ENGAGING CITIZENS
on the Tough Issues

AMERICA SPEAKS
Engaging Citizens in Governance
www.americaspeaks.org

About America*Speaks*

America*Speaks* seeks to reinvigorate democracy by engaging citizens in the public decision-making that most impacts their lives.

Since 1995, we have built a reputation for taking-on the tough issues and for making sure citizen voices are heard. Believing deeply in the collective wisdom of ordinary people, we created the 21st Century Town Meeting®: a dynamic forum that integrates state-of-the-art technology with small-group, face-to-face dialogue to allow thousands of people to deliberate simultaneously about important issues and come to shared views. We connect citizen voices to decision-makers in the deliberation process in order to have the greatest impact on public policy.

America*Speaks* is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization based in Washington, D.C. Through the support of our worldwide volunteer network – and our international arm Global Voices – we have led dozens of citizen engagement projects on issues such as health care, economic development, Social Security, brain science, government spending, the environment, and disaster recovery.

America*Speaks*' volunteers give generously of their time and skills to help citizens around the world have a greater voice in public decision-making. We are pleased to introduce a few of them on the pages of this report.

AMERICASPEAKS
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REBUILDING THE CONNECTION
Between the Public and Policy-Makers

We are living in an important time for the practice of democracy. World events make it increasingly apparent that citizens *must* have a real voice in governance. In the last year, America*Speaks* has dramatically expanded the scope and reach of its work, enabling more than 11,000 people in the U.S. – and globally – to be authentic participants in the decision-making that most affects their lives.

From the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland to the community of Oakland Mills in Columbia, Maryland, America*Speaks* is bringing together diverse groups of citizens to deliberate on difficult issues, find common values, and reconcile conflicting viewpoints. Our work helps build strong coalitions that hold decision-makers accountable for change.

This report provides a snapshot of our recent and ongoing efforts.

- *We're tackling the tough issues:* gulf coast recovery, health care, youth obesity, economic development.
- *We're engaging citizens at every level of governance:* community, county, city, state, regional, national, and international.
- *We're breaking new ground with our 21st Century Town Meeting model:* facilitating in nine languages, conducting an international webcast and managing a two-site data and video link.

After ten years we still hold fast to the cornerstone commitments that make the 21st Century Town Meeting uniquely successful. We make sure every voice is at the table, and the work is transparent. We produce immediate citizen recommendations and ensure decision-makers are involved and committed to taking action. Most importantly, we commit to – and achieve – the scale of participation necessary to have an impact.

We believe the increasing volume and success of our work is compelling proof that citizens are ready to have their voices brought into public decision-making processes on a regular basis. As we move toward this goal, we find inspiration in America's founding tenets: "consent of the governed," and "a government of the people, by the people and for the people." Through the lens of this early wisdom we understand that democracy *must* maintain an authentic connection between the collective will of the people and their representatives. We are working to rebuild the connection, and hope you will join us in meeting this challenge.

Carolyn J. Lukensmeyer, Ph.D.
President and Founder, America*Speaks*

2005: A BANNER YEAR
for America*Speaks* and Citizen Engagement

Voices & Choices Northeast Ohio *(on-going)*	Tens of thousands of citizens are determining how to solve regional economic challenges.
World Economic Forum Davos, Switzerland *January, 2005*	700 world leaders prioritize actions on poverty, globalization, climate change and other issues.
Oakland Mills Village Meeting Columbia, MD *January, 2005*	A community creates a revitalization agenda; block safety effort covers 60 percent of the area in the first year.
European Citizens' Deliberation on Brain Science Brussels, Belgium *March, 2005*	Citizens from nine countries develop recommendations for the European Parliament.
San Francisco Listens San Francisco, CA *April, 2005*	300 people prioritize action steps for the Mayor on governance, housing, and public safety.
Tough Choices in Health Care Biddeford & Orono, Maine *May, 2005*	Citizens across the state help the Governor develop a new state health plan that reflects their priorities.
Clinton Global Initiative New York, NY *September, 2005*	800 world leaders decide actions on poverty, climate, religious conflict and good governance.
National Conference on Citizenship Washington, D.C. *September, 2005*	Citizens determine local, state and national strategies for strengthening and measuring citizenship.
Your Health, Your Care, Your Say Birmingham, UK *October, 2005*	1,000 Britons produce a roadmap to make the health care system more responsive to consumers' needs.
Citizen Summit IV Washington, D.C. *November, 2005*	2,000 people prioritize actions for the Mayor on job training, at-risk youth, housing and other issues.
Louisiana Recovery & Rebuilding Conference New Orleans, LA *November, 2005*	Citizens, planners and designers jointly develop key principles for rebuilding in Louisiana.
Gulf Coast Business Reinvestment Forum Washington, D.C. *November, 2005*	125 economic leaders build strategies for strengthening business reinvestment in the Gulf.

