to be connected to all constituencies and needed to perceive youth as a vital constituency and resource. Surprisingly few of the respondents in our study reported a direct connection between the youth council and the chief executive. On the few occasions when direct connection occurred, it appeared to be a powerful force. This was the case of town R. A central figure in viewing youth as an important constituency, the mayor occasionally attended council meetings and/or interacted with the youth council at other city events, all of which were considered by the youth in our sample to be special.

The second form of adult support is having at least one adult staff member who is involved in the operation of the council. The staff member(s) should have specific youth-related expertise, or seek to increase their competency over time. For example, some of our interviewees bolstered their skills through webinars, conferences and networking with other youth council leaders in the region. There was variation in the sample as to whether this person was focused on the youth council full-time, part-time, as part of another role, or in a volunteer capacity; however, a supportive political environment and access to resources was critical.

In town T, the political milieu was that of stated support for youth programs and youth well-being but without the resources and policy to allow for action. A single full-time staff member and the tireless efforts of committed volunteers led the work of the youth council. Though these adults were committed to youth in the city, their influence on youth programming was limited due to a lack of authority and funding. In contrast, the full-time staff person in charge of the council in town H was located within a larger youth-related department, which gave the youth council the ability to use departmental resources, as well as their own budget, when necessary.

4. Approach diversity of council membership in thoughtful ways

It is important to consider multiple aspects of diversity and to include youth with various attributes and histories (e.g., youth in foster care, teen parents, immigrant youth) when recruiting and selecting members for a youth council. While it is not possible to incorporate all forms of diversity in council membership, it is important to strive for membership that is representative of the youth in the city/town/neighborhood. It is also necessary to consider many aspects of diversity such as race/ethnicity, economic status, immigrant origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, and ability/disability, when selecting youth council members.

In our data we found a lack of economic and academic diversity. Regarding the former, one adult stakeholder reported, "Town D is a very upper-middle class, non-diverse community, about 95 percent white; yet there are diverse segments of the community: lower class subsets, high population of homeless children, and low-income housing. It comes up in the council that we need to do a better job of outreaching to these segments."

Regarding academic diversity, the youth councils were overwhelming populated by high achievers. As noted by one respondent, "the youth we have in our council are great, however, several of them are in National Honors Society or other high school clubs (O)." This was confirmed by our youth sample; the majority attended one of the top high schools in the city and identified multiple pre-existing opportunities for community engagement.

Membership on youth councils, while inclusive in some respects, might also perpetuate social inequalities. We identified academic excellence, family involvement, and social networks as factors related to youths' involvement in municipal youth councils.[7] Adult stakeholders noted the importance of looking beyond the "best students" and engaging a wide variety of youth, including youth in vocational programs or home school, and youth "at risk" for dropping out of high school.

5. Provide youth development opportunities

Youth in our study reported joining the youth council so that they could "make difference in their community." In order for this to happen there is a need for ongoing training, support, and guidance from adults working with the council. Ideally, the council would hold an orientation before the start of any council activities. The orientation might range in duration and substance depending on the needs of the locale, but in general it should provide youth with an overview to the local government structure and functions, the role of the youth council (e.g., in terms of advising local government on policy, programs, and/or practice), the activities of the council, and the expectations of youth council members. Holding an orientation before the start of the council provides youth with a context for their role and responsibilities, while helping them to understand the position of the council (e.g., within or outside local government) and the potential impact of council activities.

Once youth are on the council, they should be provided opportunities to engage in activities that assist them in developing their leadership knowledge and skills. Our participants discussed a wide range of activities, including attending meetings, participating in education and prevention efforts, conducting community service and outreach efforts, and engaging in policy-advocacy. Both youth and adults should carefully select these activities to ensure that youth have the opportunity to assume leadership roles, while simultaneously receiving support and guidance from adults. For example, in town O young people raised awareness of the importance of transportation. They worked with adults from the local transportation authority to create a "youth route" for the bus route. The route traveled from the high school to the movie theatre or the mall. Youths participating in this activity had the opportunity to exert their leadership skills while also receiving input from adults.

One of our larger youth councils was engaged in a youth-led participatory budgeting process involving young people between the ages of 12 and 25. The mayor allocated 1 million dollars to be spent on capital projects proposed, developed, and voted on by youth in the city. The youth council was charged with implementing the participatory budgeting process, including collecting ideas from young people, developing proposals for capital projects, and encouraging participants to vote on the proposals. The youth council had regularly scheduled meetings with the entire council where they received training focused on participatory budgeting, methods of communication and outreach, and teamwork. Youth who participated in the process had the opportunity to develop multiple leadership skills including teamwork, public speaking, communications, decision-making, and time-management. Moreover, participants often mentioned the importance of this concrete, important, and highly-recognized activity to focus their attention and to make their participation meaningful rather than symbolic.

Youth who participated in the process had the opportunity to develop multiple leadership skills including teamwork, public speaking, communications, decision-making, and time-management.

6. Recognize and address anti-youth attitudes

The majority of adult stakeholders involved in this study viewed youth as capable, powerful, and a necessary voice within the political process. Yet, it was

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seen as inevitable that youths would interact with individuals and groups who are not supportive of them and who may have explicit or implicit biases against young people. In essence, the idea that "adult attitudes are the greatest barrier to effective" youth participation, as Sharon Bessell has suggested in an article in the journal *Childhood*, was echoed in our study.[8] While our adult interview respondents represented individual professionals who believe in the potential of youth voice and participation, youth councils continually contend with cultural attitudes at-large. Bassell identifies four key areas where these attitudes are embedded: "institutional context and procedural requirements; cultural and social norms; lack of clarity about children's participation; and concerns about negative consequences."[9] Thus, the adult allies of the youth council may be called upon to support the youth council in a variety of ways to confront anti-youth attitudes. One specific action typically requires an adult stakeholder to help prepare and guide the youth council members when they are planning to interact with adult members of the city council or city departments. Adult stakeholders commonly support youth in practicing presentations, for example, as well as anticipating potential responses.

Confronting anti-youth attitudes within systems is a larger task. Our youth sample indicated that perceptions of government and its employees were initially prohibitive to active engagement in government. Prior to joining the council, young people typically had little interest or information about city government. In some cases, they held negative connotations of government and adults, feeling that these structures and individuals did not value their opinions. In discussing views of city government, one youth (48) stated that prior to joining the youth council, "I thought that there were just a bunch of grown men who made ideas and collectively agreed on the ideas but didn't really reach out to anybody else… I thought that it was more exclusive and not involving the community."

Many of the young participants in our study had positive experiences with adults, and city government, based on their involvement with the youth council. The consensus among them shows that without direct experience with encouraging adults and systems, their attitudes and opinions of government were neutral at best, and created a disinterest in entering these spaces. Even for the youth on the council, they believed that many of their friends and generally, youth-at-large, did not believe adults (specifically in city government) would listen or care about young people. It appears that these attitudes extended beyond individuals and had to do with the institution and social norms.

Adult stakeholders were aware of some of the barriers within government that are perceived as restrictive to participation. In town K, "difficulties of the bureaucratic procedures have been noticeable." Several young people shied away from participating on the council because they were intimidated by the formal procedure of being sworn-in. The swearing-in process while strictly procedural, was intimidating enough to deter some youth participation. Understanding how formal structures may be unintentionally anti-youth might also assist in explaining why it is that high-achieving youth seem to participate in these institutions.

In practice, adult allies of young people must be aware of the myriad ways systems of operation in government can feel foreign, and thus anti-youth, to young people. Adult allies can then take steps to make institutional practices more youth-friendly, for example, altering unnecessary formalities or finding a home for the council that provides flexibility. At a minimum, practitioners can prepare youth to expect to face anti-youth attitudes in their work, since these attitudes reflect social norms well beyond any individual.

7. Be purposeful in providing social networking opportunities

Social networks appear to be a key component of youth councils in numerous respects. Young people may be interested in joining a youth council largely or in part because of the social aspects of meeting and interacting with other young people. In some instances, they may be recruited to join the council via their social networks. For example, one youth in our sample reported that she learned about the youth council through one of her friends she follows on Twitter who provided regular updates on the various activities she performed on the council. Consistent with goals related to diversity, outlined above, networking opportunities of youth councils may allow youth participants to broaden their

networks. Making sure networks to enter and participate are open enough to allow a wide range of youth to participate is critical. Additionally, interactions with young people from a wide range of backgrounds allow each of the youthful participants to grow in their social competence.

Networks may also have instrumental value. By creating opportunities for skill development and engagement in political process, youth may also benefit by developing relationships that can further their educational and career goals. We heard some instances in which involvement in a youth council was initially perceived as a "resume builder" although most youth later realized there were many more benefits.

> Consistent with goals related to diversity, outlined above, networking opportunities of youth councils may allow youth participants to broaden their networks.

Additionally, in large youth councils with access to city government employees there may be opportunities for genuine career paths. Cultivating networks to achieve goals of education and employment are all to the good. Indeed, these tangible benefits may provide a very real incentive for participation and they mirror the processes of engagement that adults frequently utilize for their own advancement. If youth councils are constructed to achieve such individual benefits to the young, it is particularly important that access to participation does not result from "insider" networks but that recruitment and application processes aim to reach a wide range of youth.

Conclusion

Through the course of conducting this research we had many practitioners ask us for advice about forming and running youth councils. Having a youth council within or attached to city government is widely considered to be a good idea. Yet, many good-intentioned efforts fall short in practice. Furthermore, many well-running, established youth councils continually seek information and new ideas to improve their operation. Our article aims to address this need for information by providing guidance in some key areas that came to our attention during the course of the research project.

We identify these best practices to be "overarching." Of the many lessons learned they rose to the fore as most fundamental to undergird the operations of the council and its potential accomplishments. They were culled from numerous data collection efforts. Additional guidance of a more practical nature is also relevant (e.g., setting appropriate time and location, offering food) but we aimed for more conceptual categories to guide practice. Youth councils themselves can then decide how to apply these guidelines in their work.

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Electing Better Politicians: Is It Really Possible?

BY CHARLES K. BENS

There are still some very good politicians here in the United States, as well as in other places around the world, just not as many as there used to be. I have spent most of my adult life interacting with, interviewing, and observing this very unique breed of *Homo sapiens*. They come from every walk of life with a real mixed bag of skills, interests, and motivations. Most start out with some genuine reason for seeking public office, but somewhere along the path, things seemed to change for the worse for too many of them.

Many people seeking public office fall into a category known as "single interest candidates." They become upset, or just interested in one cause, and feel compelled to speak out in an attempt to change public policy. It could be an environmental issue, a social issue, a planning issue, or an economic issue. Specifically, some common single issues include abortion, gun control, taxes, pollution, or education reform. The good candidates, who actually get elected, eventually learn about other issues and are usually able to share points of view, find compromise, and ultimately reach agreement on what changes are possible.

What happened to this idealistic world that is now more likely to spawn legislative gridlock, than give and take compromise? What are the barriers to recapturing the lost art of political compromise and agreement? Here are just a few of the barriers I have observed over the past 40 years:

1. Gerrymandering—As politicians became frustrated by only getting some of the changes they wanted, they found out that political boundaries could be altered at the state level, allowing them to get more consistent legislative majorities. This allowed the party in power to yield more influence through increased funding for their projects and programs.
2. Urban Flight—Minority populations became concentrated in urban areas due to lower paying job opportunities, deteriorating and more affordable housing, as well as underfunded schools. The predominately white suburbs, with the help of gerrymandered election districts, were able to move better paying jobs to the suburbs, create their own shopping districts and maintain control of their preferred school systems. Efforts to reverse these trends, such as school busing, public housing, public transit, and intercity job programs have had little long-term success in most jurisdictions.
3. Infrastructure Decline—Many politicians have taken advantage of the fact that most municipal infrastructure is underground. Water and sewer lines are the best examples, but even visible infrastructure, such as bridges and highways have deteriorated, as politicians delayed funding for other more "worthy" projects or simply to keep taxes down for the next election cycle. This has resulted in trillions of dollars of accumulated "infrastructure debt." Schools are also deteriorating and now the overall debt, in most communities, is beyond reasonable replacement. If water becomes polluted, then emergency funding is provided. If a bridge collapses, emergency funding is provided. The collective body politic is now forced to respond to crisis, rather than logical planned replacement of the infrastructure.
4. Shifting the Blame—Over the past few decades, local governments have asked for more funding for deteriorating infrastructure, education, job creation, and much more. Increasingly, the so-called senior levels of government have been saying no to these requests. States have deteriorating interstate highways, expanding Medicare costs and expensive environmental clean ups. The federal government has expenses too, such as airport security, social security, national defense, and ever-rising national debt.

Frustration Peeks

Is it any wonder that citizens have become frustrated with politicians? Congress has the lowest

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ratings in opinion polls than at any time in American history. And yet, most people think their congressman, or woman, is doing a pretty good job. How is this possible?

Elections have become expensive mud-slinging embarrassments for both political parties. Many people say this deterioration of the political process has reached an all time low. And yet people, at least some of them, don't seem to care. They just want to turn their frustration on the next nonpolitician to appear on the scene.

> Many politicians have taken advantage of the fact that most municipal infrastructure is underground. Water and sewer lines are the best examples, but even visible infrastructure, such as bridges and highways have deteriorated, as politicians delayed funding for other more "worthy" projects or simply to keep taxes down for the next election cycle.

Political Reformers Disagree

There is some agreement on what needs to be done to regain a higher level of trust and confidence in our political system.

1. Special interests—There is some interest in doing away with the excessive influence of special interests. The problem is that it is their funding that keeps politicians in office. How about no contact within 100 days of an election? This has been proposed, but never gets implemented.
2. Campaign funding—It is probably time to consider public funding, with limits, for most state and national elections. Almost everyone agrees that campaign finance is out of control, but no one has the courage to address it.
3. Gerrymandering—Some states have gotten better at this by getting citizens to help draw political boundaries. This needs to happen more quickly with some best practice guidelines for every state.
4. Political parties—Is it time to do away with the two-party system? Probably. More parties would help to promote compromise as long as there were sound guidelines for the creation of new parties. How about proportional representation where elected seats are provided on the basis of the percentage of votes received. Perhaps a test case in a few jurisdictions would be worthwhile. Or, we could lower the threshold for funding and participation in debates from 15% to 7.5%. That might spur some interest in the political process.
5. Guidelines for politicians—What if every candidate needed to take a course on political decision-making after they filed their papers to be a candidate? The League of Women Voters could produce such a course, along with a few political science professors.
6. Politician evaluations—Some communities have evaluation criteria for the candidates for public office. These criteria can be used to give each candidate a score, based on their background and experience. Sometimes the criteria are developed by local taxpayer groups. Some have been used in Canadian and American communities based on my book *Electing Better Politicians: A Citizen Guide*. Most voters have no idea who they are voting for, so these guidelines can only help.
7. Citizenship standards—Most schools do not have very good civic education programs and most students aren't interested in this topic in any event. However, what if voting was mandatory? Other countries have this requirement, and maybe we should also. This is a one-step solution that could change the course of history for a country in clear need of a big change.
8. Balanced budgets with measured results—Perhaps every level of government needs to adopt a balanced budget approach that requires revenues and expenditures to be balanced every year. And, we now understand how any government programs performance can be measured. I have helped governments at all levels to do this, and I've written books about it. The time has come to get out of debt and use the tax money we spend wisely. This may be the last chance we have to do this and get it right.

The Tsunami in our Future

There is a crisis coming in the U.S. and most western countries that is bigger than anything we have experienced to date. The health crisis is on its way, as our population has become less healthy with each passing year.

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- 60% of people are chronically ill. This was 10% about 60 years ago.
- Health care consumes about 20% of our GNP and this was 7% 50 years ago. An Economist in Britain estimates we will spend 100% of our GNP on health care by the year 2065.

Some Canadian provenances now spend over 40% of their budget on health care (Ontario, British Colombia, and Prince Edward Island).

If this problem is not addressed very soon, the previously mentioned election reforms will be a mute point. Only a benevolent dictator will be able to get us out of this mess. The health crisis has been happening for the past 60 years or more. The problems are obvious.

