

2011

DEBATES

Democracy in Action



THE
SOAPBOX

ALLEGHENY COLLEGE CENTER *for* POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

*Did you know
that in the past
soapbox crates were used as
temporary platforms
for making
impromptu public
speeches?*



SOAPBOX

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ON THE COVER

Republican Mike Kelly makes a point during a contentious debate last October with then-U.S. Congresswoman Kathy Dahlkemper (D) at Ford Chapel on the Allegheny College campus. Only weeks later, in one of the most watched midterm races in the country, Kelly beat Dahlkemper for the 3rd Legislative District seat, capturing 55.7 percent of the votes. (Photo by Bill Owen)

FROM *the* DIRECTOR



I am sometimes asked what keeps us so busy at the Center for Political Participation. My answer, often much longer than the questioner bargained for, highlights three areas of work: campus activities, community projects and scholarly endeavors. As you will note in the following pages, we were running on all cylinders this past year!

We kicked off the year's campus activities with a visit from Ben Franklin. Well, sort of. In celebration of Constitution Day, we invited a Ben Franklin reenactor to campus. It was good fun seeing one of our nation's framers in the Campus Center during lunch hour, but tough student questions and comments made the event quite educational. Later in the year, we explored our continued interest in political civility by sponsoring a panel discussion on religious tolerance, as well as a lecture on abortion politics. We also held two important candidate debates, including a packed gathering at Ford Chapel featuring U.S. House incumbent Kathy Dahlkemper and challenger, Mike Kelly, both of whom are pictured on the front cover. Among much else, we also were pleased to help sponsor a visit from a key player in the Pennsylvania Tea Party movement, and to hold our first-ever Veteran's Day event.

As for work in the community, we conducted our semester-long, nationally acclaimed Model Campaign USA program. We set a new record this year, too, with nearly 200 area high school students and teachers participating. As you may recall, the goal of this program is not simply to help young citizens better understand modern campaign practices, but to stress ethical politics.

Our scholarly work centered, primarily, on issues related to civility. By teaming up with Indiana

University-Purdue University Fort Wayne, we were able to undertake two additional national surveys, one in September and the other just days before the midterm elections in November. Our aim was to gauge attitudes and perceptions related to the tone of politics. We are continuing to digest the findings, and to present our evidence at scholarly gatherings and other public events. Several publications are in the works, including an edited book on civility, due out in December.

On a more somber note, the tragic shooting of U.S. Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords and six others in Tucson last January highlighted the importance of our work on civility in politics. We understand that Jared Laughner, the alleged shooter, is an unstable young man, and that his violent acts did not spring from lucid political motivations, nor were they the direct result of the words or deeds of any politician or commentator. But the event caused many Americans to take a serious look at how we do politics in America. People from across the nation have turned to our research for comprehensive, objective information, and we are dedicated to continuing this important work.

As always, many thanks go out to the CPP student fellows and our program coordinator, Mary Solberg, for their hard work and dedication. I also want to welcome a new member of the team: Associate Professor Brian Harward. Brian joined the Political Science Department last August and shortly thereafter agreed to be a research fellow at the CPP. His insights and energy have already made a big difference.

All the best,

Daniel M. Shea, Ph.D.
Director

DEBATES Democracy in Action

BY MARY SOLBERG

Economy at center of congressional, commissioner debates

From the U.S. Congress to the Crawford County commissioner's office, the economy took center stage this past year. So it was no surprise when the bleak economic outlook played heavily in two separate debate forums hosted by the Center for Political Participation.

On Oct. 21, 2010, Kathy Dahlkemper, the Democratic incumbent in the 3rd Congressional District, debated her Republican opponent, Mike Kelly, at Ford Chapel on the Allegheny campus. Kelly, owner of a car dealership in Butler, Pa., was leading by 7 percentage points the night of the debate, and won the general election a couple weeks later with 55.7 percent.

Six months later, full into the primary season, the CPP brought together the nine Republican and Democratic contenders for the Crawford County commissioner race. The commissioner forum was held April 25 in the Tillotson Room of Tippie Alumni Center. Of the nine candidates, Democrats Sherman Allen and Patricia Gillette, and Republicans Jack Lynch and Francis Weiderspahn captured the most votes and will go on to run in the Nov. 8 general election.

The congressional debate, clearly contentious from the outset, attracted a large, rowdy crowd at Ford Chapel.



Mike Kelly

"Times are tough, but we see things getting better," Dahlkemper said at the podium, standing only feet from Kelly. "This is probably the most important election of our generation."

Kelly quickly responded, "I don't share that same enthusiasm as the congresswoman. Things are not getting better."

This, however, was not the only issue on which the candidates sparred. Kelly criticized the recently passed health care law, adding that he would never have voted for a bill that penalized the unborn.

Dahlkemper shot back, "It's morally reprehensible that my opponent describes me as not pro-life. This was the most pro-life bill ever passed by Congress. Health care is pro-life."

While Dahlkemper touted her accomplishments during her single term in office, Kelly pledged to rein in big



Kathy Dahlkemper

government. "The best government is the least government," Kelly explained. "If we get to a point where we are able to actually grow our businesses without being overregulated, without being overtaxed, the investment then would go into training."

CPP Director Dan Shea moderated the debate with *Meadville Tribune* reporter Keith Gushard, asking the candidates additional questions submitted from the audience. Following the debate, Pam Davis of Erie told *Soapbox* that she thought the campaign had been "ugly." Two years, she said, is not enough time for any legislator to serve. "I think they need to serve a longer term," Davis added.

Jeff Keeling of Cochranton appreciated the opportunity to see the debate, referring to the important issues facing the country. "You're dealing with a climate where people are struggling.



We need genuine leadership,” Keeling added.

At the April 25 commissioner debate, the economy also took center stage with each of the candidates offering thoughts on how they would help the county through the next four years. Among the important qualities of a commissioner, each said, was accountability, transparency, improving the job outlook in manufacturing, and better communication.

