AMERICASPEAKS
Engaging Citizens in Governance

1050 17th Street NW, Suite 701
Washington, DC 20036
tel: (202) 775-3939
fax: (202) 775-0404
info@americaspeaks.org
www.americaspeaks.org

On The Road to National Discussions:

Three Major Initiatives that Blaze the Trail

A Report from

AMERICASPEAKS

About America*Speaks*

America*Speaks* gives citizens an authentic voice in local, regional, and national decision-making on the most challenging public issues of the day. Our vision is that the public's business will be conducted differently – that by developing a rich national infrastructure for democratic deliberation we can access the collective wisdom of the American people.

More than 130,000 people have had an impact on their communities through our 21st Century Town Meetings® and multi-faceted citizen engagement strategies. Among other projects, America*Speaks* brought large-scale citizen participation to the redevelopment of the World Trade Center site and post-Katrina New Orleans; to the creation of municipal budgets in Washington, D.C. and San Francisco; to regional planning and economic development efforts in the greater Chicago area and Northeast Ohio; and to setting a framework for brain science research and decision-making for the European Parliament.

Founded in 1995, America*Speaks* is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization based in Washington, D.C. For more information, please visit us on the web at www.americaspeaks.org

What is the 21st Century Town Meeting?

America*Speaks*' 21st Century Town Meeting® is a public forum that links technology with small-group, face-to-face dialogue to allow thousands of people to deliberate simultaneously about complex public policy issues and express a shared message to decision-makers. 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 decision-makers and real governance processes.

Message From the President:
Groundbreaking Work Toward our Vision

America*Speaks* recently concluded three large-scale initiatives that have helped us turn a critical corner. We have reached a new level of proficiency in citizen engagement that sets the stage for launching a National Discussion in 2009 – after the presidential election cycle – on a topic of vital concern such as climate change or immigration reform.

This report offers a look at these three break-through projects, and how they build a foundation for a very different American democracy – one in which National Discussions are routine and citizens have a real voice in policy-making. The report then lays out a concrete path for getting there. Inside you'll find:

3 The Problem and the Vision:
What's ailing our democracy and how we can reinvigorate it.

5 New Orleans Community Congresses:
4,000 New Orleanians, many participating over great geographic distances, develop a recovery blueprint for their city.

7 Citizens' Health Care Working Group:
35,000 people develop a common viewpoint on health care reform through national-level engagement strategies.

9 Voices & Choices:
21,000 people from the 16 counties of Northeast Ohio take on the area's failing economy through a strategic mix of engagement methods that sustain high levels of participation over time.

11 Large-Scale Citizen Engagement in the Future:
The core components of a National Discussion and how to institutionalize them; and additional promising mechanisms for increasing citizens' roles in governance.

12 A National Discussion in 2009:
The next step is implementation, and there's no shortage of gridlocked national policy issues calling out for citizen engagement.

America*Speaks* is "on the road" to achieving our mission – to reinvigorating our nation's democracy by ensuring that citizens can regularly and authentically participate in decision-making about the most challenging public issues of the day. We hope you will join us.

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

The Problem and the Vision

An Ailing Democracy…

In a healthy democracy, policy-making at all levels of government reflects the views of the people most affected; citizens and leaders are partners – not adversaries – who work together to make the decisions that will guide the nation.

Unfortunately, these words do not describe democracy in America today, where civic participation is low and people have lost faith that their elected officials will represent them. In our democracy today, political leaders are trapped in a polarized environment, face intense pressure from special interests and have little authentic connection to their constituents. The media has walked away from its role as a consistent and authentic educator of the public.

We see the results of our democratic deficit all around us: the public is often manipulated and unmotivated to participate, and there is a failure at all levels of political life to act for the common good. Unless we find a new way to involve citizens in the governance of the nation, our political institutions and our democracy will continue to decay.

…A Vision for the Future

For more than a decade, America*Speaks* has taken its 21st Century Town Meeting® and other public engagement strategies around the country, bringing participatory governance to citizens and decision-makers alike. We have partnered with hundreds of organizations, blending community outreach and unique engagement methods into a highly successful model. Thousands of facilitators have contributed their time and skills to these discussions.

Our work is about building an American democracy that is truly "of the people, by the people and for the people" – a democracy in which citizens from every walk of life can regularly meet and wrestle with tough policy questions, and then articulate their views to decision-makers.

