



# Civic Engagement

## Agenda

**Social Time** (30 min)

**Roundtable Discussion**  
(45-60 min)

Use the guide to the right to structure your conversation.

For Circles larger than 15 participants, break into groups of 7-10. Each group should identify who will be the **facilitator, timekeeper, scribe, and reporter.**

**Circle Recap** (20 min)  
Breakout group reporters share findings.

**Next Steps** (15 min)

**Discuss** how to influence policy-making.  
**Determine** who will post a summary.  
**Decide** on a topic and date for the next meeting.

## Roundtable Discussion

**Opening Questions** (10-20 min)

Take 1-2 minutes to share a thought or reaction to the brief.

- What lenses did you wear when reading the brief?
- What is your background or experience with this topic?
- Did your opinion change? What did you learn?

**Questions for Discussion** (30-40 min)

- How engaged are you in your community? Do you remember your parents being involved in civic /community groups and organizations when you were young?
- How would you navigate a conversation on policy issues with someone with whom you disagree?
- How has being a member of The Policy Circle impacted or changed you? If you are just starting out with The Policy Circle, what impact do you hope to see?
- What steps can you take to become more civically engaged? What is within your comfort level and what would be outside of it?
- How would you explain the importance of civic participation to the younger people in your life, be they children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews?

**Closing Questions** (5-10 min)

- How can we influence the dialogue on this topic?
- Who can post a meeting summary on our Circle page?
- What are thoughts on a topic for next meeting?

(If you have more than one breakout group, please reconvene as a larger group for the Circle Recap and Next Steps.)

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## Key Facts:

- According to a Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement report “Today’s young adults are less engaged in civic and political activities than their predecessors were 30 years ago.”
- Civic engagement is “working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference, according to Thomas Ehrlich, board member of the Corporation on National and Community Service.
- The concept of civic duty dates back to the ancient world with the Athenian oath, a pledge young men in ancient Athens took when they came of age to state their commitment to civic responsibility. This influence of classical thinkers and writers from the ancient world influenced the thinking of our Founding Fathers.
- Robert Putnam, Harvard professor and author of *Bowling Alone*, defines “social capital” as “connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called ‘civic virtue.’ ... a society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital.”
- The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life lists the following five obstacles to civic engagement:
  - Lack of Civility
  - Lack of attention public affairs
  - Lack of role models
  - Lack of civic and political skills
  - Lack of awareness
- The Policy Circle builds civic engagement through a focus on education and roundtable discussion where women build a better understanding of policy which leads to increased confidence and greater engagement with issues facing their communities.
- The Policy Circle focuses on policy rather than politics to cultivate civil conversation rather than contentious partisan debate.

## What Can You Do:

- Talk about policy with people in your life.
- Follow an issue in your community.
- Find a free market think tank in your state or a national think tank and follow them; subscribe to their newsletter and keep up with what is going on in your state. Read about ways they are having an impact across the country.
- Follow the U.S. House Agenda “A Better Way,” which makes the case for a stronger, safer, and more prosperous America and outlines concrete steps and reforms. recap the discussions and identify next steps together.