Professor Shea also moderated this debate, guiding the candidates through key topics, including property reassessments, the Crawford County Correctional Facility, and the proposed expansion of the Crawford County Court House.

Regarding property reassessments, Shea explained that Crawford County has not had a reassessment since 1969. “Are you in favor of a county-wide property reassessment?” Shea asked. All of the candidates said no, citing the ongoing recession and the detrimental effect it might have on senior citizens.

“Recession is not the best time to try it [reassessment],” said Republican Keith Bromley.

Besides winners Sherman Allen, Patricia Gillette, Jack Lynch and Francis Weiderspahn, other primary candidates were: Republicans Keith Bromley, Mike Forbes, Susan K. Smith and Robyn Sye; and Democrat Patrick Donahue.



From top:

Showing the flavor of the midterm elections, audience members got a little rowdy at Ford Chapel during the debate between U.S. Congresswoman Kathy Dahlkemper and her Republican challenger, Mike Kelly.

Mike Kelly is pictured here being interviewed by the media at Ford Chapel after the debate with Kathy Dahlkemper.

Republican Jack Lynch, in foreground, was one of four candidates who won the 2011 primary race for Crawford County commissioner. Pictured next to Lynch are Susan Smith, center, and Robyn Sye.

NEWS BRIEFS

Reading for a better tomorrow

• **CPP Program Coordinator Mary Solberg** and CPP fellow Megan McNally '11 talked to students enrolled in the Crawford County READ program in downtown Meadville last Oct. 4.

Seven students enrolled in the program were seeking their high school equivalency degrees. They ranged in age from 17 to 54.

McNally presented basic information on how the U.S. government works and discussed the importance of voting. Afterward, the CPP helped students and some members of the READ staff to register to vote.

CPP staff gets dirty



CPP fellows got dirty for Make a Difference Day in Meadville last fall. Pictured, left to right, are: Katie Janocsko '11, Elise Swanekamp '12, Chris Plano '12, and Megan McNally '11.

• **Rakes, shovels, pruning shears, gloves...** not the usual tools of political scientists. But one Saturday last fall, the staff and student fellows of the Center for Political Participation got more than a little dirty for Meadville's Make a Difference Day.

The CPP joined hundreds of other students and community volunteers in projects to aid the Meadville area's low-income families, the elderly, disabled, and many non-profit agencies. The CPP worked with several youth in cleaning up the Meadville Middle School's courtyard.

"Your efforts and time were so greatly appreciated by the faculty and students," said

Charlotte Thomas, Make a Difference Day coordinator. "The Allegheny community gives so much and Meadville is so fortunate to have such an outstanding college in its midst."

Civil War revisited

• **The CPP sponsored a reception for** guest lecturer Vernon Burton of Clemson University Oct. 26.

Professor Burton was invited to campus by Allegheny's History Department to commemorate the sesquicentennial of the Civil War. Professor Burton's lecture was titled "The Age of Lincoln, Then and Now."

Thanks, veterans!



CPP fellow Matt Lacombe '11 met with U.S. Air Force veteran John Lehman, center, and U.S. Navy veteran Ron Petersen during a Veteran's Day event in Meadville last November.

• **Allegheny students, under the art** direction of CPP fellow Katie Janocsko '11, got creative for Veteran's Day last year.

Students gathered the evening of Nov. 10 at the Campus Center to design thank-you cards for veterans of the Meadville area. The next morning, CPP fellows distributed the cards at Active Aging Inc.'s salute to veterans at the Lew Davies Community Building in downtown Meadville.

"I think it's a wonderful thing to thank a veteran," said Pam Roberts, coordinator at Active Aging.

Fellows travel to Harvard



CPP fellows Alex Sproveri '13 and Megan McNally '11 talked to John McConnell, longtime senior speechwriter for President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney.

• **Two CPP fellows—Megan McNally '11,** and Alex Sproveri '13—joined more than 50 other college students from around the country April 1-3 at the annual conference of Harvard University's National Campaign for Political and Civic Engagement.

Former U.S. Congressmen Bob Inglis, a Republican from the 4th District of South Carolina, and Bart Stupak, a Democrat from Michigan's 1st Congressional District, advised students at a luncheon lecture to be vigilant in maintaining civility in all public discourse.

"Tone the rhetoric down, even on your campuses," Stupak said.

Inglis, who served in the U.S. Congress from 1993-98 and from 2004-08, said he would make changes to the current system by encouraging genuine debate and by limiting media influence. "I think," said Inglis, "that we all need to become more discerning of media messages."

The CPP's McNally and Sproveri also attended workshops on public speaking and a presentation on social media in the 21st century by Blue State Digital. Blue State Digital consults on web strategy for a wide range of clients, including the NAACP and United Way. A closing session included remarks from John McConnell, a longtime senior speechwriter for President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney.

HE'S ALIVE... BEN FRANKLIN, THAT IS!

"Thanks for the electricity, Ben!" yelled an Allegheny student who saw Benjamin Franklin walking across campus in September 2010.

This Ben Franklin, of course, was not the same man who signed the United States Constitution 224 years ago. He was Paul Stillman of Historically Speaking, Cameron Mills, N.Y. He charmed a Campus Center crowd for a noontime Constitution Day event sponsored by the Center for Political Participation.

Stillman, who stayed in character during the hour-long presentation, told the crowd gathered in the lobby, "Putting this Constitution together was the most important thing this country could do." He called himself "the babysitter of the Constitution," referring to the frequent disagreements that erupted during its drafting.

The audience consisted of Allegheny faculty and students, as well as residents from the surrounding community. They asked him



Paul Stillman, a Ben Franklin reenactor, enjoyed his visit to Allegheny College to commemorate Constitution Day in September 2010.

questions on everything from slavery to women's rights to Native American history. Associate Professor of Political Science Brian Harward asked Franklin if he thought the Constitution would be different if it hadn't been debated behind closed doors.

"Yes, it would have been different," Franklin answered. "I wanted it to be more open."

Franklin also defended his anti-slavery stance, and commented that he would have wanted Congressional term limits. "I thought there should be limits of 10 to 12 years," he explained.