We must ensure that millions of people are routinely called upon to engage in national-level policy deliberations on key issues. Citizen participation at this level would give policy-makers the strong support they need to truly act on the public's behalf. National Discussions would be a cornerstone of a thriving democracy.

America Is Ready:

Three Key Projects Pave the Way for National Discussions

In the last two years America*Speaks* has "upped the ante" in citizen engagement. Among a robust portfolio of projects, we have undertaken three large-scale initiatives that have significantly advanced practice in the field, and concretely demonstrate that America can take democracy to scale:

unop The Unified New Orleans Plan

Two *New Orleans "Community Congresses"* enabled 4,000 citizens to come together to overcome bottlenecked politics and produce the Unified New Orleans Plan, the official recovery blueprint for the hurricane-ravaged city. The work linked citizens living in New Orleans with those who had been dispersed to 20 other cities around the country. The Community Congresses demonstrated how to involve large numbers of people simultaneously over great geographical distances.

Voices & Choices

Voices & Choices brought together 21,000 people from across Northeast Ohio to address the area's ailing economy. This 18-month initiative featured a strategic mix of engagement methodologies to sustain citizen participation at unprecedented levels over an extended period of time.

Citizens' Health Care Working Group
HEALTH CARE THAT WORKS FOR ALL AMERICANS

The *Citizens Health Care Working Group* engaged more than 7,300 people in person, and more than 27,000 through electronic and written participation, in developing a national viewpoint on health care reform. One of the few times the government has formally authorized a national issue discussion, this work demonstrated a blend of national-level citizen engagement strategies.

We know that together, citizens will find solutions.

The pages that follow detail these three break-through initiatives – the context, the citizen engagement process, the results, and the lessons learned. With this experience in hand, America*Speaks* believes our country is ready for a National Discussion in 2009 on an issue of vital importance – such as climate change or immigration reform. The report concludes by mapping-out the core components of a National Discussion as well as additional promising mechanisms for increasing citizens' roles in governance.

The Unified New Orleans Plan

The New Orleans Community Congresses:

Bridging Geography to Produce a Blueprint for Recovery

Context: The Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina

Hurricane Katrina shattered the city of New Orleans and exposed many of the deep racial and economic disparities this nation has long ignored. In the aftermath, plans to rebuild New Orleans faced a ravaged infrastructure, financial losses of enormous scale, a failure by decision-makers to act quickly and effectively, and a citizenry whose trust in government had been abused. City officials' early planning efforts were met with anger and protest as the community struggled to revive an entire city.

Citizen Engagement Process: Rising to Meet Enormous Challenges

In this challenging environment, the parameters of what it would take to launch and sustain recovery planning in New Orleans seemed daunting. Participation representative of New Orleans before the storm, as well as the inclusion of New Orleanians dispersed around the country, would be needed. And, citizens would have to overcome extreme skepticism and fatigue about planning efforts, and a strong legacy – recently intensified – of racial mistrust and socio-economic division. Limited outreach for an initial city-wide meeting (not organized by America*Speaks*) drew only about 300 people – and few were from the low-income African American communities that had been disproportionately affected by the storm.

For the two Community Congresses that followed, America*Speaks* played a critical role in securing robust, diverse and substantive citizen participation. Through an accelerated and massive outreach effort, these deliberations engaged more than 4,000 citizens in New Orleans, Houston, Atlanta, Dallas, Baton Rouge and 16 other cities in developing collective recovery priorities for the city.

With key decision-makers listening, citizens discussed how to ensure safety from future flooding, empower residents to rebuild safe and stable neighborhoods, provide incentives and housing so people could return, and establish sustainable, equitable public services. The 21st Century Town Meetings used interactive television to connect dispersed citizens. Participation closely reflected the racial and socio-economic demographics of pre-Katrina New Orleans.

Results: Powerful Outcomes for the City

With its unprecedented levels of citizen engagement, the New Orleans Community Congresses yielded powerful results.