AIDING RECOVERY IN THE GULF COAST
Bringing-in Citizen Voices

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita rendered thousands of people both homeless and "community-less," and exposed deep racial and economic disparities in our nation. Successful long-range recovery in the Gulf will depend on whether those who have been most affected have a voice in shaping the vision and priorities for their region's future. The displacement of Gulf Coast residents presents an unprecedented challenge for their participation via traditional governance mechanisms.

America*Speaks* Brings Vision and Experience to Early Planning

In mid-November, America*Speaks* helped facilitate the Louisiana Recovery and Rebuilding Conference (LRRC), the first large-scale, multi-stakeholder meeting to develop key principles for rebuilding. To support a more diverse and representative process, America*Speaks* recruited 150 citizens and community representatives to join planning and design professionals and officials at this three-day event. America*Speaks* provided facilitation and technology that enabled citizens to participate fully and equally, and produced immediate synthesis and prioritization of participants' views. On December 1st, the principles that emerged from the LRRC were unanimously endorsed by the Governor and the Louisiana Recovery Authority as a foundation for going forward.

Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco listens to citizens' views.

There is a long way to go in the Gulf. Our vision for recovery efforts is large scale citizen engagement – involving thousands of people – that is representative, transparent, fair, and directly linked to the governance processes charged with rebuilding. America*Speaks* has been working with many organizations and coalitions in Louisiana and Mississippi to help make this happen.

> " I wanted to give something of myself that might make a lasting impact on the future of New Orleans and its citizens. Facilitating and coaching are gifts that I have been given, so sharing them through America*Speaks* was a perfect way for me to help."

—Gloria Polk
Volunteer Facilitator from Detroit, MI
Louisiana Recovery and Rebuilding Conference

FIXING TROUBLED HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS
Citizens Weigh-in

Health care is an area of public life in which citizens' views have often been absent from policy-making. And yet, around the world, governments struggle with how to ensure that citizens have access to health care that truly meets their needs. In an effort to address this disconnect, America*Speaks* has been undertaking a series of efforts, at home and abroad, that are aimed at bringing citizens into decision-making about health care.

Mainers Weigh-In On Tough Choices in Health Care

Maine Governor John Baldacci knew that health care reform in his state would only be possible if it reflected the priorities of the people who would be using the system. But enabling real dialogue that would build shared views across a large and rural geographic area would not be easy. In May, 2005 America*Speaks* partnered with Governor Baldacci to make it happen. Through an innovative two-site, statewide design and a modified random selection recruitment process, several hundred demographically representative Mainers deliberated together on cost-reduction, quality improvement and health care access, and provided the Governor with their recommendations. The strongest themes to emerge from this dialogue were the need for systemic change, a stronger focus on prevention, an increase in community health clinics, and universal coverage.

> " Tough Choices "will be the foundation of our continuing effort to expand affordable health care to all Maine citizens."
>
> —Maine Governor John Baldacci

Maine residents gathered in Orono participated by video-conference in the town meeting.

Citizens' Recommendations for Improving Health Care in Maine

- Encourage schools to offer healthy food choices and provide more opportunities for students to exercise
- Require all health insurance plans in Maine to make no-cost preventive care available
- Move away from the private-for-profit insurance paradigm
- Regulate insurance premiums
- Cap costs for health care providers and insurers
- Place controls on the introduction of new medical technology
- Create a single-payer universal coverage system
- Combine the expansion of Medicaid with expanding 'DirigoChoice' (a state health coverage program).

The "Tough Choices" meeting launched many months of additional citizen deliberation, all of which has resulted in a new Maine State Health Plan that clearly reflects the views from the initial large-scale forum. The Winter 2005 issue of *Maine Policy Review* features a case study on the Tough Choices project. Please visit: www.umaine.edu/mcsc/mpr.