Near the end, CPP fellow Katie Janocscko '11 asked Franklin what he considered his greatest invention. He quickly responded, with a wink, "The hot tub."

IN HOT PURSUIT OF VOTERS

CPP research assistants Clay Moran '13 and Steven Jones '12 pored over City of Meadville voting lists to determine that about 30 percent, or an estimated 800 of Allegheny's 2,100 students, were registered to vote in the 2010 midterm elections.

The 800 figure does not include students who voted by absentee ballot.

Get Out the Vote efforts by the CPP and College Democrats and College Republicans were particularly intense last year. Fellows held tabling events for absentee registration and also registered new students at the college Activities Fair at the Campus Center. College Dems and Republicans did some great dorm-storming, too.

CPP FELLOW PUBLISHED IN *INSIDE HIGHER ED*



Matt Lacombe '11

Just in time for last year's midterm elections, Matthew Lacombe '11 wrote a personal viewpoint on young voters for *Inside Higher Ed*.

A CPP fellow since his sophomore year, Lacombe was inspired to write a reflection after attending Jon Stewart's "Rally to Restore Sanity" in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 30. An estimated 215,000 people converged on the Mall for the event.

In his article, Lacombe countered a previously published report by Scott McLemee which asserted that "the anti-ideological spirit" of the Restore Sanity rally was "a dead end."

Lacombe wrote: "Personally, I can think of two positive things Stewart does; first, he encourages young people to refuse to subscribe to the currently pervasive ultra-partisan view of politics that fosters incivility and acts as a barrier to progress; and second, and more basically, he brings some level of political awareness through humor to people who might otherwise be totally apathetic and ignorant."

Lacombe, however, agreed that students must become more engaged in order to make real change. He wrote, "The burden most certainly falls on us; politicians are not going to pander to a portion of the electorate they don't believe will turn out to vote."

ELECTION DAY = RIDES AND iTunes CARDS

The CPP provided free rides to the polls on Election Day 2010, and then added a new “twist” to its annual Election Night Extravaganza by giving away iTunes cards.

Students packed Grounds for Change in the Campus Center to watch election results on a big screen. Surrounded by balloons and lots of boxes of pizza, they also participated in a contest to win \$10 iTunes cards. Winners correctly answered questions dealing with several races.

Here are the winners:

- **Sarah Bickel '11**, who guessed the correct time that the Delaware Senate race between Christopher Coons (D) and Christine O'Donnell (R) would be called by CNN (8 p.m.).
- **Steven Jones '12**, who correctly answered, “What will be the total number of U.S. Senate seats won by Republicans (47), and Democrats (53)?”
- **Brendan Helt '14**, who correctly answered, “Who will win the Pennsylvania District 3 Congressional race (Mike Kelly), and what will be the margin of victory (11 percent)?”
- **Robert Patterson '13**, who correctly answered, “Will California’s Proposition 19 (legalization of marijuana) pass (No), and what will be the margin of victory or defeat (7.8 percent)?”



Top: CPP fellow Jeramie Parker '11 congratulates Sarah Bickel '11, one of the iTunes winners on Election Night.

Bottom: The CPP offered Allegheny students rides to the polls for the midterm elections in November 2010.



BOOK NEWS



Let's Vote set for December publication

If you want to learn more about the American electoral system, stay tuned for the publication of CPP Director Daniel M. Shea's newest book, *Let's Vote: The Essentials of the American Electoral Process*.

Published by Longman Inc. this December, the 224-page text goes beyond parties-related topics to other election-centered issues, such as the role of the Internet in modern campaigning, the rise of new-style campaign

consultants, the importance of negative campaign advertising, and the rise of new media.

Some other chapters include the theoretical underpinnings of elections, minor parties in the United States, and campaign finance.

“One of the most rewarding things about writing this book was collaborating on research with several Allegheny students,” Shea said. “Time and again, they helped make the manuscript more accessible and livelier for college-age readers.”

Voter Lists Clogged

BY MEGAN MCNALLY '11



Grads asked to remove names

Every year, hundreds of Allegheny College graduates pack up their belongings but then leave behind their names on an ever-growing list of alumni on the Crawford County voting rolls.

The voting lists are clogged with well over a thousand names of grads who had registered to vote in Crawford County, but then left the area, never to vote here again. Melanie Mushrush, director of the Crawford County Board of Election, is working hard to clean up the voter rolls, but it's time-consuming and costly.

"Right now, we have between 1,000 and 1,500 names still on the list [who have not voted]...but the number is slowly going down," Mushrush says.

When a person has not voted after five to 10 years, they are sent a letter asking them to update their contact information and/or remove their names. She gets about a 25 percent return on her request, but the cost of stationery, postage and manual labor to stuff envelopes adds up.

This past academic year, the Center for Political Participation began a two-pronged effort to ease the situation. In the summer and fall of 2010, the CPP used its Facebook page to encourage grads to remove their names if they no longer live and vote in the area. Then, during the week leading up to this year's commencement, graduates were asked to sign a form indicating if they wanted their names removed.

"If the college continues this program, it's saving us money and improving our voting records," Mushrush added.

The CPP collected 134 voter withdrawal forms and delivered them to the Board of Elections this past summer. According to Dan Shea, director of the CPP, it's an important service because the CPP is responsible for registering students in the first place. Also, when voter rolls are filled with citizens who no longer live or vote in an area, it skews statistics.

"Turnout appears lower than it actually is because those on the voter list don't live in the community," Shea explained.

Editor's Note: If you graduated from Allegheny in the past 10 years and had been registered to vote in Crawford County, you must remove your name from the Crawford County voting rolls if you no longer live and vote here. Go to the CPP's website (cpp.allegheny.edu) and see the voter withdrawal form on the Voting Guidelines page.

Bringing Theory to Practice



Conversations probe civility, new media

The Center for Political Participation hosted two separate dinner conversations this past spring for the Bringing Theory to Practice program sponsored by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU).