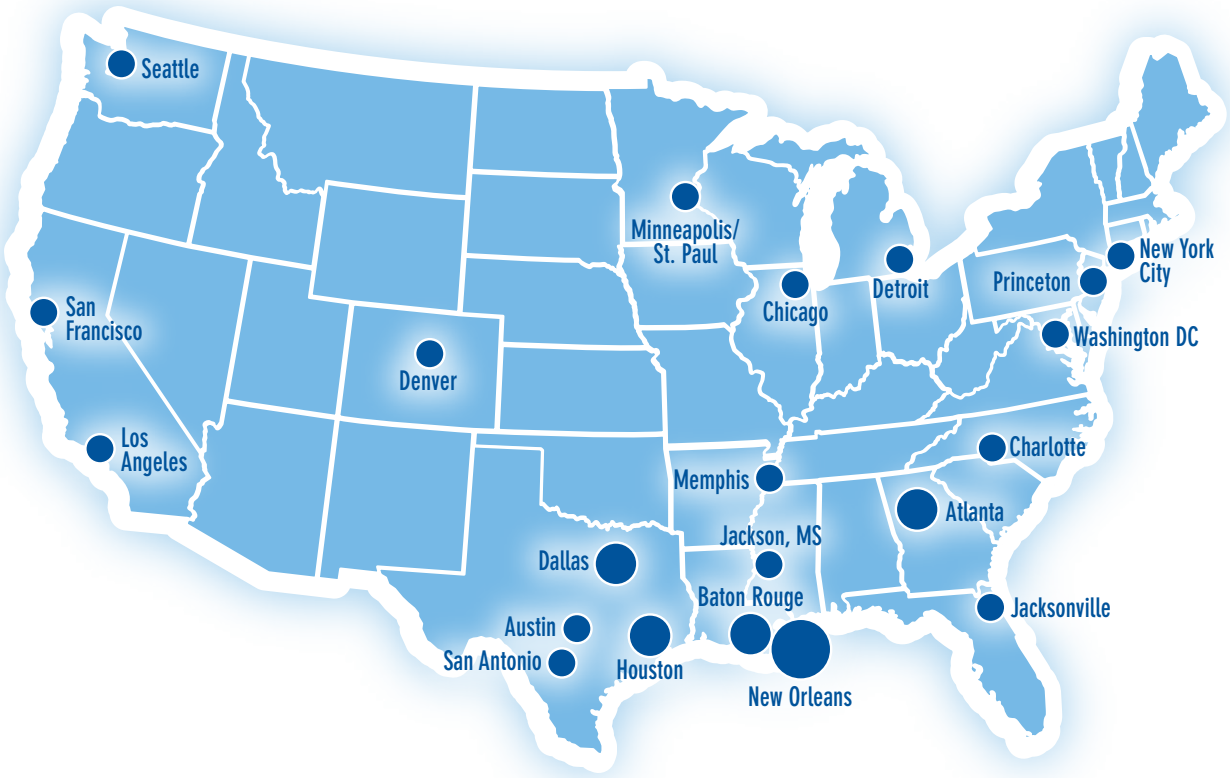
- **Decision-makers were brought on board.** After a year of conflict, local political leaders came together to support the Unified New Orleans Plan. In interviews by a Harvard researcher, New Orleans public leaders indicated that the Community Congresses enhanced the credibility of the planning process in their eyes, by gathering a representative mix of citizen voices and enabling conversation across differences.
- **Large numbers of citizens made substantive contributions to complicated policy issues.** Citizens publicly declared their priorities for rebuilding their city, raised concerns that accurately reflected weaknesses in the planning process, and were willing to accept additional responsibilities and individual sacrifice.
- **Equal voice was given to the most disenfranchised.** Diverse participants said they were "very comfortable" speaking their minds at their tables (96%), and that people listened to each other "very well" (91%).
- **The deliberation had an impact on citizens.** 80% said hearing from people in the other cities made a "big impression" on them; 33% felt their views had changed as a result of the table deliberations.
- **Citizens committed to staying involved.** 93% of citizens at the final Community Congress said they would stay engaged, creating a constituency for further participation and for holding decision-makers accountable for results.
- **Hope was ignited.** New Orleans and its citizens had been through a devastating trauma and left to languish for almost a year and a half without a concrete action plan. People's hope was reignited by participating in the Community Congresses.

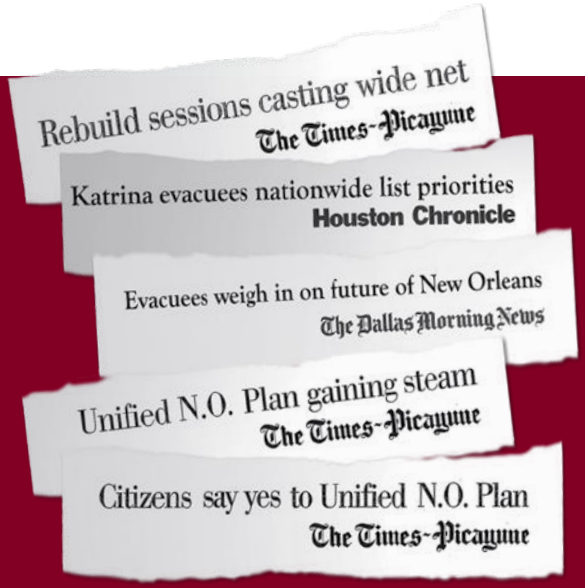
Milestones on the Road to National Discussions:
Involving Large Numbers Over Great Distances

