

LWV LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®
Raising Awareness Since 1920

New and Improved
Methods for

Civil Discourse



in the
Public Arena

"With malice towards none,
with charity for all"

Abraham
Lincoln

Effective
Ideas & Solutions

EASY TO USE

"Good governance is a clash of ideas and values in the political arena. We need to listen to our opponent's arguments and look for areas of common interest ...if we are to govern this country effectively."

Brint Milward, National Institute for Civil Discourse

-AND SO IT BEGINS...



“...And so it begins...”

What is Civil Discourse?

It is courteous, constructive communication characterized by mutual respect, fairness, and attentive listening.

Why Does Civility Matter?

Civil Discourse promotes informed discussion of public issues essential for government bodies and citizens to make good decisions.

Improving Civility is Easy

Shine a bright light on civility!
Call on others to do the same.



Find points of disagreement and their solutions amicably.

Be kind to one another, even if you disagree on stuff.



"Good God Winifred! How long has civility cost nothing?"

Civility: Not Just Politeness

It means be tolerant. Listen, don't interrupt. Refrain from sarcasm. Be respectful. Speak in modulated tones. Stick to the issue. Recognize there are two sides. Avoid labels.

Tip> To prevent shutting down conversation, choose civil words. Civility increases your chance of being heard.

Civility vs. Free Speech

You may have the right to say what you want but there is no need to say it in an inflammatory or insulting manner.

"We can only exercise our right to free speech insofar as we feel safe and respected in doing so, and this in turn requires that people treat each other with civility."

J. Mullen Jr., The importance of Civility in Public Discourse

Tip> Attack the message, not the messenger

INTIMIDATE

Violence, threats, personal attacks, name calling

CONTRADICT

"I'm right!
You're wrong!"

ARGUE

Using half-truths or lies

REFUTE

Constructively point out errors of opposition

DEBATE

Using reason and evidence



How to Adopt and Promote Civility and Civil Discourse

Table of Contents

Preface

Introduction

Acknowledgments

Some Civil Discourse Outcomes & Testimonials

Latest Civil Discourse Projects

What is the Level of Trust in your Government Bodies?

Are Citizens at the Top of your Government Bodies' Organizational Chart?

Have you asked your Government Bodies to Adopt a Resolution?

Do Elected Officials have an Agreed upon Mission Statement and Agreed upon set of Norms?

Do Chairs begin every Public Meeting with a reminder about Decorum and Civil Discourse?

Civil Discourse Pledge

Civil Discourse Workshops

Civil Discourse Observers at Public Meetings

Listening: A Key Trait for Civility- Civil Discourse

Santa Barbara Community Public Forum "Can We Talk... and Listen to One Another?"

Civil Discourse Best Practices

Famous Quotes to inspire you to Model Civility and Civil Discourse

LWVSLO County Responses to Santa Barbara Community Public Forum

What are the best responses to Incivility and Uncivil Discourse?

Recruit Change Leaders

How to work through differences of opinion

Resources and Information Links

Appendix A

Appendix B

Appendix C

Appendix D

Appendix E

Appendix F

Appendix G

League of Women Voters of San Luis Obispo County
Compiled and Edited
By
Sharon E. Kimball & Debora Humphreys
Version 1
© June 13, 2017

Promoting Civil Discourse*
In
San Luis Obispo County:
Outcomes
Follow-Up
Ongoing Projects
Developing Projects

By

Sharon E. Kimball
1st Vice President
Chair of Civil Discourse Study
Director of Civil Discourse
LWV of San Luis Obispo County

**Winner of the 2017 LWVC “Strengthening Democracy Award”
in recognition for
promoting civil discourse in the public arena through partnerships
with elected officials and the County Office of Education,
developing a pilot program through the schools, and creating
various published resources.**

Preface

At the January 2013 Program Planning Meeting for the LWV of San Luis Obispo County after the 2012 Presidential Election, we were concerned about the growing divisiveness and partisanship on the national level that was not only impeding Congress but also the newly elected President from making important decisions, developing relevant and fair public policy, and passing much needed legislation on critical issues affecting all of us. We did not want to see this kind of gridlock in San Luis Obispo County. We never guessed that the next Presidential Election would be much worse in unexpected and unforeseen ways.

How could we advocate on issues with any expectation of seeing results if the communication process continued to be broken? We saw the need to promote civil discourse, but, in the League, you cannot advocate on an issue if there is no existing Position at the local, state, or national level, without first conducting a formal study. There was no existing Position on Civil Discourse. A majority of our members at the January 2013 Program Planning Meeting decided that we should study this ideal communication process called “civil discourse” so we could promote it in our own County. What is “civil discourse?” What does it look like? What are the Best Practices of Civil Discourse? Where should our efforts be focused? What would be our scope? How would we even begin: we were used to studying issues with clear pros and cons. This was definitely a different type of study altogether.

After an intensive yearlong study where we reached out not only to elected officials, their staff, and the public, but also to our own League members in Unit Meetings, we wrote our final CD Study Report and presented it to our LWV of San Luis Obispo County Board of Directors for approval. Next, we presented our final CD Study Report to the LWV of SLO County League Membership for approval at the Annual June 14th, 2014 Meeting. More than the required quorum approved the CD Study. Everyone who participated in the Civil Discourse Study found himself or herself transformed in significant and positive ways by the end of the Study.

In meetings, we found ourselves sharing stories about incidents that used to challenge our civility and civil discourse but now no longer did because we had learned to respond in new and healthier ways. We talked about family members who were frustrated because they could no longer trigger incivility or uncivil discourse in us because we had identified our own triggers and were no longer at their mercy. We were learning how to own and model civility and civil discourse in challenging situations with challenging people. We were now ready to take our civil discourse program on the road. We highly recommend that you sit down with each other and have these important discussions and conversations.

Introduction

In putting this Civil Discourse Booklet together, we tried to combine information about our original Civil Discourse Study and Civil Discourse promotion actions with outcomes, follow-up, and information about our ongoing and developing Civil Discourse Projects. While we definitely recommend that you go to our League's web site and click on "Civil Discourse" in the left hand column for additional resources and references that include PowerPoint presentations, we hope that this CD Booklet will make it easier for you to evaluate and decide if your League might want to promote civil discourse in your own local government by adopting our CD Study by concurrence. We hope that the materials, suggestions, and help provided in this booklet will make it easier for you to get started and see the opportunities for making a difference in your own backyard. In Appendix A through F at the end, you will find many important resources to help you in your own efforts to promote Civil Discourse in local government.

Our elected officials, their staff, and the public are facing some very challenging times and they need an organization like the League of Women Voters to support and help Democracy work better by encouraging civil discourse and helping train both elected officials and the public in how to better serve each other using the Best Practices of Civil Discourse. We have all had an important wake up call about the immediate need to become more active in local government in positive ways that will make a difference and we need to inspire others to do the same. We all need to learn how to have the necessary and sometimes difficult conversations if we are ever to solve the necessary and difficult issues. We hope our Civil Discourse Booklet will motivate you, at a minimum, to become more active in your own local government, and, at a maximum, inspire you to run for office, or encourage others to run for office – always keeping in mind the Best Practices of Civil Discourse.

Acknowledgments

(It takes more than a village to do a Civil Discourse Study, update a Government Position, promote Civility and Civil Discourse to elected officials, their staff, and the public and keep the momentum going for Civil Discourse!)

Special Thanks to **Ellen Taylor** with the LWV of Claremont for providing me with the necessary roadmap to do a local study in her wonderful resource, “How to Direct a Local Study.”

Special Thanks to **Martha Cox** with the LWV of North County San Diego for inviting us to participate in the “Democracy in Dialogue” workshop at the last LWVC Convention and for constantly connecting us with other Leagues, League members, and community members interested in Civil Discourse as well as sending resources and support our way.

Special Thanks to **Joanne Leavitt** with the LWV of Santa Monica who collaborated with me on figuring out the process of “Concurrence” for studies that are adopted outside of a League Convention, by individual League Chapters or other State Leagues.

Special Thanks to the amazing **Sally Seven** for her special LA County League Day Workshop on Civil Discourse and for the LWV of Claremont to recommend that the LWVC adopt the LWV of San Luis Obispo County’s Civil Discourse Study at their 2017 Convention.

Special Thanks to **Bev King** with the LWV of Santa Barbara for inviting Debora Humphreys and I to participate in their League’s successful Community Forum entitled, “Can We Talk ... and Listen to One Another?” (Over 100 people showed up.) Bev King forced us to review what we had achieved and focus on what we were hoping to achieve – ongoing and developing projects, successes, outcomes, and lessons learned.

Special Thanks to **Terry Cornelius** with the LWV of Tulare County (& AAUW) and **Betty Gaudette-Cross** with the AAUW Visalia-Sequoia Chapter for organizing and coordinating our 1st Civil Discourse Virtual Meeting where we shared ideas and collaborated about the state of civility and civil discourse in our local governments.

Special Thanks to the amazing **Emily Penfield** for her support, leadership, networking, and recruiting that got us off to a solid start with our Civil Discourse Study and who continued to inspire and support me and our CD Action Team: she kept us going and kept us growing.

Special Thanks to Past President and future **Co-President Marilee Hyman** for her help on finding a definition and best practices of civil discourse, co-editing our CD Brochure, and helping with the design of our CD Buttons in addition to her wonderful collaboration on our Civil Discourse Democracy in Dialogue Workshop at the last LWVC Convention.

Special Thanks to our current **Marguerite Bader** for teaming up with me as we reached out to elected officials to follow the Best Practices of Civil Discourse, gave civil discourse presentations to government bodies and other organizations, and invited government bodies to adopt our Civility and Civil Discourse Resolution. Who could forget President Marguerite's creative and well-choreographed Civil Discourse Rap that we performed on stage at the Good Morning SLO Chamber of Commerce Meeting in front of 300 members?

Special Thanks to **Debora Humphreys** for helping with the design, facilitation, and implementation of our new workshops and services to teach elected officials and the public what the best practices of civil discourse look like in practice when they lead or participate in public meetings.

Special Thanks to **Carrie Pardo** for stepping up to Chair our Civil Discourse Observer Corps and encourage our League members to increase their presence at critical government meetings.

Special Thanks to **Susan Devine** for stepping up to Chair our Civil Discourse Ambassador Corps and contributing to the Civil Discourse Scripts that our Ambassadors spoke from during Public Comment at critical public meetings all over San Luis Obispo County.

Special Thanks to **Nancy Welts** for her assistance on helping me upload my CD Study and supporting documents to the LWV Clearinghouse on September 1, 2015 and for taking the lead and collaborating with me on the Application for the Strengthening Democracy Award for the 2017 LWVC Convention **which we won "for promoting civil discourse in the public arena through partnerships with elected officials and the County Office of Education, developing a pilot program through the schools, and creating various published resources."**

Civil Discourse Steering and Study Committee Honor Roll:

Sharon Kimball, Chair of CD Study, 1st VP, Director Program-Development
Marilee Hyman, President during CD Study
Sharon Whitney, Past President & Director of Government during CD Study
Vera Wallen, 2nd VP and Director of Voter Services, then, and now
Elinor Kogan, Membership Chair during CD Study
Emily Penfield, Immediate Past President at time of CD Study

Civil Discourse "Unit Meetings" Honor Roll:

Cindy Marie Absey
Rev. Charlie Archibald*
Mary Beth Armstrong
Marguerite Bader
Alice Bunker
Dottie Conner*
Patti Dale
Bruce Gibson
Ann Havlik
Kathy Henderson
Shelly Higginbotham
Marilee Hyman
Trudy Jarratt
Sharon Kimball

**Elinor Kogan
Janet Kourakis
John Lindsey
Marcia Lombardi
Susie Nash
Joan O'Keefe
Emily Penfield
Carrie Pardo
Gail Robinette
Jim Scoggin
Pat Shutt
Valerie Steenson
Vera Wallen
Sharon Whitney
Sharon Winslow
Barbara Weymann
Ray Weymann**

Civil Discourse Ambassador-Observer Honor Roll:

**Marguerite Bader
Janice Carr
Susan Devine
Bud Hankins
Pat Harris
Debora Humphreys
Marilee Hyman
Sharon Kimball
Susie Nash
Marlys McPherson
Emily Penfield
Julie Rodewald
Glenn Silloway
Nancy Welts**

Civil Discourse Curriculum Committee Honor Roll:

**Glenn Silloway, Chair
Betty DeHaan
Barbara Hawkins
Sharon Kimball
Michelle Turner**

Current Civil Discourse Action Team Honor Roll:

**Cindy Marie Absey
Theresa Bachoc
Marguerite Bader
Deborah Basile
Cindy Betonte
Rose Marie Beuttler
Ray & Ruth Biering
Toni Bouman
Deanna Cantrell
Janice Carr
Susan Devine**

Betty DeHaan
Nicole Durrant
Gerry Lynn Evans
Charles Feltman
Patricia Gordon
Ann Havlik
Barbara Hawkins

Current Civil Discourse Action Team Honor Roll Continued:

Debora Humphreys
Marilee Hyman
Christine & Lee Johnson
Sharon Kimball
Dee Lacey
Vi Matlin
Mary & Richard Moore
Mary Morrison
Sue Nash
Meta Nisbet
Carrie Pardo
Barbara Partridge
Emily Penfield
Julie Rodewald
Gar & Elizabeth Salzgeber
Lorienne Schwenk
Glenn Silloway
Gina & John Strong
Michelle Turner
Nancy Welts

***In memoriam – Dottie helped us realize that we were updating our Government Position. As an invaluable 50-year member, she was always there to encourage and support us in our work when obstacles would pop up from time to time. Reverend Archibald was faithful in his attendance and his contributions.**

Some Civil Discourse Outcomes & Testimonials

In response to Presentation on Civil Discourse at Morro Bay City Council Meeting:

“The League of Women Voters’ message of “Making Democracy Work” is what we all want as Americans. With freedom comes choice and responsibility. Respect is not automatic and human emotions often cloud how we engage. It is with help from organizations like yours that remind us to take a moment, reflect on another human emotion called compassion, and compose ourselves with dignity and respect for one another. Making Democracy Work is not easy; we all need help on occasion and we appreciate the work your organization does to support elected officials on both the local and national levels. Thank you for your dedicated service.” (Mayor of Morro Bay City Council)

**Air Pollution Control District Off-Site Public Workshop:
“Beyond the Law – Values and Civil Discourse”**

Testimonials:

“From my perspective, the key outcomes were getting highly polarized individuals to get to know each other better personally through the paired discussions and small group discussions, which seemed to take the edge off all that followed; getting them to talk openly with each other and to share their personal vision, values and priorities for the agency; and actually developing a list of Board norms of behavior that were later refined and adopted by the Board.” (Executive Director/APCD Control Officer.)