1. We have a treatment-based system, even though 80% of all disease is preventable. We spend 95% of every health dollar on treatment.
2. The U.S. spends twice as much on health care than most other countries with inferior health outcomes.
3. The drug industry is making obscene profits with total protection from politicians.
4. Health insurance companies are also making excessive profits.[1]

> We need national media forums to debate the key issues of the day and offer well-researched solutions. And, we need local, state, and national governments to establish long-term goals with strategies based on facts and the well-being of all people, not just those who can influence decisions based on how much money they can give to politicians.

The Cleveland Clinic is moving in the right direction with the adoption of a Functional Medicine prevention and treatment model, and this model should be adopted by every hospital, doctor, clinic and health department in the country ASAP. A national debate is needed on this topic now with legislation required by 2018 to fix this extremely broken health care system.

Finally

Many governments have clearly not shown the ability to deal with the issues addressed in this article and unless voters become more knowledgeable, and selective, we will continue to get politicians who avoid compromise and vote for special interests. It is true that we are a divided country, but there have been divisions for over 200 years and we still managed to achieve great things with vision and good leadership.

In the early years of our country's formation there were town hall meetings and constitutional conventions to iron out differences and make better decisions. Maybe we need to reintroduce these political mechanisms to help guide us through these current perilous times. We need discussion groups in our schools and universities. We need online focus groups to help share ideas, guided by a set of values focused on compassion and understanding. We need national media forums to debate the key issues of the day and offer well-researched solutions. And, we need local, state, and national governments to establish long-term goals with strategies based on facts and the well-being of all people, not just those who can influence decisions based on how much money they can give to politicians. We need to elect better politicians and then hold them accountable for making intelligent, well-thought out decisions. If we do not do these things, we will inevitably lurch from one crisis to another and become a lesser version of the country that once promised every person the chance to realize the American dream.

Note

1 C. K. Bens, "The Beginning of the End of War on Medicine," *Life Extension Magazine*, April 2015, http://www.lifeextension.com/Magazine/2015/4/The-Beginning-Of-The-End-Of-The-War-On-Medicine/Page-01.

Charles K. Bens is founder of Healthy at Work, a wellness education and consulting company in Sarasota, Florida. He is the author of eight books, including Healthy at Work: Your Pocket Guide to Good Health *and* Electing Better Politicians: A Citizens Guide.

National Implications of Maine Adoption of Ranked Choice Voting

BY ROB RICHIE

American democracy today is working more poorly than it has in generations. The toxic 2016 presidential campaign featured the two most unpopular major party candidates in modern history and Congressional approval ratings plunged to historic lows in approval, yet nearly 98 percent of congressional incumbents won re-election. New voices are demeaned as spoilers, which suppresses debate about innovative ideas and shoehorns our diverse political views into two fiercely partisan camps. With the overwhelming majority of elections predictably going to a district or state's partisan majority, most voters lack meaningful choice even among two candidates. In conflict with the spirit of the Constitution, our electoral rules punish representatives who seek to govern outside their party boxes, blocking sensible changes that have majority support.

Absent reform, it is a near certainty that these problems will continue. No single change can unlock voters and spark a democracy where the best ideas rise to the surface and policymakers are able to implement the will of the people with respect for all. But this year we saw a true glimmer of hope for change: with 52 percent of the vote, Maine voters adopted ranked choice voting (RCV) for all their elections for governor, U.S. Senate, U.S. House, and state legislature in a campaign endorsed by the Libertarian Party, the Green Party, and hundreds of major party elected officials from across the spectrum. Starting in 2018, Mainers will be able to vote for the candidates they like the most without helping elect the candidates they like the least. They will earn what we all deserve: a fair vote and a truce in the battle over whether minor party and independent candidates can have an enduring seat at the electoral table.

Editor's Note: Adapted with permission from *Cato Unbound: a Journal of Debate*, December 5, 2016, https://www.cato-unbound.org/2016/12/05/rob-richie/hacking-americas-antiquated-elections

RCV (sometimes called "instant runoff voting" and "preferential voting") is a proven voting method designed to accommodate having more than two choices in our elections. It has its most experience in the United States in cities, where more than a dozen have passed ballot measures to implement it since 2000. When used to elect one candidate, RCV essentially simulates the math of traditional majority runoffs, but in one trip to the polls. Voters have the freedom to rank candidates in order of choice: first, second, third, and so on. Their vote is initially counted for their first choice. If a candidate wins more than half the votes, that candidate wins, just like in any other election. If no candidate has more than half the votes, then the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. The votes of those who selected the defeated candidate as a first choice are then added to the totals of their next choice. This process continues until the number of candidates is reduced to two or the winner earns more than half of the active votes.

RCV upholds majority rule while accommodating increased voter choice. It creates incentives for winning candidates to reach out to all voters in order to get a higher ranking and allows a voter to consider more choices with a greatly reduced likelihood of "splitting" their vote in a manner that might otherwise result in an unrepresentative outcome. Based on the context of its use, RCV can mitigate partisan inflexibility, foster greater accountability for incumbents, increase civic engagement, and reduce the impact of campaign spending. When used in multi-winner elections, RCV becomes a candidate-based form of proportional representation that expands the percentage of people who elect preferred candidates, increases competition, and provides a natural means to elect more diverse legislatures that include accurate representation of the left, right, and center, as well as representatives who break free from the two-party box.

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Maine's victory was grounded in grassroots energy, effective organizing, and a well-run campaign. RCV had been debated in the legislature for years and been widely hailed as a success in mayoral elections in the state's largest city of Portland. In a November 12, 2011 editorial written about the first use of RCV in Portland, the major daily newspaper the *Press Herald* led with:

> The votes of those who selected the defeated candidate as a first choice are then added to the totals of their next choice. This process continues until the number of candidates is reduced to two or the winner earns more than half of the active votes.

> Portland can have confidence in its new mayor and the system used to count the votes. The results are in and Michael Brennan is not the only winner in Portland's mayoral election: The other is ranked-choice voting. The new system of counting ballots, which attracted a high degree of skepticism from people in and around Maine's biggest city over the last year, got its trial run Tuesday and Wednesday, and it was the skeptics who were proven wrong.... Under the ranked choice system, candidates were forced to engage with each other and talk to each other's voters. The result was an interesting conversation about Portland and its future that would not have happened in a "turn-out-your-base" election. That debate helped clarify the job description for Portland's mayor, and it will make life easier for Brennan when he shows up for work

In the midst of yet another campaign for governor where the campaign was highly negative and the winner ultimately received less than half the votes—as has been the case in all but two gubernatorial elections since 1974—reformers seized a chance to launch an initiative campaign. With barely a week to organize, Election Day volunteers collected more than half the signatures required to put it on the 2016 ballot. The Committee for RCV and its allies, like the League of Women Voters of Maine and FairVote Maine, launched a two-year campaign of education and advocacy that resulted in more than 300 published letters to the editor, more than 175,000 one-on-one conversations about RCV with Mainers, nearly 3,000 donations from Mainers, and community presentations across the state. A surge of funding allowed for television and digital media that helped push the measure over the top despite being a new idea to most voters. Where RCV was best known, in Portland, it won 71 percent of the vote.

RCV also won in a local campaign in Benton County, Oregon. These wins and more than a dozen other victories for RCV in cities since 2000 demonstrate that RCV is politically viable and impactful in practice. Cities using RCV for mayor and other local offices include Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota; Oakland, San Francisco and San Leandro, California; Takoma Park, Maryland; Telluride, Colorado; and Portland, Maine; Cambridge, Massachusetts, has used RCV to elect its city council and school board for decades. Cities awaiting implementation after voter approval include Memphis, Tennessee, Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Sarasota, Florida. Internationally, RCV has been used for years to elect Ireland's president, Australia's House of Representatives, and the mayors of London (United Kingdom) and Wellington, New Zealand. With recommendations by procedural guides like Robert's Rules of Order, RCV is widely used in nongovernmental organization elections, ranging from major private associations like the American Chemical Society and American Psychiatric Association to nearly every major party in Australia, Canada, Scotland, and the United Kingdom, as well as Republican and Democratic parties in Iowa, Maine, Texas, Utah, and Virginia. Young people have adopted RCV for their student elections at some 60 American colleges and universities and are the most likely to support it on the ballot.

RCV's track record in those elections is impressive. Although still a winner-take-all system that isn't designed to elect those with minority views, RCV gives everyone a fair shot to run. Australia typically has more than six candidates per house race and the strongest minor parties run in every district without any fingerpointing or talk of spoilers. Instead, they can make their case, see the best of their ideas adopted by the major parties, and grow their vote such that these parties are now winning

fair shares of seats in senate elections held with the multi-winner proportional representation form of RCV.

In city elections in the United States, there has been a string of open seat elections where the best-financed favorites run traditional campaigns focused on their base and lose to enterprising challengers who engage directly with more voters in grassroots campaigns designed to earn not only first choice support, but second and third choice support from backers of other challengers. The pattern seems to be that the best-financed candidates rely on traditional techniques of identifying their stronger supporters, getting them to vote, and going more negative on other candidates—and the best challengers can win by putting more effort into direct voter contact regardless of first choice support. Mayor Betsy Hodges, who won in Minneapolis' first open seat mayoral election with RCV in 2013, told an audience in 2014:

Instead, they can make their case, see the best of their ideas adopted by the major parties, and grow their vote such that these parties are now winning fair shares of seats in senate elections held with the multi-winner proportional representation form of RCV.

> You know, making the phone calls and saying "Hi, I'm Betsy and here's why I'm great…I'm not the first person you think is great, well how about second? Can I be your second choice?" Now, asking to be someone's third choice…… [pause, crowd laughter]…. is exactly like you think it is, the first five or six times. After that you realize, we're just having a conversation and this person is still on the line. This person is still on the phone. We are still talking about the future of Minneapolis and the values of the future of Minneapolis. That is an incredibly valuable thing to be able to do when you are eager to represent the city of Minneapolis. And it's an incredibly valuable thing to do if you are a fan of small D democracy and deepening democracy. Because you get to have the conversations that you otherwise would really not be having because they wouldn't be worth your time as a candidate, and it wouldn't be worth the time of the voter to have that conversation because their mind would've been made up.

Outcomes are fair as well. Extensive data analysis from more than 125 RCV elections in the Bay Area shows that (1) every single winner has been the "Condorcet" candidate, or the one who would defeat all others in simulated head-to-head contests, even though several winners trailed in first choices and one winner initially was in third; (2) voters regularly rank more than one candidate, including close to nine in ten voters in competitive mayoral elections; (3) fewer voters now skip city elections when at the polls for president and governor; (4) voter turnout in decisive elections has on average risen sharply from prior systems with primaries and runoffs; and (5) more than 99 percent of voters cast valid ballots, which is often higher than their valid ballot rate in other races with large candidate fields.

RCV's promise and track record have helped earn notable support. American political leaders backing RCV include President Barack Obama (prime sponsor of RCV legislation as an Illinois state senator), Sen. John McCain (recorded a robo call in support of a ballot measure to implement RCV), former Vermont governor Howard Dean (author of several pro-RCV op-eds, including in the *New York Times* this fall), former Republican Congressman John Porter (author of a piece in a Brookings Institution report on policy proposals), Sen. Bernie Sanders (who testified on its behalf to the Vermont state legislature in 2007 on a bill that passed the legislature), and this year's presidential nominees for the Libertarian Party (Gary Johnson) and Green Party (Jill Stein).

Ways to Expand Use of RCV

RCV is not a perfect voting system, but perfection is literally impossible—and advocates of other, untested systems should be cautious about overstating their potential absent experience. But RCV is viable, legal, and successfully tested as a flexible tool for addressing problems in our elections. Once it becomes easy for all jurisdictions to use, as is likely within the next four years, both legislators

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and populist reformers will find RCV to be valuable. With each new advance, voters' conceptions of what it means to vote will change from marking an "X" to ranking choices. The RCV ballot has drawn support in several different contexts, including the following.

- ***Replacing plurality voting***: The great majority of American elections are held with plurality voting, where candidates with the most votes win, even if they do so with less than half the votes. As Maine showed, voters are ready to support RCV when they are frustrated by elections that mean either having to vote for the lesser of two evils, or else for unrepresentative winners. Some states may want to start in their primary elections, where open seats often draw multiple candidates and low-plurality winners.
- ***Replacing runoff elections***: Holding a separate runoff between the top two finishers is a means to eliminate "spoilers." But runoffs have downsides. The strongest candidates may not reach the runoff due to split votes. Runoffs exacerbate demands for campaign contributions and often have disparate voter turnout between elections. More than 96% of the nearly 200 regularly scheduled congressional primary runoffs since 1994 experienced declines in turnout, with an average turnout decline of more than 30%—a far steeper decline than the number of voters who don't rank finalists in RCV races. Finally, runoffs increase election costs and burdens on voters, making them an easy target for budget-cutting policymakers. These problems explain why more than a dozen cities have voted to replace runoffs with RCV.
- ***Replacing problematic means of nominating candidates***: Traditionally, parties used conventions to choose nominees, which ensured nominees were accountable only to the parties' most active members. But the main alternative, the primary system, has unrepresentative turnout, with steadily declining percentages of Americans registering with a major party. RCV can help solve problems associated with nominating candidates. RCV could be built into the major party presidential candidate nominating processes, starting with party-run caucuses, and RCV could be used more generally to ensure nominees for all offices earn greater support. More dramatically, states could stop paying for primaries entirely and use RCV to accommodate voters having more general election choices among independents and party nominees.

One form of RCV is drawing particular attention: modifying the Top Two primary to advance four candidates, with RCV to be used in November. As used in California and Washington, Top Two establishes that all candidates seeking an office run in the same primary contest, and the top two finishers face off in November regardless of party. FairVote's analysis of California's 2012 congressional elections found that advancing four candidates to an RCV contest in November would nearly triple the number of general election races with third party or independent candidates and more than quintuple the number of general elections with more than one candidate from the same major party.

> Maine shows that voters are ready for change, and reformers are planning city and state campaigns for RCV across the nation in 2017 and 2018, and we expect more than a dozen states to entertain some form of RCV legislation. Now is the time to think big—and rank the vote.

- ***Opening up legislative elections to better choice and fairer representation***: The combination of winner-take-all rules and rising partisanship has led to a sharply rising percentage of districts in which only one party has any real prospect of winning, and more legislatures where one party has a lock likely to last for generations. It has entrenched incumbents, depressed participation, promoted unrepresentative homogeneity within parties, and created barriers for women, racial minorities, and minor parties to win more seats. Redistricting alone has limited impact on these problems, as suggested by distorted partisan outcomes in California and not a single congressional seat changing hands in 2016. Truly unlocking democracy depends on adopting RCV in multi-winner elections—what the National Civic League endorsed for city elections for many years in what it called "single transferable vote." The first step with this form of RCV is to have larger districts with more voters and more seats;

for example, one might combine five adjoining districts into a larger district with five representatives. These would be chosen by RCV, with the percentage of the vote necessary to win declining in relation to the number of seats in the district—about 17% of like-minded voters being able to elect a candidate in a five-winner district.

Multi-winner RCV is used in at least one governmental election by every voter in Australia, Ireland, Malta, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Minneapolis, and Cambridge, (MA). FairVote's congressional election simulations show that not a single voter in a state with more than two representatives would be represented by only one party. Congress would have a far broader mix of perspectives. New opportunities would arise for independents and third parties to hold the major parties accountable, and more cross-cutting representatives would be likely to forge compromises. Expect to see the Fair Representation Act based on this form of RCV introduced in Congress next year, and for more cities and states to consider it.

Looking forward, American politics is reaching a tipping point. Our current system simply isn't working, and all trends suggest it will keep getting worse. Maine shows that voters are ready for change, and reformers are planning city and state campaigns for RCV across the nation in 2017 and 2018, and we expect more than a dozen states to entertain some form of RCV legislation. Now is the time to think big—and rank the vote.

Rob Richie is executive director of FairVote.

Candidate Civility and Voter Engagement in Seven Cities with Ranked Choice Voting

BY SARAH JOHN AND ANDREW DOUGLAS

In a ranked choice voting (RCV) election, voters rank candidates in order of preference. The tally of RCV votes simulates a series of "instant runoffs." In each "runoff," the last-place candidate is defeated and ballots cast for that candidate are added to the tally of the next-ranked candidate on each ballot. The runoffs continue until a winner emerges. This process means that RCV rewards candidates who can win second and third choices from a broad range of voters *in addition to* first choices from a large core of supporters.