Britons Get a Commitment for Health Care Improvements

In October, 2005, Global Voices – America*Speaks*' international arm – partnered with the U.K.'s Opinion Leader Research, to organize and facilitate the biggest public consultation of its kind ever held in Britain: a 1,000-person national citizens' forum on health care. The 21st Century Town Meeting, part of an extensive citizen input process that was sponsored by the National Health Service, was broadcast live on the web, received day-long coverage on several BBC channels, and made the national press.

"Your Health, Your Care, Your Say" sought guidance on how health services could be better aligned with the realities of people's everyday lives. The deliberations produced a clear roadmap for change and commitments from Prime Minister Tony Blair. The National Health Service agreed to: work with doctors to increase office hours; improve local access to treatment options; provide for additional in-home care; give physicians greater control of the National Health Service budget; and establish a new emphasis on prevention.

> " When the government was planning the next steps in building a modern, high-quality health service, we went out and asked you what you wanted. "
>
> —Tony Blair,
> Prime Minister of England

CONGRESS SEEKS CITIZEN INPUT
Town Meetings Set Health Care Agenda

Greatly concerned about our country's troubled health care system, in 2004 the U.S. Congress decided to take-up the issue with the American people. For the first time in our history, it was mandated that citizens be a part of a national debate on health care that would influence public policy and spur government action.

The Citizens' Health Care Working Group was authorized by law to lead this work – to bring together the country's health care experts and examine the issues. Then, with this information in hand, the Working Group was charged with traveling the country, listening to what citizens have to say, and producing a roadmap for change.

America*Speaks* is helping to lead this nationwide, bipartisan engagement process by facilitating both large- and small-scale 21st Century Town Meetings around the country. Citizen views are also being gathered via the Internet and through the distribution of "Community Meeting Kits" which help individuals hold discussions in their homes or communities. The findings from these discussions are then added into the mix of information being generated around the country.

The 21st Century Town Meeting model is helping citizens find shared views on four key questions: What health care benefits should be provided? How should services be delivered? How should coverage be financed? What trade-offs should be made to ensure access to high-quality care?

The Working Group's recommendations will be presented to Congress and the President in late 2006 and early 2007, and are likely to shape health care decision-making over the next decade. For more information about this initiative, please visit www.citizenshealthcare.gov

> "For nearly 50 years, Washington has tried to impose a top-down, one-size-fits-all solution to health care, and it has not worked."
>
> **—Orrin Hatch**
> **U.S. Senator (R-Utah)**

BUILDING OUR NATION'S CAPACITY FOR DELIBERATION

America*Speaks* envisions an American democracy in which citizens are regularly called upon to deliberate about key issues facing the nation, find common ground, and then guide the actions of policy-makers in Washington. We have the technological capacity to allow millions of people to be immediately and transparently involved in governance in this way – what we lack are the physical spaces, the financial commitment, and the political will to support this level of citizen inclusion.

In the coming years, America*Speaks* will continue to demonstrate the importance and the feasibility of a national deliberative infrastructure by conducting more national-level citizen deliberations, and by helping to build the necessary national infrastructure. We will help design new public spaces for deliberation; recruit a network of volunteers and facilitators; enhance existing technologies to facilitate greater inclusion; and help build public will.

GLOBAL VOICES
Europeans Explore Brain Science Implications

In May, 2005, America*Speaks* officially launched its international arm, Global Voices, to bring the 21st Century Town Meeting model to citizens around the world. Our deliberative methodology is engaging citizens in governance on issues of importance to single countries, to clusters of nations and across the globe.

A "Meeting of Minds" Links Citizens from Nine Countries

In March, 2005, Belgium's King Baudouin Foundation brought Global Voices together with a German partner, IFOK, to launch a series of ground-breaking deliberations involving 125 people from nine European countries. Participants from Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom met in their home countries three times and twice in Brussels over a nine-month period to consider the policy implications for new-found knowledge about the brain.

"Meeting of Minds" participants agreed on these priority issues for further study: regulation and control; normalcy versus diversity; public information, education and awareness; pressure from economic interests; equal access to treatment; and freedom of choice.

On January 23, 2006, the day after the final deliberation, citizens presented their conclusions and recommendations to the European Parliament.