“In the 3 Board meetings that have occurred since the March workshop, Board members have been respectful of each other, there has been no rancor or negative personal comments directed at anyone, and there has even been some levity introduced at a few meetings that got people laughing and acting in a more cohesive way. (APCD Board Chair)

Neighborhood HOA Board Feedback Café:

Two Over-Arching Questions:

- (1) Think about some “WOW” moments when you felt particularly appreciative and excited about your Neighborhood HOA’s services and/or facilities?**
- (2) Take a deep breath and think about some times that you were surprised, irritated, and/or disappointed with a Neighborhood’s Service or Facility?**

Testimonials:

“My biggest hope was that all the participants would depart with smiles – and that happened. The seeds of trust were sown. We have important HOA decisions ahead but I think we established a sense of community that will enable us to have support with our future action plans and serve us well with the “hard stuff.” (Board President of the Neighborhood HOA)

**“Thank you again Deb, and please thank Sharon, for helping us Indian Hillers have some wonderful civil discourse! I learned things, and best of all I think those in attendance felt heard, acknowledged, and left happier than when they arrived.”
(Resident of Neighborhood HOA)**

LWV’s Interested in Adopting our CD Study by Concurrence: (Since publishing our CD Study on the LWV Clearinghouse web site, we have been contacted by a number of other organizations interested in learning more about our Civil Discourse Project as well as other League’s interested in adopting our CD Study by Concurrence. We have responded by providing links, hard copies, presenting at other League Meetings, participating in other League Community Forums, and sharing ideas through Virtual Meetings. Here is list of some of the Leagues and Organizations that we have worked with over that past year:

- LWV of Claremont: Presented Workshop about our League’s CD Study to the 12 Leagues in LA County on League Day.
- LWV of Santa Maria Valley: Presented on CD Study at their Annual Meeting.
- LWV of Tulare County: Presentation & Dialogue via FaceTime
- AAUW of Visalia-Sequoia: Presentation & Dialogue via FaceTime
- LWVOR: Support through links, hard copy documents, and email.

Some Recent Outcomes & Feedback:

1. The LWVOR adopted our League’s CD Study by concurrence at their recent LWVOR Convention in May.

“... I thought you’d want to hear about what happened at our State Convention on May 5-7. I’m happy to say that the Civil Discourse concurrence proposal passed overwhelmingly, and LWV Oregon now has a new position, thanks to your hard work in San Luis Obispo! (I even shared your letter with the delegates!) All agreed this is an especially timely topic in these partisan times, and we need to establish better relationships and initiate civil conversations with diverse audiences ... Again, I want to thank you and your League for undertaking such an excellent study and for making it available on the LWV (Clearinghouse) website ... Please give my regards to the other San Luis Obispo League members. (Immediate Past President of LWVOR)

2. The LWV of Santa Maria Valley has been facilitating discussions on Civil Discourse with their members with the intent to eventually adopt our CD Study so they, too, can promote Civil Discourse locally in their area.
3. We participated in the LWV of Santa Barbara’s Public Forum on “Can We Talk ... and Listen to One Another?” that attracted over 100 community members and was videotaped.
4. We recently participated in a joint FaceTime with members from the LWV of Tulare County and members of the AAUW Chapter of Visalia-Sequoia who intend to lead and facilitate discussions on Civil Discourse with their members based on our CD Study, materials, and projects.

5. The LWV of Claremont recommended that the LWVC adopt our CD Study at the LWVC Convention in June. **In the interim between now and the next LWVC Convention in 2019, we plan to reach out to all the League Presidents in the state of California to provide them with our Civil Discourse Booklet that contains resources on how to discuss and consider adopting our League's CD Study by concurrence so they can start promoting Civil Discourse among their own elected officials, staff, and public. We will make ourselves available by phone, email, in person visits, and/or virtual meetings for any and all of you that might be interested in working on reviving civility and civil discourse in your own backyard. Hopefully, with your added support, we will be able to successfully recommend that the LWVC adopt the LWV of San Luis Obispo County's CD Study by concurrence at the 2019 LWVC Convention so the LWVC can add "promote civil discourse" to their Government Position.**
6. While we have experienced so many wonderful outcomes and inspirational feedback from elected officials, staff, and the public for our ongoing and developing work in promoting civil discourse in San Luis Obispo County, we were definitely energized when we were awarded the **"Strengthening Democracy Award" recognized for "promoting civil discourse in the public arena through partnerships with elected officials and the County Office of Education, developing a pilot program through the schools, and creating various published resources."**

Latest Civil Discourse Projects:

1. Developing and implementing a CD Curriculum Pilot Program to complement existing Civic Education Programs in local high schools.
2. Restructuring and refocusing our CD Observer/Ambassador Program.
3. Developing and Implementing a League Concierge Pilot Program in collaboration with the Mayor, the City Manager, and the City Clerk.
4. Facilitating Community World Cafes to educate the public on civic participation and how they can participate using the Best Practices of Civility and Civil Discourse.
5. Promoting the Best Practices of Civility and Civil Discourse to newly elected officials.
6. Offering our new workshops to government bodies that are in need of improving and strengthening civility and civil discourse with each other and the public.
7. Adding new badges to reflect our new CD Projects: **"Democracy in Action" / Ask Me – League Concierge.**

What is the level of **“TRUST”** in your Government Bodies? How **“TRUSTWORTHY”** are your Elected Officials, Appointed Officials, and their Staff? **“Trust”** and **“Trustworthiness”** are cornerstones that strengthen Democracy.

What is **TRUST?**

and

How do we recognize **TRUSTWORTHINESS?**

in ourselves,

in others,

in our Elected,

in Appointed Officials,

and in our INSTITUTIONS?

How Do You Recognize Trustworthiness in Yourself and Others?

From The Thin Book of Trust by Charles Feltman

The 4 Distinctions of Trust:

1. **SINCERITY** – “I mean what I say, say what I mean, and act accordingly.”
2. **RELIABILITY** – “You can count on me to deliver what I promise!”
3. **COMPETENCE** – “I know I can do this. I don’t know if I can do that.”
4. **CARE** - “We’re in this together.”

The 4 Distinctions of Trust

From The Thin Book of Trust by Charles Feltman

The 4 Distinctions of Trust Defined:

1. **SINCERITY** – is the assessment that you are honest, that you say what you mean and mean what you say; you can be believed and taken seriously. It also means when you express an opinion it is valid, useful, and is backed up by sound thinking and evidence. Finally, it means that your actions will align with your words.
2. **RELIABILITY** – is the assessment that you meet the commitments you make, that you keep your promises.
3. **COMPETENCE** – is the assessment that you have the ability to do what you are doing or propose to do. In the workplace this usually means the other person believes you have the requisite capacity, skill, knowledge, and resources to do a particular task or job.
4. **CARE** – is the assessment that you have the other person’s interests in mind as well as your own when you make decisions and take actions. Of the four assessments of trustworthiness, care is in some ways the most important for building lasting trust. When people believe you are only concerned with your self-interest and don’t consider their interests as well, they may trust your sincerity, reliability and competence, but they will tend to limit their trust of you to specific situations or transactions. On the other hand, when people believe you hold this interest in mind, they will extend their trust more broadly to you.

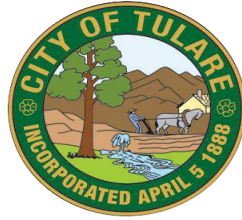
Are

“CITIZENS”

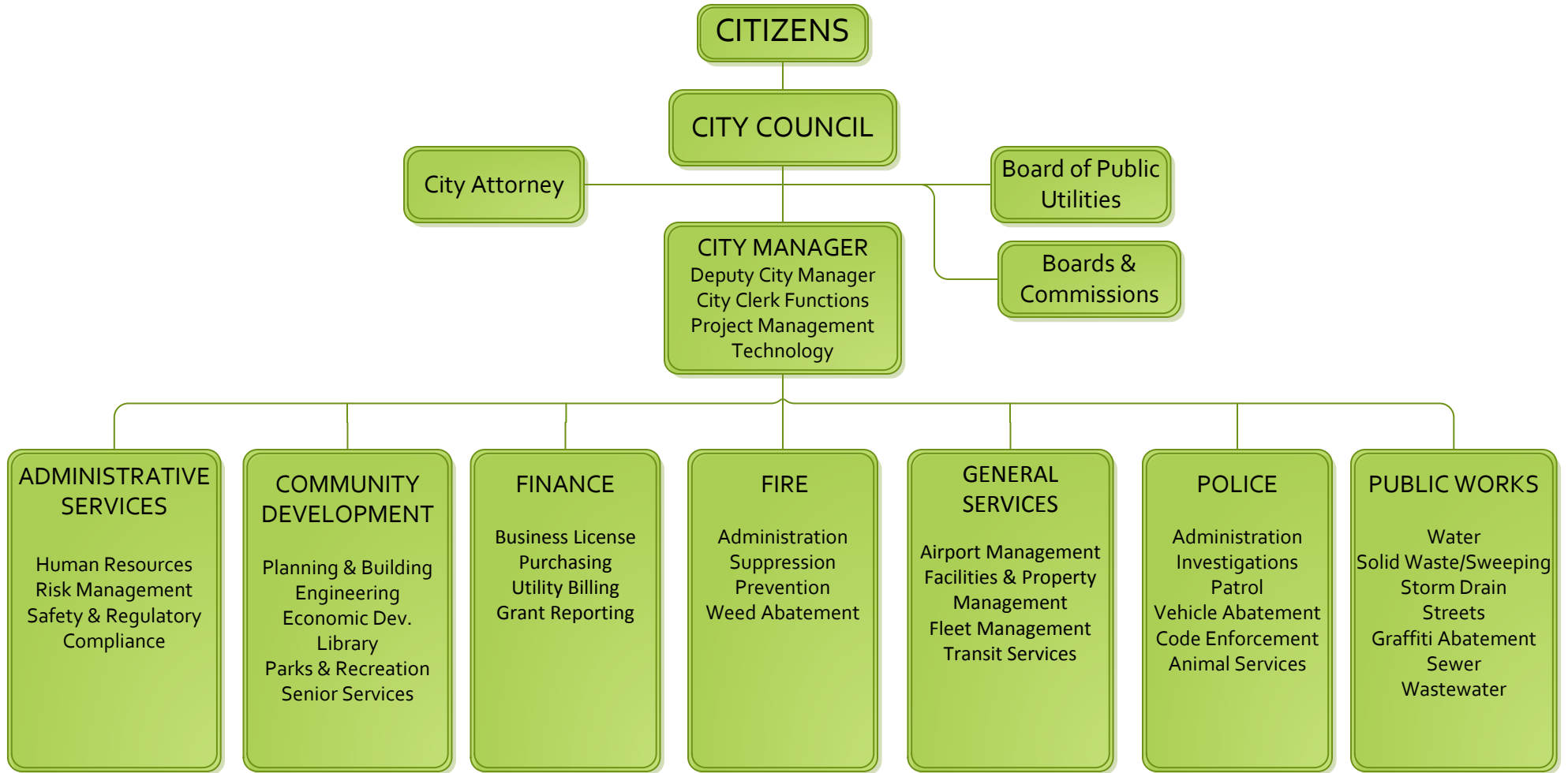
at the **TOP**

of your Government Bodies’

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART?



Organizational Chart



Have you asked your GOVERNMENT BODIES

to ADOPT a

“CIVILITY and CIVIL DISCOURSE RESOLUTION”

and

commit to following

THE BEST PRACTICES

of

CIVILITY and CIVIL DISCOURSE?

IN THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

7th day July, 2015

PRESENT: Supervisors

ABSENT:

RESOLUTION NO. _____

CIVILITY AND CIVIL DISCOURSE ACCORD

The following resolution is hereby offered and read:

WHEREAS, We, the San Luis Obispo Members of the Board of Supervisors, in order to ensure **civility** and **civil discourse** in all of our meetings, pledge our commitment to the following **best practices of civility** and **civil discourse**:

WHEREAS, We pledge our commitment to **Respect** the right of all people to hold different opinions in all our meetings;

WHEREAS, We pledge our commitment to **avoid rhetoric intended to humiliate, malign, or question the motivation** of those whose opinions are different from ours in all our meetings;

WHEREAS, We pledge our commitment to **strive to understand** differing perspectives in all our meetings;

WHEREAS, We pledge our commitment to **choose words carefully** in all our meetings;

WHEREAS, We pledge our commitment to **speak truthfully** without accusation, and avoid distortion in all our meetings;

WHEREAS, We pledge our commitment to **speak out against violence, prejudice, and incivility** in all their forms whenever and wherever they occur in all our meetings.

WHEREAS, We commit ourselves to building a civil political community in which each person is respected and spirited public and political debate is aimed at the betterment of San Luis Obispo County and its people and not the disparagement of those with whom we disagree.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Members of the Board of Supervisors and the community of the County of San Luis Obispo, State of California, shall promote the use of and adherence to the principles of **civility** and **civil discourse** in conducting business with elected officials, staff, and citizens:

Upon motion of Supervisor _____, seconded by Supervisor _____, and on the following roll call vote, to-wit:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAINING:

The foregoing resolution is hereby adopted:

Chairperson of the Board of Supervisors

ATTEST:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

BY: _____

Deputy Clerk

First Steps in Organizational Improvement: Identify What's Important ...

- **Mission:** Does everyone agree on the Mission Statement? Is everyone committed to following the Mission?
- **Values:** Does your organization have an agreed upon set of Guidelines, Code of Conduct, Rules of Decorum, or Norms that describe how your members interact with each other and with the Public?
- **Vision:** Do you have buy in and/or a commitment from all members and/or stakeholders on how you can contribute to making your Mission work in positive and effective ways now and in the future?

Values:

What can you contribute to improve the culture of your government body or organization? What do you need from others in order to make the best decisions or public policy? What values are most important? Least important?

Integrity Teamwork Partnership Honesty

Communication Respect Safety Attitude

Caring Trustworthy Diversity Sincere

Nonpartisan Accountable Ethical Humor

Competent Inspiring Professional Fun

Empathy Listener Fair Impartial

Civility Civil Discourse Thoughtful Creative

Can you think of other values that should make the list? How would you rank the values that you care most about?

Do Elected Officials

in your GOVERNMENT BODIES

have an AGREED UPON MISSION STATEMENT

and

an AGREED UPON SET OF NORMS

that are REVISITED ANNUALLY (or

after each ELECTION),

included in RETREATS-ORIENTATION ,

and included on each

AGENDA for Public Meetings?