In theory, RCV incentivizes campaign civility because, in order to win second- and third-choice rankings, a candidate needs to appeal to other candidates' supporters. The increasing use of RCV in the United States, including in four Bay Area cities in California and Minnesota's Twin Cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, enables rigorous testing of the effects of RCV on the civility of election campaigns.

As part of a broader project funded by the Democracy Fund, the Eagleton Poll at Rutgers University has partnered with the University of Iowa's Caroline Tolbert and Western Washington University's Todd Donovan in conducting two polls—one in 2013 and another in 2014—that explore the impact of RCV on city elections in the United States. Each poll surveyed a random sample of more than 2,400 likely voters, the great majority of whom had voted in their local election that year. (Likely voters are defined as currently registered voters who, when asked, expressed interest in local affairs.) The surveys were conducted in English and Spanish and on cell and landline telephones.

In November 2013, half of respondents surveyed by the Eagleton Poll were in three cities holding RCV elections: Minneapolis, where RCV was used for mayor and 21 other offices; St. Paul, where RCV was used for mayor and a city council race; and Cambridge, Massachusetts, where the multiseat form of RCV was used to elect the city council and school committee. The other half of respondents were from one of seven non-RCV control cities with similar demographics, including Seattle, Tulsa, Boston.

In November 2014, the Eagleton Poll conducted an expanded version of the same survey in eleven Californian cities: the four Bay Area cities that use RCV (Berkeley, Oakland, San Francisco, and San Leandro) and seven control cities. In the 2014 survey, 1,345 respondents were likely voters in one of four cities holding elections with RCV: 685 respondents from Oakland, which used RCV to elect a new mayor and half of its city council and school board; 395 respondents from San Leandro, which used RCV to elect a new mayor and three city councilors in citywide races; 151 respondents from San Francisco, which adopted RCV first in the Bay Area and in 2014 used RCV in one competitive city council election and five less competitive elections in its eleven wards; and 114 respondents from Berkeley, where there were two competitive RCV city council races among its eight wards. The 2014 survey also included 1,111 likely voters in one of seven control cities in California with demographics and social structures comparable to a surveyed RCV city.

Summary of Findings

The data provide evidence of RCV's positive effect on civility, widespread general support for RCV, and voters' ease with voting on a RCV ballot. Here is a summary of the key trends and findings of the 2013 and 2014 surveys. In addition, data is presented from a survey by Tolbert and Donovan of more than 200 candidates from cities holding RCV elections in 2011 to 2013 and from control cities.

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- In both surveys, more respondents in cities using RCV reported **candidates spent little time criticizing opponents** than in cities that did not use RCV. In the 2013 survey, only 5 percent of respondents thought that candidates criticized each other "a great deal of the time" compared to 25 percent in non-RCV cities. Similarly, only 28 percent of RCV-city respondents reported candidates criticized each other "a great deal of the time" in the 2014 California survey, compared to 36 percent of respondents in non-RCV cities.
- More respondents in cities using RCV reported **less negative campaigns** than in cities that did not use RCV. In the 2013 survey, 42 percent of respondents in RCV cities found the 2013 campaign to be less negative whereas only 28 percent of voters in non-RCV cities shared a similar sentiment. In the 2014 survey in California, 18 percent of RCV-city respondents perceived the 2014 campaign as less negative than recent local campaigns compared to 13 percent of respondents in non-RCV cities.
- Evidence from the Donovan-Tolbert candidate survey found similar opinions about the effects of RCV from those on the other side of the electoral process. Only 29 percent of candidates in RCV cities reported being portrayed negatively by opponents, compared to 40 percent in non-RCV cities.
- In the 2013 survey, an overwhelming majority (90 percent) of respondents in RCV cities found the RCV ballot **easy to understand**. Similarly, 89 percent of respondents in RCV cities in California found the RCV ballot **easy to understand.**
- In California, more respondents (49 percent) in RCV cities reported **understanding RCV extremely or very well** than reported understanding the top-two primary extremely or very well (40 percent). (The question was not asked in the 2013 survey).
- A majority of all respondents in both surveys believed **RCV should be used in local elections in their city**. Support was greatest in cities already using RCV: in the 2013 survey, 62 percent of those in RCV cities supported its use in their local elections; in the 2014 survey in California, 57 percent of respondents in cities using RCV supported its use. In cities that use plurality voting methods, 49 percent of respondents in the 2013 survey support the introduction of RCV for their local elections and in the 2014 survey in California 54 percent supported the introduction of RCV into their local city.

Impact on campaign tone

Respondents from RCV cities reported lower levels of criticism among candidates than those in non-RCV cities. In the 2013 survey, 5 percent of respondents in RCV cities thought candidates criticized each other "a great deal" compared to 25 percent in non-RCV cities. (All percentages reported are percentage of valid responses. Responses of "don't know" and refusals to answer are excluded from the data.)

In the 2014 survey in California, 28 percent in RCV cities responded that candidates criticized one another "a great deal." By contrast, 36 percent of respondents from non-RCV cities reported a great deal of criticism between candidates.

The contrast between candidate-on-candidate criticism levels in RCV and non-RCV cities (Figures 1 and 2) is much larger in the 2013 survey than in the 2014 survey in Californian cities. However, Californian likely voters in cities using RCV consistently perceived less candidate-on-candidate criticism than in non-RCV cities.

The proposition that a less negative campaigning style accompanies RCV is bolstered when we consider respondents' views on whether the recent campaigns were more or less negative than other recent local political contests. When asked if this year's campaigns (2013) were more or less negative than other recent political contests, 42 percent of likely

Figure 1 Time candidates spent criticizing their opponents, November 2013

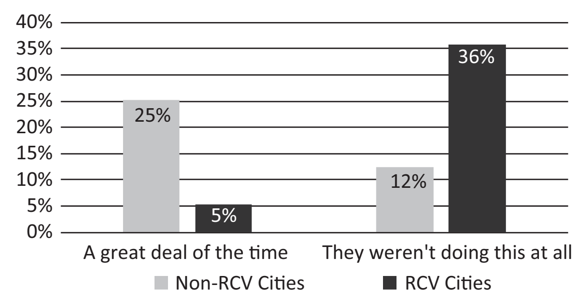

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Figure 2 **Time candidates spent criticizing their opponents, November 2014**

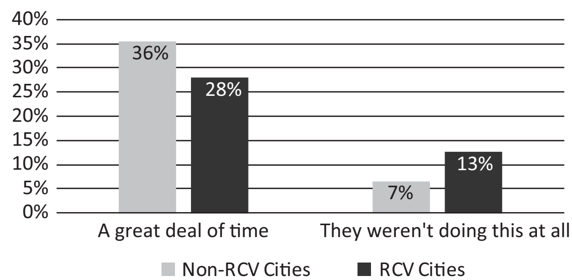

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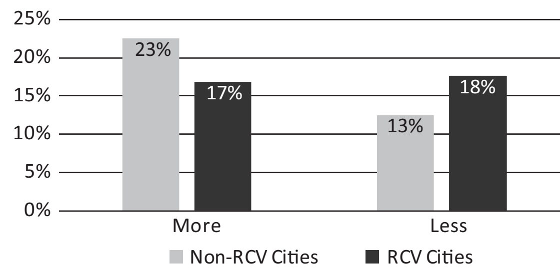
Figure 4 **Negativity of 2014 campaigns compared to previous local campaigns, November 2014**



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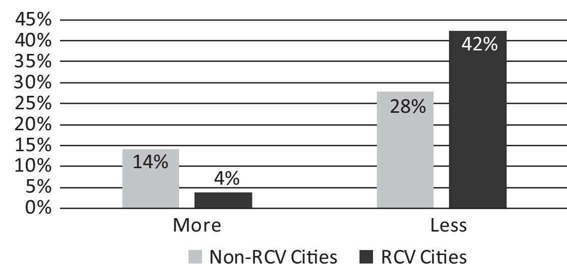
voters in the 2013 survey in RVC cities thought local campaigns were *less* negative (Figure 3), compared to the 28 percent of likely voters in non-RCV cities. Furthermore, just 4 percent of respondents in RCV cities felt local campaigns were *more* negative than in previous years whereas 14 percent of non-RCV respondents thought their local campaigns were more negative.

In the 2014 California survey, more respondents in RCV cities reported that the 2014 election was less negative than prior contests (Figure 4). Overall, 18 percent of respondents in RCV cities, thought that the campaign was less negative than in the recent past. In non-RCV cities, only 13 percent of respondents believed the 2014 local campaign was *less* negative than recent contests. Similarly, only 17 percent of respondents in RCV cities believed the 2014 local campaign was *more* negative, compared to 23 percent in the non-RCV cities.

The tendency for likely voters in RCV cities to report less negative campaigning was statistically significant in both the 2013 and 2014 surveys, even though each survey focused on a different set of city elections.

Figure 3 **Negativity of 2013 campaigns compared to previous local campaigns, November 2013**



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In the 2013 survey, respondents in non-RCV cites were more than three times more likely to report that campaigns in their city elections were more negative than in past contests than were respondents in RCV cities. In 2014, respondents in non-RCV cites were 35 percent more likely than respondents in RCV cities to report that campaigns in their city elections were more negative than in past contests.

By contrast, in 2013, one of the three surveyed RCV cities (Minneapolis), was holding its first serious citywide contest with RCV—a competitive mayoral election—and St. Paul was holding its first citywide election using RCV. The data from the 2014 and 2013 surveys suggests that a consistently less negative campaigning style accompanies RCV.

One potential reason for the smaller difference between RCV and non-RCV respondents' perceptions of negativity in the 2014 survey is that RCV is well established in the Bay Area. San Francisco has used RCV to elect city leaders since 2004, and Berkeley, Oakland, and San Leandro previously used RCV in competitive elections in 2010 and 2012. As a result, any reduced negativity caused by the use of RCV would have mostly been perceived in campaigns before the 2014 campaign. By contrast, in 2013, one of the three surveyed RCV cities (Minneapolis), was holding its first serious citywide contest with RCV—a competitive mayoral election—and St. Paul was holding its first citywide election using RCV. The data from the 2014 and 2013 surveys suggests that a consistently less negative campaigning style accompanies RCV.

Evidence from the Donovan-Tolbert candidate survey (Figures 5 and 6) found similar opinions about the effects of RCV from those on the other side of the electoral process. Candidates who participated in RCV elections were significantly less likely to claim that they had been portrayed or described negatively by their opponents, or to admit that they had portrayed an opponent negatively.

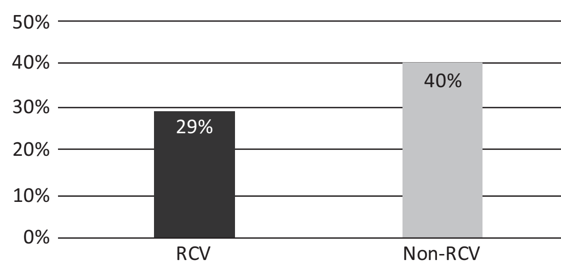
The 2013 and 2014 surveys also found that the vast majority of those who have voted in a RCV election understood the ballot with ease. In both surveys, almost 90 percent of respondents reported understanding the instructions on their RCV ballot was either somewhat or very easy.

Support for RCV

A majority of respondents from RCV cities supported the use of RCV in local elections in both surveys, with 62 percent of RCV respondents supporting the continued use of RCV in the 2013 survey and 57 percent supporting its use in the 2014 California survey (Figures 7 and 8).

Opposition to RCV never topped 48 percent in any city using RCV. In the 2013 survey, about 49 percent of respondents from non-RCV cities supported the introduction of RCV to local elections. Interestingly, a majority of those in non-RCV cities in California (54 percent) supported the introduction of RCV to their elections. In two non-RCV cities (Santa Ana and Santa Clara) in the 2014 survey, support for RCV was over 60 percent. These results indicate a support for expanding use of RCV. They also indicate that first-hand experience sustains or improves attitudes toward RCV, even in cities with controversial elections. For example, in Oakland, 60 percent supported RCV despite a close mayoral election that triggered criticism of RCV by backers of a losing candidate.

Figure 5 Candidates reporting negative portrayal by opponents, 2011-2013



(Color photo can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com.)

Figure 6 Candidates admitting to portraying opponents negatively, 2011-2013

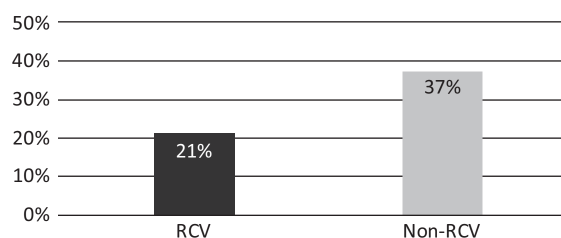


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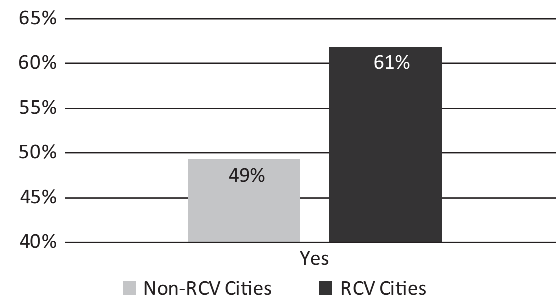
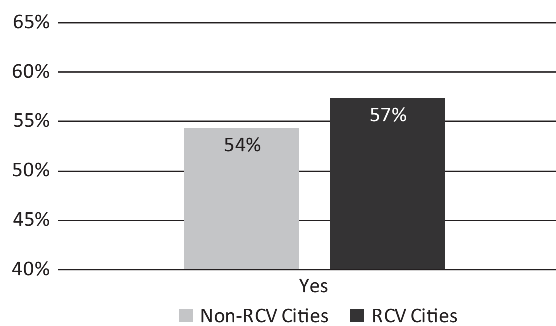
Figure 7 Views on whether RCV can be used in local elections, November 2013



(Color photo can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com.)

Figure 8 Views on whether RCV can be used in local elections, November 2014



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Conclusion

Both the 2013 and 2014 surveys indicate that voters perceive less criticism between candidates and lower levels of negative campaigning in elections conducted using RCV. Results of the surveys also suggest that most voters easily understand RCV ballot instructions and want RCV to be used in their

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local elections. Support for RCV was strong in the three RCV cities surveyed in the 2013 survey and in the four RCV cities in the 2014 California survey.

Given the clear improvements to the tenor of campaigns seen in cities with RCV, the ease with which voters have adapted to using it, and the system's ability to avoid problems with traditional plurality voting elections (the spoiler effect) and runoff elections (costs and turnout), it is no surprise that support for RCV is strong among those who have experienced it.

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Alexis de Tocqueville's America

BY ELKIN TERRY JACK

Americans today are generally not excited about politics and think of politicians as self-serving, not to be trusted for a minute. However, this sentiment is not new. In fact, this skeptical public attitude about politics and politicians was one of the many observations Alexis de Tocqueville made during his travels to the United States in 1831.

Tocqueville was born in France in1805, a few years after Thomas Jefferson became president. He died in 1859, a year before Abraham Lincoln took the oath of office. He studied law and was appointed a magistrate but feared that his ambitions would not be realized. He sought permission from the Ministry of Justice to travel to America, which the French viewed as a strange new country. Ostensibly he came to study a recent sociological innovation, the American penitentiary system, arriving in Rhode Island in 1831.

Tocqueville did indeed visit several penal facilities but he did so much more, Journeying through 15 of the 24 states that compromised the union at the time and talked to thousands of people in all stations of life. As he traveled a nation governed by the Constitution for less than 50 years, he took notes on the conversations he was having. Returning to France in 1832 he began working on one the most widely read and quoted book(s) ever written about America character, which he published in two volumes, in1835 and 1840.