The Community Congresses represented an advance in citizen engagement practice on several critical dimensions and laid important groundwork for institutionalizing National Discussions. The effort drew participation on a scale few had previously attempted, demonstrating concretely that dispersed geography need no longer hinder face-to-face participatory processes.

The effort also demonstrated effective strategies for securing substantial and representative participation in a "hardest case" environment, and for giving equal voice to those most disenfranchised. It showed that we can take citizen deliberation in our country to a much larger scale.

> "People of all races, creeds, from various neighborhoods actually had an opportunity to sit down with each other and engage in discussion… it has broken down barriers that have existed for a long time."
>
> - Tarence Davis, New Orleans Community Support Organization





Bridging Geographical Distances:
The Mechanics of a Multi-Site Meeting

The large-scale Community Congresses that were central to the Unified New Orleans Plan process engaged thousands of citizens simultaneously across the country. A series of technologies combined with the skill of hundreds of facilitators and staff made this possible:

- Facilitated table conversations helped people deliberate with their fellow citizens face-to-face.
- A webcast enabled citizens in 16 other cities to view the program while participating in their own facilitated discussions, and then submit their views in real-time.
- Networked laptops and handheld voting devices allowed constant distillation of emerging themes from table discussions and participants' votes in all sites.
- Public television viewers in New Orleans were able to follow the programming from their homes.
- Live participant interviews were broadcast via satellite video to the whole group throughout the day to capture a flavor of each location's conversation.

Citizens' Health Care Working Group
HEALTH CARE THAT WORKS FOR ALL AMERICANS

Large-Scale Citizen Engagement at the National Level Yields a Consistent Voice

Context: A Vexing National Issue

The U.S. spends nearly $2 trillion each year on health care – more than $6,000 per person – and yet our health care system provides unequal and inadequate care to large numbers of Americans. Health care has not kept pace with demographic changes or with advances in medical technology, and policy development has stagnated in the face of competing interests. There is an enormous gap between the public's readiness to make choices on health care, and decision-makers' ability to take action in a partisan and stale-mated political environment.

Citizen Engagement Process: Congress Mandates a National Debate

In 2003, the U.S. Congress decided to take-up this issue with the American people. Led by Senators Orrin Hatch (R) of Utah and Ron Wyden (D) of Oregon, the *Medicare, Prescription Drug Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003* mandated that citizens be part of a national debate on health care that would influence policy and spur government action. The non-partisan *Citizens' Health Care Working Group* was authorized by law to study the issues, listen to citizen views, develop recommendations, and secure a response from Congress and the President.

Traveling the country, the *Citizens' Health Care Working Group* asked Americans to explore their values and make choices about the health care services they want; how these services should be delivered; how the country should pay for it; and what trade-offs in benefits or financing they would be willing to make.

The Citizens' Health Care Working Group Travels the Nation

America*Speaks* and the Public Forum Institute helped the Working Group coordinate and implement this national initiative with a multi-tiered approach that included large and mid-size community meetings, small group meetings, and online interaction. Over 18 months, and with the support of more than 80 national, regional and local organizations, the initiative garnered substantial public participation:

- About 7,350 people attended 98 community meetings across the nation;
- Over 20,000 people responded to Internet questionnaires; and
- About 7,300 individual email and written comments were received on the Working Group's interim recommendations.

Results: A Consistent Voice on Health Care Emerges Though Impact is Limited

The *Citizens' Health Care Working Group* surfaced remarkable consistency of opinion on a complex and often contentious issue. Americans want a health care system in which everyone participates, and with benefits that ensure access to affordable, high-quality care. Americans also "expressed a clear willingness to pay a fair share, to try to do a better job of taking care of themselves, and to accept limits on coverage if based on good medical evidence" *(CHCWG Final Recommendations)*.

With nearly 35,000 people weighing-in, the Working Group's recommendations sent a clear message to Congress and the White House in September, 2006. Twelve weeks later, Senator Wyden unveiled a plan to provide health care coverage to all through a pool of private insurers – an idea at least partially linked to Working Group recommendations.