APCD MISSION

As stewards of healthful air supporting a healthy environment, our Mission is to realize and preserve clean air for all, to promote community and individual responsibility for air quality through education, and to provide quality and cost-effective service.

APCD BOARD NORMS

The APCD Board members individually and collectively commit to the following:

1. To uphold the APCD Mission as the highest purpose for achieving constructive solutions for matters before the Board.
2. To treat the public, staff and Board members with courtesy and respect.
3. To respect the rights of others to hold and express differing opinions.
4. To debate issues without malice, refraining from derogatory remarks that reflect upon the integrity, motive or personality of others.
5. When appropriate, to publicly share communications and information received that may affect decision-making.
6. To conduct an orderly meeting without side conversations, interruptions, delaying tactics or use of personal electronic devices.
7. To address the Chair first to gain recognition prior to speaking. Once recognized, to be allowed to speak without interruption, limiting comments and questions to the subject matter before the Board.
8. To avoid issuing individual direction regarding APCD policy or other substantive matters to staff members.
9. To respect past decisions of the Board and move forward in a positive manner.
10. To contact staff with significant questions on an agenda item in advance of the Board meeting, if possible, so staff can be properly prepared to respond.
11. To seek ongoing training and information on APCD mandates and programs, both as new and returning members.
12. To conduct all APCD affairs with fairness, honesty, integrity and respect.

Individuals wishing accessibility accommodations at this meeting under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), may request such accommodations to aid hearing, visual, or mobility impairment by contacting the APCD at 781-5912 48 hours in advance of the meeting.

Do your Government Bodies' Chairs
Begin every Public Meeting
with a reminder
about Decorum and Civil Discourse,
the California Brown Act,
Public Meeting Protocol,
and
their commitment to serving the Public
who are their Number 1 Priority
and
the Foundation of Strength
for our
Democracy?

10 Simple Rules for **Civil Discourse**



A Presiding Chairperson sets the tone of a meeting...

- 1) Leads by example and encourages others to do the same. Shows respect to **all** in actions, body language, and speech.
- 2) Encourages open spirited debates on **all** facts by contending parties.
- 3) Provides adequate time for **public** comment.
- 4) **Actively** listens. Thanks speakers and, where appropriate, **acknowledges** public input.
- 5) **Speaks** truthfully without distortion.
- 6) **Never** comments on the motivation of a speaker.
- 7) **Limits** discussion to merits of issues. Explains the rationale and evidence to support opinions and conclusions.
- 8) **Promotes** rules **publically**. Gives a brief reminder before meetings.
- 9) **Enforces** the rules. **Allows** no disruptions of a meeting. **Allows** no slanderous, profane or negative **personal** remarks.
- 10) **Regularly** reviews/updates rules (city/county codes, codes of ethics, Robert's Rules, Brown Act, **pledges**).

...and ensures fair treatment with Rules of Order and Decorum



"Civil Discourse makes a difference for the good so we can have an environment that calls people to government service. We owe it to our democracy and to every young person who will inherit it."

J. Mullen Jr., Allegheny College

Civil Discourse Pledge for Elected Officials, Citizens, and the Public

I pledge to be civil, courteous, and respectful in attitude, tone, and body language, to listen with an open mind and heart, to engage in a thoughtful exchange of opinions and ideas, and to seek and find common ground and areas of agreement whenever possible.

Acting Chair's Request for Ethical Accountability

1. In accordance with the California Brown Act – we begin this meeting free from preconceived outcomes, prepared to actively listen, ready to consider reports from Staff, open to facts and evidence from experts in the field, and prepared to respect all opinions presented during Public Comment.
2. Before we make motions or take a vote, let's take a moment to review today's presentations and ask ourselves, "Do we have all the necessary facts and evidence needed regarding the issue under consideration in order to make an informed decision today?"
3. Before each official presents his or her view, please ask yourself, "Will the outcome I am proposing be fair not only to the constituents I represent but also fair to residents, businesses, citizens, and the public outside my constituency who might also be affected by my final decision?"
4. Finally, "Has the process leading to our final decision taken into consideration not only the benefits but any disadvantages and have we weighed both pluses and minuses thoughtfully enough to arrive at a decision that is as beneficial as possible to all concerned?"

© League of Women Voters of San Luis Obispo County
May 22, 2017

What's next after adopting a "Civility and Civil Discourse Resolution," committing to a "Civil Discourse Pledge," and agreeing to have the Chair read the "Request for Ethical Accountability" at the beginning of each meeting?

Deepen the understanding of what the "Best Practices of Civility and Civil Discourse" look like when communicating and interacting with others by offering a series of "Civil Discourse Workshops": *

- 1. Beyond the Law: Finding Your Own Ethical Guidelines**
- 2. Team Development: Strengthening Working Relationships**
- 3. New Leader Transition Support: Building Rapport Quickly**
- 4. Collaboration and Consensus Building:
Working Efficiently in spite of Difference**
- 5. Building Trustworthiness and Trust**

***Find a Certified Coach or Specialist like Ted Celeste with the National Institute for Civil Discourse to partner with or help you with the design of your own Civil Discourse Training Workshops. Recruit new members who have this expertise to help you and/or partner with local certified coaches who have a background in "Appreciative Inquiry."**

How do our Civil Discourse Observers
recognize the PRESENCE or ABSENCE
of
Civility and Civil Discourse
in
Public Meetings?

Observable Checklist of the Presence and Absence of Civil Discourse

A, Observable Examples of the Presence of Civil Discourse:

- **At the beginning of all public meetings, the elected official in charge states and reviews the established Guidelines, Ethics, Rules of Conduct, Official Protocol, and/or any other Procedural Information with all participants – elected officials, staff, and citizens – prior to the official start of the meeting.** _____
- Active listening _____
- Non-verbal Attentiveness _____
- Collaborating to find solutions _____
- Working to find common ground _____
- Negotiating _____
- Speaking in a respectful tone of voice _____
- Paraphrasing and repeating back what participants have said _____
- Exchange of ideas _____
- Courtesy _____
- Respectful of other participants' feelings _____
- Agreeing to disagree if unable to find common ground or compromise _____
- Establishing eye contact (Positive in the American Cultural Context) _____
- Talking one person at a time _____
- Including all stakeholders or affected parties _____
- Presenting all sides of the issue and/or all options or solutions _____
- Presenting the facts _____
- Presenting supporting evidence _____
- Reasoned, orderly debate _____
- Constructive debate _____
- Moderation – striving for the middle ground _____
- Refraining from monopolizing the dialogue, conversation, or debate _____
- Giving all participants an equal opportunity to express their views _____

B. Observable Examples of the Absence of Civil Discourse:

- Filibustering _____
- Monopolizing _____
- Violence _____
- Interrupting _____
- Swearing _____
- Heckling _____
- Sarcasm _____
- Argumentative _____
- Inciting _____
- Excluding _____
- Exaggeration _____
- Extremes _____
- False Information _____
- Disrespectful of others' feelings _____
- Non-verbal inattentiveness or rudeness _____
- Disrespectful tone of voice _____
- Invective _____
- Distortion _____
- Manipulating _____
- Intimidating _____
- Profiling _____
- Stereotyping _____
- Insulting _____
- Slandering _____

LISTENING: A Key Trait for Civility-Civil Discourse

There are many observable traits for civility and civil discourse. Where do we begin? **First, we begin by learning and modeling Civility and Civil Discourse ourselves.** It takes time to analyze our strengths and weaknesses. If we were to pick one key trait to learn and practice that would make an immediate powerful difference in our own relationships both personal and volunteer or work-related, what would it be?

1. Start by learning and practicing the **“Top Ten Powerful Listening Practices.”**
2. Invite organizations to implement the Best Practice of using **“Listening Circles.”**

THE LISTENING CENTER

Workshops and Presentations on the Sacred Art of Listening
Kay Lindahl

Top Ten Powerful Listening Practices

1. *Stop talking.*

One person speaks at a time. One of the most irritating listening habits is that of interrupting.

2. *Pause before speaking.*

Allow the person who is speaking time to complete their thought, wait a few seconds before responding.

Another variation on this is to ask “Is there anything else?” There almost always is.

3. *Listen to yourself.*

Be in touch with your inner voice. Ask yourself, “What wants to be said next?”

4. *Listen for understanding.*

You do not have to agree with what you hear, or even believe it, to listen to understand the other person.

5. *Ask for clarification.*

If you do not understand what someone is saying, just ask.

6. *Let the speaker know that you have heard them.*

Body language: nodding, facial expressions.

7. *Be patient and present.*

Listening well takes time and your presence.

8. *Listen with an open mind.*

Be curious and appreciative of what you are listening to.

Listen for new ideas instead of judging and evaluating.

9. *Pay attention to the environment.*

Stop what you are doing to listen.

Turn off background noise when possible; move to a quieter corner of the room; clear your desk.

10. *Listen with empathy and compassion.*

Put your agenda aside for the moment. Put yourself in their shoes.

It only takes one minute a day to...

... *practice silence.*

Spend at least one minute each day intentionally silent.

... *practice reflection.*

Ask yourself, “What is emerging now? What wants to be said or done now?” Then wait for your inner wisdom.

... *practice mindfulness.*

Spend at least one minute per day aware of what you are doing for each second.

Copyright © 2009 Kay Lindahl

PO Box 3531, Long Beach, CA 90803-3531 562-987-5496
E-mail: TheListeningCenter@yahoo.com www:sacredlistening.com

Listening Circles*

“This method is extremely versatile and allows for quality listening about a specific topic or question. It is very effective for hearing each person’s views in a time-efficient way and for identifying areas of agreement. It works best with less than ten people. If you have a large group, you can break them into smaller groups and combine their answers later. There are three roles:

- **FACILITATOR** keeps the group on track.
- **RECORDER** takes legible notes as directed and hands them in to the facilitator.
- **TIMEKEEPER** announces when each person’s time is up. (Let them finish their sentence.)

STEPS:

1. Draft a few questions the group could discuss.
2. Confirm the group’s agreement on the question, or use their suggestions to formulate a new question.
3. Instruct the group to take a minute of quiet so each person can think about and organize their answer. Here’s a phrase you can use: “Take a minute to organize your own thoughts, so you can listen when others speak.”
4. Every person shares their answer within the agreed upon time frame – usually 30-60 seconds per person is plenty. Here’s a tip: If a timekeeper announces the number of seconds it takes for each of the first three people who share, others will usually adjust to the time limit.
5. As each person shares, everyone else just listens. Encourage the listeners to:
 - See the topic from the other person’s viewpoint.
 - Notice what others say that they agree with, or what makes sense to them.
6. No one speaks twice until everyone has spoken once.
7. Do not allow debates, attacks or grandstanding.
8. After everyone has shared their perspective, open it to the whole group for a general discussion.
9. Have the group then identify their common themes, similarities, or top three ideas.
10. Encourage them to write their results on a large flip chart.
11. If there is more than one group, have them bring their results back to the whole group.”

*Horowitz, Delia and Vigneault, Paula. **Collaboration Soup: A Six-Step Recipe for Co-Creative Meetings and Other Conversations**. Pp. 77-78.

Santa Barbara Community Public Forum

(Falkner Gallery: February 2017)

Topic: **“Can We Talk ... and Listen to One Another?”**

“Best Practices of Civil Discourse Studied, Defined, and Promoted”

By **Sharon E. Kimball & Debora Humphreys** – LWV of SLOCO

Introduction

Thank you Bev and the League of Women Voters of Santa Barbara for inviting Deb Humphreys and me to participate in today’s forum on the topic “Can we talk ... and listen to one another?” We would also like to extend a special thank you to everyone in the audience for taking time out of their busy schedules to participate in today’s forum. We are so honored to be here and so excited to tell you about the League of Women Voters of San Luis Obispo County’s ongoing efforts to promote and sustain the Best Practices of Civility and Civil Discourse in San Luis Obispo County.

Let me begin by saying that Deb and I are more than hopeful and optimistic about Santa Barbara’s future. We are confident that, by working together, using the Best Practices of Civil Discourse, elected officials, staff, and residents of Santa Barbara can achieve their shared vision. Both Santa Barbara County and San Luis Obispo County are built from the same strong foundation: the strength of a vibrant Democracy that has survived tough challenges for more than 200 years and the strength of the League of Women Voters who have been making Democracy work better for everyone locally and nationally for almost 100 years.

We believe that the elected officials, League members, and citizens present here today already share common ground – in spite of party differences or differences in ideologies -- because all of you collectively believe in the Mission of Santa Barbara “... to provide quality public services to the people of Santa Barbara County in response to Santa Barbara’s need for a **healthy, safe, and prosperous environment** ... and to establish and maintain a workforce which reflects the diversity of the Santa Barbara community.”

LWV of San Luis Obispo County: Setting the Groundwork for Civil Discourse

For the past 4 years, the League of Women Voters of San Luis Obispo County has worked tirelessly to add another layer of strength to the foundation of our own local county Democracy. We asked our local San Luis Obispo County elected officials, staff, and citizens to commit to the Best Practices of Civility and Civil Discourse in all their public meetings and interactions with each other. **“Can we talk ... and listen to one another?” Yes, if each of us is willing to commit to the Best Practices of Civil Discourse by understanding how it works, what it looks like, and how to practice it every day at home, at work, and in our volunteer and advocacy efforts.**

Civil Discourse is not only beneficial to our personal health, but to the health of our relationships, and to the health of our Democracy.

Key Civil Discourse Concepts

The League of Women Voters of San Luis Obispo County believes that putting the Best Practices of Civil Discourse into action insures that everyone feels safe, comfortable, and valued while expressing their views -- regardless of power, status, or money -- and, after all, isn't that the higher standard of shared communication at the heart of the concept of a truly inclusive and healthy democracy? Genuine Civil Discourse allows open vigorous reasoned dialogue on the issues themselves, based on evidence and argument, coupled with the willingness to learn from others. The League of Women Voters of San Luis Obispo County believes that in order to arrive at the best public policy and solutions to critical challenges facing our communities, we need to strive to understand different points of view by truly trying to see where the other person is coming from based on their experiences and contexts and by allowing ourselves to be open to the possibility that the other person may offer us some new and valuable insight to the issues under discussion.

Civil Discourse is not focused on a result to which everyone necessarily has to agree, but on the mutual understanding of all the views and perspectives that shape people's positions as an open and ongoing process. Sincere, reliable, competent, and caring Civil Discourse is the open-minded, mutually respectful, engaged and yet non-dogmatic public dialogue in which everyone wins because all have reached a better understanding of everyone's convictions. It is neither a competitive debate nor a shallow polite conversation about the inconsequential, but a serious thoughtful reasoned exchange about public matters of common concern, which affect all of us. To raise the level of public conversation in our culture, to reach the level of Civil Discourse, is thus essential for a vibrant living and thriving Democracy.