In addition to the important public guidance emerging from this initiative, "Meeting of Minds" was also landmark work for America*Speaks*/ Global Voices in several ways. The deliberations required simultaneous translation in nine languages. The process successfully engaged average citizens on issues that were extraordinarily complex and technical. And, the initiative required a commitment to five weekends of deliberation spanning a nine-month period. For more information, please visit www.meetingmindseurope.org

GLOBAL VOICES

> "Meeting of Minds is an important achievement, establishing that citizens' participation is not only possible but also highly desirable. I'm convinced that this will contribute to more robust European policies."
>
> **—Janez Potocnik**
> **EU Commissioner for Science and Research**

> " This is the first time Europe has asked my opinion. Today, I feel truly European."
>
> **—Participant from Greece**

WORKING GLOBALLY
Building Bridges and Setting Key Priorities

Fostering agreement about the world's top priorities among heads of state, CEOs, religious leaders, academics, and public figures – and devising action steps – would seem a formidable challenge. But at the 2005 World Economic Forum and the Clinton Global Initiative, America*Speaks*' 21st Century Town Meeting process did just that.

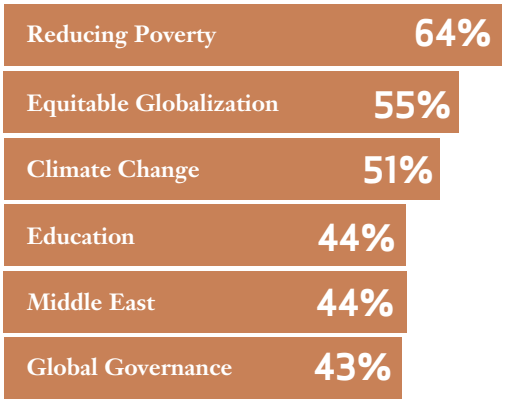
World Economic Forum Uses America*Speaks*' Methodology

On the opening day of the 2005 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, 700 world leaders sat down together to figure out how to prioritize and address some of the toughest issues facing the global community. America*Speaks*' international arm, Global Voices, led a Town Hall Meeting that helped these leaders narrow the list to six priorities for the coming year. Using a combination of laptop computers and individual keypads, small groups discussed the issues and then each participant voted his or her preferences.

Among the 12 issues originally on the table, the ones the assembly considered most urgent were: poverty, equitable globalization, climate change, education, the Middle East, and global governance. Over the following three days, World Economic Forum participants produced recommendations for action in all six areas. At the closing plenary they determined, by vote, which action steps would be the highest priority.

> "America*Speaks* has developed a curiously effective technique of using technology to tap the collective thoughts of a large group."
>
> —*Forbes* Magazine

World Leaders' Ranking of Most Important Issues



Source:
World Economic Forum 2005 Global Town Hall Results

Clinton Global Initiative Sets Ambitious Agenda

In September, 2005, President Bill Clinton convened nearly 800 world leaders to develop action plans on four critical issues: poverty, climate change, religious conflict and reconciliation, and good governance. Attending this first-annual Clinton Global Initiative were some of the world's key leaders and most prominent individuals, including: U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, King Abdullah of Jordan, General Electric Chairman Jeffrey Immelt, News Corporation Chairman Rupert Murdoch, and Oprah Winfrey.

America*Speaks*' trained facilitators led the table discussions, and the 21st Century Town Meeting technology allowed for immediate collation of the collective wisdom of the participants. At meeting's end, President Clinton announced commitments of nearly $1.2 billion to help fund work that will address the Initiative's priority concerns. In the following months, additional commitments have brought the total to $2 billion.

President Clinton announces more than a billion dollars in commitments on the meeting's closing day.

"If anyone had described the system to me in advance - facilitators live-streaming table comments to the panel for incorporation immediately into the session, and unscripted plenary panels —I would not have believed it could work!"

—Jan Piercy
Former Personnel Director,
Clinton Administration

"Participation matters. This is my work...to hold space for difficult conversations while allowing that which wants to emerge to come forward as an expression of co-laboring."

—Aliki Nicolaides
Doctoral Student, Columbia University, New York, NY
Volunteer Table Facilitator, Clinton Global Initiative

"America*Speaks* really can open eyes and change the way people think about the world through deepening and enlightening the discussion."

—Seth Green
Chair, Americans for Informed Democracy, New Haven, CT
Volunteer Table Facilitator, Clinton Global Initiative

FACING CITY BUDGET CHALLENGES
Mayors Bring Citizens into the Process

Public budgets have an enormous impact on the quality of people's daily lives. Unfortunately, because needs often outpace resources, budget decisions tend to create winners and losers. By "leveling the playing-field" among participants, a 21st Century Town Meeting helps ensure that resource allocation reflects the common good rather than the priorities of the most vocal.