The work of the *Citizens' Health Care Working Group* was historic in that it was a federally mandated effort to gather the views of the American public as a precursor to policy-making. However, a national dialogue on this critical policy issue could and should have yielded more immediate and discernible results. In the end, the lack of a robust connection to policy-makers in Congress and the White House, and insufficient funding significantly limited the initiative's ability to affect debate and bring about concrete policy changes.

(for more information, www.citizenshealthcare.gov)

Milestones on the Road to National Discussions: Implementing National-Level Engagement Strategies

The *Citizens' Health Care Working Group* relied on a variety of innovative national-level citizen engagement strategies that will be key to future efforts:

- **Using a range of meeting formats.** The 98 citizen meetings combined large, medium and small-scale gatherings to cover every region of the contiguous 48 states and the District of Columbia. Some focused on health care in general and others on particularly challenging topics such as mental health and end-of-life care.
- **Convening experts and citizens via a Webcast.** The Working Group collaborated with the Big Ten Conference and the Association of Schools of Public Health to bring together participants from 22 universities across the country in a "University Virtual Town Hall Meeting."
- **Encouraging self-initiated meetings.** Citizens interested in holding their own discussions about health care had online access to a "community meeting kit" and were encouraged to submit results online.
- **Engaging opinions online.** Online efforts included a quantitative survey, open-ended questions and a Blog frequently updated by Working Group members.

"We fanned out across the nation to listen to citizens in person, to hear their concerns, and gain insights that we could get in no other way. There is no question that nation-wide discussions add significant value to policy-making."

- George Grob, Former Executive Director, Citizens' Health Care Working Group

Voices & Choices

Large-Scale Citizen Engagement Gives a Struggling Region a Powerful Action Plan

Context: A Region Faces Severe Economic Challenges

The 16 counties that make up the Northeast Ohio region faced some daunting challenges. Home to more than four million people, the area lagged behind the country in job growth, wages, and plant openings. Its big cities – Cleveland, Akron, Canton and Youngstown – experienced budget shortfalls and significant population declines. Efforts to address these concerns were plagued by leadership challenges and the region's 500+ political jurisdictions accustomed to acting unilaterally.

Citizen Engagement Process: 21,000 Citizens Step Up to the Plate

To respond to these concerns, the Fund for our Economic Future – a collaboration of over 80 philanthropies from across Northeast Ohio – launched a massive citizen engagement initiative in partnership with America*Speaks* and a collaborative of local universities.

Over 18 months, and through a strategic mix of engagement methods, *Voices & Choices* actively involved 21,000 people from across the region and educated hundreds of thousands more. Thousands of people helped identify Northeast Ohio's greatest assets and prioritize its most pressing challenges, including workforce development, race relations and income equality, business development, government inefficiency, equitable school funding and accountability, and regional sprawl. Hundreds of experts and leaders identified a broad set of options for addressing these issues and several thousand citizens then prioritized the ways to make it happen.

Results: Clear Priorities and Action Steps for the Region

Voices & Choices produced a clear agenda for turning around the ailing region and united the people of Northeast Ohio behind a collective commitment that was responsive to hard economic realities. The initiative also created an extensive network of citizens and leaders ready to work towards a stronger future for Northeast Ohio and to hold decision-makers accountable for action.

Now in a three-year implementation phase, *Voices & Choices* maintains contact with participants and supporters through the work of "Advance Northeast Ohio," a regional economic action plan announced in Spring 2007 that is based on the public priorities set during *Voices & Choices*. (For more information, www.voiceschoices.org and www.advancenortheastohio.org)

Milestones on the Road to National Discussions: Blending Engagement Methods and Sustaining Participation

Voices & Choices established a substantial base of experience from which to draw in building national-level discussions about challenging policy issues. In addition to providing a primer on operating in a regional context, the initiative demonstrated how to:

- Build and sustain momentum over the extended time needed to achieve in-depth citizen participation on a complicated issue;
- Effectively blend a range of citizen engagement methodologies to maximize reach and participation (see Box);
- Fully engage leaders so they publicly support the process and commit to its emerging agenda; and
- Ensure a vital role for the media in both educating the public and helping to generate large-scale participation (see Box).

"Change will require some new beliefs – new to Northeast Ohio at least: That the fates of people from Cleveland to rural Carroll County are intertwined. That if a region of 4 million people cooperates to leverage its many assets, it can be greater than the sum of those parts."