Civil Discourse Study

These are the critical concepts we discovered when we conducted our formal yearlong League-directed Civil Discourse Study in pursuit of a definition and Best Practices of Civil Discourse. We could not promote the Best Practices of Civil Discourse without a formal study that was accepted and approved by our League's Board of Directors and our League's membership. From the beginning of our CD Study, we reached out to elected officials, League members, and the public to help us in our pursuit of a definition and Best Practices of Civil Discourse. Our definition and primary objective for promoting civil discourse is now part of our Government Position. We have been formally advocating civil discourse to local elected officials, their staff, and the public ever since. By publishing our CD Study on the League's Clearinghouse web site, we enabled other Leagues in California and other states to adopt our CD Study by **concurrence** and promote civil discourse in their own locations as well. To view the

LWV of San Luis Obispo County's published CD Study in its entirety along with supporting documents, PowerPoint's, our Civility and Civil Discourse Resolution, Civil Discourse Brochure, resources, and more, just [click here www.lwvslo.org](http://www.lwvslo.org) to go to the **Civil Discourse** section on the **LWV of San Luis Obispo County's web site**.

Overall Objectives

Following is a brief outline of the overall objectives of the LWV of San Luis Obispo County's Civil Discourse Action Team that highlight what civil discourse is, what civil discourse is not, and how to put it into action both on an individual basis and on an organizational level. Putting the Best Practices of Civil Discourse into action is an ongoing process that takes commitment, practice, and accountability. Because we are all human and subject to unexpected triggers that may derail our best intentions to be civil, we must learn how to not only forgive ourselves when this happens but learn how to forgive others when this happens to them. We also need to learn how to support others as they try to move toward being more civil and more skilled in the implementation of the Best Practices of Civil Discourse in all their communications. We must not only believe in our own ability to embrace this change and shift in our thinking, speaking, and responses to others but we also need to believe in the potential for others to also change and shift their own thinking, speaking, and responses.

As we become more familiar with our own triggers and hot buttons and those of others, we will become more adept as facilitators and practitioners of the Best Practices of Civil Discourse. When we finally achieve this higher standard of behavior and communication, we will no longer fear or dread conversations with others whose perspective, point of view, philosophy, or ideology is different from ours. Although there may be times when we may have to agree to disagree, we don't have to be disagreeable. By increasing our ability to open our hearts and minds, empathize with others, seek common ground, and acknowledge what is working, we open the door to more effective collaboration with an increased opportunity for consensus which makes Democracy work better for everyone.

Outreach and Next Steps

As newly elected officials and staff were preparing to take their places in their new positions after the November elections, the LWV of San Luis Obispo County once again reached out to San Luis Obispo County government bodies to follow-up and find out how the adoption of our League's Civility and Civil Discourse Resolution impacted the level of civility and civil discourse among their elected officials, staff, and the public this past year. We also reached out to the first government body to participate in our ½ day workshop entitled, "Beyond the Law: Values and Civil Discourse." **"Can we talk ... and Listen to One Another?"** Here are some comments from participants in this workshop:

“From my perspective, the key outcomes were getting highly polarized individuals to get to know each other better personally through the paired discussions and small group discussions, which seemed to take the edge off all that followed; getting them to talk openly with each other and to share their personal vision, values and priorities for the agency; and actually developing a list of Board norms of behavior that were later refined and adopted by the Board.”

“In the 3 Board meetings that have occurred since the March workshop, Board members have been respectful of each other, there has been no rancor or negative personal comments directed at anyone, and there has even been some levity introduced at a few meetings that got people laughing and acting in a more cohesive way.”

Because of the success of our initial workshop and the even greater need for more civility and civil discourse after the outcome of the recent November election, we decided to add several more workshops and training tools in support of our incumbent and newly elected officials, their staff, and the public with the hope of ensuring a smooth transition and path to even more effective government in San Luis Obispo County:

- **Beyond the Law: Finding Your Own Governing Ethical Guidelines**
- **Team Development: Strengthening Working Relationships**
- **New Leader Transition Support: Building Rapport Quickly**
- **Collaboration and Consensus Building: Working Efficiently in spite of Differences**
- **Civil Discourse PowerPoint Presentation: Civility and Civil Discourse in Action**
- **Civility and Civil Discourse Resolution: Pledging to follow the Best Practices**

At our League’s Program Planning Meeting in January, League members of San Luis Obispo County agreed that we should make civic education a priority this year by expanding out outreach to schools and the community. Voter Services received a Grant to go into the classroom and educate students not only on the importance of registering to vote and how to register but also on the importance of becoming a well-informed voter who actually shows up to vote on every Election Day. Our Civil Discourse Action team wants to make civic education a priority as well by teaching the importance of civility and civil discourse as the foundation and glue for civic education and a thriving Democracy. We want to continue the World Café Model as a key model for facilitating conversations that matter using the Best Practices of Civility and Civil Discourse. Our Civil Discourse Action Team successfully implemented this model with a local HOA event whose participants included management, board members, and residents. We

successfully used this model with our own January League Program Planning Meeting. Here are some comments from participants in the World Café Model:

Subject line in email: “Walking on air!!!!!!!!!!!!”

“My biggest hope was that all the participants would depart with smiles – and that happened.

***“The seeds of trust were sown. We have important HOA decisions ahead but I think we established a sense of community, which will enable us to have support with our future action plans and serve us well with the ‘hard stuff.’
“I learned things, and best of all I think those in attendance felt heard, acknowledged, and left happier than when they arrived.”***

Civil Discourse – Best Practices

Overall Objective of Civil Discourse:

- Demonstrate an understanding of diverse perspectives.
- Be willing to come to a shared or common meaning.
- Make an effort to find common ground.

What Civil Discourse is NOT:

- A win-lose environment.
- Someone else’s responsibility.

What do Best Practices Look Like in Action?

1. Take Personal Responsibility – Model Civil Discourse

- *Check your Attitude* – demonstrate an interest in engaging others.
- *Own your triggers.*
- *Listen to understand others’ perspectives.*
- *Choose words carefully* – avoid rhetoric intended to humiliate, malign, or question the motivation of those whose opinions are different from yours in all your meetings.
- *Speak truthfully without accusation, and avoid distortion in all your meetings.*
- *Respect the right of all people to hold different opinions and perspectives by keeping a bi-partisan mindset.*
- *Ask others for feedback on how you come across to others.*

2. Develop your Organization's Own Code of Conduct (Guiding Principles)

- *What do you need from each other to exercise open, respectful communication?*
- *Commit yourself to building a civil political community in which each person is respected and spirited public and political debate is aimed at the betterment of your City or County and its people.*
- *Check examples of other organizations' guiding principles.*
- *Use language that your organization can understand and own.*

3. Make and Keep the Guiding Principles Visible

- *Do something with the agreed upon Code of Conduct: post it, put it on meeting agendas, and reinforce it.*
- *Take shared responsibility for following it.*
- *Introduce it to new members.*
- *Revisit Principles each year to make adjustments.*

4. Reinforce Guiding Principles

- *Invite feedback on how Principles are working.*
- *Use examples of what each Principle looks like in action.*
- *Give each other permission to change.*
- *Use humor to make adjustments.*
- *Have League Civil Discourse Observers available during meeting to provide feedback.*

5. Prevent Uncivil Behavior

- *Educate young people on civil discourse principles and personal responsibility for finding common ground.*
- *Make Guidelines/Principles visible – refer to them in meetings.*
- *Consider specialized workshops on conflict dynamics, team building, and trust building.*
- *Consider Leadership Development coaching if needed: build self-awareness of impact of behavior on others.*

We hope these quotes will inspire you to model civility and civil discourse ...

- **“Civility is claiming and caring for one’s own identity, needs, and beliefs without degrading someone else’s in the process.”** Cassandra Dahnke and Tomas Spath
- **“Wisdom is made up of ten parts, nine of which are silence.”** Author unknown

- **“Go and speak to your enemies. [But know that] you cannot change someone else unless you first change yourself.” Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa**
- **“Tact is the knack of making a point without making an enemy.” Sir Isaac Newton**
- **“Unexpected kindness is the most powerful, least costly and most underrated agent of human change.” Bob Kerrey, former U.S. Senator from Nebraska**
- **“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead**
- **“Remember that you are needed. There is at least one important work to be done that will not be done unless you do it.” Charles Allen**
- **“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.” Mohandes Gandhi**

LWV of SLOCO Responses from Santa Barbara Community Forum:

“Can We Talk ... and Listen to One Another?”

1. What does “civil discourse” look like in action in public meetings with elected or appointed officials, staff, and the public?

- Shared agreement on a set of civil discourse guidelines
- Adoption of a Civility and Civil Discourse Resolution
- Commitment to repeat a Civil Discourse Pledge before meetings
- Make Guidelines or Resolution visible to public on Agenda/web site
- Officials who model civil behavior and civil discourse in meetings and interactions
- Officials who periodically review and reinforce Guidelines as part of Chair’s duties
- Search for shared meaning with other officials and the public
- Encourage spirited, yet respectful exchange of opinions and ideas

2. What are the observable traits of “civil discourse” in these meetings?

- Engaged officials and public – both verbally and non-verbally
- Active listening -- seek to understand with an open mind
- Focus on issues, facts, and evidence not on the messenger
- Choose respectful words and model civil actions
- Chair facilitates and encourages full participation
- Chair encourages inclusive bipartisan exchange
- Search for shared meaning, common ground, areas of agreement

3. Who or what sets the tone for “civil discourse” in public meetings?

- Agreed upon printed, visible guidelines
- Chair sets tone through guidelines, own behavior
- Officials and public should be self-aware and self-correct when needed
- Presence of League CD Observers-Ambassadors with “I heart CD buttons” and “Making Democracy Work Buttons” supports and encourages “civility” and “civil discourse”
- Attract more civic-minded community members trained in “civility,” “civil discourse,” and public meeting protocol to attend critical public meetings

4. What does “uncivil discourse” look like in action in public meetings?

- Negative non-verbal demeanor- no eye contact
- Expressed frustration with words, actions, and body language
- Officials and public who refuse to find common ground or areas of agreement
- Officials and the public who resort to verbal attacks
- Judgmental, demeaning remarks directed at specific people and/or groups
- Misassumptions about motives of officials and the public
- Disinformation instead of vetted information from reliable and trusted resources

5. What is the best way to deal with “incivility” in public meetings?

- Learn ways to prevent conflict and ways to deescalate conflict
- Make sure you are providing enough community outreach with open and accessible workshops about heated topics before they go before your government body

- Provide space for a League Civil Discourse Concierge to help the public with questions, information, and forms prior to the start of the public meeting
- Ask League members to attend wearing “CD Badges”-“Making Democracy Work” Badges
- Chair must be proactive from the start by reading “CD Resolution,” “CD Pledge,” “CD Guidelines,” and/or the “Request for Ethical Accountability.”
- Chair should refer back to guidelines, resolution, pledge, or request- printed on Agenda
- Invite the public to join in and recite the CD Pledge that is printed on the Agenda
- Stay calm, listen respectfully, and, at the end, ask how you can help or assist
- Provide disruptors with a form to express their frustrations in writing
- Chair can request a ten minute break if needed to diffuse-deescalate the problem

6. **Is the propensity for “gotcha” moments destroying “civil discourse” and efforts to work for public policy solutions?**

- Focus on the strengths of a government body – on what is working well. Then, move on to opportunities for improvement
- Reframe “gotcha” moments – see them as a moment to listen, learn, and clarify
- Civil discourse is not a win-lose situation: it’s a process of working toward shared meaning, common ground, areas of agreement, and/or new insight
- Embarrassing others will not advance ideas, opinions, or agendas
- Own and admit when you are wrong – this creates both trust and respect
- Compliment others who may in fact be correct – valuing and acknowledging others is the right thing to do

7. **How do we avoid #6?**

- Do not make assumptions about the motivation of the speaker
- Avoid profiling or judging speakers based on political affiliation or other personal affiliations that are not relevant
- Refer back to Robert’s Rules of Order, California Brown Act requirements, and facts, not judgments
- Ask pertinent questions and request clarification if subject is related to an item on the Consent Agenda
- Show respect if there is a violation -- educate, do not judge
- No embarrassing remarks
- Help violator save face

8. **Do you think the people of the United States are concerned about the absence of “civility” and “civil discourse” in local, state, and national government?**

- In a January 2017 poll, Weber Shandwick found 97% of Americans expect civil behavior from political leaders
- “Fake News” or “Disinformation” is now adding fuel to “incivility in America.”

9. **What are the minimum communication requirements necessary for “Civil discourse” to thrive among elected officials, staff, and the public for social policy issues to be discussed?**

- Own personal responsibility to demonstrate civility
- Be open to learn from others

- Seek shared meaning
- Inquire and discover
- Demonstrate engaging behavior- (verbal and non-verbal)
- Speak clearly and respectfully, be aware of your tone of voice
- Use language that others can understand
- Avoid jargon and acronyms
- Keep it short
- Give space to others
- Gather differing perspectives
- Become self-aware of impact on others

10. **What are the most common communication barriers that obstruct or prevent “civil discourse?”**

- Focusing exclusively on personal agendas
- Inability to be open to new ideas or points of view
- Lack of engagement and eye contact
- Hostile intent, demeaning words, and negative body language
- Inability to listen with an intent to understand
- Inability to empathize with others
- Inability to forgive, forget, move on
- Inability to give others permission to change

11. **How do we encourage “self-reflection” and “accountability” in a positive way so both “civility” and “civil discourse” are valued and practiced by elected or appointed officials, staff, and the public?**

- Create and adopt a set of agreed upon norms, ethics, and/or related guidelines that promote civility and civil discourse and provide built-in accountability
- Bring civility and civil discourse to life with real stories and examples
- Bring attention to what is working well with people and the organization
- Remember and talk about the success stories
- Allow for mess ups -- learn from them – move on
- Praise demonstrated civility and civil discourse
- Make the process of practicing civility and civil discourse fun – keep your sense of humor
- Provide ongoing civic education, training workshops, and world cafes to educate and reinforce how to practice civil discourse

12. **How do we encourage “self-reflection” and “accountability” in a positive way so both “civility” and “civil discourse” are valued by individuals?**

- Don’t assume individuals know what “civility” and “civil discourse” look like
- Provide success stories about “civility” and “civil discourse” in action
- Take time to reflect on what you did and how well did you -- demonstrated civility
- Give folks permission to change when they fail at “civility” and “civil discourse”
- We are all human – with our own special triggers – we learn and grow from our mistakes
- Give feedback on what would have been a better way to have handled the situation
- Reinforce civil discourse best practices by congratulating yourself and others when successful – verbally, in a letter, with an award

What are the best responses

to “incivility”

and

“uncivil discourse”

when it occurs?