About 30 people—students, faculty, and community leaders—participated in the events, both held at Tippie Alumni Center's boardroom. The conversations were meant to generate innovative, practical ways in which higher education can connect its learning mission with the call to prepare students to contribute to a more civil, informed society.

Allegheny was one of about 18 colleges and universities throughout the country that participated in the conversations. The CPP, with its longtime focus on youth engagement, organized two events:

- The Role of Civility in Higher Education
- The Role of New Media in Citizenship

CPP Director Dan Shea moderated each discussion at Allegheny last March. The first discussion on civility focused primarily on how higher education can promote civil political discourse on our campuses, in our communities and throughout the nation. The second gathering tried to identify ways that higher education can respond to the changing nature of news delivery and consumption in our world.

The results of the discussions were forwarded to the AACU. Participating colleges—including Allegheny—gathered in Washington, D.C., this past summer to discuss the initial findings.

Another meeting is scheduled this fall to discuss in more detail how to support institutions in their efforts toward greater civic engagement.

Top left: While Allegheny students are enthusiastic about registering to vote, many never remove their names from the Crawford County voting lists when they graduate.

Top right: Charles Heller III, superintendent of schools for the Crawford County School District, left, and Dave Miller, a member of the Crawford County School Board and a professor of English, participated in the conversation about the role of civility in higher education.

Alumni Run for Office

BY MEGAN MCNALLY '11



Poli sci grads stump in New York State

Allegheny students continue to be active in public life well after graduation. Many have run for public office. Here are three who ran in New York State last year.

Greg Edwards '82 ran for lieutenant governor of New York in November 2010. Edwards and the Republican candidate for governor, Carl Paladino, lost the election.

A Republican, Edwards currently serves as county executive of Chautauqua County, N.Y., a post he has held since first being elected in 2005. He handily won re-election in 2009, defeating Democrat Chuck Cornell.

Edwards worked for 18 years as an attorney in western New York before entering politics. He is finishing the last two years of his four-year term as county executive, but says he would consider running for a statewide position again if he could be part of the solutions facing his sprawling, diverse state.

"I enjoyed running statewide. It gave me the opportunity to understand New York State better," Edwards told *Soapbox*.



Kathleen Joy '83 made an unsuccessful bid for the New York State Senate in November 2010, pitted against an 18-year incumbent.

"I used the stats from the CPP civility study during that campaign," Joy said.

Despite the loss, Joy is looking forward to retaining her common councilor-at-large seat with the Syracuse (N.Y.) Common Council. Terms run for four years.

Joy, a Democrat, was first elected in 2005 in a special election to fill an unexpired term for a councilor-at-large spot in Syracuse. She won again in 2007. Currently, she is majority leader and chair of the council's Economic Development and Environment Committee.



Matt Doheny '90 was the Republican candidate for New York's 23rd Congressional seat.

The endorsed candidate of all GOP county committees in the vast 11-county district, Doheny won a competitive and nationally covered Republican Party primary in September 2010. He lost the general election to Bill Owens by only 1,900 votes—only 1 percent—while a third-party candidate remained on the ballot (getting about 6 percent of the vote), making it one of the closest midterm races in the entire United States.

Currently, Doheny is preparing to run for the same Congressional seat in 2012. "I'm just going to clean it up [referring to the close margin] and win," Doheny told *Soapbox*.

Doheny is president of North Country Capital, LLC, a Watertown, N.Y.-based company that turns around troubled companies and invests in start-ups.



ON-CAMPUS EVENTS

Abortion Politics

Compromise on abortion unlikely

Abortion is a complex, often unclear, issue in both the lives of the American people and its lawmakers, according to a political scientist who lectured at Allegheny College last Nov. 15.

“We hold ambivalent feelings on abortion, collectively. We are sometimes in a position of having two conflicting views at the same time, and we’re comfortable with that,” said Scott Ainsworth, a professor of political science at the University of Georgia, during a lunchtime lecture at Quigley Hall.

Ainsworth’s book *Abortion Politics in Congress: Strategic Incrementalism and Policy Change* was recently published by Cambridge University Press.

According to Ainsworth, most people hold an “it depends” viewpoint on abortion. There is, he explained, a flat 40 percent approval of abortion regardless of circumstances. The approval comes mostly in the areas of birth defects, health of the mother, rape and economic condition.

There are, Ainsworth added, increasing ideological distances in the U.S. House of Representatives on abortion since abortion was legalized by *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. During the first decade after *Roe*, there was vir-

tually no difference between Democrats and Republicans on pro-life issues. But from 1993 to 2004, 55 percent of Democrats called themselves pro-life, while a resounding 92 percent of Republicans claimed to be pro-life.

Compromise on abortion is less and less likely, Ainsworth said. Calling abortion a “back-burner sort of issue,” Ainsworth told the packed auditorium at Quigley that legislators address abortion politics in smaller slices than before. In the first decade after *Roe v. Wade*, legislators sent about 64 percent of their abortion

debate on to the judiciary committee. Today, that figure has dropped to about 25 percent.

“In your lifetime, there will not be a Constitutional amendment [outlawing abortion],” Ainsworth said.

Top: Scott Ainsworth, political science professor at the University of Georgia, lectured on abortion politics and his new book, *Abortion Politics in Congress: Strategic Incrementalism and Policy Change*.

Below: The complicated politics of abortion intrigued a packed Quigley Hall audience, including Rick Howser '14, left, and CPP fellow Chris Plano '13.

“We hold ambivalent feelings on abortion, collectively...”





Civility Surveys Make News

CPP & Purdue-Fort Wayne examine nasty politics

In the past academic year, the CPP conducted two more national surveys to determine what Americans think of declining political discourse. The most recent surveys—done in September and November 2010—followed up on the CPP's first survey (April 2010), "Nastiness, Name-calling & Negativity: The Allegheny College Survey of Civility and Compromise in American Politics."

While the initial "Nastiness" survey laid the groundwork for identifying and analyzing the problem, the two follow-up surveys in the fall of 2010 confirmed that political rancor had continued and that it actually had deteriorated into one of the most acrimonious midterm elections in history.

