

CONVERSATION SPARKS

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT BRIEF



What is civic engagement, why does it matter, and how can you get involved? The **Civic Engagement Brief** answers these questions and explores the importance of Americans' participation in civic life, how to build the social capital essential to civic duty, and how to become a more engaged citizen.



When you hear the term “civic engagement,” what comes to mind? How is it different from or similar to political participation?

The Constitution protects freedoms of speech, assembly, press, and petition. Why are these protections essential to civic engagement, and how do they shape public policy?

What role do civil society institutions, such as nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and community groups, play in influencing policy?

Why might local government be the most accessible and impactful place for civic engagement?

What local policy decisions most affect your daily life?

What barriers prevent people from engaging in civic life (time, distrust, etc.)?

How does civic knowledge (or the lack of it) influence public policy outcomes? Should states or communities reconsider how civics education is taught?

Public trust in institutions has shifted over time. How does trust (or distrust) affect civic participation and policy development?

Has technology strengthened or weakened civic engagement?

If you wanted to influence a policy issue you care about, what would be your first step? What level of government would you target and why?

After discussing the Civic Engagement Brief, consider how you (individually or as a Circle) might turn insight into action.

FROM DISCUSSION TO ACTION: WAYS TO GET MORE ENGAGED

Civic engagement doesn't require running for office. Consider taking one concrete step to start or continue your civic engagement journey:

- Attend a local government meeting (city council, school board, county commission, zoning board) to observe how decisions are made.
- Review your local government's website to learn how to submit public comments or contact elected officials.
- Meet with or write to an elected representative about a policy issue you care about.
- Serve on a local board or commission (library board, planning commission, advisory council).
- Volunteer with or support a civil society organization addressing an issue in your community.
- Research an issue before the next election understand how local offices shape policy outcomes.
- Support civic education efforts in your community, such as mentoring students or advocating for stronger civics curriculum.