Washington, D.C. "Citizen Summits" Engage Thousands

Mayor Williams and Carolyn J. Lukensmeyer of America*Speaks*.

Washington, D.C. has a long and well-documented history of problems in government management, resulting in residents who have been highly distrustful of, and disconnected from, decision-makers. In 1999, Mayor Williams launched a process to renew people's faith in government and involve them in changing the status quo. In November 2005, Citizen Summit IV capped this seven year initiative that brought together more than 13,000 citizens in four D.C.-wide 21st Century Town Meetings about the city's spending priorities. A fifth summit, The City is Mine: Youth Summit 2000, engaged 1,400 young people to identify action priorities for the city's youth.

> "The America*Speaks* citizen engagement model has helped make our Citizen Summits an effective way to engage the public during our budget process."
>
> **—Mayor Anthony A. Williams**
> **Washington, D.C.**

The D.C. Citizen Summits have been the largest on-going town meeting in the U.S. Residents have come to the forums with concerns about safety, education, youth outcomes, housing, and government responsiveness, among other issues. Their efforts have borne fruit.

- Millions of dollars in the city budget have been allocated to citizens' priority concerns: an additional $270 million for education; $10 million for senior services; 1,000 new drug treatment slots; an additional $25 million for a housing trust fund; $2 million for citizen involvement; and nearly $20 million for more police and juvenile-related initiatives.

- New community-based governance mechanisms with enhanced oversight measures have been put in place.

- A new and codified role for youth in the District's policy development process was established.

The 2005 Citizen Summit was Mayor Williams' last, since he is not seeking re-election. As testament to the power and popularity of this initiative, all five mayoral candidates attended the Summit and announced their commitment to continuing broad-based citizen engagement in the District of Columbia.

San Francisco is allocating funds to address the needs of the homeless.

San Franciscans Give Mayor Their Top Priorities

Eighteen months into his term as San Francisco Mayor, Gavin Newsom wanted to make sure he was on the right track – that his priorities matched citizens' concerns. In partnership with America*Speaks* Mayor Newsom sponsored "SF Listens," three small-scale 21st Century Town Meetings which brought together 300 residents to deliberate about priorities for the city.

One of citizens' primary goals was more effective and responsive government. To respond to this concern, Mayor Newsom made a strong commitment to a 24-hour "311 line" for addressing residents' needs and to performance evaluations for government workers. Homelessness, housing, and public safety also emerged as top priorities for citizens during the 21st Century Town Meetings, and these were later reflected in the Mayor's budget. Some $136 million has been allocated for housing and services for the homeless, as well as low cost rentals for seniors, families, and the disabled. The new budget calls for a $14.4 million increase over the prior year in funds for affordable housing.

" People definitely come in with one set of preconceptions and ideas. They get information and they actually learn through the process of dialogue and communication with other human beings."

–Don Edwards
CEO, Justice and Sustainability Associates
Area Facilitator, Washington, D.C. Citizen Summits

TACKLING A FALTERING ECONOMY
Northeast Ohioans Roll Up Their Sleeves

Tens of thousands of people from across Northeast Ohio are coming together to set an action agenda to revitalize the area's ailing economy. This massive public deliberation, called Voices & Choices, is the result of an unprecedented partnership between America*Speaks* and a coalition of 80 local foundations and organizations.

Citizens Set Agenda for Area's Growth

The 15 counties of Northeast Ohio face some daunting challenges. With more than four million people, the area lags behind the country in job growth, wages, and plant openings. Its big cities – Cleveland, Akron, Canton and Youngstown – are experiencing budget shortfalls and population declines. Complicating efforts to address these concerns are the region's 500+ political jurisdictions that have historically acted unilaterally.

To address the challenges head-on and build the public will needed to turn the region around, America*Speaks* designed one of the largest public deliberations ever convened. Voices & Choices is a three-stage initiative that began in March 2005 and will continue through the fall of 2006. It combines a variety of approaches for mobilizing the region's citizenry, including one-on-one interviews, online forums and large-scale town meetings.