Democracy In America was not written for American consumption, but to explain to the French what the strange Americans were up to in this exotic new land. In offering his explanations Tocqueville looked into the "soul" of America, for most of the observations he made 181 years ago are as poignant today as when he put pen to paper. He could not have anticipated the vitriolic nature of the 2016 election but he came close. "A presidential election in the United States may be looked upon as a time of national crisis," Tocqueville wrote. "As the election draws near, intrigues intensify, and agitation increases and spreads. The citizens divide into several camps, each behind its candidate. A fever grips the entire nation. The election becomes the daily grist of the public papers, the subject of private conversations, the aim of all this activity, the object of all thought, the sole interest of the moment."[1]

Individualism, a word that Alexander de Tocqueville was one of the earliest to use, has long since been a catchword for American character. In *Democracy In America* he defined individualism as a "calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his follows and withdraws into the circle of family and friends; with this little society formed to his taste, he gladly leaves the greater society to look after itself." "Aristocracy links everybody, from peasant to king, in one long chain," Tocqueville said. "Democracy breaks that chain and frees each link."[2]

Tocqueville was concerned about the future should the untethered individual choose to "stay shut up in the solitude of his own head." The antidote for this and the best hope for sustaining the life of the republic were for individuals to be active in local organizations. *Democracy In America* posits that the future of the republic depends on the "habits of the heart" (mores and customs) citizens developed, and on the health of the voluntary associations in which the heart is formed: families, neighborhoods, classrooms, congregations, workplaces, local government, and other places where strangers meet. These voluntary associations were the "little republics" in which people practiced skills of citizenship and learned to make their own decisions about their future. Because of these "little republics" the character of the American people had been formed well before the Constitution was written.

Democracy In America answers the question that energized Tocqueville's travel: Why does the American polity work? I don't think the answer would have surprised early 19th century Americans, but contemporary readers surely would be taken aback. The key wasn't the ingenious structural design (separation of powers, Bill of Rights, and Federalism) bequeathed to us by the authors of the Constitution. Rather, for Tocqueville, democracy worked because

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of the aforementioned character, or in his words, "the whole moral and intellectual condition" of its citizens. In relationship to character there was no more important influence than religious faith. Tocqueville called religion the "foremost political institution in that country.[3] By this, he was not suggesting that religion had a formal political role. Rather, he observed that religion shaped the heart, the home, will, and public actions of citizens. As he put it: "Even though the law allows the American people to do anything and everything, there are some things that religion prevents or forbids them to attempt."[4]

He ends his discussion of religion in *Democracy In America* by asking, "How is it possible that society should escape destruction if the moral tie is not strengthened in proportion as the political tie is relaxed? And what can be done with a people which is its own master if it be not submissive to the divinity."[5]

Tocqueville was an abolitionist and had advocated the end of slavery in all French colonies, and his penetrating account of Jacksonian America did not hide the cruelty of slavery in the southern states. He held out little hope for progress for African Americans and Native Americans, and did not think the abolition of slavery would solve the racial crisis in the south. He felt that race would plague the nation for years.

Especially relevant given the 2016 presidential election, Tocqueville emphasized the "superiority" of American women as one of the new nation's greatest attributes. His foresight about women would eventually be reflected in the 19th Amendment and Title IX.

Democratic politics has its origins in the conversations people have in their communities about the things that matter to them—not in voting or passing bills. Tocqueville observed that in his native France when a problem occurred, people would go the local lord or magistrate and say, "your honor, there is a problem—please fix it." But in America when a problem occurs, a person turns to his neighbors and says, "We have a problem—let's talk about it and decide what we are going to do." These community-based conversations are the "Laborites of Democracy" in which people make sound decisions about their future. Our politics requires "little republics," or a society of these informed citizens in order to work effectively.

One wonders what that perceptive Frenchman would say if he returned to the America of 2017. Of course, he would acknowledge what we all know to be true: 24 states have expanded to 50; a population of 13 million or so has swelled to 300+ million; and a technological-industrial economy has eclipsed the agrarian society of the early 19th century. But what would Tocqueville say of Americans today, assembled in their respective "little republics?" Are we still practicing the "habits of the heart?" Surely, he would lament the dysfunctions and challenges of today's fragmented national life, but he might also say that these challenges could be minimized by the strengths of a decentralized and diverse nation. A revival of society's "little republics"—families, schools, churches, charities, civic groups, and the communities within which they are found—would allow us to rediscover a sufficient consensus to address our nation's problems in a system of checks and balances.

Notes

1 Alexis de Tocqueville, Alexis, *Democracy in America*, vol. 1 (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 2004), 152.

2 Ibid., 586.

3 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 2 vols. (New York: Bantam Classics, 2004), 355.

4 Ibid., 338.

5 Ibid., 357.

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Institutions Supporting Democratic Communication Among Citizens

BY TIMOTHY J. SHAFFER

Since the earliest years of the republic (or even before if we count the colonial period), democratic practices have been woven into the fabric of our formal and informal structures and institutions. Acknowledging grassroots examples of democratic life is critical, but we haven't always appreciated the important role of institutions in cultivating opportunities and outlets for democratic life and expression. As we seek to both understand and improve civic life, understanding the roles of institutions in both creating opportunities for robust forms of civic engagement and sustaining those efforts is a critical element of cultivating civic spaces and opportunities.

What follows in this article is an introduction to some of the democratic innovations that have shaped American history and that reside at the intersection of democracy and education, particularly institutionalized efforts to engage publics through discussion in various forms. This brief essay is not exhaustive. Instead, I offer vignettes that can give a flavor for what occurred starting with experiments in colonial America and concluding with the Second World War. I close with what we might learn from those experiments today.

Jefferson and Town Meetings

Thomas Jefferson was one of the great political thinkers who helped to usher in this democratic experiment we know as the United States of America. He offered a simple statement that undergirds the idea that citizens can and should discuss issues of shared concern and that democracy should be "learned and relearned" as Carmen Sirianni and Lewis Friedland wrote in their book, *Civic Innovation in America*.[1] Jefferson stated boldly,

> I know of no safe repository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education.[2]

Jefferson put faith in people to know best about their lives. But there was a caveat—if people do not understand enough to make decisions, then they ought to have the opportunity to pursue education to address that deficiency. If democracy was to survive let alone thrive, it would require people to become informed and engaged.

Jefferson helped shape a new way of seeing the world and enact a paradigm shift. But this did not come easily. Jefferson struggled with seeing the world differently as he came from a world with monarchs. He was groping for a new world focused on citizens as self-determining actors. Thus, an early draft of the Declaration of Independence points to that shift in thinking from first seeing people as subjects to a divine authority to later as citizens with equal rights and obligations. This reframing was challenging, even for Jefferson. And today we see the limited scope of what equality meant to the founders as some would remain enslaved and many more marginalized.

While Jefferson is a familiar historical figure in the telling of American democracy, there are many other individuals, institutions, and programs that helped to foster the democratic ethos that has been reclaimed and created anew in recent decades, often without realizing these roots. Carolyn Eastman's study of public speaking and print communication speaks to the great challenges faced in the United States in the decades after Independence, but also the opportunities for citizens to learn with and from one another in new ways.[3] The American experiment has been shaped and reshaped by men and women who have sought to see the world differently

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and to marshal in more democratic manifestations of civic life and citizen-centered politics.

In *The Ecology of Democracy*, David Mathews, president of the Kettering Foundation, referred to the town meeting as a story that "begins in 1633, not 1787" because this more citizen-centered form of politics predates formalized models of American democracy.[4] Drawing on the model of congregational autonomy within the Puritan church, in contrast with the hierarchy of the Episcopal or Catholic churches, the New England town meeting emerged as the near equivalent to a religious tradition that privileged local leadership and decision-making. These meetings were fundamentally about how to use common resources, with the Boston Commons serving as a striking example of the tragedy of the commons—in that case about the overgrazing of cows and how citizens could find a way to ensure their individual economic futures collectively. More frequently, however, town meetings served as the preferred way for local governments to convene citizens in order to conduct town business and voting, a tradition that continues to this day. It is significant to recognize the role that discussion groups played in America before the revolution. The first suggestion of a Congress composed of representatives of all the town meetings of the colonies came in 1764, pointing to the deep roots for citizens discussing public problems. As John W. Studebaker, one of the leaders of the forum movement in the 20th century put it, "The Constitution of the United States is the written report of a meeting which was composed of the men trained in the town meeting."[5]

> Jefferson struggled with seeing the world differently as he came from a world with monarchs. He was groping for a new world focused on citizens as self-determining actors.

While the New England town meeting did not survive as a primary means of governing, it did shape political discourse and, importantly, provided a way to think about and conceptualize education's role in a democratic society. As Morse A. Cartwright put it, "the New England town meeting [was] a truly democratic educational agency for adults."[6]

The intersection of adult education and democracy continued throughout the 1800s through efforts such as the Chautauqua Institution and its Chautauqua movement, public lectures, and the open forum movement. To many, the New England town meeting of the 17th century, which "formed the initial adult education venture" in North America, was viewed as an ideal that was often evoked for engaging communities around important social and political issues.[7] Many decades later, the image of citizens gathering together to discuss issues of shared import would lead to multiple approaches with discussion at its center.

Lyceums, Chautauqua, and Informal Education

First established in the village of Millbury, Massachusetts, lyceums were self-education opportunities for men and women—namely farmers and mechanics. Between 1826 and 1845 more than three thousand town lyceums were formed. As J. Michael Sproule has noted, audiences after the 1820s flocked to hear regional and national experts address literary, scientific, and (later) political topics in town and village lyceums—a practice that, beginning in New England, spread westward with the railroad.[8]

In 1874, Bishop John J. Vincent and colleagues drew on the lyceum tradition and established what would become known as the Chautauqua Institution. Expanding a Sunday school association into a robust adult education venture that resulted in the development of commercial and educational forums that reached across the country, the Chautauqua movement emerged as a popular entertainment and informative medium for communities, especially in rural areas. Building on lyceums and the circuit of traveling speakers and lecturers, the Chautauqua movement spurred informed discussion, reaching its crest of popularity in the late 19th and early 20th century as presenters would go on the circuit of small towns in the summer months. The Chautauqua movement lost its prominence, but the essence of its mission continued and inspired other efforts to create informal educational opportunities for citizens to be introduced to important social, cultural, and political issues. Demographic shifts pointed to increasingly growing urban centers as sites for civic institutions to engage citizens in public discussion.

Defining Institutions of the Progressive Era: Social Centers, Settlement Houses, and Open Forums

"The United States," Richard Hofstadter wrote in *The Age of Reform*, "was born in the country and has moved to the city."[9] This demographic shift at the turn of the 20th century changed how citizens thought about themselves in both public and private ways. Harry C. Boyte and Nancy N. Kari have written in their book *Building America: The Democratic Promise of Public Work* that "As the nation changed from a largely agricultural and rural society to an urban, industrialized nation, self-employed producers became employees of others. Technological change guided by private business and controlled by experts became the driving force. The rural world of small-scale and household production, small community, and self-sufficiency gave way to a world of large, crowded, anonymous cities, and consumer culture. Finally, a rising class of university-trained experts—engineers, technicians, doctors, lawyers, managers, professional journalists, and many others using the language and appeal of science—increasingly dominated the landscape."[10]

This period of transition ushered in what scholars have referred to as the "age of the expert." The rise of technical rationality emerged with modernity in the Western world, but it reached a highpoint in the first decades of the twentieth century as diverse critics—including Frederick Jackson Turner, Thornstein Veblen, John Dewey, and Lewis Mumford—agreed that "scientific disinterestedness with a practical bent, often encoded as the engineer, held the key to the good society," according to Robert Wiebe.[11] There was great hope that science could bring an end to many of the problems plaguing citizens and the world. As Leon Fink wrote, "the Progressive generation of reformers boldly positioned themselves as agents of social change… To these writers, social scientists, and social workers (and for a time the terms were nearly synonymous) the problems of poverty, inequality, racial and ethnic tolerance, women's rights, even war were all thought solvable, or at least ameliorable, by a combination of applied reason and active citizenship."[12] The origins of the *National Civic Review* trace to this period in which civic leaders saw an importance in understanding how to manage all facets of incorporated life. But this is only part of the story about the progressive movement. While many were turning to universities and other institutions to help solve society's problems, others sought to create spaces for citizens to engage one another about the issues they collectively faced.

In his study of the period, *Creating a Democratic Public*, Kevin Mattson highlighted how urban government leaders made efforts to establish and support opportunities for people to deliberate with one another about various public issues. These social centers, in places such as Rochester, New York, offered "an actual institution in which citizens could educate themselves for political deliberation and decision-making" rather than just the rhetoric about democracy that was awash during the Progressive Era.[13] What was particularly striking in these social centers was that, unlike Chautauqua and other lecture circuits, citizens themselves decided "what was to be debated and who was to do the debating."[14] The embrace of scientific management and democratic ideals made this period an "odd mix of populism and science" that set American society on the course it largely maintains today with its administrative state, according to J.A. Morone.[15] The deployment of social engineering and the intent to solve problems juxtaposed a view that democracy, however flawed, needed non-experts. Nevertheless, the idea of detached, technical knowledge became the dominant paradigm, embodying what James C. Scott referred to as a "high-modernist ideology" which dominated the century in dramatic and often in detrimental ways.[16]

In addition to social centers, there were many other settings in which people interacted and engaged with both ideas and people. Institutions such as libraries, YMCAs, and museums offered opportunities for Americans to learn about public issues and one another through programming that introduced new ideas and concepts while making space for group discussion to occur. Additionally, "Settlement houses and community centers sponsored debate clubs and forum series, and granges provided places where farmers could discuss the issues of the day," noted John Gastil and W. M. Keith.[17] Civic life was cultivated and encouraged in diverse environments.

Made most famous by Jane Addams at Hull House in Chicago, settlement houses served as critical sites for civic education and opened up opportunities for

immigrant communities and others marginalized by society to have continuing education opportunities beyond school settings. As Nicholas Longo put it, "Addams called for communities to be the center of education."[18] In an 1892 talk entitled "The Subjective Necessity for Social Settlements," Addams outlined the purpose of settlement houses; they were established in poor urban neighborhoods as residences for reformers and social workers (usually of a middle- or upper-class background).[19] Settlements provided diverse social programs including medical treatment and educational lectures as well as playground space for children and space for hosting community events. Settlements were distinctively local institutions which brought reformers into close proximity with the impoverished communities that they sought to aid. Addams argued that settlements served a unique and necessary social function for democracy and were necessary to create connections across class lines. Settlement houses served as sites where democratic learning could occur in everyday interactions and experiences.

While settlement houses were rooted in particular urban communities, the open forum movement built on the model established at Chautauqua by having speakers present to large crowds in more formal settings. But in contrast to Chautauqua, city clubs, or many lyceums, "open forums" referred to the public rather than private nature of these institutions. People from all walks of life could attend and participate in the give and take following a lecture.

One of the most popular examples of the open forum movement was the Ford Hall Forum in Boston. Similar forums developed across the United States in the style of talks that moved away from the religious topics of Chautauqua to more "intellectual" and "civic" topics. Arthur S. Meyers refers to the open forum movement as an "innovative direction in community learning" that was a "decentralized, locally planned, non-partisan, non-sectarian assembly of citizens discussing matters of public interest, always under the guidance of leaders but with full audience participation."[20] Similarly, Maureen A. Flanagan noted how open forums were necessary because a "truer democracy requires places where ordinary people could gather together and discuss the problems of society, and such places were in short supply."[21] Over the following decades, the use of forums would spread across the United States in a range of forms. Forums were, in Rollo Lyman's view, settings in which people could form "sound judgments on accurate data," and not simply about a single issue: "It is the habit of forming sound judgment which we desire to foster."[22] This desire for offering and cultivating spaces for citizens to understand issues, communicate with fellow citizens, and make informed decisions would continue, notably in places like Des Moines, Iowa.