YOUR ROLE IN RESOLVING CONFLICTS

Be a role model. Use appropriate communication tools like reflective or empathic listening, validation and “I” statements.

Keep calm. This attitude will reflect onto others.

Stay neutral. Don't take sides. If you are unable to do this, you are the wrong person to participate.

Don't put anyone on the spot. They will get defensive and the process will fail.

Show empathy. This encourages people to talk and express feelings.

Be flexible. Take a moment to think, if necessary, before you speak.

Assure confidentiality. Don't leave the meeting and talk about it with others.

Stay in control to help the people come to a result they feel good about and which can work.

Is it possible to recruit

Change Leaders

and

what are the qualities

of

Change Leaders?

Managing Change: Being a Change Leader

Activity 1: Complete a Behavior Matrix	
Project Name: New Fundraising Event	WHO?
▪ DEMONSTRATES CLEAR VISION	
▪ IS PATIENT YET PERSISTENT	
▪ ASKS TOUGH QUESTIONS	
▪ IS KNOWLEDGEABLE & LEADS BY EXAMPLE	
▪ HAS STRONG RELATIONSHIPS & IS TRUSTED	

**How do you work through
differences of opinion and
have productive conversations**

- **in person face-to-face,**
- **remote by text – email,**
- **and/or a combination?**

Here are some insightful guidelines ...

Guidelines for Successfully Navigating Your Way Through Conflict

Surfacing issues, hearing different points of view, and working through conflict take time, energy, and diplomacy. It's no wonder that many people prefer to ignore conflict and push through to a speedy conclusion. After all, who has time for all of that debating?

Those who dismiss conflict and ignore the implications do so at their own peril. By brushing conflict aside, or minimizing the consequences, achieving your desired results will take far longer—if in fact you can achieve them at all.

Here are some tips to help you anticipate, surface, and work through differences of opinion by having productive conversations, whether face to face, remote or a combination.

1. Identify likely areas of conflict that may impede progress in advance

Don't be caught blindsided, imagining that everyone will naturally agree to go along with "what's best for business." After all, what's best for business can be highly subjective. And what's good for the business overall may not be so great for certain individuals or organizations. Ask yourself:

- Whose interests might be competing?
- What organizations may perceive they have the most to gain or lose?
- Who might be feeling alienated?
- Who's likely to resist change?
- Which personalities might cause the most friction?
- What organizational dynamics might represent the hidden landmines?
- What historical conflicts may still exist?

2. Dig more deeply to find out more.

Find a way to discover what's really going on. Confronting people during an open meeting is not usually the best way to ferret out the thoughts and feelings that cause conflict.

Pick up the phone or drop by to get a better handle on why people feel the way they do. Start with your own direct observations, using objective language. Try something like: "I have noticed that the last few times the topic of a new call handling process has come up, you have expressed your opinion before suddenly leaving the room. Can you help me understand what might be going on for you when this topic comes up?" Ask probing questions until the person gives you better insight as to the source of the conflict from his/her perspective.

Avoid putting anyone on the defensive by using evaluative language such as: “Boy, you seem really peeved about the prospect of a new call handling system! Why are you so upset?”

3. Speak plainly about conflicts right up front

Make sure that everyone acknowledges the proverbial elephant(s) on the table. State the conflicts that you know about as simply as you can. Better yet, put them in writing, either as a handout (sent in advance or passed out at the start of the meeting) or post on flipcharts so that people can refer to them as needed throughout the meeting.

Seek validation that you have accurately described the conflicts, and ask for help in identifying the associated reasoning behind the conflicts.

4. Build in time for meaningful dialogue

Do not short-circuit needed conversations by claiming that you don't have time in the agenda. If you can't find a way to allocate the needed time, then you can reschedule the meeting when you do have the time. Or you might allocate the time you have today for the needed discussions and then set up a follow-on meeting for evaluating options and making decisions.

The fastest way to lose credibility and heighten conflict is to ask people for their viewpoints, give them insufficient time to express them, and then proceed as though no different viewpoints have been heard.

5. State ground rules in advance and be prepared to enforce them

Offer some ground rules to the group and solicit ideas from others. Post ground rules clearly so all participants can keep them in their mind's eye and refer to them as needed. Examples include:

- Silence does not mean consensus
- We will speak one at a time
- We will look at each other when we speak
- We will paraphrase to ensure understanding
- We acknowledge all ideas and opinions as valid
- All ideas will be evaluated using the same criteria
- We will provide rationale when we express a different perspective
- We will avoid using the word “but” and will use “and” to build on ideas
- We will not attack people, but we are free to disagree with ideas
- We won't dismiss any idea out of hand
- We will not allow any one person to control the conversation
- We will not make decisions until all ideas are heard

6. Agree on a decision-making process up front

Don't wait until the end of the meeting, when people may be too worn out to make intelligent decisions. Make sure everyone knows the answers to these questions in advance, preferably prior to the meeting, when emotions might start flying early on.

- Which criteria are most important? Do some carry more weight than others?
- Who will make decisions? Will the group use a strictly democratic process, or will only some people have a final decision?
- How do we know when we have enough information to make a well-informed decision?
- Does a decision need to be made today?
- How can we solicit the additional input we need?

7. Decide when to intervene

Depending on your role, you may choose to intervene when conflicts arise if by doing so, the conversation is likely to be more productive. Among the reasons intervention might make sense:

- One or two people monopolize the conversation
- People express strong opinions but offer no supporting rationale
- Several people go silent
- People interrupt others frequently
- People dismiss other ideas out of hand
- People don't seem to be listening to different points of view
- Comments become personal attacks
- Digressions become derailments
- Disagreements become circular and can't be resolved

8. Decide how to intervene

Interventions can sometimes make matters worse, so proceed with caution.

- Describe what you're seeing based on direct observation. Example: "Paul, every time Joanne or Warren begin to describe their ideas for a new employee suggestion program, you roll your eyes and start to whisper to Alan."
- State the impact this behavior has. Example: "Every time this happened, Joanne and Warren have stopped talking. Everyone else who originally volunteered ideas also seemed to shut down."

- Suggest options for moving forward. You can appeal to the group for their ideas, or offer one or two of your own. Example: “Paul, do you think it might be possible for you to listen to each idea, and perhaps take a few notes about each one. I’ll make sure to cycle back to you to hear how your ideas might differ. Then together we can determine which ideas to build on. Does this approach make sense?”

9. Make sure everyone is heard

Not everyone will volunteer his/her ideas in front of others—especially if they dissent from the opinions held by the majority. If you can’t find a non-threatening way to discover opinions from everyone during a meeting, try pulling aside people during a break. If you’re using meeting technology, you might send an IM to probe for other viewpoints. If appropriate, you might try using a groupware technology that allows for anonymity.

10. Be prepared to postpone making a decision

Don’t force a meeting to an unnatural conclusion if you feel that conflicts remain. State your intentions to reconvene as a whole group or as a subset, and explain your reasons. Be clear about the conflicts that you believe still exist and validate with group members. Ask for help from the group as to what additional information, from whom, is still needed to enable the group to make a well-informed decision. Suggest whether offline conversations might be helpful, especially if the chief conflicts exist between just a couple of participants.

11. Thank everyone for their courage, conviction and candor

Acknowledge how difficult it is for some to disagree, especially when doing so might appear to slow things down or make some people angry. Reflect on ways the conversations today have helped everyone to learn something new. Summarize how hearing different perspectives will ultimately help the group come up with a better solution.

[Civil Discourse in Action: Resources and Information Links](#)

Center for Appreciative Inquiry

<https://www.centerforappreciativeinquiry.net/>

Civil Discourse LWVSLO Study (and multiple resources)

<http://slo.ca.lwvnet.org/CivilDiscourse.html>

Collaboration Soup: A Six-Step Recipe for Co-Creative Meetings and Other Conversations

Horwitz, Delia & Vigneault, Paula. (2010) ISBN: 1449907679 ISBN-13: 9781449907679.

Conflict Dynamics, Eckerd College

<https://www.conflictdynamics.org/insight-research/#whitepapers>

Eddy, B. (2014) *So, What's Your Proposal?* Scottsdale, AZ: Unhooked Books

Eddy, B. (2011) *BIFF: Quick Responses to High-Conflict People*. Scottsdale, AZ: Unhooked Books

Emotional Intelligence Books and Articles (Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis)

For a quick EI survey to become self-aware, try *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* by Travis Bradberry and Jean Graves (2009)

Guided Insights

<http://www.guidedinsights.com>

National Institute for Civil Discourse

<http://nicd.arizona.edu/>

The Listening Center

<http://www.sacredlistening.com>

The Thin Book of Trust

Charles Feltman, Author, Amazon

Weber Shandwick, Powell Tate, & KRC Research: Reporting on **"Civility in America"** since 2010 and now reporting on **"Fake News"** and its effect on **"Civility in America."***

<http://www.webershandwick.com>

The World Café

<http://www.theworldcafe.com/>

*According to Weber Shandwick, Powell Tate, & KRC Research's latest report, **"Fake News stirs up emotions such as anger, confusion, anxiety, and disengagement, all leading to greater incivility and polarization.** They go on to say **"... the elimination of fake news may be a step in the right direction for improving the civil discourse and behavior in our public square."**

Appendix A

Letter to Elected Officials

From the beginning, we wanted to be open, positive, and inclusive with San Luis Obispo County Elected Officials about the purpose of our League's Civil Discourse Study. From the start, we wanted officials to know that we were not going to be the Civil Discourse Police. So, we reached out in a letter asking for help from the leaders and members of the core government bodies in San Luis Obispo County: the 5 Supervisors on the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors, the 7 Mayors of our 7 cities, and the Council Members of our 7 City Councils.

If your League decides to adopt our CD Study by Concurrence and start promoting Civility and Civil Discourse in your own local government, then, you might consider sending a letter with a return stamped envelope asking for their help and support in your new mission of promoting Civil Discourse to Elected Officials, Staff, and the Public. Prior to sending the letter, we met with the current Chair of the Board of Supervisors and ask his help on the best way to approach elected officials. Send a letter asking for their help was his sage advice – which got us off on the right path.

Since then, we have gradually expanded our efforts to promote Civil Discourse to include Appointed Officers, CSDs, Regional Agencies, Advisory Boards, Commissions, and Boards of Education. As our officials and public became more comfortable and supportive of our mission to promote civil discourse, we started receiving invitations from elected officials to attend meetings that might be potentially divisive. We began to hear from the public about government bodies and/or officials who could benefit from our “CD Resolution,” “CD Pledge,” and or “CD Workshops.”

Recently, a former Mayor and Council Member from one of our 7 cities made the front page with a nasty verbal hit and run delivered during Public Comment and immediately left the City Council Chambers leaving everyone stunned. Before the incident made the newspaper, our League was contacted for help in how to deal with this matter and handle or prevent such incidents in the future. Our League Mission is to “make Democracy work” and we can think of no better way to support this Mission than promoting Civility and Civil Discourse in our own local government bodies.



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY**

Mailing Address: PO Box 4210, San Luis Obispo CA 93403
TEL (805) 782-4040 **EMAIL** info@lwvslo.org **WEBSITE** www.lwvslo.org

Date:

OFFICERS

President

Marilee Hyman

*1st Vice-President/
Program & Development*

Sharon Kimball

*2nd Vice-President/
Voter Services*

Vera Wallen

Secretary

Vallerie Steenson

Treasurer

Mary Beth Armstrong

DIRECTORS

Member Services

Pati Dale

Government Director

Sharon Whitney

Communications Director

Alice Bunker

Dear:

The League of Women Voters of San Luis Obispo County would like to know about your best practices for achieving civil discourse. What do you do to secure civil discourse as you work with your governing body?

The LWV local position on Government encourages efforts to improve communications between the citizen and government agencies. Toward that end, we hope to elicit your help in discovering the rules, guidelines, and/or protocols that you and other elected government officials currently use to promote civil discourse in regular meetings among elected officials and with the public.

In our yearlong study on Civil Discourse, we intend to develop a definition of the term “civil discourse” as it applies to local government, explore current methods employed by the County Board of Supervisors and seven City Councils, and develop a position on “Best Practices” for ensuring Civil Discourse as practiced by these bodies. We would appreciate any information you can send that will help us.

A reply by November 15th will help facilitate our study. Enclosed is a self-addressed stamped envelope for your convenience.

We thank you in advance for taking time out of your busy schedule to help us on this important yearlong mission. If you have any questions regarding our study, please do not hesitate to leave a message on our League answering machine at (805) 782-4040 for the Chair of our Civil Discourse Committee or mail us at LWV of SLO County, P.O. Box 4210, San Luis Obispo, CA 93403.

We hope that San Luis Obispo County will not only be known as the “Happy Place” but as the place that also practices the best “Civil Discourse” in local government.

Warm regards,

Marilee Hyman, President

The League of Women Voters.... ninety years ago it was for women. Now it's for everybody!

Appendix B

Civility and Civil Discourse Resolution with Script

Following is a sample of the “Civility and Civil Discourse Resolution” that we asked core government bodies to adopt and follow in all their interactions with each other and the public. You are welcome to use this same CD Resolution, design your own, or collaborate with each government body on customizing their own “Civility and Civil Discourse Resolution.” Most government bodies adopted our CD Resolution. All government bodies were receptive to our CD presentations. The 2 government bodies that did not adopt our CD Resolution already had effective agreed upon documents that focused on best practices of how they should interact with each other and the public.

Recently, we developed a more succinct “Civil Discourse Pledge” that is in the main body of this booklet. So, you have an alternative or companion piece to complement the CD Resolution. More importantly, we have added the Chair’s “Request for Ethical Accountability” that can be read at the beginning of every public meeting which is also in the main body of this booklet. You might suggest that the public who are present join in by reciting the pledge with the Chair and Elected Officials. Each government body is different as is the current level of civility and civil discourse. So, you will have to use your own judgment and work with the Chair and Elected Officials to find out what is the best protocol.