In the fall of 2005, more than 1,000 leaders and nearly 3,000 citizens took part in a series of workshops and interviews about the region's strengths and challenges. Their ideas shaped the design of a Regional Town Meeting in November, which engaged 750 people. At this meeting, citizens from all 15 counties began to identify the most important challenges facing the region.

Voices & Choices participant makes a point during a small group discussion.

" In creating a process of public engagement that draws on the broad community, the coalition has set an impressive example for all of us, encouraging fresh approaches to reinventing Northeast Ohio."

***—Akron Beacon Journal*, November 16, 2005**

In early 2006, more than 20,000 people across the region are taking part in hundreds of conversations held in homes, schools, churches and community centers, to prioritize challenges and brainstorm solutions. In the summer of 2006, thousands of people will evaluate a series of "tough choices" facing the region in online forums, leadership workshops and a second Regional Town Meeting. By the end, the initiative will produce a clear and powerful economic action agenda for Northeast Ohio.

For America*Speaks*, Voices & Choices demonstrates the feasibility of a large-scale deliberative infrastructure – an important stepping stone toward our vision of an American democracy in which millions of citizens are regularly called upon to deliberate about key issues facing the nation. Our blueprint for this work, called "Millions of Voices," is available at www.americaspeaks.org/resources/library/as/pubs/index.htm

"There's an old saying that if the people will lead, the leaders will follow."

—David T. Abbott, George Gund Foundation, Voices & Choices Funder

" I do this work to create a more viable future for this region, as a model for others to learn from, and to discuss the importance of intergenerational community education."

—Peter J. Whitehouse M.D.-Ph.D.
Shaker Heights, Ohio
Volunteer Table Facilitator, Voices & Choices

" Every individual has the capacity to make a difference and when technology, skill, committed listening, and open dialogue are put together the world can be a better place for everyone."

–Audrey Sloofman
New York City
Volunteer Table Facilitator, Clinton Global Initiative

SHAPING AMERICA'S YOUTH
Taking on the Challenge of Youth Obesity

Nearly one in three American children is overweight or obese, and the numbers are growing. Overweight adolescents have a 70 percent chance of being overweight or obese as adults. These trends have put millions of Americans at great medical risk for impaired productivity, reduced quality of life, and a shortened lifespan. The future added healthcare costs for the nation will be extraordinary.

Shaping America's Youth Brings America*Speaks* on Board

Shaping America's Youth® (SAY) is a cross-sector initiative seeking to develop a National Action Plan that will mobilize policy makers, service providers, doctors, educators, parents and others to address our nation's youth obesity crisis. SAY asked America*Speaks* to facilitate a series of 21st Century Town Meetings to help achieve these goals.

The first SAY Meeting, held in January, 2006, brought together 1,000 residents of Memphis and the Mid-South region. Participants rose to the challenge of looking at responsibility for youth obesity from multiple perspectives – from the individual level to the national policy level.

> "I didn't go to the Shaping America's Youth Town Meeting on my own behalf, but I came away from it with major personal benefits. I came away with a new perspective on...the impact on my family, my parish, my community, my state and the nation. I made a commitment to exert what control I could bring to bear on each of these levels and I did so with a much greater understanding of the nature and scope of the problem. Did I feel like my voice was heard at the Town Meeting? Well, in a word "YES!" Thank you for helping me to have an impact on the future."
>
> **—Darla R. Joure, Memphis SAY Participant**

At the Shaping America's Youth meeting Laurie Durnell, a graphic facilitator from The Grove, puts participants' ideas into an action plan for tackling the youth obesity crisis.

The SAY Meeting was designed to move the discussion beyond "silver bullets" and devise action steps for many sectors. Participants prioritized ideas for stakeholder partnerships, such as food organizations joining with businesses to sponsor camps for kids; or health care providers, businesses and government creating competitions for the healthiest school environments. Key national action steps were also identified, such as collaboration between educators, corporations and federal agencies to fund national initiatives for healthy lifestyles and after school programs. Participants also strongly supported federal funding for physical education and the President's physical fitness program.

Local, state and national leaders have been strong supporters of the SAY initiative. At the Memphis Town Meeting, speakers included the Governor of Tennessee, the Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Health and an Assistant U.S. Surgeon General. In addition, U.S. Senators William Frist and Ron Wyden, and Congressman Harold Ford, Jr. addressed the assembly via videotape. At the end of the day, Shelby County Mayor A C Wharton committed his office to follow-up action.