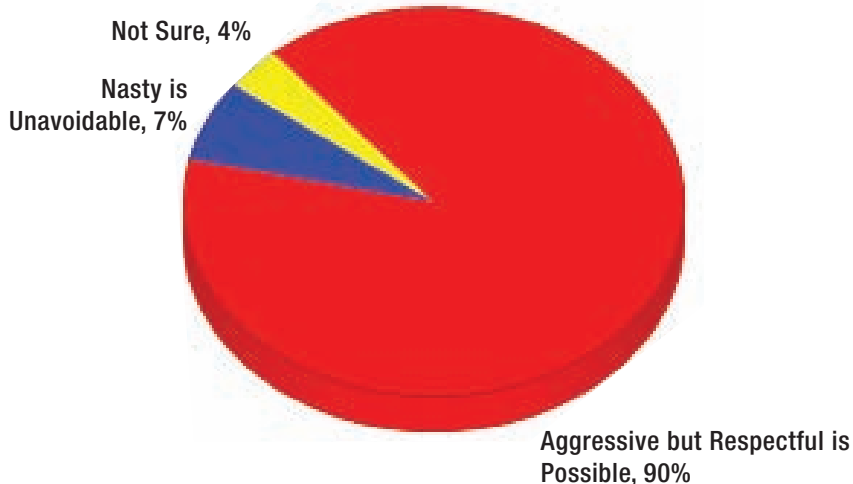
"Many of us assumed that the tone of politics would improve after the drama over the health care debate died down. But most Americans don't see it that way. We're still waiting for the thaw. It's still awfully nasty out there," said Daniel M. Shea, the CPP's director, after releasing the results of the September 2010 survey.

The September 2010 survey, commissioned by Allegheny College in partnership with Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW), was conducted by SurveyUSA Sept. 13-16. In all, 1,242 randomly selected registered voters were interviewed. It found that a solid majority of Americans, 58 percent, believe the tone of political discourse has become worse since Barack Obama was elected president. That figure was an increase of 10 percent from the CPP's first survey.

Michael Wolf, associate professor of political science at IPFW and co-author of the study with Shea, said the increased nastiness might have been a reflection of the ramping up of political campaigning for the midterms. Regarding the September survey results, Wolf added, "Resolving this issue is complicated because the only thing Republicans, Democrats and independents seemed to agree on is their general dislike of political incivility and the feeling that campaigns are hurting democracy."

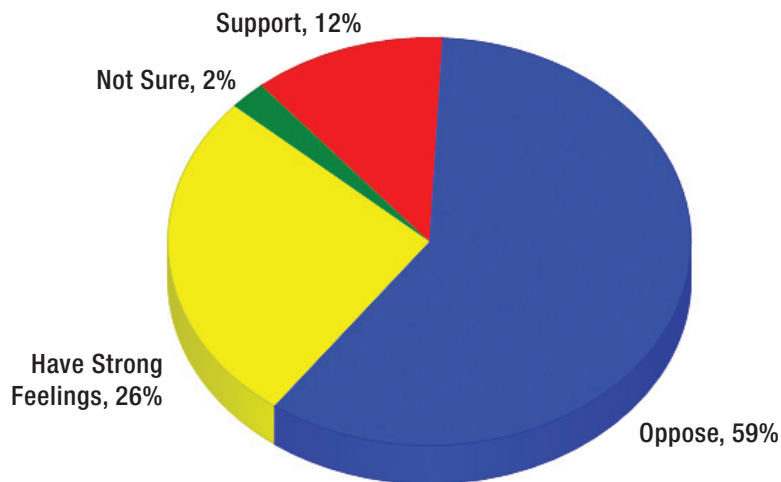
In November 2010, Allegheny and IPFW came together again with SurveyUSA to test the incivility waters. During the last four days leading up to the November midterm elections, Shea and Wolf found that the perception of incivility had increased by 5 percent from just two months earlier. In less than one year, the

Is it possible for politics to be respectful?



This SurveyUSA chart is from September 2010.

Do you support or oppose allowing groups from outside a district to spend money in a campaign?



This SurveyUSA chart is from November 2010.

percentage of people who believed politics had become less civil increased from 48 to 63 percent.

A full 46 percent of registered American voters in the November poll said the midterms were the “most negative they had ever seen.” According to Shea, “Sure, memories are short and it’s common for all of us to think the most recent election was the worst, but these polling results are powerful. Nearly three out of four people believe this election (November 2010) was one of the nastiest they have ever seen.”

Another sore subject for voters in the November poll was the role of so-called “outside money” in campaigning. Outside money refers to the practice of interest groups not located in a particular district to flood a race with ads, mailings and phone calls. Just less than 60 percent of respondents oppose this practice. Democratic respondents were more opposed to outside money (69 percent) than independents (57 percent) and Republicans (51 percent).

Editor’s Note: Go to the CPP website at cpp.allegheny.edu to see the links to full civility reports from April, September and November 2010.

CPP IN THE HEADLINES

Since initiating research on civility and politics in April 2010, Political Science Professor Daniel M. Shea and the Center for Political Participation have been cited in well over 1,000 news/editorials throughout the world, reaching an audience of at least 200 million.

The horrifying shooting of U.S. Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords in Arizona last January further prompted many news outlets to turn to Shea for his views on contemporary politics.

Here is a sample of stories that cited Shea and the CPP:

The Wall Street Journal

Nov. 1, 2010—“Revival of Volatility Signals Historic Era in U.S. Politics”

Jan. 12, 2011—“Politics of a shooting prompts search for civility”

The China Post.com

Jan. 18, 2011—“Political Empathy in Washington won’t last for long”

Washington Post

Jan. 9, 2011—“Analysis: Tucson shootings put focus on political climate, lawmakers’ security”

Yahoo! News

Oct. 5, 2010—“95 percent of Americans polled feel that civility in politics is important for a democracy”

USA Today

Nov. 19, 2010—“Search for civility grows in Washington after midterms”

Jan. 9, 2011—“Gabrielle Giffords shooting fuels debate over rhetoric”

The Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch

Jan. 16, 2011—“Why can’t we just be nice?”