- The Plain Dealer

Vital Elements: Media Partnerships & Communication

The success of *Voices & Choices* hinged, in many respects, on two vital elements: the ability of local media to help generate awareness and provide information on the issues, and a large-scale and multi-faceted communication effort. Over 18 months *Voices & Choices*:

- Distributed more than 53,000 discussion guides and reports;
- Received more than 70,000 visits to – and 1 million hits on – its web site;
- Sent more than 100,000 email messages to its network; and
- Logged more than 450 stories in newspapers and on television for a total exposure of more than 39 million viewings.

Though improbable in today's competitive media market, ten of the region's public and private television stations came together to produce and broadcast a series of joint reports on the regional economy that were viewed by hundreds of thousands. This unprecedented collaboration significantly expanded *Voices & Choices*' reach and increased awareness of regional issues.

Voices & Choices:

Leadership Teams:
June 2005 - Ongoing

Multi-sector committees of leaders support development of regional priorities.

Citizen Interviews:
August - December 2005

33,000 citizens participate in one-on-one interviews to identify the region's strengths.

Leadership Workshops:
August - September 2005

1,000 leaders develop preliminary list of challenges facing the region.

Regional Town Meeting I
November 2005

750 citizens and leaders participate in a 21st Century Town Meeting to begin prioritizing regional challenges.

Community Conversations:
February - June 2006

13,500 prioritize challenges and brainstorm solutions in discussions in homes, schools, businesses and communities.

Leadership Summit:
June 2006

200 leaders provide input on action options for addressing the region's challenges.

Online Choicebooks:
July - September 2006

1,700 people complete interactive online surveys to prioritize solutions.

Make Your Choice:
September 2006

Ten public and private television stations broadcast a series of joint reports on the regional economy, viewed by hundreds of thousands.

Regional Town Meeting II:
September 2006

900 citizens and leaders participate in a 21st Century Town Meeting to identify action priorities.

On the Road to National Discussions: Next Steps

1 Take Stock of Lessons Learned

The New Orleans *Community Congresses* process, *Voices & Choices* and the *Citizens' Health Care Working Group* initiative clearly demonstrate advances in citizen engagement practice at the local, regional and national levels that lay important groundwork for regular National Discussions.

New skills have been developed and honed, such as how to:

- Secure participation across dispersed geography and in "hardest case" environments;
- Use webcasts and satellite video telecasts to link multiple deliberative sites;
- Build and sustain participation and momentum over an extended time;
- Blend a range of citizen engagement methodologies that can reach people where and how they live;
- Engage leaders creatively and strategically to sustain their participation;
- Use "community conversation kits" to support citizen-initiated discussion;
- Establish a role for stakeholder groups so their participation is well-balanced with that of citizens;
- Use the Internet as a participation vehicle; and
- Fully engage the media.

The three initiatives described in this report also reconfirmed a core tenet of America*Speaks*' work: to gain the attention of – and have credibility with – national policy-makers, a National Discussion must engage a sufficiently large and representative portion of the public. Only at this level of participation can such a discussion inspire or compel decision-makers to confront partisan grid-lock and take action on the issues most important to our nation.

2 Launch a National Discussion in 2009

America*Speaks*' work across the country demonstrates again and again that the public is ready to participate in regular discussions on key policy concerns. Getting from here to there, then, is not about convincing the American people. Nor, as this report reveals, is it about developing the technology or the know-how. We know how to bring together and substantively engage a large enough population to have a real impact on policy.

What is missing is the will in our institutional leadership – in the White House, in the Congress, among our governors and state legislatures – to make it a reality. And yet, a growing cadre of elected officials who have experienced this work first hand stand ready to help build our national will. Our sights are set on 2009, after the presidential election cycle, for launching a National Discussion on a critical public issue.

Identifying an Issue

There is no shortage of critical policy issues facing our nation – the war in Iraq, our struggling public education system, climate change, looming budget deficits of enormous scale, immigration reform. Through experience, America*Speaks*' has determined a number of criteria that indicate whether an issue is particularly "ripe" for large-scale citizen engagement. For example:

- When polling data show the public is ready to make far-reaching decisions to solve a problem even though the partisan political process will not allow it.
- When a win-lose model of ideological positioning is defining the direction for action instead of the common good.
- When there is a gap between expert opinion and citizen understanding that drives allegiances and stands in the way of dialogue.
- When the traditionally disenfranchised, and/or those most directly affected by an issue, have not had the opportunity to participate authentically and on equal footing with stakeholders and interest groups.