On April 22, 2006, the second SAY meeting was held in Dallas. Two more SAY meetings, in two other cities, are also being planned. In late 2006, final recommendations from all the Shaping America's Youth Town Meetings will be presented to members of Congress, government agencies, and professional and non-profit organizations. For more information please visit: www.shapingamericasyouth.org.

" 'Making History:' Turnout – and Enthusiasm – Exceed Hopes at Forum on Children's Health"

—Headline in *The Commercial Appeal*, the day after the Memphis SAY deliberation.

" America*Speaks* made it very efficient to gather input from 1,000 people in this huge ballroom. There weren't a lot of presentations but rather a process for taking and processing information from a cross-section of the Memphis community to effectively make decisions. It was just astounding."

—Mary Jo Greil
Carson Greil Group LLC
Volunteer Table Facilitator, Memphis

THE AMERICA*SPEAKS* MODEL:
Taking Citizen Engagement to Scale

In a healthy democracy important policy decisions at all levels of government take into account the views of the public. For ten years, America*Speaks* has been a tireless advocate for active citizen participation in government decision-making. We believe an educated and involved citizenry leads to more effective and lasting public policy.

Principles for Successful Citizen Engagement

The 21st Century Town Meeting model is unique in its field in several ways: the scale of engagement, the immediacy of impact, the representativeness of participation, and the explicit link to decision-makers and governance processes that ensures outcomes. Seven core principles underlie America*Speaks*' model.

1. *The issue selected must be sufficiently "ripe."* A 21st Century Town Meeting works when real action on an issue is possible.

2. *Credibility must be maintained.* The process must be free of partisanship and bias and must be open and transparent throughout.

3. *There must be diverse participation.* A broad segment of the affected public must participate – especially those who are most marginalized.

4. *A safe public space must be created.* Events must foster fair and productive dialogue in which individual citizen voices are equal to those of established interests.

5. *Informed dialogue must be supported.* High-quality deliberation requires strong facilitation, neutral materials and the availability of experts.

6. *Public agreement must be achieved.* To be actionable, the process must produce information that clearly highlights the public's shared priorities.

7. *Citizen voice must be sustained.* A robust public participation process sustains its constituency, secures institutional commitments and builds on-going civic capacity.

A Menu of Approaches to Citizen Engagement

Working with a range of governmental, nonprofit and private sector partners, America*Speaks*' projects can engage several hundred citizens or several thousand. Some projects call for small-scale community forums while others feature a large-scale 21st Century Town Meeting. Increasingly, our projects involve a combination of approaches.

■ The 21st Century Town Meeting

The 21st Century Town Meeting is a public forum that links technology with small-group, face-to-face dialogue to engage large numbers of people (up to 5,000 at a time) in deliberations about complex public policy issues. Through a combination of keypad polling, groupware computers, large screen projection, teleconferencing and other technologies, 21st Century Town Meetings enable people to simultaneously participate in intimate discussions *and* contribute to the collective wisdom of a very large group. The 21st Century Town Meeting creates a level playing field on which citizens can be authentically engaged with each other in policy and planning discussions that are directly and transparently linked to real governance processes and to key decision-makers.

■ Smaller-Scale Meetings

The technology and principles of the 21st Century Town Meeting can be applied to smaller forums involving a few hundred people. These more intimate settings are ideal for generating quick public input on a local issue, or to enable more focused, follow-up work after a large-scale meeting.

■ Webcasts and Online Deliberations

Online communication is an important frontier for reaching large numbers of citizens. America*Speaks* facilitates dialogues over the Internet as part of a 21st Century Town Meeting process. Simultaneous webcast of a 21st Century Town Meeting is another strategy for bringing tens of thousands of people into a dialogue.

■ Citizen-Facilitated Discussions

Citizen-facilitated discussions expand the reach of a 21st Century Town Meeting. Self-identified individuals use a video and discussion guide in their homes, places of work, or communities to proceed through the agenda used in the large-scale forum. The results of these small group discussions are transmitted electronically and incorporated into the larger body of opinions being generated by the deliberation process.

Providing Leadership to the Field: The America*Speaks* Democracy Lab

In addition to conducting large-scale 21st Century Town Meetings, America*Speaks* builds the citizen engagement field through our Democracy Lab – a home for innovation, collaboration and experimentation. Highlights of our recent work include:

- *Research & Development.* We are studying the dynamics of deliberation, the after-effects of participation, and the institutional and policy effects of the 21st Century Town Meeting model. We are also developing a growing online inventory of deliberative methods and creating tools to guide people in using them.