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Establishing Urban and Rural Sites for Public Discussion

One of the best known examples of public discussion came about through the work of John W. Studebaker. While superintendent of the Des Moines, Iowa, public school system, Studebaker used public schools as sites for forums where citizens could learn about diverse issues through lectures and discussion with others. The response to these forums was hugely positive: in their first year 13,404 individuals attended, and in the second year attendance rose to 70,000. Studebaker played a central role in raising the prominence of discussion and forums as a means to respond to what he considered to be the greatest enemy of democratic government—civic ignorance. Just as farmers were trying to save the soil from erosion and being swept away by the wind, discussion was to save the "topsoil of our democracy." What needed to be done was to "plant centers for public discussion in every rural and urban community" to serve as a "wind-break against the gusts of emotionalized propaganda," he wrote.[23]

In his book *The American Way*, Studebaker argued that the most important problem facing the United States was "to save the democracy of free learning and to make possible, through it, intelligent choices

at the happy medium between the old democracy of rugged economic individualism and the new democracy of cooperative effort."[24] He observed that "our common problems have become so complex that the ordinary citizen begins to despair of his ability to understand them—and more important still, of his ability to retain, and adequately to discharge, responsibility for their solution," noting that a possible solution was the use of public forums as a means of preserving democratic ideals.[25] He believed that the interest in public discussion expressed through the forum movement was "neither a passing fad nor a temporary excrescence of political or economic unrest."[26] What's striking is that Walter Lippmann, in books such as *Public Opinion* and *The Phantom Public*, saw the increasing complexity of modern society as justification for greater reliance on experts rather than turn to ordinary citizens to discuss and understand these collective challenges.

The interest in public forums continued and 10 federal forum demonstration sites were established in places as diverse as Portland, Oregon, to Monongalia County, West Virginia. Building on the forums in Des Moines, the Federal Forum Project would expand into a national system of forums involving millions of Americans. The project established Cooperative Forum Centers and Forum Counseling Programs in partnership with state universities and departments of education. A 1937 story from *The New York* Times referred to these centers as "beacon lights of democracy" scattered across the country with the first line in the article stating that "The future of democracy is topic number one in the animated discussion going on all over America."

Alongside the efforts of Studebaker and others in urban settings, rural communities were also experiencing increased opportunities for public discussion about a range of relevant topics to communities thanks to government administrators within the USDA such as M. L. Wilson. While more detail on this particular initiative can be found in an article recently published in the *National Civic Review,* a partnership between the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), land-grant universities, and the Cooperative Extension Service enabled rural people to take up and consider the implications of a number of policy issues shaping not only the future of agriculture, but society in general.

Viewed by USDA leaders as a critical element of its work with rural citizens, discussion became a central approach for community-based Extension educators as they engaged men, women, and youth in discussions about diverse issues. Discussion was what kept democracy standing and it was essential to reinforce that central and critical stone through democratic masonry. The discussion project encouraged Extension educators to view themselves as facilitators and trainers rather than content experts in things like agriculture or home economics. On the front end of this project a preliminary report was produced highlighting the efforts that had been undertaken in 10 states across the country. Concluding this report was a statement that captured the department's desire to institutionalize and systematically support citizen discussion groups:

> As a nation we have always had periods in which the people discussed the nation's affairs at great length and with high interest. We seem to be in another era when the average citizen is talking much about important issues. The aim of the informal methods is to go the cracker box or hot stove sessions at least one better—by making the discussion of lay people more systematic than they usually are, and by laying before them the schools of thought which bear on the questions they are considering.[27]

Resources were created to train people in discussion methods and how to facilitate robust and engaging conversations. Additionally, materials for a range of topics such as questions about farm ownership, taxes, soil conservation, and relationships between urban and rural communities were produced and widely (and freely) distributed to Extension agents across the country. Local communities were also encouraged to create their own issue guides to respond to localized problems and they did. There are numerous examples of the coordinators of this project to adapt and borrow the structure and guidelines presented in the official USDA materials to what was needed to help rural communities engage the tangible and lived issues in their specific localities.

There were a number of reasons both the Studebaker and USDA forums ceased. First, in the case of the rural forums, concerned parties such as the American Farm Bureau Federation, the major agricultural interest group, expressed discontent with the direction the USDA had taken broadly with locally-based planning efforts. Discussion work was wrapped up with those efforts and, subsequently, was a casualty of Washington, D.C. politics. Funding was cut from these programs until entire staffs were laid off. Eventually these action-oriented and citizen-centered efforts folded into a research office that would conduct surveys of rural people rather than engage them in discussion about issues of public concern or through planning processes. Second, for the Studebaker forums, one of the challenges was overcoming what William Keith and Paula Cossart refer to as the "standard educational experience: an expert speaks, audience members ask some questions for clarification, and everyone goes home."[28] Opportunities to learn about issues and to discuss them were more formalized and less interactive, but they were also not always connected with policy making. To discuss and learn is one thing, but it is quite another to also feel there is a connection to political issues that can be addressed. Third and finally, both urban and rural discussion efforts also dealt with a significant shift that altered the once promising participatory and democratic landscape: the radio and then later, television. While initially a powerful supplement and resource, emergent technologies turned face-to-face interaction into more of a novelty rather than a necessity.

> Discussion was what kept democracy standing and it was essential to reinforce that central and critical stone through democratic masonry. The discussion project encouraged Extension educators to view themselves as facilitators and trainers rather than content experts in things like agriculture or home economics.

The Role of Radio for Education and Democratic Life

While democratic discussion typically translated into small groups of people gathering together to talk about an issue of shared concern in school auditoriums or grange halls, radio offered a new medium for engaging increasingly diverse—and dispersed—populations. By the beginning of the 20th century, Progressive Era reformers were concerned that rural America was being left behind with respect to social and technological revolutions. President Theodore Roosevelt established a Commission on Country Life to "look into the 'deficiencies' of agriculture and country life and the means by which they might be remedied," as S. J. Peters and P. A. Morgan have noted.[29] Many would view the recommendations as an attempt to bring rural Americans more in line with their urban counterparts, especially with respect to what reformers saw as the four critical innovations—the telephone, the automobile, radio, and electricity. Rural communities needed to be re-conceptualized for a new world, quickly moving towards mechanization and increasing international markets for their goods. The ways of the world were leaving the small farmer without technology behind. One of the most dramatic ways this was made apparent was through electrification and the presence of radios in homes.

In the early 1920s, radio broadcasting exploded in pervasiveness and popularity. While there were only a handful of transmitting stations in 1922, they were joined within two years by over 500 licensed broadcasting stations. By one account, in the decade after 1922 the diffusion of radio receivers in U.S. households went from a market penetration of 0.2 percent to 55.2 percent before eventually reaching a total of approximately 81.5 percent of all households immediately before World War II.

Before World War I, AM broadcasting stations were experimental at best, with scheduled and continuing programming beginning with station KDKA in Pittsburgh in November, 1920. Largely, the 1920s saw a paradigmatic shift in American radio; as Hugh Richard Slotten put it, the change was from a "largely amateur, nonprofit, and local activity conducted by a diverse range of institutions and individuals to a predominantly professional and commercial pursuit dominated by national networks interested in selling audiences to advertisers."[30] In 1924, Herbert Hoover, then Secretary of Commerce, spoke about the "central role of education" in broadcasting and how radio stations at

universities and colleges were "a step towards the realization of the true mission of radio."[31] Land-grant universities were particularly engaged with radio as a means to communicate weather forecasts and other agriculturally-focused information with farmers. As Josh Shepperd stated, "…educators, largely at land-grant universities, believed that radio held capacities effective for swaying public judgment and promoting pedagogical initiatives that had originated in distance-learning programs and adult education courses" and, significantly, the "character of public airwaves—which owed a great debt to land-grant university physics experimentation between 1900 and 1921—was monolithically delegated to the networks with the Communications Act of 1934."[32] Just as those interested in broadening democratic discussion and debate were preparing to utilize this new technology, the model was shifted. The purely educational and amateur ideals gave way to commercial interests. And while commercialization did not end such forums, the purpose shifted.

The use of radio in rural communities, similar to their urban counterparts, became a lifeline to the happenings elsewhere in the country and world. As Morse H. Salisbury, chief of the USDA's Radio Service put it, "Common sense reflection leads one to surmise that the radio, by subjecting the rural mind to the same sort of influences as the city mind and speeding up the tempo of news, entertainment, and information for the farm home, has changed farm thought and attitudes enormously."[33] By 1930 over half of farms in the United States had automobiles, about a third had telephones, and smaller percentages had electricity and radio. However, as Steve Craig noted, "the coming of the Great Depression altered adoption patterns considerably. Throughout the 1930s the percentage of farm homes with automobiles remained flat, while the number with telephones substantially declined. Yet during the same period, the number of rural families owning radios nearly tripled, and by 1940 more farm homes owned radios than had telephones, automobiles, or electricity."[34] It is important to note the pervasiveness of radio during this period and in relationship to democratic discussion because this marks a shift with respect to both "means" and "ends." Discussion would continue, but in an altered way.

In *Radio's Civic Ambition: American Broadcasting and Democracy in the 1930s*, David Goodman highlights the many ways in which radio was used for civic and democratic purposes.[35] Studebaker and Wilson, both champions of face-to-face discussion took to the airwaves to speak about the importance of democratic discussion in their respective contexts. Using the technology as a way for advertising upcoming events, discussion advocates also engaged in conversations on the radio as a model or example for what is possible when people talk with one another. For Studebaker the "essence of democracy" was "freedom of choice" and being aware of multiple perspectives on an issue. The radio was a tremendous asset in making that possible. Others, such as George Denny who was part of Town Hall's America's Town Meeting of the Air, made efforts to "get neighbors…to listen to the other side" on issues of great importance but which were not necessarily discussed.[36] As the most well-known and best resourced radio forum, America's Town Meeting of the Air was broadcast on NBC from 1935 and then, after the separation of NBC's networks, on ABC from 1943 to 1956. The face-to-face interactions found in the social centers of Rochester, in the school auditoriums of Des Moines, or the grange halls in rural Michigan gave way to individuals or families listening to broadcasts privately in their homes. Long before Robert Putnam would sound his alarm about people bowling alone, shifts from public spaces for civic concerns were taken indoors to the comfort of one's living room.

Radio forums were blended with substantive content and discussion as well as theatrical flourishes that kept people listening. By the mid-1930s each of major radio networks had its own national forum program. And while this would continue in the coming years, World War II would shift priorities and some of these democratic experiments would cease to exist. And, much as radio had only decades earlier been the new technology, it was being replaced by not so much a means of communication, but of entertainment: the television. In the following decades political discussion was seen less as an opportunity to be introduced to new ways of things but, instead, in the words of David Goodman, "broadcast political discussion between people of opposing views had become routinized, not something that was going

to change the world."[37] Keith and Cossart were right: people would listen (or watch) to what was being said on radio or television and then would "go home," meaning they would simply turn it off. Current topics were discussed, just not with the same intimacy or impact. American life had shifted from public—and civic—spaces in neighborhoods and communities to newly constructed homes in suburbs and beyond.

> The face-to-face interactions found in the social centers of Rochester, in the school auditoriums of Des Moines, or the grange halls in rural Michigan gave way to individuals or families listening to broadcasts privately in their homes.

Recognizing Institutions in Democracy

John Dewey, in *The Public and Its Problems*, wrote that "Unless local communal life can be restored, the public cannot adequately resolve its most urgent problem: to find and identify itself."[38] The process of coming to understand and situate oneself as part of a larger community with a sense of purpose and identity has long been a cultural and political struggle. Efforts made by Studebaker, Wilson, and others in social centers, the Hull House in Chicago, or the picturesque shores of Lake Chautauqua point to both the possibilities and challenges that confront those with civic-minded approaches to public problems. What's instructive about Dewey's perspective, especially in *The Public and Its Problems*, is that the quest for what he called the "Great Community" had to go "hand-in-hand with the revitalization of the local community," as R. B. Westbrook suggests.[39] That personal interaction with others was critical if the public, broadly understood and defined, was to have any role in public life. Citizens needed to find themselves—they needed to talk with others and embrace their individual and collective voices and agency in civic ways.

For us, what's important is to recognize the role that institutions and those within them have played in this framing of democracy. This brief overview has pointed to situated institutions and actors who, often in professional capacities, sought to create space for citizens to consider topical matters and to become more informed. Some of these scenarios were more passive as people listened to lectures, sprinkled questions, and went home; but other efforts, such as the one led by the USDA with Extension, point to another model. Alongside county land-use planning efforts, discussion helped men and women consider the complexity of issues and how concerns about soil erosion had more to do with international markets and taxes than at first thought. David Mathews has written about the ecology of democracy, and it is striking to be reminded of the role that civic organizations have played in the cultivation of citizen-centered political life. Ecosystems are reliant on many aspects to ensure vitality.

> Some of these scenarios were more passive as people listened to lectures, sprinkled questions, and went home; but other efforts, such as the one led by the USDA with Extension, point to another model.

As we look back at these democratic experiments, we would be remiss to overlook institutional efforts to support democratic communication among citizens.

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Engaging Immigrants at the Local Level

BY CARLA J. KIMBROUGH

When President Obama issued executive orders related to immigration, the move prompted a discussion among city leaders in San Jose, California.

The executive orders, issued in November 2014, offered some relief from deportation to people brought to the United States as children and to the parents of U.S. citizens and legal residents.

Members of the San Jose City Council began to wonder how equipped the city was to serve undocumented immigrants. To preserve that question for the new mayor and city council following the elections, they put it in writing. The next city administration acted.

Through research, city officials learned that immigrants started more than 50 percent of the new small businesses and that nearly four out of every ten residents in San Jose—approximately 38 percent—were immigrants. For perspective, the number of people who were born outside of the United States is roughly 13 percent, according to census figures.

"I don't think anyone had looked at the numbers," said Zulma Maciel, who was hired to lead the city's Office of Immigrant Affairs in July 2015, balancing that work with other duties in the city manager's office.

Maciel wasted no time. She embarked on a listening tour, visiting about 60 places—many of which were nonprofit organizations. She wasn't just listening; she was also looking for people to steer the city's efforts. Maciel said she wanted people who showed leadership capabilities, who were influencers, who represented multiple sectors, who thought objectively and globally, who were doers and who could dedicate seven to nine months to an effort to create an immigrant integration plan.

By September 2015, San Jose officials had declared their commitment to become a more inclusive city and approved the development of a "Welcoming San Jose" plan. That same month, a steering committee held its first meeting and began its work to develop a three-year immigrant integration plan.

Next came five subcommittees, seventeen focus groups and community forums. The subcommittees were organized as follows: leadership and communications; equitable access; economic opportunity and education; civic engagement; and safe, healthy, and connected communities. The focus groups, which nonprofit organizations hosted, all used the same information, using translated materials, and tackled the same topics, including asking participants to share a time when they did not feel welcome in San Jose. The focus group participants also gave feedback that was critical in creating the three-year plan. The first community forum was planned by staff and partner organizations and was conducted in Spanish. Again, highlights of the subcommittees' work were shared and ideas were gathered. But one community forum was not enough, staff decided. Five other community forums were conducted with people from the Eritrean, Ethiopian, Muslim, Persian, and Vietnamese communities.

By October 2016, San Jose had adopted its three-year Welcoming San Jose immigrant immigration plan. While Los Angeles and San Francisco have immigrant affairs offices, San Jose says it is the first major California city to formally pass and publish a comprehensive, multi-sector plan on immigrant integration.

Maciel said the city had identified three priorities to work on in the first year of the plan: building translation and interpretation services, offering customer service training that focuses on cultural competence and humility, and creating civic engagement and leadership opportunities in Vietnamese and Spanish.

What happened in San Jose is one of the high-end examples of what local governments can do to

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welcome and engage immigrants. Large cities such as Boston and Atlanta and smaller cities such as Dayton, Ohio, and Nashville, Tennessee, and even smaller communities, such as Crete and Schuyler, Nebraska, are all working to create strategies that integrate foreign-born residents into the fabric of their cities.

For some cities, creating a welcoming atmosphere for immigrants and refugees is a strategy to address population decline and in others it is one way to harness the economic prosperity that small businesses can bring.

The first step many government officials take is looking at census figures. The U.S. Census Bureau uses "foreign born" for the millions of people who are not U.S. citizens at birth. The foreign-born category includes people who become naturalized U.S. citizens, permanent residents here legally, people who are here illegally, and humanitarian migrants such as refugees (defined by federal government as "people outside of their country who are unable or unwilling to return home because they fear serious harm").

For some cities, creating a welcoming atmosphere for immigrants and refugees is a strategy to address population decline and in others it is one way to harness the economic prosperity that small businesses can bring. The activity around immigrants and refugees on a local level was amplified at the federal level.

Federal Focus on Immigrant Integration

The Obama Administration had identified three pillars—civic, economic, and linguistic—to help speed the integration of immigrants and refugees into the United States. In the same month he issued the executive orders, President Obama created an interagency group, The White House Task Force on New Americans, to expand upon those pillars and create a plan to promote civic engagement, support skill development and entrepreneurship, and expand linguistic integration and education. The task force issued its first report in April 2015 and followed it with updates in December 2015 and April 2016.