As we build our national capacity for these conversations, we can regularly take-on those issues that most need the collective wisdom of our citizens and the commitment of our decision-makers to take action.

Putting the Necessary Elements in Place

Five core components will be needed to launch a National Discussion in 2009:

1. A commitment to the resources needed to engage hundreds of thousands of people.
2. High levels of decision-maker and stakeholder involvement.
3. A strategy for ensuring transparency of process and immediacy of results.
4. A robust communication and media effort.
5. Creation of a National Advisory Board to provide credibility and visibility.

On the Road to National Discussions:
Next Steps

An Example:
"Americans Discuss Climate Change"

Despite broad scientific consensus about the reality of global warming, 64 percent of Americans perceive 'a lot of disagreement' among scientists on this question. Partisan political debates over the past ten years have increased confusion and divisions among citizens.

There are a variety of effective solutions to the problem of climate change, but many will require the public to accept trade-offs related to energy costs, lifestyle decisions, and job opportunities. Because citizens will be so intimately involved in the solutions, they must be authentically engaged in discussions, and come to agreement, about which directions to pursue. Without this, elected leaders have little political support for anything but maintaining the status quo or, at best, making minor, short-term changes.

A National Discussion on Climate Change could establish a collective understanding of the facts and a broad commitment to specific actions that will enable us to make substantial headway on this issue for the first time.

An Example:
"Americans Discuss Immigration Policy"

Development of a coherent national immigration policy will require synchronized responses to a series of challenges, including:

- the on-going entry of undocumented immigrants;
- the short- and long-term benefits and trade-offs of responding to immigrants' health and education needs;
- issues of national security and public safety; and
- balancing the country's larger economic needs with the needs of American workers.

To address these challenges, Americans will have to untangle facts from perception and prejudice, and juggle regional variations in the impact of this issue.

Though immigration has been a highly divisive subject, Americans strongly indicate that they are ready for a national policy that is both fair and fiscally sound. A National Discussion on Immigration would provide an opportunity to address concerns "continentally" so that policy reflects the needs of all three interested parties: the U.S., Canada and Mexico. While Congress is currently moving on the issue, a National Discussion would solidify a strong constituency to support policy-makers in their efforts to make real progress.

3 Build the Infrastructure to Support Regular Discussions

A National Discussion in 2009 would not be an end in itself. Rather, it would be a key stepping-stone toward building the institutional will and capacity in this country to enable millions of citizens to *regularly* participate in governance in this way.

In addition to National Discussions, a national deliberative infrastructure would require other mechanisms for bringing public voice into policy-making. Last summer America*Speaks* convened international leaders, practitioners and scholars to explore this question. From the gathering, a number of unique and concrete proposals were generated that would:

- Give citizens a legislated role in identifying an issue that Congress must place on its agenda each year;
- Provide an opportunity for engaging citizens in monitoring progress toward national priorities; and
- Establish performance measures of citizen engagement against which government agencies would be officially assessed.

America*Speaks* is committed to working with partners to create these and other new national governing mechanisms. In the coming months and years, we will look for opportunities to build the support, funding and leadership to do so.

Institutionalizing large-scale citizen participation will also require the availability of multi-use physical spaces that can support large-scale public deliberation; thousands of skilled facilitators who can moderate the public's dialogues; and a media environment that encourages citizen participation and educates the public about the issues on the table. As we travel the country undertaking citizen engagement work, we are helping to build capacity in all of these areas.

> "Engaging citizens is critical to building public trust. This is a solution for many challenges we are facing"
>
> - John Kamensky, Associate Partner and Senior Fellow, IBM Center for The Business of Government

Recapturing the Vision: American Democracy at its Best

It should not be a distant dream, that participation in National Discussions on critical policy issues will be – like jury duty and voting – a normal part of every American's civic life. America*Speaks* has been seeding this vision with decision-makers, foundations, communities, businesses, and with the American people. We know the road to regular National Discussions may be bumpy, with financial hurdles, credibility concerns, and turf battles. Yet the large-scale citizen engagement work undertaken over the last decade – and in particular the accelerated work of the last two years – provides a map. We can learn from these experiences and build on the substantial momentum that has been created.

Our founding fathers entrusted to us a system of governance that was brilliant in its simplicity – those who are governed must participate and give their consent. As a nation we have strayed from that vision, and suffered the consequences. It is time to recapture the vision so that American Democracy can fulfill its aspirations.

Laying the Groundwork:

The 21st Century Town Meeting Across the Country

What is the 21st Century Town Meeting?