- *Publication.* Among other publications, America*Speaks* recently published "Public Deliberation: A Manager's Guide to Citizen Engagement," through a grant from the IBM Center for the Business of Government. Available at www.americaspeaks.org

- *Experimentation.* By working with developers at the forefront of online citizen engagement – citizen journalism, online consultation, and online community-building – we are bringing some of the latest thinking into America*Speaks*' projects.

PROJECT TIMELINE
America*Speaks* 1998 to 2006

1998
Americans Discuss Social Security
(45,000 people)

2000
Washington D.C.
Citizen Summit I Follow Up
(1,500 people)

Washington, D.C.
Youth Summit
(1,400 people)

1999
Washington, D.C. Citizen Summit I
(3,000 people)

2001
Tri-States Colloquium
Ohio
(200 people)

Youth Summit Follow-Up
(125 people)

Northeastern Illinois
Planning Commission
(1,000 people)

Washington, D.C.
Citizen Summit II
(3,000 people)

Citizen Summit II Follow-ups
(1,250 people)

2002
Community COMPASS
Hamilton County, Ohio
(1,300 people)

National Conversation
on Youth Development
(1,200 people)

Listening to the City I
(650 people)

Harvard Kennedy School
Town Meeting
(150 people)

Listening to the City II
(5,350 people)

Academy of Natural Sciences
(150 people)

2003
Colorado College
(400 people)

The RegionSpeaks,
Charlotte, NC
(150 people)

Leadership 2003, Harvard University
(150 people)

American Camping Association
(1,250 people)

Colorado 100 Leadership Summit
(130 people)

Dialogue with the City
Western Australia
(1,100 people)

Fixing New York's State Fiscal Policies
(150 people)

Washington, D.C.
Citizen Summit III
(2,800 people)

2004

Oakland Mills Village Meeting
Columbia, MD
(150 people)

American Camping Association
(1,050 people)

FEMA Project
Florida Gulf
(1,000 people)

Skyland Mall Town Meeting
Washington, D.C.
(60 people)

United Agenda for Children Charlotte, NC
(1,000 people)

First Quarter 2006

Voices & Choices
Northeast Ohio
(estimate total of 50,000 people)

Shaping America's Youth
(estimate total of 4,000 people)

Citizens' Health Care Working Group
(estimate total of 4,000 people)

Pittsburgh Non-Profit Summit
(1,000 people)

European Citizens' Deliberation
on Brain Science
(125 people)

SeaportSpeaks
New York City
(80 people)

2005

World Economic Forum
Global Town Hall
(700 people)

Oakland Mills Village Meeting,
Columbia, MD
(200 people)

Voices & Choices Northeast Ohio
(4,750 people)

European Citizens' Deliberation
on Brain Science
(125 people)

San Francisco Listens
(300 people)

Tough Choices in Health Care
Maine
(300 people)

Clinton Global Initiative
(800 people)

National Conference
on Citizenship
(250 people)

UK: Your Health,
Your Care, Your Say
Birmingham, UK
(1,000 people)

Washington, D.C. Citizen Summit IV
(2,000 people)

Louisiana Recovery
and Rebuilding Conference
(700 people)

Gulf Coast Business
Reinvestment Forum
(125 people)

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GET INVOLVED
with America*Speaks*

America*Speaks* needs your help and support in strengthening our democracy by bringing citizens into government decision-making.

- Subscribe to our quarterly newsletter to get regular updates on where we are working and what issues we are tackling. Email us at news@americaspeaks.org
- Become a 21st Century Town Meeting facilitator. Send an email describing your facilitation background and experience to facilitators@americaspeaks.org
- 21st Century Town Meetings have catalyzed change in communities, cities, states, and regions. Find out how a Town Meeting can bring a pressing issue in your area into the spotlight. Email us at info@americaspeaks.org
- Help us reinvigorate democracy in America and around the world. Encourage others to get involved so we can increase public demand for large scale citizen engagement.
- Make a financial contribution to America*Speaks*. Your support will help us increase citizen voice on more issues and in more communities. Email us at development@americaspeaks.org

For more about America*Speaks* please visit us on the Web at www.americaspeaks.org or call us at 202-775-3939.

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Engaging Citizens in Governance

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