One of the task force's key documents is the Building Welcoming Communities Campaign's 13-page *Roadmap to Success*.[1] It contains dozens of ideas and possible action steps to help guide efforts under the following five categories:

- **Strategic planning and developing infrastructure,** which involves obtaining and understanding the community's population figures of immigrant and refugee communities, identifying service providers to these communities and building a strategic plan that includes multiple sectors.
- **Promoting equitable access and building trust,** which includes inviting new Americans to give input on community boards, implementing language access policies to government agencies and schools, and combating fraud and increasing access to legal services.
- **Strengthening existing pathways to naturalization and civic engagement,** which focuses on increasing awareness of the citizenship and naturalization process, hosting regular town halls to engage immigrants, preparing government materials in various languages, and connecting immigrants and refugees with the receiving community through dialogues and cultural events.
- **Supporting skill development, fostering entrepreneurship, and protecting new American workers**, which focuses on harnessing the full potential of this workforce by engaging area employers, helping immigrant professionals understand the licensing process, and expanding business development information.
- **Expanding opportunities for linguistic education and integration**, which promotes creating welcoming schools, engaging immigrant families, prioritizing dual-language learning, and identifying pathways to career and post-secondary education.

The roadmap concedes upfront that there is no singular approach because each community has unique circumstances. That said, the initial task force report identifies the need for action because of the changing demographics in the United States.

Immigrant Growth, Migration Patterns Gain Notice

The task force report, using figures from an October 2014 Brookings Institution report, noted the size

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of immigrant community: 41.3 million people—including more than 3 million refugees resettled since 1975—live in the United States, just over 13 percent of the nation's population. That same Brookings report, *Immigrants Continue to Disperse, with Fastest Growth in the Suburbs*, described the immigration patterns that have made local governments pay attention.[2]

"Immigrants continue to be attracted to the nation's largest metropolitan areas but are dispersing to more and smaller places across the country," the report said. "In 2000, the 10 metro areas with the largest number of immigrants (New York, Los Angeles, Miami, Chicago, Houston, San Francisco, Washington, Dallas, Riverside, and Boston) accounted for 56 percent of all the foreign born living in the U.S."

The report noted the downward trend of immigrants living in those top ten metropolitan areas for immigrants—in 1990, 61 percent of immigrants lived in those cities; in 2000, the immigrant population was down to 56 percent and dipped even more in 2013 to 51 percent of immigrants in those 10 areas. By comparison, only 26 percent of the total U.S. population lived in those areas in 2013.

"In 87 of the 100 largest metro areas, immigrants made up a larger share of the population in 2013 than they did in 2000," the report said.

Boston Renews Its Immigrant Focus

The demographic shift is clear in Boston, where immigrants make up 27 percent of the population. City officials collected a variety of statistics in "Boston's Shifting Demographics," an online PowerPoint published in July 2015.[3] Among the statistics about the immigrant community: The city's foreign-born population has increased steadily since 1970, accounting for much of Boston's overall population growth. Foreign-born Hispanic and Asian immigrants were major contributors to the diversity in Boston, where the white population had declined to 47 percent in 2010. By 2013, almost 36 percent of Boston's residents spoke a language other than English at home, up from only 13 percent in 1980.

City officials have been busy with efforts to serve this growing community. Alejandra St. Guillen, director of the city's Office for Immigrant Advancement, said the focus on immigrants has been renewed under the new mayor, Martin J. Walsh, who is the son of immigrants. In April 2016, Walsh announced the strategic rebranding of the Mayor's Office for Immigrant Advancement—initially formed in 1998 as the Office of New Bostonians—to handle the evolving needs of the city's immigrants.

One initiative was to create Immigrant Information Corners at libraries all over the city; the corners carry information related to citizenship and other helpful guides prepared by the city and nonprofit organizations, St. Guillen said.

The city also has planned legal clinics featuring volunteer immigration lawyers, who helped attendees with issues relating to citizenship, family, employment, and deportation matters. Some clinics have attracted more than 300 people while others have attracted a dozen or so attendees, said An Le, the office's policy and communications advisor who, among other duties, coordinates the clinics through the immigrant advancement office.

The city connects with immigrant communities in several ways, St. Guillen said. For example, the city has an advisory board of leaders in the immigrant community that gives officials guidance on how to improve access to city hall. Another task force focused on how to assist foreign-trained professionals gain access to the workforce. The city also provides grants to help organizations that serve immigrants, she said.

Boston also honors the contributions of immigrants and those who work on behalf of immigrants at an annual event, the We Are Boston Gala. In November 2016, the 11th annual gala featured an appearance by "Orange is the new Black" and "Jane the Virgin" actress Diane Guerrero. The event also helps raise money for city efforts.

St. Guillen said language access "will break down a lot of barriers." Guides to city services are available in English, Haitian Creole, Spanish, Cape Verdean, Chinese, and Portuguese. If a city office is contacted by an immigrant with limited English language

skills, city employees who have volunteered to help people with translations, either on the phone or in person, can be found on a directory available on an internal city website. Additionally, the city has a list of professional translators who are available to attend town hall meetings or even meetings as complicated as zoning appeals.

California Tops Nation With Its Immigrant Population

By 2010, people who were born outside of the United States lived in every state, according to a 2012 report from the Census Bureau. But over half of the immigrants live in four states: California, New York, Texas, and Florida. California has more immigrants than any state, with foreign-born residents making up 27 percent of the state's population. Nationally, one in four immigrants choose California as home.

Such numbers keep the Institute for Local Government busy. A nonprofit education and research organization that helps cities, counties, and special districts, the Institute has helped municipalities of all sizes connect with immigrants by using a "meet them where they are" strategy with government officials, said Mahvash Hassan, immigrant integration and civic engagement consultant who works with ILG.

One strategy is simply to connect government and elected officials with ethnic media as well as faith-based and nonprofit organizations that already work with immigrants, Hassan said.

Sarah Rubin, the Institute's public engagement program manager, shared an example of immigrant integration that "really felt special." In Turlock, officials were notified that the city of about 70,000 residents may have violated voting rights. Although the city had a significant Latino population, the city council was primarily white. To respond, the city council approved a ballot measure that would change the city from at-large elections to district seats. Then, officials launched a community outreach effort over an eight-month period that included translating materials into Spanish, Portuguese, and Assyrian, the native languages of some of the residents; conducting educational presentations at civic organization meetings such as the Latino Community Roundtable and the Turlock Realtors Association; and distributing information through various businesses, a weekly farmers market and political campaign volunteers. Ultimately, the measure passed with a 74 percent approval rate.

"It was deep and authentic engagement," Rubin said of the effort. "It was really that early and often theme."

When Hassan and Rubin have encountered resistance to immigrant integration efforts, most often the reluctance is tied to beliefs that the efforts would cost too much or that officials feel they lack expertise. That's where the Institute steps in with a variety of services, including sharing information at statewide conferences and workshops, coaching officials on the telephone or offering longer term, on-the-ground technical assistance, Rubin said.

Whatever the size of the community, Rubin suggests two steps to get started. The first is to check census data to get an idea of the numbers and backgrounds of the residents. The second step is to learn how the residents get their information and begin engaging them through those channels.

Welcoming Movement Spreads

Welcoming America, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, has worked in 100 communities nationwide to help government officials and nonprofit organizations build welcoming infrastructures in their towns so that everyone feels welcomed and can fully contribute.

Rachel Peric, deputy director of Welcoming America, said the Georgia-based organization has witnessed that same demographic shift discussed in the Brookings report. She noted that government officials nationwide are waking up to the spread of immigrants that she described as "very rapid, very dispersed."

"Just about every community is changing or will be changing," Peric said.

Peric points to Nashville as a city that has undergone a demographic transformation over the last decade. Census figures put its foreign-born population at

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12 percent, and another report notes that immigrants were responsible for 60 percent of the city's growth between 2000 and 2012. Peric said Nashville began as an unwelcoming city, then moved to a place tolerant of immigrants and now is considered a welcoming city.

Galen Spencer Hull, a co-founder of the Tennessee Immigrant and Minority Business Group, wrote in a newspaper column that Nashville has gained a reputation as a new "Ellis Island." Nashville, which in 2012 had the fastest-growing immigrant population of any U.S. city, had the nation's largest Kurdish populations as well as immigrants from Bhutan, Egypt, Eretria, Somalia, and Sudan, he wrote.[4]

The work done over the years in Tennessee became the model for Welcoming America, whose founder and executive director helped found Welcoming Tennessee. Now, Welcoming America has a formal agreement with the White House and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to create practices that help governments meet the challenges related to the demographic shifts. Peric said Welcoming America hoped to launch a certification program by 2018.

"Many local governments are beginning to recognize there's a lot that they can do" without federal immigration reforms, Peric said. "The welcome that immigrants receive really happens at the local level."

That focus on local is one of the strategies that the White House Task Force on New Americans suggested in its 2015 report with its Building Welcoming Communities Campaign. By fall of 2016, the program had attracted nearly 50 communities of various sizes.

Both Welcoming America and the Building Welcoming Communities Campaign recommend a multifaceted approach to integrating immigrants into communities. Peric said the first step should focus on building trust and building bridges between immigrants and native-born residents and city institutions such as police. Other steps include helping immigrants obtain English language skills, achieve citizenship, gain access to workforce and entrepreneurial opportunities, and encourage civic participation. Strategies to deliver these services vary, depending on the community.

A wealth of free tools exist to help immigrants and refugees adjust, Peric said. Welcoming America's website provides access to webinars, toolkits, reports, and guides that offer guidance on conversations, activities, and strategies for creating welcoming communities.

Both Welcoming America and the Building Welcoming Communities Campaign recommend a multifaceted approach to integrating immigrants into communities.

One way a community can get started in creating a welcoming atmosphere is to participate in Welcoming Week, with involvement ranging from government proclamations and community potlucks to volunteer projects and international festivals that bring foreign-born and U.S.-born people together. In 2016, Welcoming Week triggered 359 events in more than 135 communities. In 2017, Welcoming Week is scheduled for September 15 through September 24.

Immigrant-Friendly Dayton Plan Called An Example

Dayton, Ohio, which became an informal partner of Welcoming America in 2012, is among the communities that participate in Welcoming Week. The city partners with local organizations to host a variety of activities. "Voices," a panel discussion that helps immigrants and refugees tell their stories, and the Dayton World Soccer Games tournament, which features youth and adult teams with immigrant and native-born people representing various immigrant nationalities or communities who live in Dayton, are two activities often held in conjunction with Welcoming Week.

Like many other U.S. cities, Dayton awakened to the demographic shift through two key factors. First, city officials saw an increasingly visible foreign-born population grow by 50 percent between 2000 and 2010. Second, research by the city's Human Relations Council revealed housing discrimination against immigrant populations, but

those communities weren't alerting the city to those problems. Shortly thereafter, in the fall of 2010, city officials began discussing how Dayton could become an immigrant-friendly city, said Melissa Bertolo, program coordinator of Welcome Dayton, which became a part of the city's Human Relations Council (HRC).

By spring 2011, the city had embarked upon four community conversations that allowed residents to discuss what positives they noticed, what concerns they had, and what it would mean if the city became friendly to immigrants. Officials then asked participants for a 90-day commitment to create what became a three-year mapping strategy of goals and objectives. Participants joined their choice of four committees: Social Services and Health Services; Local Government and Justice System; Business and Economic Development; and Community Culture, Arts and Education. After the reports were delivered and a name chosen for the initiative, "Welcome Dayton—Immigrant Friendly City," the city commission unanimously voted in October 2011 to adopt the plan.

In the city's final report on the immigrant integration plan, one concern noted was "the real unfulfilled integration of populations, including African Americans, who have a longer history of struggle to be embraced economically, socially, and politically." Dayton's African American population in 2010 was nearly 43 percent. In light of that expressed concern, Bertolo said that the HRC works to look at the larger picture and takes care not to pit minority groups against other minority groups, adding that some initiatives work to create "justice for all of us." One example of that was a decision by Dayton police not to arrest people for driving without a license on the first offense, Bertolo said. That moved helped not only immigrants but also African American drivers, she said.

"Welcome Dayton is a small part of what we're trying to accomplish around HRC," said Bertolo, who became the first full-time employee of the Welcome Dayton program.

Bertolo points to a number of Welcome Dayton program successes. First, Welcome Dayton is a "community initiative," not just a government, top-down program, she said. Immigrants can access city services, regardless of their English language skills, because of a language-access program that connects them with interpreters of hundreds of languages, either in-person or on the phone; in Dayton, Spanish, Arabic, Ahiska Turkish, and some African languages from Rwanda are among the most common. Also through Welcome Dayton, about 15 people assist immigrants with tasks such as job applications, transportation to appointments, and self-care advice through a Natural Helpers program. Two programs that have won national notice are its Welcome Dayton Ambassador program, which nearly 100 people have completed, and Welcome Belmont, which pairs immigrant and native-born students in a yearlong cultural collaboration.

Immigrants can access city services, regardless of their English language skills, because of a language-access program that connects them with interpreters of hundreds of languages, either in-person or on the phone.

The City of Dayton, which also joined the federal initiative, Building Welcoming Communities Campaign, was discussed in the White House task force report for taking "specific and strategic actions for becoming immigrant-friendly." The report said: "In fact, Dayton has seen revitalized neighborhoods and business corridors, along with a significant increase in the number of immigrants settling in the city, which has helped offset over 20 years of rapid population decline. Now, local population and tax revenue decline has all but halted, and business districts and neighborhoods that were previously half empty are now thriving due to the arrival of new immigrants."[5]

For cities that might embark on similar initiatives, Bertolo said she would suggest engaging the community at large early, before a negative incident occurs. Giving residents an opportunity to discuss and address their fears and hesitancies as well as the time to reflect upon whether becoming an immigrant-friendly community is right for the community will be important to the success of an integration effort, she said.

Nebraska Program Encourages Public–Private Partnerships

Another Midwestern state, Nebraska had three cities—Crete, Lincoln, and Schuyler—that were among the first to participate in the Building Welcoming Communities federal initiative. Christa Yoakum, coordinator for the Nebraska Is Home program, which worked with these and other cities in the state, said while every community has a unique experience, a public–private partnership that includes multiple sectors is critical to creating a welcoming atmosphere for immigrants.

In Crete, people from business, city government, libraries, schools, faith, and even police formed a Welcoming and Inclusion team that explored both the positives and the challenges of having a growing immigrant population, Yoakum said. One result was a director level position with the city that focuses on helping all newcomers, regardless of birthplace, find the answers they need, whether that be how to start a business, how to gain citizenship, or how to bring a problem to city council. Having someone at the director level enables that person to affect change in existing or future city policies, she said.

Another aspect of that new position was how it evolved from idea to reality. Several people from Crete's Latino community—who in 2010 made up about 36 percent of the city's 7,000 residents, according to the census—were involved in deciding whether such a position would be helpful, what services were needed, what skills the person should have and some of them even sat in on the interviews, Yoakum said.

About 300 miles to the west of Crete, Schuyler, a city of nearly 6,200 residents, has one of the highest proportions of Latinos in the state at about 65 percent, based on 2010 census figures. The demographic shift was work driven, said Mynor Hernandez, who has lived in Schuyler since 1996. Many Latinos began moving there in the late 1980s and early 1990s to fill jobs at a Cargill beef processing plant, Hernandez said. With 2,150 workers, the plant is the largest employer in the county.

Although the Latino population was growing, that didn't mean the city's newest residents were getting involved civically. In 2012, only 17 Latinos—not 17 percent—voted in elections, Hernandez said. The next year, a group of Latino residents began meeting informally and discussed the need for greater involvement in civic matters, said Hernandez, who noted a particular gap in school involvement. Within a few weeks of the November 2014 election, Hernandez said a group went to the Cargill plant to encourage people to vote, an effort that pushed the number to 136 Latino voters. That impact moved them to create Comite Latino de Schuyler, a nonprofit organization that works to promote integration and progress in the city, he said. In 2016, the first Latino ran for city council.

