



Bringing Civil Discourse Workshop to your State

***Building Trust through Civil Discourse* is a half-day interactive workshop that includes facilitated discussions and exercises for participating legislators. The goal is to develop a deepened appreciation for one another's commitments to public service, agree on a vision for working productively together, and identify concrete steps toward achieving that vision.**

Legislators:

1. The first step in bringing the workshop to your state is the identification of a bi-partisan pair of legislators to agree to be the champions. Should you have an interest in being one of the champions, seek out a partner from across the aisle to work with you to start the process.
2. Once you have your team, you should approach the leadership with your desire to host the workshop in your state and ask for their support and identify a date.
3. Next Generation has found that the ideal size for the workshop is between 15 to 30 legislators. The mix between Republicans and Democrats should be as evenly divided as possible. Also, we encourage the inclusion of both Senate and House members in the group.
4. Picking a venue and the date are the first critical steps in the process.
5. Invitations should be sent from the champions or through the leadership. Next Generation will provide templates for invitations and save the dates that you can send to your colleagues.
6. If a local sponsoring group has not been identified by NICD, you are encouraged to seek out a University School of Public Policy, or an advocacy group that might be interested in providing the venue / co-ordination assistance.
7. Below is a draft agenda of the workshop that will help in your understanding of the program as you explain it to your colleagues:



**Draft Agenda for Building Trust through Civil Discourse
Workshop**

- 8:00 **Breakfast Introduction of Workshop Purpose**
 Participant Introductions Social Networking
- 8:45 **Ground rules for the workshop**
- 9:00 **Define the Current State of Civility/Incivility and**
 and Political Dysfunction
 Small Groups
 Report Out
- 9:30 **Political Journey**
 Timeline exercise
 Gallery Walk
 Pairs Small Group Discussion
- 10:15 **BREAK**
- 10:30 **Envisioning the Desired State of Civility**
- 11:00 **Opportunities to Leverage Change/Goal Statement**
- 11:30 **Statement of Mission and Action Agenda**
- 11:45 **Feedback**
- 12:00 **ADJOURN**



next
generation

A Program of the National Institute for Civil Discourse

The National Institute for Civil Discourse (NICD) is a nonpartisan organization that combines research and practice to address political dysfunction and advocate for civility in governance through three target areas: elected officials, the media, and the public. Next Generation is NICD's program that focuses specifically on state legislatures. The purpose behind this focus is the importance of engaging with elected officials before they reach the nation's capitol as nearly 50% of state legislators run for higher office. In 2012, 305 Congressional candidates were current or former state legislators. Moreover, state legislatures are also often overlooked due to the national focus on Congress, however when compared, state legislatures passed 45,564 bills and resolutions during the 2013-2014 legislative sessions while the 113th Congress enacted 296 laws between January 2013 and January 2015.

“Building Trust through Civil Discourse”

A half-day Interactive Workshop

Developed by Ted Celeste, former Ohio State Representative, and presently the Director of State Programs for The National Institute for Civil Discourse, this workshop has been co-facilitated by a Republican and Democrat legislator in nine states over the past two and a half years. The main mission of the workshop is to provide legislators with an opportunity to explore the benefits of increasing the level of civil discourse in their state and more effectively work across the aisle in their legislative work. “Building Trust through Civil Discourse” is an energizing, legislator-led program that aims to improve a culture where discourse and collaboration typify public policy development.

The half-day workshop generally begins with a meal, with time for legislators from both parties and both houses to introduce themselves. After the meal, the two co-facilitators lead the group in discussion to determine the ground rules for the workshop. These rules are then posted on a flip-chart and displayed throughout the workshop. This exercise allows participants to create their own safe space for personal interactions throughout the workshop.

The component of the workshop that gets the most positive comments from participants is called the “political journey”. During this exercise, each legislator is asked to think about the event in their lives that most influenced who they are politically today, write it down and post it on a wall underneath a listing of decades. After a time for everyone to

read each other's' events, small groups are convened to share those experiences and their impacts. Afterwards, participants reflect on the exercise and its common themes.

The two co-facilitators lead the balance of the workshop in discussions identifying what an ideal legislature would look like if it were conducting business with civility, what the barriers are in their state preventing civil discourse, and what can be done to improve the level of civil discourse, with the development of a series of action steps for implementation. In every state that has held the workshop to date, a robust list of action steps has been developed and several states have already held a second workshop.

An outgrowth of the workshops has been the development of a facilitator training program that has trained 27 legislators and former legislators to co-facilitate workshops around the country. As the demand for workshops increases, additional facilitator trainings will be held at multiple times throughout the next two years to increase Next Generation's number of trained facilitators to accommodate states who are interested in holding workshops.

In a number of states, local and state organizations have jointly sponsored the workshops and offered to help sustain any ongoing activities that the participants have identified in their action steps. This commitment to sustainability is the key to implementing lasting results through this program.

Additionally, having had over 220 legislators from 9 different states participate in at least one "Building Trust through Civil Discourse" workshop, we kick-off our National Network of State Legislators Dedicated to Civil Governance on August 2, 2015 preceding the commencement of the 2015 NCSL Legislative Summit.