IN THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

____ 7th ____ day ____ July _____, 2015

PRESENT: Supervisors

ABSENT:

RESOLUTION NO. _____

CIVILITY AND CIVIL DISCOURSE ACCORD

The following resolution is hereby offered and read:

WHEREAS, We, the San Luis Obispo Members of the Board of Supervisors, in order to ensure **civility** and **civil discourse** in all of our meetings, pledge our commitment to the following **best practices of civility** and **civil discourse**:

WHEREAS, We pledge our commitment to **Respect** the right of all people to hold different opinions in all our meetings;

WHEREAS, We pledge our commitment to **avoid rhetoric intended to humiliate, malign, or question the motivation** of those whose opinions are different from ours in all our meetings;

WHEREAS, We pledge our commitment to **strive to understand** differing perspectives in all our meetings;

WHEREAS, We pledge our commitment to **choose words carefully** in all our meetings;

WHEREAS, We pledge our commitment to **speak truthfully** without accusation, and avoid distortion in all our meetings;

WHEREAS, We pledge our commitment to **speak out against violence, prejudice, and incivility** in all their forms whenever and wherever they occur in all our meetings.

WHEREAS, We commit ourselves to building a civil political community in which each person is respected and spirited public and political debate is aimed at the betterment of San Luis Obispo County and its people and not the disparagement of those with whom we disagree.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Members of the Board of Supervisors and the community of the County of San Luis Obispo, State of California, shall promote the use of and adherence to the principles of **civility** and **civil discourse** in conducting business with elected officials, staff, and citizens:

Upon motion of Supervisor _____, seconded by Supervisor _____, and on the following roll call vote, to-wit:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAINING:

The foregoing resolution is hereby adopted:

Chairperson of the Board of Supervisors

ATTEST:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

BY: _____

Deputy Clerk

Script for Adoption of Board of Supervisors
Civility and Civil Discourse Accord
July 7, 2015

Talking Points for Civil Discourse Rollout to Board of Supervisors:

- The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization whose members encourage informed and active participation in government, strive to increase the understanding of major public policy issues, and work to influence public policy through education and advocacy. For 95 years, members of The League of Women Voters have been dedicated to the education of voters, the study and advocacy of issues, and the promotion of good citizenship. As a nonpartisan organization, the League takes pride in the fact that they **neither support nor oppose candidates or political parties** but, instead, **work on vital issues of concern to the public.**
- In June of 2014, our League resolved to study and promote civil discourse through action and education.
- The League believes in representative government and the individual liberties established in the US Constitution. **Making Democracy work has always been a primary goal of all Leagues in America.**
- The League believes that Democracy thrives when we ...
 1. ... can discuss differing viewpoints amicably;
 2. ... listen and speak respectfully;
 3. ... strive to understand and be understood;
 4. ... keep an open mind;
 5. ... focus on facts and evidence NOT personalities or parties.
- We believe that all members of the Board of Supervisors and citizens here today want to see San Luis Obispo County thrive now and in the future.
- We would like to thank the Chair and members of the Board of Supervisors for your encouragement and support in adopting a **“Civility and Civil Discourse Accord”** for both current and future members of the Board of Supervisors, their staff, citizens, and our countywide community.
- Adoption of the **“Civility and Civil Discourse Accord”** marks the first step on our new journey together to promote civility and civil discourse countywide.
- The League will be present at public meetings countywide both as Ambassadors and as Observers.
- We would now like to distribute our Civil Discourse pamphlets, buttons, and stickers that were made possible through the support of special donors and a Grant from the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors.
- We hope you will wear these buttons as reminders of Civil Discourse while conducting public business.
- We invite everyone here today to join us in promoting Civil Discourse.

Appendix C

Script – Post Convention Q. & A. Democracy in Dialogue Workshop

Thinking about starting discussions on Civility and Civil Discourse? Are you also considering the possibility of adopting our CD Study by Concurrence? Following is a script that a facilitator might use to discuss the highlights of our yearlong CD Study. The tough post-convention questions that follow should spark some interesting discussions.

In the main body of this CD Booklet under the Santa Barbara Community Forum entitled, “Can We talk ... and Listen to One Another” is a list of some of the most commonly ask questions about Civil Discourse. If you go to our League’s web site at www.lwvslo.org you will be able to download a plethora of materials and resources. Of course, Debora Humphreys and I will also be available by phone, email, and/or to schedule a virtual meeting. We would be happy to talk about lessons learned and best strategies.

The Civil Discourse Study – 05/16/15 – LWVC Convention Workshop Script

INTRODUCTION: “Hi! I’m Sharon Kimball, 1st Vice President of the League of Women Voters of San Luis Obispo County, Chair of the local Civil Discourse Study ... and I LOVE ROBUST, FRANK, FACT DRIVEN CIVIL DISCOURSE ... ON ALL THE TOUGH ISSUES.

Opening Slide #1: (“How to Direct A Local Study prepared by Ellen Taylor-LWVC)

If your League has NEVER done a local study or if, like us, it’s been more than 10 years since you’ve done a local study, then, I highly recommend, “How to Direct A Local Study” prepared by Ellen Taylor and financed by the State League’s Education Fund. (... and Yes, I downloaded all 43 pages and followed EVERY suggestion.)

I’d love to share the unabridged version of our yearlong study – so many resources and compelling stories – but time won’t allow – so here’s the Executive Summary ...

Slide #2: (Scope of Study Issue #1: What is Civil Discourse-Definition
Issue #2: New or Updated position?
Compile Best Practices)

WE WERE FACED WITH 2 KEY ISSUES:

FIRST: What IS Civil Discourse? (It’s not like there were many examples!)

SECOND: At the end of our study, would we be ADDING a new position?

OR ...

UPDATING an existing Position?

AND FINALLY ...

What ARE the Best Practices of Civil Discourse?

Slide #3: (Where do we begin?)

WHAT IF ...

We could find RESOURCES for these KEY ISSUES in our own COUNTY?

...

while RAISING AWARENESS and BUILDING SUPPORT for CIVIL DISCOURSE along the way?

Slide #4: (Engage County Participation:

- 5 Board of Supervisors)

OUR GRASSROOTS STRATEGY?

Engage COUNTY Participation ... from the very beginning.

We asked each of the 5 Supervisors, “What are YOU doing to promote CIVIL DISCOURSE with other elected officials, staff, and citizens?”

Slide #5: (Engage County Participation:

- 7 City Mayors
- 5 Board of Supervisors)

Then, we reached out to our 7-CITY MAYORS, and asked them, “What are YOU doing to PROMOTE CIVIL DISCOURSE with other elected officials, staff, and citizens?”

Slide #6: (Engage County Participation:

- 28 City Council Members
- 7 City Mayors
- 5 Board of Supervisors)

We posed the same question to our 28 City Council Members.

One elected official at a time ... we were gathering information about Civil Discourse and Best Practices ... with our COUNTY GOVERNMENT ... while RAISING AWARENESS and ENGAGING COUNTY PARTICIPATION ... at the same time.

Slide # 7: (Engage County Participation:

- 4 Countywide Citizen Meetings
- 28 City Council Members
- 7 City Mayors
- 5 Board of Supervisors)

By the time we reached out to our CITIZENS in 4 COUNTYWIDE MEETINGS, we had piles and piles of 3-ring binders filled with COMPELLING INFORMATION about CIVIL DISCOURSE.

Slide #8: (Engage County Participation:

- 6 LWV Consensus Meetings
- 4 Countywide Citizens Meetings
- 28 City Council Members
- 7 City Mayors
- 5 Board of Supervisors)

After reaching CONSENSUS on a DEFINITION and BEST PRACTICES of CIVIL DISCOURSE, on JUNE 14, 2014

a quorum of our members approved the UPDATED GOVERNMENT POSITION ... allowing us to ADD these 3 CRITICAL WORDS ... **PROMOTE CIVIL DISCOURSE.**

Slide #9: (Engage County Participation:

- Local Media
- 6 LWV Consensus Meetings
- 4 Countywide Citizen Meetings
- 28 City Council Members
- 7 City Mayors
- 5 Board of Supervisors)

Now that we had a Position, we were ready to reach out to the LOCAL MEDIA and tell our story.

Slide #10: (Updated Government Position:

The League supports policies and actions that achieve a responsive and representative government, PROMOTE CIVIL DISCOURSE,

It only took 12 MONTHS and OVER 35 MEETINGS to ADD these 3 CRITICAL WORDS! In addition we added the following goal that reads ...

- #5. Promote civil discourse through action and education for all government bodies, staff, and citizens for the purpose of improved public policy decisions and processes. Civil discourse means, at a minimum, mutually respectful courteous constructive, and orderly communication.

Q. & A. from Democracy in Dialogue Workshop

10. Are there aspects of your civil discourse project applicable to anarchistic outsiders who disrupt or even take over meetings?

Answer: In our **Civil Discourse Brochure**, we stress the importance of **Leadership** in setting the tone for meetings. We believe that **Leaders** who practice the **10 Rules of Civil Discourse** are more likely to affect not only the tenor of elected officials on the dais but also the tenor of citizens speaking during public comment time. When **Leaders** fail to take charge and enforce the rules, then, disruptive situations are much more likely to occur according to our sources and resources. Of course, there are always exceptional circumstances involving individuals whose behavior may be unaffected by rules or the **Best Practices of Civil Discourse**. Many elected officials and citizens seem to share our belief that **promoting Civil Discourse** may be the best offense to prevent disruptive behavior either on the dais or off the dais. As we know, elected officials are bound by the freedoms protected by the First Amendment and Brown Act.

While the first Amendment and Brown Act allow citizens the right to speak and be heard in both public and special meetings, citizens are not allowed to make violent threats to officials, citizens, or disrupt the orderly conduct of the meeting. Usually, there is no redress for “uncivil content” from disruptive citizens – with exception to the above-mentioned extremes. Government bodies, such as City Councils, may enact “reasonable regulations” governing the public’s exercise of First Amendment and Brown Act rights to address City Councils and other government bodies. The LWV of SLOCO would like both elected officials and citizens to embrace **Civil Discourse** for the purpose of preventing these extremes from occurring. Most citizens -- including some of the most disruptive citizens – just want their voice to be heard and respected. When elected officials show all citizens due respect and strive to listen with a sincere intent to truly understand what citizens are saying, then, most citizens become much more respectful themselves. (LWV of SLOCO)

11. Will it be possible to adopt the SLO government position by concurrence?

Answer: Yes. We are in the process of taking the first step by filling out and filing the LWV Clearinghouse Submission Form #8. Our Civil Discourse Study Report, documents, and PowerPoint are complete and ready. We just need our Civil Discourse Study Committee to review materials and determine which documents to select for submission. Clearinghouse volunteers will review the Submission Form, links, and documents. They will notify the LWV of SLOCO when this process is complete and the **Civil Discourse Study** materials will be accessible the LWV Clearinghouse web site as well as our own web site at www.lwvslo.org. In the meantime, we will begin posting Civil Discourse information on our local web site in June – after our own vetting process is complete. (LWV of SLOCO.) **Our LWV of San Luis Obispo County Study: Finding a Definition, Best Practices, and Position for Civil Discourse in San Luis Obispo County was published on September 1, 2015 on the LWV Clearinghouse web site and is now available for a League Chapters to download. To go to the LWV Clearinghouse web site. First Google “LWV Clearinghouse web site. Click on the result. Then go to “Government” in the left hand column and click on “Citizen Participation” under “Government” to go to the CD Study and supporting materials.**

12. How can techniques for civil discourse work if only one side is willing to do it?

Answer: Never underestimate the **power of one!** When there is spirited robust debate between two people **and only one** of these two people chooses to use the **Best Practices of Civil Discourse**, you would be amazed how the person using **civil discourse** can not only transform and change the direction and results of the entire conversation but also affect the demeanor of the other person. A seasoned practitioner of **civil discourse** knows how to **keep an open mind and heart, be respectful, courteous, and listen** with a sincere intent to **truly understand the other person's point-of-view** – even when the level of divisiveness has degenerated into personal attacks. When the **Best Practices of Civil Discourse** becomes second nature, you will know how to diffuse and reframe even the most contentious crucial conversations or, at least, know when to **agree to disagree without becoming disagreeable**. We highly recommend the book, **Crucial Conversations: Tools for talking when stakes are High** that is listed in the Resource List for our Democracy in Dialogue Workshops. We also recommend taking a look at our **LWV of SLOCO Civil Discourse Brochure**. (LWV of SLOCO)

13. Through your studies on civility can you conclude that civic participation will increase as a result from renewed civil dialogue opportunities?

Answer: Yes. Our Civil Discourse Study and other studies show when citizens are given increased opportunities to express their opinions and be heard in a safe environment characterized by orderly, constructive communication where mutual respect, fairness, and attentive listening is the rule and not the exception – they are more likely to engage in civic participation. The last decade has produced large numbers of citizens who feel disenfranchised from the democratic process and who distrust institutions – especially government institutions and bodies. The League is positioned to turn this trend around and change minds if they continue to reach out and engage these citizens with educational outreach programs, candidate and proposition forums, and activities that promote **Civil Discourse among elected officials, their staff, and citizens**. We feel that elected officials running for office in 2016 who reach out to citizens in person, online, in the media, and social media **using the principles of Civil Discourse** will be much more successful in not only winning votes but in winning voters' trust. This will be the first step in the process of reengaging the public and restoring trust in the democratic process, government institutions, and officials. The League needs to do the same thing. We need to identify and reach out to citizens on a grassroots level and engage them in helping us in our own mission to make democracy work through **Civil Discourse**. We need to ramp up our publicity, marketing, and events to engage all citizens of all ages and backgrounds. We were given several creative examples during the Democracy in Dialogue Workshop on just how to accomplish this. (LWV of SLOCO)

Appendix D

Keeping Engaged: CD Observer Corps & Ambassadors

How do you engage, support, and inform elected officials about the ongoing importance of not only using the Best Practices of Civility and Civil Discourse in their interactions with each other, Staff, and the Public but also about the ongoing importance of supporting decisions and legislation on issues that our League Program has prioritized for action and emphasis because we believe that supporting our Positions on these issues is critical to strengthening Democracy and making Democracy work better?

As League members, you are familiar with the Observer Corps which was formed to observe government for the purpose of educating members on how government works, supporting transparency, and learning about issues on the Agenda that are or may become items for local study and action. If you would like more information on the Observer Corps, download the following on how to start: www.lwv.org/files/lwvof/ObserveYourGovernment.pdf Then, visit other League web sites and look at their Observer Corps section to see which government bodies or organizations they observe and how they report their findings.