But politics is only one arena of involvement. Hernandez, a community organizer with Comite Latino de Schuyler, whose work includes being a liaison to the city, said Latinos now are involved in every organization in town, from the Rotary to the local chamber of commerce. Schools also have greater involvement from the Latino community, he said.

That change has occurred over time, he said. It began with "understanding who we are as Latinos," Hernandez said. As the community has educated themselves about the importance of civic involvement and has learned the difference between governance in the United States versus some of countries where residents had seen corruption, there has been greater buy-in from Latinos, Hernandez said.

"It's one step at a time," he said.

For Hernandez, the decision to get involved was spurred by his children. As his son neared school age, Hernandez said he and his wife began to discuss whether they would take the easy way—move to another city—or the hard way—work to improve the schools in Schuyler, where Hernandez graduated from high school. In November, Hernandez was elected to the Schuyler Community Schools' board of education. "We chose to be involved," said Hernandez, whose son is now in second grade.

Yoakum said the immigrant integration effort was community driven. One example was the focus on involving the entire community to raise money for library renovations. A dance contest, patterned after "Dancing with the Stars," was used as a

fundraiser for the library, Yoakum said. Hernandez said Latino residents have participated in various ways, including serving with the library foundation, showing their dance skills and even giving through Cargill, Hernandez said, adding that proceeds from a Labor Day event contributed to the fundraising also.

Another effort to create an integrated community was the city council's October 2016 approval of a translation service that goes beyond Spanish and English, which was needed because some of the city's immigrants speak French as well as various African and Central American languages. Hernandez said the city has a number of employees at a variety of agencies who are bilingual and can help Spanish speakers access city services.

"There's all kinds of good things happening," Hernandez said. "You're seeing that buy-in."

Not only are Latinos boosting their involvement, but city institutions and organizations also are encouraging the involvement, he said. The local chamber, which has a high percentage of Latino-owned businesses, is one example of that involvement, Hernandez said.

> Participants said they wanted to be able to access city services, navigate city offices easily, and learn about citizenship through libraries and community centers, Barousse said.

Yoakum said one reason that Nebraska cities are joining the welcoming effort is purely about the numbers. Nebraska has a low unemployment rate and its population is shrinking, she said. Employers are looking for workers of all kinds, she said. People are hearing about what other towns are doing to welcome immigrants and want to learn how they can create welcoming environments. Although the national conversation around immigration reform can be divisive or can make people feel helpless, that doesn't have to affect local efforts, Yoakum said. "It's important that local communities don't suffer from that unrest," she said of the national conversation. "Their (local) efforts pay off a lot more."

Communities do not have to take stands on immigration to create welcoming and inclusive environments, Yoakum said. She pointed to examples of publishing materials in multiple languages and creating multi-sector teams that focus on inclusion.

Back in San Jose, inclusion has been a goal from the beginning of the city's effort to build an immigrant integration plan. Services Immigrant Rights and Education Network (SIREN) was one of the community partners the city worked with in developing the three-year immigrant integration plan. SIREN had representatives on each of the subcommittees and its executive director was part of the steering committee.

> The organization works to help immigrants understand how legislation is created, how budget priorities are made, and how to serve on boards and commissions and promotes voter registration and get-out-the vote efforts.

Jeremy Barousse, a community organizer with SIREN, worked closely with immigrants the organization serves to communicate their needs and desires. SIREN hosted two of the focus groups—each with 12 participants, with and without legal status—as part of San Jose's efforts. Participants said they wanted to be able to access city services, navigate city offices easily, and learn about citizenship through libraries and community centers, Barousse said. Some of those requests are being realized already; the city has co-sponsored a workshop regarding citizenship, which Barousse said was a "great first step."

Barousse, who has worked with SIREN for about four years, said he has learned that immigrants do care about civic involvement. SIREN's clients work in the schools their children attend, engage with city and state lawmakers to advocate or oppose legislation that affects immigrants and promote civic involvement by registering and encouraging people to vote, he said. Because SIREN belongs to national coalitions, Barousse said he has seen immigrant integration efforts unfold nationally in larger cities and he wasn't surprised about San Jose's efforts.

"It's about right that we have our own immigrant affairs office," Barousse said of the nation's 10th largest city.

Priya Murthy, SIREN's policy and advocacy director, said the process San Jose used to create the welcoming plan also enabled SIREN constituents to emphasize what existing policies they want to see continued. For example, immigrants want the San Jose police to continue the policy of refraining from asking about immigration status during interactions with the community. Immigrant communities feel safe when they interact with local law enforcement with the current policy, Murthy said.

Another positive has been greater city involvement in SIREN's "robust" civic engagement efforts, Murthy said. The organization works to help immigrants understand how legislation is created, how budget priorities are made, and how to serve on boards and commissions and promotes voter registration and get-out-the vote efforts. With the organization's legal clinics that offer, in part, an opportunity for people to learn about the naturalization process, SIREN has had easier access to city-operated community centers where events are held and more high-profile opportunities to promote the naturalization process. "What the city of San Jose has done is a good start," Murthy said. "We hope that this can lay a good foundation that is holistic and deeper for immigrant integration work in the future."

Whether the integration process involves refugees specifically or immigrants generally, Welcoming America's Peric noted that communities must move beyond looking at status. What's more important is that "they want to be seen as neighbors, colleagues, parents." A welcoming environment for immigrants and refugees can happen in many different ways on the local level, she said. "These are really exciting questions and lend themselves to exciting innovation. It's an opportunity to really restore a level of participation that governments hunger for."

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All-America City Profile: Hayward, California

DAVID KORTH AND DANA DEBEAUMONT

What began in 2009 as an anti-graffiti project blossomed into a citywide beautification effort transforming utility boxes, sound walls, underpasses, school buildings, and commercial properties from "tagging targets" into "creative canvases" that told the story of Hayward, California through the medium of public murals. The Hayward Mural Project also creates jobs for local artists, engages residents, and community groups, and cements partnerships amongst community stakeholders. Artists are commissioned to work with local schools and involve youth, teaching them about respect and pride in their communities, and ultimately learning from them what it is that they find important about community life.

Hayward has created 149 murals to-date, and reduced graffiti by over 50 percent with no graffiti on murals in over two years. Graffiti was once rated a significant concern to Hayward residents, but the most recent Resident Satisfaction Survey suggests that far fewer number graffiti as a serious problem. More than 50 other cities have expressed an interest in Hayward's Mural Art Program, which received the California Association of Code Enforcement Officers Innovative Program Award and League of California Cities Helen Putnam Award for Excellence.

The graffiti program is a symbol of the way residents, community organizers, and leaders of local public, private, and nonprofit institutions in Hayward, California, go about the business of problem solving—by looking at challenges and finding innovative ways of engaging people, associations, and institutions in the solutions. A winner of the All-America City Award in 2016, Hayward listed three community improvement projects that reflect the community commitment to equitable and innovative social problem-solving.

Editor's Note: This article was adapted from the City of Hayward's 2016 All-America City Award application.

Hayward dwellers like to think of their community as "the Heart of the Bay," a sobriquet that carries a double meaning. It reflects the city's location on the east shore of San Francisco Bay just south of Oakland and San Leandro. It also reflects the community's caring and inclusive nature. Hayward is the second most diverse city in California and the 15th most diverse city in the nation. About half of residents are renters, which is slightly higher than the statewide average. Hayward is one of the most affordable cities in the Bay Area.

The graffiti program is a symbol of the way residents, community organizers, and leaders of local public, private, and nonprofit institutions in Hayward, California, go about the business of problem solving—by looking at challenges and finding innovative ways of engaging people, associations, and institutions in the solutions.

Affordability, however, is a relative term, and the Bay Area is well known for its high cost of living, so many residents face significant financial challenges. The median household annual income in Hayward is significantly less than the region as a whole and in the low-income areas of Hayward, for instance, South Hayward, there are significant linguistic, cultural, and economic barriers to education, healthcare, mental health and other social services.

There was a time when many South Hayward residents felt they were in a forgotten part of the city, but community leaders and an emerging interagency support system are working hard to change that situation. South Hayward's neighborhood revitalization efforts are focused on enhancing access to

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employment, supporting socioeconomic mobility, reducing crime, and enhancing other quality of life improvements.

According to Hayward's application for the 2016 All-America City Award, "neighborhood revitalization strategies include the development of new multimodal transportation; well-lit and safe routes to school and other neighborhood destinations where residents feel comfortable walking and riding bikes day and night; encouraging fitness with linear park space adjacent to improved roadways that also include jogging paths and fitness par courses; and catalyzing investment in this distressed area that will activate vacant parcels and revitalize aging small business establishments." To further quote:

> The median household annual income in Hayward is significantly less than the region as a whole and in the low-income areas of Hayward, for instance, South Hayward, there are significant linguistic, cultural, and economic barriers to education, healthcare, mental health and other social services.

> Throughout Hayward, these transformations are occurring with residents who are increasingly active in the process. The Hayward Promise Neighborhood, modeled after the successful Harlem Children's Zone, is one example. Hayward was one of the first five communities in the nation to receive a five-year, $25 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The Hayward Promise Neighborhood initiative represents a partnership between California State University-East Bay (as the primary grant recipient), the HUSD, Chabot Community College, the City and other local government agencies, businesses, faith and nonprofit service organizations and local residents working together to provide long-lasting education reform and neighborhood improvement strategies and solutions.

The community has taken a "two generational approach to fighting poverty, where students and their parents are provided access to quality education, workforce development, and financial equity resources." Other efforts include the "establishment of the Hayward Neighborhood Partnership Program" that brings city officials to neighborhoods to listen to what residents and other neighborhood stakeholders are saying about quality of life issues. Again, quoting from the Hayward AAC application, "Over 36 Hayward neighborhoods have participated in over 130 meetings, each with 25 to 50 community participants on average. The largest meeting included over 100 community members," according to the AAC application.

In 2016, when Hayward applied for and won the All-America City Award, participating communities were challenged by the National Civic League to highlight local projects and initiatives aimed at improving the well-being of young people and their families. The participating communities listed issues such as school attendance, health, access to and affordability of transportation, neighborhood safety, poverty, food access and nutrition, affordable housing, and healthy natural environments. The three projects described in this article reflect Hayward's successful efforts to address these issues with same spirit of innovation that animated their creative approach to graffiti removal.

The Firehouse Clinic

Hayward's Firehouse Clinic opened in January of 2016 at the city's first new fire station to be built in twenty years as an innovative way of providing health care to some of the city's neediest residents. It was the brainchild of Alex Briscoe, director of the Alameda County Health Care services Agency, who oversees the delivery of health care services countywide. The idea was spawned by something he noticed in 2009 in the aftermath of a controversial police shooting. During the protest that ensued, the angry crowd moved to the side of the road and cheered as a fire truck sped by. Another incident occurred later during the outbreak of the H1N1 epidemic. Firefighters were among those who delivered vaccinations to low-income residents who stood in long lines to receive vaccinations from the first responders, preferring to wait instead of going elsewhere for the vaccine.

What these incidences suggested to Briscoe was the high level of trust that Hayward firefighters

apparently enjoyed in low-income areas of the community. Noting that first responders also had specific knowledge about many patients, having responded to emergency health calls in the past, he reasoned that there might be merit in capitalizing on that trust and knowledge to improve access to primary care and preventative care. Over a period of years, the concept was discussed and explored until a collaboration of public agencies, health care providers, the California Healthcare Foundation, local architects, the fire department, labor groups, and the faith-based community mounted a grassroots effort to site the clinic at a new fire station.

Among the groups spearheading the effort was The Organizing and Leadership Academy. Formed in 2010, the group has taken on a mission of training the next generation of grassroots organizers and leaders. The group's organizers and volunteers spent two months going door to door, visiting more than 11,000 households to inform residents about the firehouse clinic concept. The group gathered more than 1,900 letters of support from residents and more than 122 from businesses, congregations, and community organizations. The letters were presented to the Hayward City Council to garner support.

> Firefighters were among those who delivered vaccinations to low-income residents who stood in long lines to receive vaccinations from the first responders, preferring to wait instead of going elsewhere for the vaccine.

After Hayward officials, the fire department and the Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center committed space, staff, and leadership, Alameda County officials pitched in to commit dollars from a health services tax initiative passed by the voters in 2004. The center was built on city land, but the county paid $1.2 million in construction costs, with Hayward covering another $840,000 in infrastructure and technology costs. The Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center operates the clinic and the county is subsidizing operating costs for the first two years.

The firehouse clinic idea creates a nexus between the emergency first responders and the healthcare system by increasing communication, sharing data, and coordinating services to better connect patients to provide the best level of care and continuity. The staff uses tablets instead of computers to cut down on patient waiting time and ensure that records are easily accessible. In addition, exam rooms are equipped with wheeled carts loaded with supplies. The idea is to provide more effective, patient centered health care that improves patient outcomes and reduces costly emergency room visits, taking advantage of the trust and expertise of the first responders.

Hayward Fire Chief Garrett Contreras notes that firefighters are trained as first responders in an emergency. "We do trauma and emergency medicine really well, but when we have a patient that doesn't have those significant issues, we treat them the same way—we send them to the emergency room," he says. "There's a better way to do it. There's a better, more cost-effective way to help make this a healthier and more vibrant community."

The 2,400 square-foot Firehouse Clinic, located at 28300 Huntwood Avenue, officially opened in early January and operates about 20 hours a week, but will soon be open from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. weekdays, with eventual weekend hours. A full-service primary and preventive care clinic, common medical visits to the Firehouse Clinic include everything from ear/nose/throat infections, urinary tract infections, asthma, TB tests, and treatment of colds and flu.

An onsite lab runs basic tests, such as for blood sugar and pregnancy. In addition to medical services and follow-up from emergency room visits, the Firehouse Clinic staff provides health navigation services to connect patients to the best insurance program available to them and a medical home for chronic care, if necessary. Medical staff also provides referrals for specialty care and acute care follow-up to ensure that discharged patients are taking medicines and following medical advice. Mental health and dental care will soon be part of the service menu.

The Firehouse Clinic is expected to treat 9,450 patient visits in the next two years, providing health

services to about 2,400 new clients this year and 3,500 new clients next year. With Medi-Cal and Medicare billing and public funding, the operational model should be scalable and sustainable in this and other communities. It is expected to pay for itself the third year of operation in Hayward.

The Affordable Care Act brought changes to health insurance and opened the doors for everyone to get insurance. However, just because it is available does not mean that all will enroll or find access to timely, quality care in a convenient place. Like other areas, Hayward faces a shortage of primary and preventive health services. The Firehouse Clinic improves healthcare access to a vulnerable population regardless of coverage. Most importantly, it provides families and individuals with access to primary care. For single-issue and one-time medical needs without long waits, a first for many in the community.

> Medical staff also provides referrals for specialty care and acute care follow-up to ensure that discharged patients are taking medicines and following medical advice. Mental health and dental care will soon be part of the service menu.

Upwards of 76% of the calls firefighters respond to are medical and not to extinguish fires. Similarly, research shows that a significant number of costly emergency room visits are not acute and that patients would be better served in a primary care setting, such as the Firehouse Clinic. This trend is even more prevalent in underserved communities.

During 2015, 13,109 transports were performed within Hayward, a minimum of 30% of which most likely did not require an ambulance or an emergency department (please note that transports do not result from most first responder calls). That equates to at least 3,933 ambulance transports to an emergency department that could have been handled differently.

In addition, there are patients returning to the hospital following discharge due to lack of compliance with discharge instructions, which has created a readmission rate that is unacceptable. To that end, Medicare is no longer covering facility or professional fees for patients readmitted within 30 days. With 6,349 discharges from Hayward's St. Rose Hospital, there is a significant probability of readmission for patients diagnosed with chronic diseases.

In the past decade, rates of chronic disease in Alameda County's underserved communities have risen. People turn to the emergency room because they are not able to see a primary care provider, or they do not have health insurance. What they need is better access to healthcare as is being offered at the Firehouse Clinic. The clinic is close to home, convenient and affordable—both from a community and a public funding perspective. There is also the added benefit of health navigation services, which are essential to help new patients to secure insurance and gain access to the medical services they need to stay active and able to care for their families.