America*Speaks*' 21st Century Town Meeting® is a public forum that links technology with small-group, face-to-face dialogue to engage large numbers of people (many thousands 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 decision-makers and real governance processes.

1998
Americans Discuss Social Security
(45,000 people)

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

2000
Washington, D.C. Citizen Summit I Follow-Up
(1,500 people)
Washington, D.C. Youth Summit
(1,400 people)

2001
Tri-States Colloquium Ohio
(200 people)
Washington, D.C. 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-Up
(1,250 people)

2002
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 Region Speaks, 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)

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)

2006

Voices & Choices, Northeast Ohio
(total 21,000 people)
Shaping America's Youth, Memphis, TN and Dallas, TX
(2,000 people)

Citizens' Health Care Working Group
(4,000 people)
Pittsburgh Non-Profit Summit
(1,000 people)
European Citizens' Deliberation on Brain Science
(125 people)
SeaportSpeaks New York City
(80 people)

Clinton Global Initiative
(1,000 people)
National Emergency Medical Services
Preparedness Initiative
(60 people)
Community Congress, Unified New Orleans Plan
(2,500 people)

Clinton Global Initiative
(800 people)
National Conference on Citizenship
(250 people)

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)

2007 (January - May)

Community Congress, Unified New Orleans Plan
(total 4,000 people)
National Emergency Medical Services Preparedness Initiative
(60 people)
Shaping America's Youth, Philadelphia, PA and Chicago, IL
(1,000 people)
Port Phillip Speaks, Australia
(750 people)
National Rural Assembly
(est. 300 people)

CaliforniaSpeaks
(est. 4,000 people)

National Advisory Board

Tom Allen
U.S. Representative, Maine

Derek Bok
Harvard University

Bill Bradley
Former U.S. Senator
Allen & Company, LLC

John Bridgeland
Civic Enterprises

Steve Burkholder
Mayor, Lakewood, Colorado

Henry G. Cisneros
Former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development
Former Mayor, San Antonio
City View

Archon Fung
Harvard University

William A. Galston
University of Maryland
The Brookings Institution

David Gergen
Harvard University

Jim Leach
Former U.S. Representative, Iowa

Jane Mansbridge
Harvard University

Mary G. Wilson
League of Women Voters

Constance Barry Newman
Carmen Group

Norman Rice
Former Mayor of Seattle
University of Washington

Alice Rivlin
The Brookings Institution

Barbara Roberts
Former Governor of Oregon
Portland State University

Lou Tomson
Former President,
Lower Manhattan Development Corp.

Daniel Yankelovich
Public Agenda
Viewpoint Learning

Board of Directors

Chair
Damon Hemmerdinger
A&Co., LLC

Treasurer
Benjamin J. Lieblich
ProPractica, Inc.

Secretary
Ernest H. Urquhart
Catholic Healthcare West

Juanita Boyd Hardy
IBM Global Services (retiree)

Peter Levine
Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning

Carolyn J. Lukensmeyer
AmericaSpeaks

Adam Solomon
StoneWater Capital, LLC

Supporting Foundations June 2005 – May 2007

Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Anthem Foundation of Ohio

Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation

Blue Shield of California Foundation

The California Endowment

California Community Foundation

California HealthCare Foundation

The California Wellness Foundation

Carnegie Corporation of New York

The Case Foundation

The Cleveland Foundation

Ford Foundation

Fund for Our Economic Future

The Greater Cincinnati Foundation

The George Gund Foundation

The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

IBM Center for the Business of Government

W.K. Kellogg Foundation

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation

The David and Minnie Meyerson Foundation

The Greater New Orleans Foundation

Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Inc.

The Rockefeller Foundation

Surdna Foundation

Get Involved with America*Speaks*

America*Speaks* seeks your support to strengthen our democracy, so that Americans can routinely engage in National Discussions on their critical public concerns.

- Subscribe to our newsletter for regular updates on where we are working and what issues we are tackling. Sign up on our homepage at www.americaspeaks.org or email us.
- 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 around the country and internationally. Contact us to help bring a pressing issue for your community into the spotlight.
- Help reinvigorate democracy in America and around the world. Encourage others to get involved and increase public demand for large-scale citizen engagement.
- Make a financial contribution to America*Speaks*. You can donate online at www.americaspeaks.org or send a check to America*Speaks*, 1050 17th Street NW, Suite 701, Washington, DC 20036. Your support will help us strengthen citizen voice on more issues and in more communities.

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