Our League added another dimension to the existing Observer Corps concept: observe and report on the level of civility and civil discourse exhibited by elected officials, Staff, and the Public. In light of this added purpose, we now call our corps the Civil Discourse Observer Corps. If there seems to be serious dysfunction, then, you report back to your CD Observer Corps Chair, Director of Civil Discourse, and your Board of Directors so they can decide on the appropriate action. **(The “Civil Discourse” section of these reports is “confidential” – not published.)** We will reach out in private meetings with Chairs and members to offer public workshops and/or private one-on-one training – if the government body and/or individuals involved are open to feedback and our help. **(We never call out or name individuals or gossip about our CD findings.) This would only add to the dysfunction!**

As a county League with a lot of territory to cover, we try to select and prioritize those government bodies that have the greatest impact on decisions relating to our League Advocacy and/or show the greatest dysfunction in their communication with each other, staff, and the Public. Following are samples of scripts used by our designated, trained “Ambassadors.” Our “Ambassadors” are approved by our President to speak from highly vetted approved scripts only when the President or Vice President is unavailable to speak on critical issues or dysfunction observed in previous Public Meetings. (The “Observable CD Checklist” is in the main body of the CD Booklet.)

Sample Ambassador Script #1*: CD Resolution Reminder

Good morning (afternoon, evening) (chair and members of government body/organization.) My name is _____ and I am here today with the permission of our League President, _____, to speak as a representative of the Civil Discourse Ambassador Corps for the League of Women Voters of San Luis Obispo County. In 2015, your (name of government body/organization) adopted our League's "Civility and Civil Discourse Resolution." As a Civil Discourse Ambassador, I would like to take a moment to remind everyone present today about the Best Practices listed in the adopted "Civility and Civil Discourse Resolution." When elected officials, their staff, and citizens follow the Best Practices of Civility and Civil Discourse, they ...

- Respect the right of all people to hold different opinions.
- Avoid rhetoric intended to humiliate, malign, or question the motivation.
of those whose opinions are different from theirs.
- Strive to understand differing perspectives.
- Speak truthfully without accusation and avoid distortion.
- Speak out against violence, prejudice, and incivility in all their forms, wherever and whenever they occur.
- Commit to build a civil political community in which each person is respected and spirited public debate is aimed at the betterment of the community and its people and not the disparagement of those with whom they disagree.

Some may contend that the call for Civility and Civil Discourse is an attempt to curtail the right to free speech of (name of government body/organization) and the Public. While we in the League support First Amendment Rights, we believe that practicing Civility and Civil Discourse during heated discussions not only increases the speaker's chance of being heard but also increases the opportunity that the speaker's ideas, criticisms, or suggestions might be taken under advisement. "Civility is claiming and caring for one's own identity, needs, and beliefs without degrading someone else's in the process." (Cassandra Dahnke and Tomas Spath) Let's approach today's meeting and future meetings using these Best Practices of Civil Discourse.

*Read these scripts during Public Comment at the beginning of a Public Meeting for the appropriate government body. Most government bodies have time limits for Public Comment – usually 3 minutes. Make sure you know the time limit for Public Comment where you plan to speak and time your script before the Public Meeting so you don't run the risk of embarrassment by being cut off before you complete your message.

Sample Ambassador Script #2: Election Year

Good evening (Chair or Presiding Elected Official). My name is _____ and I am here tonight with the permission of our President, _____, to speak as a representative of the Civil Discourse Ambassador Corps for the League of Women Voters of San Luis Obispo County.

In an election year, it is more important than ever to ground ourselves in the Best Practices of Civility and Civil Discourse. Our League continues to believe that, by following the Best Practices of Civility and Civil Discourse, Democracy works better, public policy-making decisions improve, and elected officials and citizens find better solutions to critical problems facing our County.

On (Date of Adoption), your (Name of Governing Body) adopted the Civility and Civil Discourse Resolution – pledging your collective commitment to the Best Practices of civility and civil discourse. Tonight, (Observer's Name), a representative of our Civil Discourse Observer Corps, and I are here to thank you, (Presiding Elected Official), and each (Name of governing body) Member for your ongoing commitment to the Best Practices of Civility and Civil Discourse.

We are also here to remind officials, staff, and citizens about the importance of continuing to show respect -- not only in our own choice of words and body language when we speak --but also in our response to others as we respectfully listen while they speak. By clearing our mind of all preconceived ideas and opening our hearts with the intent to genuinely understand perspectives different from ours, we just may find new and better solutions to the items or issues on tonight's Agenda.

Showing sincere, genuine respect in thought, word, and deed just might result in the respectful response needed to move both hearts and minds in the right direction – the direction of robust, frank, honest, fact-based discussions – necessary in the pursuit of common ground – resulting in the best decisions possible. Please show others the respect you would like shown to you. Yes – even when others choose to take the low road. Thank you for your continued collective efforts to help the city of San Luis Obispo thrive now and in the future.

Ambassador Script #3: Leadership

Good morning (afternoon, evening) (chair and members of government body/organization.) My name is _____. I am here today with the permission of our League President, _____ to speak as a representative of the Civil Discourse Ambassador Corps or the League of Women Voters of San Luis Obispo County. In 2015, you heard a presentation from us on “Civility and Civil Discourse” and you adopted our Resolution acknowledging your commitment to follow these Best Practices in working with your colleagues and the public. So now, we want to gently remind you and the citizens present today about these Best Practices and why they matter.

Our League believes that Civil Discourse begins with courteous, constructive communication characterized by mutual respect, fairness, and attentive listening. As elected officials, you can provide the leadership for this type of communication. As leaders, you can encourage open spirited debate and active listening. You can set the tone by encouraging your colleagues and the public to honor these same rules, resolutions, and guidelines that you have adopted. You can remind everyone at the beginning of each public meeting about the importance of following these Best Practices.

It is heartening to see concerned and involved members of the Public attending these meetings. When citizens feel comfortable to speak freely about the facts and present their opinions in a reasonable and courteous manner, it is a pleasure to see Democracy at work. When elected officials and citizens learn to disagree without being disagreeable, learn to show genuine respect for each other, and learn to listen with an open mind, then, we can hope to find common ground together that will lead to better decisions and better public policy making.

We want to thank the elected officials, their staff, and citizens who strive to make Civility and Civil Discourse a hallmark of their communications: you are setting a standard, precedent, and proud legacy for future elected officials, staff, and citizens. Let your actions be the model that other (government bodies/organizations) will want to emulate – a model that not only fosters increased civic participation but also motivates more young people to choose a career in the political arena.

Appendix E

Script for Non-Government Organizations Civil Discourse Rap – Using Fun and Humor

As word spread about our Civil Discourse activities, we started receiving invitations from non-governmental organizations. The Chamber of Commerce was the first to invite us to their Good Morning SLO Meeting that attracted an attendance of over 300 people. There is a precedent at the Chamber of Commerce that all Good Morning SLO presentations must be both creative and fun. There is a prize for the best presentation. We admit that this was a challenge since we League members are very conscientious about being proper and professional at all times.

Still, this was an unprecedented opportunity to spread our mission and message to the broader community. So, we put on our thinking caps. Our President, Marguerite Bader, who shares my love for poetry and writing poetry, came up with the idea of a Civil Discourse Rap put to music with some fun choreography. Frankly, I was more than a little nervous. We practiced and practiced and received a standing ovation and cheers after our performance – reputation still in tact but now the perception is that we do know how to have fun at the League of Women Voters!

Civil Discourse Presentation Talking Points
Good Morning SLO – Chamber of Commerce
Thursday, August 27, 2015

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that neither supports nor opposes candidates or political parties but, instead, works on vital issues of concern to the public. The LWV of San Luis Obispo County ...

- Encourages informed and active participation in government;
- Strives to increase the understanding of major public policy issues;
- Works to influence public policy through education and advocacy.

After completing a yearlong countywide **Study of Civil Discourse** in June of 2014, the League of Women Voters of San Luis Obispo County resolved to promote civil discourse through action and education because **making Democracy work has always been a primary goal of all Leagues in America** and the LWV of San Luis Obispo County believes that **Democracy thrives when we ...**

- Can discuss differing viewpoints amicably
- Listen and speak respectfully
- Strive to understand and be understood
- Keep an open mind
- Focus on facts and evidence NOT personalities or parties

In addition to updating our Government Position to include the promotion and advocacy of Civil Discourse, the LWV of San Luis Obispo County has also created a permanent position on our League Board of Directors – Director of Civil Discourse – so we can continue to promote and advocate on behalf of Civil Discourse by ...

- Establishing a Civil Discourse Task Force to carry out our action initiatives
- Publishing a Civil Discourse Brochure outlining the Best Practices of Civil Discourse
- Designing Civil Discourse Buttons and Stickers to raise awareness and build support
- Encouraging government bodies to adopt a “Civility and Civil Discourse Resolution”
- Creating a Civil Discourse Observer Corps to observe public meetings
- Establishing a Civil Discourse Ambassador Corps to speak at public meetings
- Partnering with the NICD* to create Civil Discourse Training Workshops for Elected Officials
- Partnering with schools on establishing a Civil Discourse Curriculum
- Creating a Civil Discourse Speaker’s Bureau to reach out to the Community

*NICD – The vision of the **National Institute for Civil Discourse** is to “advance the understanding and practice of civil discourse to strengthen our democratic traditions and improve governance and public decision-making”. (www.nicd.arizona.edu) We are currently working with Ted Celeste who reaches out to legislators nationwide in order to help them identify areas of change that provide incentives for constructive engagement and improvements to the political environment.

Civil Discourse Rap

Good Morning SLO ... we're the League of Women Voters.
We've got a project going ... that will really rev your motors!
We are so sedate - don't expect to see us twerking
Cause our favorite motto is ... **"Get Democracy working!" (ALL)**

To the Mayors, City Councils, Board of Supes, and CSD's,
Our League will bring the message: "Use Civil Discourse please!"
When you're dealing with your peers ... you may often disagree,
But when you differ with them ... **Use civility!" (All)**

So all of you officials ... that we citizens elected
You need to show our people ... their opinions are respected.
You need to really listen ... and keep an open mind.
Focus on the facts ... **and most of all be kind! (All)**

At public comment time we need to keep in sight
Speak up freely - but don't abuse - your First Amendment rights!
Bring your passion - but speak calmly - about what's on your mind
Stick to facts and evidence ... **and leave mean words behind! (All)**

We've got brochures and stickers, and buttons on our theme.
We're telling folks from North to South our Civil Discourse dream:
Ambassadors, Observers, we've got the County covered.
We want to raise awareness ... **as you've probably discovered! (All)**

So if we all work together towards Civil Discourse striving,
We'll see before too long Democracy is thriving!
SLO could be so famous ... that in Kudos ... we'd be swimmin'!
With Civil Discourse as our norm ... **thanks to our fine League women! (ALL)**

We have a workshop in our plans, it sits on our back burner.
Anyone elected can be a Civil Discourse learner.
Thanks for having us today did you think we would be tamer?
We're civil -yes -but fun's good too ... **so here's to YOU, SLO Chamber! (All)**

Appendix F

Civil Discourse Brochure and Buttons

How do we get the word out about our mission to promote Civil Discourse among elected officials, their staff, and the public? How do we increase our visibility and get our key points out to as many people as possible? We decided to design and publish a Civil Discourse Brochure. We printed 10,000 copies. It took many meetings, eyes, collaborations, and proofs. We also designed an “I Love Civil Discourse” button. You can download the brochure from our web site and print copies to distribute in your community.

Then, our President and Director of Communications reached out to the media with Publicity Releases and meetings. We even participated in local radio shows where people could call in and ask questions. We distributed our CD Brochures all over San Luis Obispo County. We made sure that all our elected officials, their staff, and citizens had our CD buttons to wear. We never charged money for the buttons or the brochures because we felt that would distract from our mission and message. We did not get into the business of promoting civility and civil discourse to make money. We are in it for 1 reason only – to strengthen our Democracy – and make Democracy work better in San Luis Obispo County.

Our expanded mission is to strengthen Democracy all over California and beyond by inviting League Chapters all over California and in other states to adopt our CD Study by Concurrence and start promoting civility and civil discourse among their own elected officials, staff, and public. The LWVOR adopted our CD Study by Concurrence in May at their Convention so the state of Oregon and all the chapters in Oregon can now promote Civil Discourse in their local and state government bodies.

When we formed our Civil Discourse Observer Corps and Civil Discourse Ambassador Corps, we added the CD Observer and CD Ambassador buttons. We are now in the process of restructuring our CD Observer and CD Ambassador Corps. We are also in the process of adding a League Concierge Pilot Program at the San Luis Obispo City Council. This is why we designed and added the “Making Democracy Work” and “League Concierge” buttons that you see pictured on the following pages.

Learn to disagree without being disagreeable. Use courtesy and respect in words and deeds. Talk to each other instead of at each other.



Be Respectful

Listening is as important as expressing your own views. Listening is not the same as agreeing. Recognize opposing positions.



Listen with an Open Mind

Reach across the aisle. Seek shared values. Challenge stereotypes. Ask pertinent questions. Identify and focus on problems. Articulate, argue and defend issues. Be open to compromise.



Find Common Ground

Viewpoints on Civil Discourse

"Come together, in open dialogue, to discuss the great issues of our day, learn from each other, and work to move our society forward."
UC President Janet Napolitano

"Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the ability to cope with conflict by peaceful means."
Ronald Reagan

"Honest disagreement is often a good sign of progress."
Mahatma Gandhi

"Differences of opinion lead to inquiry, and inquiry to truth."
Thomas Jefferson



We invite you to join the League of Women Voters to promote Civil Discourse as an essential way of life for a thriving democracy.

LWVSLO.org

Brochure produced by LWV SLOCO Civil Discourse Committee
Contributing Editors: Sharon Kimball and Marilee Hymen
Graphic Design: Kelly Hayes, TJA Advertising
Sponsors: San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors
Steve and Marian Saldo
©2015 League of Women Voters San Luis Obispo County, Inc.

New and Improved
Methods for

Civil Discourse



in the
Public Arena

"With malice towards none, with charity for all ..."

Effective Ideas & Solutions EASY TO USE

"Good governance is a clash of ideas and values in the political arena. We need to listen to our opponent's arguments and look for areas of common interest ...if we are to govern this country effectively."
Brint Millward, National Institute for Civil Discourse



"...And so it begins..."

What is Civil Discourse?

It is courteous, constructive communication characterized by mutual respect, fairness, and attentive listening.

Why Does Civility Matter?

Civil Discourse promotes informed discussion of public issues essential for government bodies and citizens to make good decisions.

Improving Civility is Easy

Shine a bright light on civility!
Call on others to do the same.



Find points of disagreement and their solutions amicably.

Be kind to one another, even if you disagree on stuff.

10 Simple Rules for Civil Discourse



A Presiding Chairperson sets the tone of a meeting...