Associated Press

Jan. 16, 2011—“With shock subsiding, pain sets in for shooting victims”

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Nov. 7, 2010—“Another polarized ‘wave’ election”

Dothan (Ala.) Eagle

Jan. 16, 2011—Editorial: “Restoring Civility”

United Feature Syndicate

Nov. 21, 2010—“We must not be enemies” (Syndicated column by Cokie and Steve Roberts)

Oakland (Calif.) Chronicle

Oct. 16, 2010—“Tom Hennessy: Gloves have always been off in U.S. politics”

Reuters.com and Bloomberg.com

Jan. 25, 2011—“The Center for Political Participation at Allegheny College...has commissioned and analyzed three national surveys to further explore the deterioration of civility in our political processes...”

Dayton (Ohio) Daily News

April 23, 2011—“Fellowship teaches politicians civility, leadership”

Huffington Post (blog)

Dec. 19, 2010—“Negativity and Partisan (De)Mobilization in the 2010 Midterms”

The New York Times Caucus Blog

July 5, 2010—“Only One Ready to Play Nice”

Voice of America Radio (worldwide broadcast)

Jan. 15, 2011—Interview with Daniel M. Shea on Encounter Show

WHAT’S ON YOUR MIND?

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Diana Reimer, a national coordinator for the Tea Party Patriots, visited the CPP offices last March 14.

ON-CAMPUS EVENTS

Tea Party

BY ALEX SPROVERI '13



Tea Party leader sparks campus discussion

The Tea Party emerged as a dominant narrative of last year's midterm elections, prompting the Center for Political Participation to co-host a visit by a national leader of the movement.

Diana Reimer, one of five national coordinators of the Tea Party Patriots, lectured at Quigley Hall March 14 to discuss the movement's ideals and political implications, particularly in future elections.

“No one thought that this movement would grow the way that it has.”

“It seems that I am well-known in the United States now, but this movement is not about me; it's about the American people,” said Reimer, 68.

A resident of Philadelphia, Reimer came to Allegheny at the request of Kazi Joshua, director of Student Life and the teacher of a freshman seminar class titled “Persuasion, Participation and Public Policy.”

“This gave the students a real live person with a story who was a regular American instead of a cardboard cutout created by

the news,” Joshua said. “It went behind the headlines and connected personal narrative with political issues.”

During the afternoon lecture at Quigley, Reimer discussed how her dissatisfaction with the economy and the deteriorating job market spurred her to become an organizer for the Tea Party's Philadelphia Tax Day event on April 15, 2009. Six-hundred people attended. She took on more and more leadership and speaking roles, speaking at rallies throughout the country the past two years.

“No one thought that this movement would grow the way that it has,” Reimer said, referring to a Tea Party march on Washington, D.C., that attracted about a million people.

During the question-and-answer segment of her lecture, Reimer seemed visibly upset over questions that sought to clarify her position on national policy. The discussion turned somewhat tense, but it did not stifle student interest in learning more about the Tea Party and its historic role in American politics.

Following the lecture, members of the College Democrats and College Republicans met with Reimer at a round-table discussion at the Campus Center.

The evening discussion centered on universal healthcare, the Patriot Act, and public employee retirement benefits.

Reimer's visit proved helpful in the CPP's effort to promote civility in politics. Students and others who attended the two talks were challenged to welcome all prevailing political viewpoints.

UPCOMING EVENT

The CPP will continue to explore the effects of the Tea Party by hosting a lecture Sept. 22 by Vanessa Williamson, a doctoral student of government and social policy at Harvard University. She recently coauthored an article, titled “The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism.” Before going to Harvard, she served as policy director for Iraq and Afghanistan, Veterans of America.



ON-CAMPUS EVENTS

Help Haiti Heal

CPP reaches out to Haiti

Families affected by the January 2010 earthquake and subsequent cholera outbreak in Haiti were the direct recipients of donations collected by the Center for Political Participation.

Three large boxes of various items—including clothes and sandals, bandages and other medical supplies, toothbrushes, blankets, shampoo, soap, and flashlights—were collected by the CPP from November to December 2010 and mailed to Project Medishare at the University of Miami School of Medicine. Project Medishare volunteers personally took the goods to Bernard Mevs Hospital in Port-au-Prince, which is one of the last hospitals left standing after the devastating earthquake.

The CPP conducted the Help Haiti Heal project to honor the legacy of President John F. Kennedy, who proposed 50 years ago to start a war on poverty. Allegheny College is a member of Harvard University's National Campaign for Political and Civic Engagement, which asked member schools to mark the JFK anniversary.

Recognizing that politics and service work hand-in-hand, CPP Program Coordinator Mary Solberg contacted Allegheny graduates Elizabeth Lemley Stanley '05 and Briana Rusiski Kelly '01, who did volunteer work at Bernard Mevs in the summer of 2010. Both Stanley and Kelly provided physical therapy services through Project Medishare, a non-profit founded in 1994 by doctors from the University of Miami School of Medicine.

"Most people stop giving when it [a major catastrophic event] is not in the news anymore, so if folks are looking for ways to help, this is great," Professor Bob Gailey of Project Medishare told Soapbox.



Top: CPP fellow Elise Swanekamp '12 and CPP research assistant Steven Jones '12 helped coordinate the CPP's Haiti relief effort.

Above: A young woman at Bernard Mevs Hospital in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, tries on new sandals that the CPP sent to Haiti in a shipment last winter. (Contributed photo)

ON-CAMPUS EVENTS
MCUSA
 BY MARY SOLBERG



CPP recognizes political savvy of high school students

The Center for Political Participation hosted its largest ever Model Campaign USA program this year, with 180 area high school students and teachers gathering on campus for a mock campaign on May 4.

Several high school teams won awards recognizing their achievements in conducting exemplary political campaigns. The award for Best Overall Campaign went to McDowell High School, Erie.