Data show that children are more likely to have seen a healthcare provider and to receive well-child health visits when parents are also receiving healthcare. The Firehouse Clinic's operator, Tiburcio Vasquez, has been expanding healthcare services to youth by establishing clinics in schools; however, school officials knew that more parents needed care in order to really impact outcomes. A study by the Institute of Medicine found that the health of parents can play an important role in the well-being of their children, noting that a parent's poor physical or mental health can create a stressful family environment that may impair the health or well-being of a child. The study suggested that better treatment for parents may ultimately improve the family environment in which children grow up and may contribute to better child health and personal outcomes.

Education and Healthy Families

Hayward has adopted a "Cradle to Career" ethic to encourage residents from all backgrounds to succeed in school, graduate from colleges and universities, and thrive in the career market. Local institutions and service agencies have also developed a range of initiatives and programs to advance the cause of learning. For example, the city has formed a partnership with the local school district and higher

education institutions, California State University East Bay and Chabot College to help kids facing linguistic and academic challenges.

The partnership puts a focus on aligning services and adopting a collective impact strategy. They have situated after school Homework Support Centers (HSCs) at 10 local schools and two libraries. The homework centers offer bilingual tutoring services two hours a day, four days a week. Recruited from California State University East Bay and Chabot College, the tutors are given literacy training, so they can be effective in helping kindergarten through 12th grade students. The kids get free meals through the school district's food service and access to free Wi-Fi and Netbooks or Chromebooks.

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Tutors receive stipends for their participation in the program. They come from diverse backgrounds and different majors and gain useful experience to help with a variety of useful skills. It also gives them an opportunity to reflect on the challenges facing students and teachers in underfunded and low performing schools and learn about the social challenges associated with urban schools and working class communities. According to Hayward's AAC application, "The HSCs proved remarkably successful in helping students improve standardized test scores. Before and after standardized testing of students who attended the HSC at Longwood Elementary School (one of the lowest performing schools in Hayward… (showed) that participating students significantly improved their scores on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress test.

Student Success Coaches have been placed at each of the HPN target high schools. Funded by a two year grant from AT&T, the Aspire High School Achievement Program (AHSAP) expands HPN by introducing systematic interventions specifically targeting youth at risk of dropping out. Dedicated Student Success Coaches ensure that at-risk students receive the support they need for successful high school completion and transition. These specialists monitor students' academic performance on a continual basis; develop Individual Academic Achievement Plans; collaborate with counselors, teachers, and parents to help students reconnect with school; and connect students to tutors, the career center, credit recovery at Eden Regional Occupation Program, and other resources. The program increased graduation rates in the two high schools, on-time grade promotion, on-track graduation, and credit accumulation and completion of core courses (as well as required courses for state colleges). It improved attendance rates and reduced behavioral and disciplinary problems. Additionally, HPN Service Learning students support the project by also providing one-on-one attention and mentorship as well as tutoring and academic support to AHSAP students. College and career support includes higher education institution tours, career exploration, and support preparing college and financial aid applications. Workshops are also offered that guide and motivate students to prepare for the California High School Exit Exam, the Scholastic Aptitude Test, complete State Education course requirements for 2- and 4-year colleges, and achieve a high school education.

Education advocates of have long argued that student health and nutrition are vital for academic success. Hayward's Words for Lunch program helps bridge the summer learning gap that many low income students experience while offering students access to healthy food. More than 80 percent of local student qualify for free and reduced lunch programs, and some kids don't have enough access to healthy foods during the summer break. From mid-June to early August, children can get a nutritious meal at one of the city's parks and participate in a reading program every Tuesday and Thursday. The kids get free books and participate in a local Reading Challenge that recognizes students for achieving their summer reading goals.

Project EAT (Educate, Act and Thrive), an initiative of the Alameda County Office of Education,

works with young people and community groups to develop a Hayward Urban Agriculture Strategic Plan to support a local cottage food industry. At the Tennyson High School, students are trained as "youth mentors" to educate their peers and other local community members about the linking between urban farming and nutrition.

The Alabama County Food Bank has formed a partnership with dozens of local community organizations in an effort to get health, affordable food to residents through a Mobile Pantry program. The initiative also provides food safety and nutrition education. "Participating families," the application notes, "can select free nutritious foods suitable to their cultural needs. Consumers can also participate in cooking demonstrations, health screenings, and CalFresh (food stamp) application preparation. A Faces for the Future obesity education program is also being utilized and local high school students led an effort to change city zoning to increase the number of community gardens."

The Youth and Family Services Bureau

In Hayward, police officers, professional counselors, and other community partners work together in an effort to keep young people out of the judicial system and to assist them in making healthy choices. Typically, people are referred to the program if they exhibit behavior problems, if there is a pattern of parent-child conflict or abuse, or if there is a problem with adjusting to family trauma, say, domestic violence, a divorce, or the death of a close relative.

Counselors work with students, parents, and teachers to promote success in school, boost self-esteem, and confidence, and address emotional or mental health issues. Last year, the YFSB supported more than 250 young people with a range of services, which included, according to the AAC application, 24 probation and 70 law enforcement referrals. Additionally, 78 students participated in eight-week "mindfulness" curriculum and 45 youth were given "inclusion instruction," and 25 students were enrolled in ongoing support groups like the "Lunch Bunch." The bureau is also working to identify common themes and provide staff training/in-service events to provide teachers with the tools to intervene appropriately and reduce the number of consultation hours. Parents are critical to student success, so YSFB make presentations designed to help parents support the well-being of their kids by providing information on gang violence, gender, and transition issues, emotional wellness, internet safety, and parental responsibilities. The bureau is now working in ten local schools too and has the capability to provide crisis services throughout the Hayward school district.

More than 650 Hayward youth ages 5 to 14 participate annually in Junior Giants, free, noncompetitive summer baseball program developed to give at-risk kids an alternative to drugs, gangs, and crime. The program is a partnership of the San Francisco Giants Community Fund and the Hayward Area Recreation and Park District (HARD). Participants hone their baseball skills in a program that promotes education, healthy eating, violence prevention, and positive character development. Free breakfasts and lunches are provided

To quote once more from the AAC application, a report found on last summer's program found that more than 90 percent of parents saw an increase in participants' confidence, integrity, leadership, teamwork, standing up for and respecting others, and knowing what to say or do. Results also showed that students were making healthier lifestyle choices: drinking more water and less soda, eating more fruits and vegetables, exercising more, and reading more. One parent responded that the program helps "parents as well as children in developing good values and character."

Participants hone their baseball skills in a program that promotes education, healthy eating, violence prevention, and positive character development. Free breakfasts and lunches are provided.

The YFSB has been around for decades, but last year the program was expanded when local school officials expressed concerns about the problem of chronic absence, one of the major causes of low school performance. Through the Hayward Attendance Project, the community is building a coalition

to research and analyze trends to develop a data-driven approach to reduce chronic absences/truancy in South Hayward, where many families are immigrants. Partners include students, parents, residents, educators, community- and faith-based organizations, businesses, healthcare providers, probation officers, the district attorney, government officials, and researchers. Core partners are involved in monthly leadership meetings, and a 10-student Youth Council and cross-sector Leadership Council each hold quarterly meetings. The level of intervention and support services is divided into three tiers: Universal Prevention, Targeted Prevention, and Intensive Intervention.

It is hoped that this effort will not only benefit Hayward families but also serve as a model for other communities to support school attendance. Many Hayward youth and families are struggling, but Hayward's community is responding with an evidence-based approach and need-centric collaboration to cut crime, reduce youth involvement in the juvenile justice system, and ultimately keep kids in school every day so that they can graduate ready for college or career.

David Korth is neighborhood services manager for the City of Hayward, California.

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An Interview with Gary, Indiana, Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson

DOUG LINKHART

When Karen Freeman-Wilson *was elected mayor of Gary, Indiana, in November 2011, she became the first African American woman to serve as mayor of the Hoosier State. A graduate of Harvard Law School, she served as a local judge for several years before being appointed Indiana Attorney General in 2000. Later, she served as executive director of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. Born and raised in Gary, a city that has faced tough times in recent decades, she wrote her undergraduate thesis at Harvard on the city's economic decline. NCL President Doug Linkhart recently interviewed Mayor Freeman-Wilson to find out how the city was engaging residents in efforts to fight crime and improve police-community relations*.

Q: Mayor Freeman-Wilson, thank you for having this talk with me. I'm intrigued by your interest in community policing and community in general. And wondering how you saw that issue when you first came into office?

A: It was one of the motivating factors that caused me to run a third time. I had seen the system as a prosecutor, a public defender, and as a judge. In fact, I was of the first judges to introduce drug treatment court to the state of Indiana. I have also seen the system as a victim of crime. My daughter, my mother, and I were robbed in broad daylight in front of my mother's home at gun point. Then, finally, when I was coming home one night a young man had been killed in the back of my home. There was crime scene tape all along my back yard. I had pretty much decided that I wasn't going to run for mayor again. But after having that experience and prior experience with the criminal justice system, I thought that I might have something to offer. I knew that the police were working hard, I knew that the community was concerned about it. But I also had a clear understanding that there wasn't as much collaboration between the police and the community as was needed to really begin to solve problems in this arena.

Q: How do you think the community viewed the police department at this point?

A: It was my sense that the community viewed the police department as not being as responsive as they should be, but I'm not sure the community really had a sense about how understaffed and under-resourced the police were. I felt that it was important for the community to understand they had a role in policing.

Q: What is their role?

A: Their role is to be the eyes and ears of the department. The reality is that you can have one thousand officers in a small city and still not have an officer at the scene at the location of every illegal activity. The role of the community is also to embrace police officers and embrace them as individuals who often live in the community, to also understand that (community members) have to help them do their job and embrace them when they're doing their jobs in a constitutional way. The overwhelming majority of police officers are good people, caring people. That is why they're engaged in that vocation. Sometimes the skepticism with which people view police is not well placed. You tend to give people the benefit of the doubt when you know them.

Q: And did you not have that closeness between officers and residents, do the police live in other communities?

Editor's Note: This interview is part of the *National Civic Review's* expanded focus in 2017 and 2018 on community efforts to promote racial equity and healing. National Civic League is a key partner in supporting W.K. Kellogg Foundation Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation program. In 2018, the league's All-America City Award will cast a spotlight on communities with inclusive engagement practices that promote equity and bring all voices to the table to help solve our country's most pressing and complex issues. With this spotlight NCL hopes to learn more about the inclusive decision-making processes that communities use to solve complex problems and move toward more equitable communities.

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A: Well, because of state statutes, officers are now free to live in any contiguous county, and so you don't have the opportunity always to get to know them outside of their police role. And sometimes they worship in the community, sometimes they don't. Sometimes they're involved civically, sometimes they aren't. They may coach, sometimes they don't. A long time ago, when we were growing up, police officers lived in proximity to the community that they policed, so you knew that was your school friend's dad. You knew that was your church member. If they were a deacon, you understood it was deacon Jones first, as opposed to officer Jones, and that's a different type of relationship.

Q: So how do you create that relationship between the officers and the community?

A: You have to be very intentional in providing opportunities for the officers to mentor young people, and that contact has to be consistent on a monthly basis, on a weekly basis. You have to encourage officers to go out into community places on a regular basis, even when a crisis is not happening.

Q: What types of programs have your officers been involved in?

A: Our officers are engaged in weekly meetings in the community. They go and talk to community groups about maintaining safety in the community. They provide tips on preventing burglaries and other property crimes. They make their cell numbers available and encourage people to communicate with them. They are engaged in block club meetings. They are engaged in neighborhood watch, initiating neighborhood watch programs. They take the canine units to schools, and community groups, boys and girls clubs, YWCA, and other places where you typically find young people, so they can become acclimated to the canine officers and understand that they are there again to protect and serve. They also do random acts of kindness, so you have "Shop with a Cop" during the holidays. You have cops stopping people and handing out gifts during the holiday season. To have a cop stop you and not give you a ticket or citation but to give you a gift, goes a long way toward allowing a citizen to give an officer or any officer the benefit of the doubt.

Q Tell me more about the block clubs.

A: We have worked with our Urban League of Northwest Indiana to encourage neighbors and organizations to develop block clubs, so we have developed these block club kits that people can use to create block clubs where they didn't exist in the past and revive those that were dormant. As a part of that process one of the first meetings we have with newly formed or newly revived block clubs is with police.

Q: Do they have block parties and those sorts of event?

A: They have block parties, neighborhood gatherings. Some block clubs have a common space that they use, maybe it is a green space that was created as a result of a demolition or a reconstruction, which they can use as a gathering space. They sometimes discuss improvements that need to be made, fiscal improvements to infrastructure, for example. Sometimes they just identify a house where activity might be occurring that isn't legal. And because the overwhelming majority of folks are law abiding, it is easy to single out one or two houses and say, hey we need to get the attention of police in those areas. They engage in a variety of activities.

Q: What else have you done to build trust between the officers and residents?

A: We have a meeting coming up this week with the Community Relations Service of the Department of Justice, working with them and with members of the community to develop a civilian advisory committee to the police. We have a police commission, but there are times when we believe it may be appropriate to interface with a civilian advisory board. We are currently in a working group to develop that with the guidance of the Department of Justice.

Q: What work are you doing on the issue of implicit bias?

A: We are part of the national pilot for Police Community Trust, one of seven cities training officers about implicit bias. We are interviewing and creating focus groups, involving local residents, young men of color and police officers to get them to

interact and interface and have a discussion around what they see when they see police officers? How do they feel? How are police officers perceived?

Q: Do the implicit bias conversations extend into those areas, not just policing?

A: Yes. Every officer in the department in Gary has been trained in implicit bias. Sso that allows them to look at their work through a different lens, and part of the implicit bias efforts have to do with the conversations that are spurred by the training that has already occurred.

Q: What's happening with crime rates over your five years? I know some of it is the national influence and all that?

A: In the crime rates this year, we have seen the greatest reduction across the board. We are most excited about, I should say, and most nervous about the reduction in the murder rate. We're down by fifty percent. And you know at the same time were just holding our breath because we have three months to go.

Q: And you're watching Chicago, I'm sure.

A: We are, because we get a lot of spillover. I would say that we were not so close to Chicago, our crime rate would be lower. We are in an active corridor (Highways) 65, 80, and 94. We get a lot of traffic from the Detroit-Chicago connection, from the Indianapolis area connection. That is not to say we don't have our own home grown talent in the criminal arenas.

Q: What's been the key or the secret to getting the community involved, because they're not easy some times to get to the table?

A: It has been to respond to complaints in an expeditious way, but also to respond to complaints with a positive challenge by saying, "OK we're going to deal with that. I need you to deal with this, I need you to be involved in your block club, to look at neighborhood watch, to be a youth volunteer for mentoring." When people come here they often have complaints. Let's face it, that's the nature of this business. They don't call the mayor's office to say "I just want to say you guys are doing a great job." So we recognize that and it gives us the opportunity to challenge the community, whether it is the community at large or members of the faith community. We have been able to engage them and say, "We know that we have a lot to do. We believe there's something you can do as well."

Q: Is there any evidence that it is working, that more community people are engaged?

A: I think that the reduction in crime across the board is a direct result of the success of community engagement. It is not all about the police. It could never be all about the police."

About the National Civic League

The National Civic League (NCL) is one of the leading proponents of citizen democracy in the United States. Founded in 1894, NCL is a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to building community and promoting political reform at the local level. NCL accomplishes its mission through facilitating community processes and conducting and publishing research on political reform and community building. Through its All-America City Award program, NCL also celebrates community engagement efforts across the nation.

NCL believes that a thriving democracy requires the involvement of all sectors of society—the public, private, and nonprofit—in addressing our common needs and problems. NCL envisions a country where citizens are actively engaged in self-governance and works to create an inclusive civic culture comprising the diversity of community voices. As part of the overall goal of invigorating citizen democracy, NCL recognizes the essential contribution made by effective local government, and since 1900 it has published and revised a Model City Charter to guide citizens in the process of establishing efficient and responsive local government structures.

First known as the National Municipal League, the organization was founded in 1894 by educators, journalists, business leaders, and policymakers as a means to promote municipal reform. Theodore Roosevelt, Louis Brandeis, and Marshall Field were among those who participated in that founding meeting. The gathering was organized in response to widespread municipal government corruption and served as a national call to "raise the popular standards of political morality." Through its quarterly policy journal, the *National Civic Review,* its other publications and newsletters, and a vibrant Web site, NCL continues to ensure that this call is heard.

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