- 1) Leads by example and encourages others to do the same. Shows respect to all in actions, body language, and speech.
- 2) Encourages open spirited debates on all facts by contending parties.
- 3) Provides adequate time for public comment.
- 4) Actively listens. Thanks speakers and, where appropriate, acknowledges public input.
- 5) Speaks truthfully without distortion.
- 6) Never comments on the motivation of a speaker.
- 7) Limits discussion to merits of issues. Explains the rationale and evidence to support opinions and conclusions.
- 8) Promotes rules publically. Gives a brief reminder before meetings.
- 9) Enforces the rules. Allows no disruptions of a meeting. Allows no slanderous, profane or negative personal remarks.
- 10) Regularly reviews/updates rules (city/county codes, codes of ethics, Robert's Rules, Brown Act, pledges).

...and ensures fair treatment with Rules of Order and Decorum



"Civil Discourse makes a difference for the good so we can have an environment that calls people to government service. We owe it to our democracy and to every young person who will inherit it."
J. Mullen Jr., Allegheny College



"Good God winfred! How long has civility cost nothing!"

Civility: Not Just Politeness

It means be tolerant. Listen, don't interrupt. Refrain from sarcasm. Be respectful. Speak in modulated tones. Stick to the issue. Recognize there are two sides. Avoid labels.

Tip> To prevent shutting down conversation, choose civil words. Civility increases your chance of being heard.

Civility vs. Free Speech

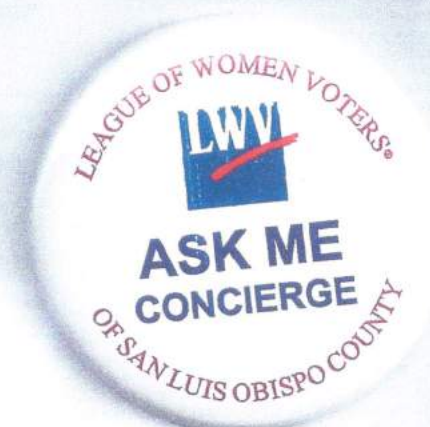
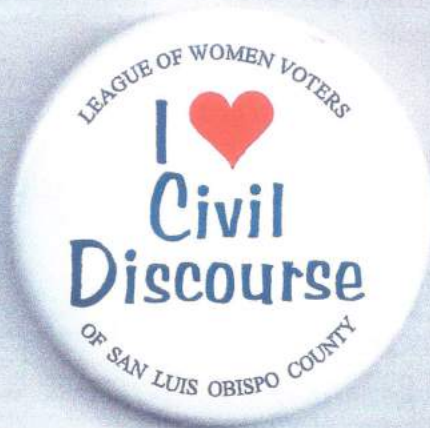
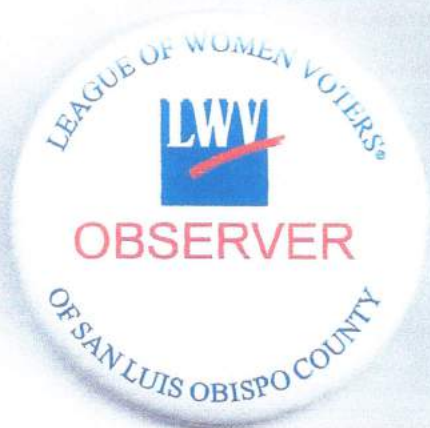
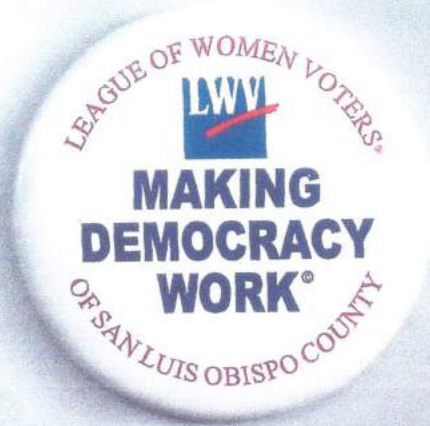
You may have the right to say what you want but there is no need to say it in an inflammatory or insulting manner.

"We can only exercise our right to free speech insofar as we feel safe and respected in doing so, and this in turn requires that people treat each other with civility."
J. Mullen Jr., The Importance of Civility in Public Discourse

Tip> Attack the message, not the messenger

INTIMIDATE	CONTRADICT	ARGUE	REFUTE	DEBATE
Violence, threats, personal attacks, name calling	"I'm right! You're wrong"	Using half-truths or lies	Constructively point out errors of opposition	Using reason and evidence

The Spectrum of
Bad, Better, and Best Ways to Communicate



Appendix G

How to Adopt the LWV of SLO County's CD Study By Concurrence and the Civil Discourse Position

After attendees at the Democracy in Dialogue Workshop at the LWVC 2015 Convention encouraged us to publish our Civil Discourse Study entitled, "A Study of Civil Discourse in San Luis Obispo County: Finding a Definition, Best Practices, and Position" on the LWV Clearinghouse web site, we took their advice and published it on September 1, 2015. Since that time, Leagues here in California and in other states have had the ability to adopt this CD Study by Concurrence and have their own Position on Civil Discourse so they, too, could advocate Civil Discourse among their own elected officials, staff, and community.

We collaborated with Joanne Leavitt, who is the current Program Director for the LWVC, on how to develop a document that would outline the steps for Concurrence when Leagues are adopting another League's published study by Concurrence. Prior to that time, the primary resource for Concurrence was in reference to the LWVC adopting a recommended study by concurrence at their biennial Conventions. On the following pages, you will see the official League document for Concurrence with the steps you need to take to adopt our League's CD Study by Concurrence. We hope you will join our efforts in trying to strengthen Democracy through the best practices of civil discourse in your own local government bodies.

Our yearlong CD Study resulted in an update to our Government Position where we were finally able to add the 3 words: "... **promote civil discourse ...**". We also added **goal #5** under our **Government Position**. Our entire updated Government Position follows so you can see the updated position in its entirety. We are dealing with very challenging times and our Democracy is really being tested at all levels. Never before has there been a time when we all need to step up and do everything possible to do what we can to strengthen our Democracy. We strongly feel that promoting civil discourse will not only make a significant difference in our government bodies but also with our Advocacy efforts on the local, state, and national level.

CONCURRENCE

The definition of concurrence in “*In League*” is:

Concurrence is the act of agreeing with—or concurring with—a statement of position. A decision-making technique used by the League for some time, concurrence can work several ways. Groups of League members or League boards can concur with 1) recommendations of a resource committee or a unit group; 2) decision statements formulated by League boards; or, 3) **positions reached by another League or Leagues.**

As a general rule, either background materials and a copy of the study and position under consideration, published on the LWV Clearinghouse web site, are downloaded and distributed to members or members are provided with the online links to these background materials and published study and position so they can download and print these to use in the concurrence process.

To ensure that all members of the League that plans to adopt another League’s study and position by concurrence are given adequate notice that they will be asked to consider adoption of a position by concurrence and that they will feel they are casting an informed vote, the following procedure will be followed:

- Local League(s) must submit in writing the recommended issue or process in the study and position under consideration for adoption by concurrence to the entire membership. It could be something such as the LWV of Santa Barbara recommends the adoption of the LWV of San Luis Obispo County’s Civil Discourse Study and Position as follows for incorporation in our current Government Position: **“promote civil discourse”** along with the civil discourse goal that states **“Promote civil discourse through action and education for all government bodies, staff, and citizens for the purpose of improved public policy decisions and processes. Civil discourse means, at a minimum, mutually respectful, courteous, constructive, and orderly communication.”**
- The local League or individual members who plan to move for adoption of another League’s study and new position by concurring with a current position of another League or ILO must notify all League Members about their intention and must present the background materials and a copy of the Study and Position under consideration to members at a general meeting that is open to the entire membership. It is the responsibility of the individuals or local Leagues to send a written notice recommending concurrence in advance of the scheduled general membership meeting not later than 30 days prior to the start of the general meeting. The President can call a second meeting – a consensus meeting – if the recommendation for adoption of the study and position was well received at the general meeting and adopt the study and position there or they can adopt the study and position as a board at the next board meeting -- if it was well received by whoever showed up at the general meeting – and reaffirm it along with their other positions at the annual meeting.
- The notice to local League presidents and members will contain the following information:
 - Position the members will be asked to adopt
 - Name of the League or Leagues whose position it is; when the study was done; a succinct but complete description of the extent of the study and instances of application of the position.
 - Any other local Leagues or ILOs that have a similar position, in order to indicate the present extent of member understanding of the issue.
- The League or members who plan to move consideration of the concurrence.
- Any needed assistance may be requested from the League expert in whose portfolio the concurrence position would fall, in this case, Government.

CD Committee Finalizes Government Position Update
“Promote Civil Discourse” Added to Government Position

On Friday, April 4th, 2014, the Civil Discourse Study Committee recommended and received approval from the Board of Directors to add the words **“Civil Discourse”** in the 1st sentence of the opening statement in the 1st paragraph of the Position Statement on Government after the word **“promote”** to read as follows ...

“The League supports policies and actions that achieve a responsive and representative government, **“promote civil discourse,”** increased citizen understanding of finances and greater involvement of the public and staff in budget making and long-range financial planning and provides for the periodic evaluation of locally levied taxes, licenses, and fees.”

The Civil Discourse Study Committee further recommended and received approval from the Board of Directors **to add a 5th strategic goal about civil discourse** under our existing Government Position to read as follows:

5. Promote civil discourse, which is mutually respectful, courteous, constructive, and orderly communication, through action and education available to all governmental bodies, staff, and citizens for the purpose of improving the public policy making decision process.

On May 2nd, 2014, Sharon E. Kimball, Chair of the Civil Discourse Study submitted her Final Report on The Civil Discourse Study for inclusion in the Annual Kit; so members could review the Board recommended update to the Government Position prior to the Annual June Meeting.

On Saturday, June 14, 2014, during the Annual Meeting, a quorum of the LWV of San Luis Obispo County Membership approved the updated Government Position.

Official League Biographies – LWV of San Luis Obispo County

Sharon E. Kimball and Debora Humphreys

Sharon joined the League in 2011 and has served on the LWV of San Luis Obispo County's Board as 1st Vice President, Director of Program, Development, and Civil Discourse. Sharon chaired a Collaboration Workshop prior to serving as Chair of the yearlong Civil Discourse Study. On September 1st, 2015, Sharon's final report on the Civil Discourse Study, entitled "A Study of Civil Discourse in San Luis Obispo County: Finding a Definition, Best Practices, and Position," was accepted and published on the LWV Clearinghouse web site. Sharon followed the LWVC's protocol on "How to Direct a Local Study" with the hope that her League's final study report would be accepted and published on the LWV Clearinghouse web site; so, other Leagues in the state of California and across the US could adopt the study by concurrence and promote civil discourse among their own elected officials, staff, and the public. Sharon graduated with a BA in English and Education from Lawrence University in Wisconsin and an MS in Advertising from the University of Illinois College of Communications. Her continuing education classes include Counseling, Computer Science, and Human Resources. Sharon has over 30 years of experience in business and education. She has lived and worked in Illinois, Wisconsin, New York, South Dakota, Oregon, and California. She was among the first women hired in Sales Management by IBM and among the first women invited to join Rotary International. She gained international experience in business and education as Director of Career Assistance with a private, business university. After years of helping local businesses through her own consultancy in advertising, marketing and technical communication, Sharon recently transitioned into freelance writing with her own businesses: Civil Communications, and Happy Place Publications. Sharon is a member of the San Luis Obispo Monday Noon Rotary Club, the San Luis Obispo Nightwriters, and lives in Avila Beach with her husband Jim. Together, they have 5 adult children and 8 grandchildren. (Contact Info: [989-780-3669](tel:989-780-3669)/sharon.e.kimball@gmail.com)

Debora Humphreys

Debora Humphreys, League of Women Voters Board Member, is an Executive Coach and Organization Development Specialist with Waypoint Coaching and Consulting who formerly contracted with The Aerospace Corporation, El Segundo, CA. Along with her consulting work, Deb volunteers time now providing transition coaching for returning veterans and is a docent for the Port San Luis Lighthouse and Pecho Coast Trail. Deb has over 25 years of organization development experience serving and coaching leaders, teams, and organizations. Deb earned her Ph.D. from Case Western Reserve University where her dissertation focused on change management and the leadership competencies that distinguish successful from average change leaders. Along with her Ph.D., she has a M.Ed. in higher education counseling and 3-year post-graduate certification in "group process" from the Gestalt Institute, Cleveland, Ohio. She is a Professional Certified Coach (PCC) credentialed by the International Coaching Federation (ICF). Deb is certified in many assessment instruments including Myers Briggs, Loominger's VOICES and eChoices 360, Conflict Dynamics, and the Hay Group's Emotional Competency Inventory, Leadership Styles, and Organizational Climate Survey. Deb believes that individuals and organizations have the creative capacity to reach their full potential. Her role as coach and OD consultant is to facilitate that process through inquiry, discovery, planning, and personal commitment for accountability. Her approach extends beyond skill development to facilitating shifts in beliefs and mindsets to better mobilize others to meet complex challenges. Because of her large-system perspective, she views the consulting relationship within the larger context of organizational, personal, and extended community life. She is an invaluable addition to our League and to the Civil Discourse Action Team. Deb lives in Avila Beach with husband, Dave, who is also a member of the LWV of SLOCO. They have 2 adult children and 6 grandchildren. (Contact Info: [424-201-9756](tel:424-201-9756)/deb@waypointcoach.com)

Learn to disagree
without being disagreeable.
Use courtesy and respect in words and deeds.
Talk to each other
instead of at each other.



Be Respectful

Listening is as important as
expressing your own views.
Listening is not the same as agreeing.
Recognize opposing positions.



Listen with an Open Mind

Reach across the aisle.
Seek shared values.
Challenge stereotypes.
Ask pertinent questions.
Identify and focus on problems.
Articulate, argue and defend issues.
Be open to compromise.



Page 81 of 82

Find Common Ground

Viewpoints on Civil Discourse

"Come together, in open dialogue, to discuss
the great issues of our day, learn from each other,
and work to move our society forward."

UC President Janet Napolitano

"Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the ability
to cope with conflict by peaceful means."

Ronald Reagan

"Honest disagreement is often a
good sign of progress."

Mahatma Gandhi

"Differences of opinion lead to inquiry,
and inquiry to truth."

Thomas Jefferson



We invite you to join the League of Women Voters to promote
Civil Discourse as an essential way of life for a thriving democracy.

LWVSLO.org

Brochure produced by LWV SLOCO Civil Discourse Committee

Contributing Editors: Sharon Kimball and Marilee Hyman

Graphic Design: Kelly Hayes, TIA Advertising

Sponsors: San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors

Steve and Marian Saldo

©2015 League of Women Voters San Luis Obispo County, Inc.