"These students from our high schools, and from Allegheny, are the future leaders of the United States, and are now better equipped to conduct themselves and treat others with dignity and civility," said Suzanne Sitzler, director of the McDowell Honors College of Leadership and Service.

Model Campaign USA is a semester-long program, held every other year, to teach high school students the art and ethics of political campaigning. Allegheny political science students visited participating high schools in the spring of 2011, teaching such things as demographics, polling, press relations, direct voter contact and fundraising. The program culminated with the final competition day, when judges decided which high school conducted the best campaign and which ones excelled in such areas as targeting, ethics, and best use of social media.

Allegheny President James Mullen delivered a rousing speech to the seven regional high schools that participated in this year's competition, challenging students to get involved in the political process.

"I hope you take the conversations and lessons you learned today and think about running for office yourself someday," Mullen said, adding, "And when you do, demand civility. In too many cases, politics is about negativity and mean-spiritedness. It's not going to change unless your generation steps up."

Students were given tasks throughout the day and created their own video commercials and press releases. Using Facebook and Twit-

"These students... are now better equipped to conduct themselves and treat others with dignity and civility."

ter, many students explored the benefits of social media in furthering their campaign platforms.

Julianna Twigg of Wilmington Area High School in New Wilmington, Pa., said she wasn't sure what to think of Model Campaign until everything came together on competition day.

"I had a lot of fun with Model Campaign," Twigg said. "When I first signed up, I wasn't sure how I would like it, but now that I'm here, I've definitely learned a lot about politics that I didn't know before."

Besides Wilmington and McDowell, other high schools that participated this year were: Cambridge Springs, Fort LeBoeuf, Grove City, Meadville, and Rocky Grove.



Here are the 2011 MCUSA award recipients:

- Cambridge Springs High School, Team A
Best Press Relations
- Fort LeBoeuf High School, Team C
Best Electronic Media
Best Direct Voter Contact
- Fort LeBoeuf High School, Team D
Best Polling
- Grove City High School
Best Targeting
- McDowell High School
Best Overall Campaign
Best Ethical Standards
Best Fundraising
- Meadville High School
Best Use of Social Media
- Rocky Grove High School
Best General Strategy
- Wilmington Area High School
Best Public Relations



Opposite Page

Top: McDowell High School won the Best Overall Campaign at the CPP's Model Campaign USA competition May 4.

Bottom: Mary Ellen Costello '12 enjoys some of the politicking done by her team from Wilmington Area High School.

This Page

Top: President Mullen addresses students during a lunch at Schultz Banquet Hall.

Middle, left: MCUSA students leave Henderson Auditorium to work on breakout session tasks.

Middle, right: McDowell High School students used their laptops for online work during the competition.

Bottom, left: Fort LeBoeuf High School students Katie Bensink, Josh Wilkins, and Andrew Dylewski used their phones to tweet.

Bottom, right: Henderson Auditorium was packed with students from seven regional high schools.



ON-CAMPUS EVENTS

Religious Tolerance

BY MARY SOLBERG

Panel explores religious diversity

For Rabbi Ron Bernstein-Goff, the term “religious tolerance” is really a misnomer.

“Tolerance is the lowest form of acceptance,” Rabbi Bernstein-Goff countered in a panel discussion on religious tolerance hosted by the Center for Political Participation last Feb. 16. “In our contemporary American society, if we’re talking about human rights, we’re going to have to do a lot better than tolerance.”

Such frankness set the tone for the two-hour discussion at Quigley Hall’s Henderson Auditorium. More than 70 staff, faculty, students and community members participated in the lively conversation, which featured Rabbi Bernstein-Goff, an associate professor of philosophy and religious studies at Allegheny, the Rev. Dr. Jane Ellen Nickell, a United Methodist minister who oversees the college’s Spiritual and Religious Life program, and featured guest Imam Daayiee Abdullah, a diversity scholar and activist from Washington, D.C.

The panel was one of several events held throughout the week marking Imam Abdullah’s visit last February. Vika Gardner of the Spiritual and Religious Life Office worked with the CPP in bringing together the panel discussion. She coordinated other events,

including the showing of the documentary film, “Gender Me,” about gay men in the Middle East; a lecture on “The Role of Alternative Voices within Progressive Muslim Thought”; and a public class on interpreting the Koran.

“It’s good to come together to talk about not just our differences, but our similarities.”

Panelists at the evening event at Quigley candidly discussed the role of religion in our personal and public lives. Another focal point was Imam Abdullah’s role as a spokesperson for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Religious Leadership Roundtable and his 10-year effort to bridge the gap between Islam and homosexuality.

Fiona Hensley ’12 asked Imam Abdullah to elaborate on his religious views on homosexuality.

“As for Islam, there is a growing understanding in helping to develop a voice to change perspectives,” Imam Abdullah responded. The Rev. Nickell added that all of Christianity is “widely divided” on the issue, and Rabbi Bernstein-Goff commented that the Jewish faith is in a stalemate, with an orthodox rabbi coming out as gay.

The panelists agreed that God speaks to everyone, no matter which faith they ascribe to. Associate Political Science Professor Brian Harward, who moderated, asked the panelists

Top: Rabbi Ron Bernstein-Goff, left, the Rev. Dr. Jane Ellen Nickell, center, and Imam Daayiee Abdullah generated a thoughtful, lively discussion on religious tolerance at Quigley Hall.

Bottom: Imam Abdullah talks to Samar Syed ’12, president of Allegheny’s Islamic Advocacy Society.

how people of different faiths can connect if they are unwilling to learn about each other.

Imam Abdullah levied some of the blame on the media for instigating disagreement between people of opposing viewpoints. “The media has found that they are able to keep the ire up in showing the differences between people. Manipulation by the media is a big issue,” he added.

The Rev. Nickell urged people to acknowledge the difference between debate and dialogue. “The dialogue’s goal,” she explained, “is shared wisdom.”

Rabbi Bernstein-Goff pointed to the late Pope John XXIII in bringing Jews and Christians together more completely. He added, “We’re talking about maintaining the diversity of the world, but that isn’t going to happen without that pluralism.”

Imam Abdullah pointed to the audience, challenging them to respect each other’s differences. “You need to help,” he said specifically to the students.

Samar Syed ’12, president of Allegheny’s Islamic Awareness Society, praised the panel, saying it was relevant and timely in the wake of the burning of the Koran in the South and a failed bomb attempt on the Islamic Center of America in Dearborn, Mich.

“It’s good to come together to talk about not just our differences, but our similarities,” Syed said. “It is time we asked these questions in order to draw positive conclusions about what we do for the future.”



CPP Fellows 2011-12

Meet the fellows for 2011-12



Outgoing and incoming CPP fellows gathered for the traditional end-of-year party in May. Pictured, left to right, are: Emma Victorelli '12, Katie McHugh '12, Jeramie Parker '11, Megan McNally '11, Matt Lacombe '11, Katie Janocsko '11, Justin Kirkwood '13, Colleen McCaughey '13, and Alex Sproveri '13. Missing from the photo are fellows Chris Plano and Elise Swanekamp, both '12.

Justin Kirkwood '13 *by the numbers:*

In the spring 2010 primary for Laurel School Board, New Castle, Pa., Kirkwood was a top vote-getter, receiving 242 Republican votes and 177 Democratic votes, totaling 419 votes.

"I am so grateful for all of the people who supported and helped me in this election. The experience was amazing, and I'm looking forward to the general election in November."

—Justin Kirkwood

Justin Kirkwood '13

Justin is majoring in political science, with a minor in communication arts. He is a candidate this November for the Laurel School Board in New Castle, Pa. He received the most write-in vote totals on both the Democratic and Republican ballots, putting him in the top five for the Democratic and Republican nominations. This past summer, he interned at Lawrence County Community Action Partnership, New Castle.

Colleen McCaughey '13

Colleen is a theatre and political science double-major. She has participated in the Allegheny College Chamber Singers, Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority, student experimental theatre, and Allegheny Playshop (most recently seen as Brighella in "The Servant of Two Masters") over the past two years. She plans to continue her voice training, having been awarded the Kessler Voice Award for 2011-12, and will participate in more theatrical productions.

Katie McHugh '12

Katie is a political science major. She currently serves as co-president of *Overkill*,

an alternative publication on campus, and is editor-in-chief of *God and Man* at Allegheny. Also, she is a staff reporter for *The Campus*, a resident adviser, a peer leader, and the web manager for four organizations on campus. She plans to publish several political works in the future, including a compilation of the lifetime writings of author Joseph Sobran.

Chris Plano '12

Chris is an environmental science major and political science minor, with a strong interest in environmental policy. He is the PA Region 1 director for President Obama's 2012 campaign, and will be in charge of setting up chapters on the college campuses of northwestern Pennsylvania. For his senior composition, he will use computer mapping software to determine how well the transit system in Maryland addresses low-income individuals' access to healthy food and entry-level employment. Chris hopes to find a fulfilling job or enter the Peace Corps.

Alex Sproveri '13

Alex is a junior political science major with a minor in Spanish. He will spend this fall semester at American

University in Washington, D.C., studying American government. Alex has been named a Doane Distinguished Scholar, awarded the highest 10 GPAs in each class. After graduation, he plans to pursue a doctorate in political science.

Elise Swanekamp '12

Elise is seeking a double-major in international studies and environmental studies, minoring in Spanish. In the spring of 2011, she studied in Ecuador, where she lived with a host family in Quito, attended university, and interned on a small sustainable farm. This past summer, she interned with the Association of Diplomatic Training and Studies, located on the campus of the Foreign Service Institute outside of Washington, D.C. After college, she hopes to join the Peace Corps.

Emma Victorelli '12

Emma is a political science major with minors in German and English. She became a CPP fellow after spending a semester as a coordinator for the center's Model Campaign USA program. In the future, she hopes to attend either law school or graduate school.

Former CPP fellows share one thing in common after they leave Allegheny College: successful careers. This year has been no different. Dave Seeley, Class of 2003, and Richard Shafranek, Class of 2010, both have good things to report.



Dave Seeley '03

Dave Seeley has recently been named regional representative for New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo. The region includes several counties in the greater Rochester area.

“Primarily, my job is to ensure that all constituencies in my region have access to the governor’s office,” Seeley explained. “This includes local elected officials, the business community, not-for-profit agencies, community groups...right down to individual constituents.”

Also, Seeley will work with the Regional Economic Development Council to develop strategic plans for the area’s economy. Before assuming the position with Cuomo’s office, he served for three and a half years as an aide to a local assemblyman, Joe Morelle.



Richard Shafranek '10

Richard Shafranek has been selected to receive a 2011-12 Fulbright Award to Indonesia. He will spend the first several weeks in Jakarta, and the remaining months in Medan, Sumatra, where he will primarily teach English. He hopes to learn about the Indonesian political process and the development of Indonesian democracy.

“I’m fascinated by what I see as the many parallels between Indonesia and the United States,” Shafranek said. “One topic I’ll be paying particular attention to during my year abroad is the tone of Indonesian politics and the role of civility and political participation therein.”

Shafranek is impressed with Indonesia’s 90 percent voter turnout.

After graduation from Allegheny in 2010, Shafranek went to Hiram College, Ohio, for a one-year appointment with AmeriCorps as a Volunteer in Service to America.



Have an update? The CPP asks former fellows to update their contact information by e-mailing the CPP offices at msolberg@allegheny.edu. Also, fellows can join in conversation and share photos and more at the CPP Facebook page (www.facebook.com/CenterForPoliticalParticipation) or join us on Twitter and YouTube.



Rudeness and Rancor: Investigating Incivility in American Politics

BY KATIE JANOCKSKO '11

- ~ INTERRUPTING SOMEONE WITH WHOM YOU DISAGREE IN A PUBLIC FORUM.
- ~ SHOUTING OVER SOMEONE ABOUT A PERSONAL OR CONTENTIOUS ISSUE DURING AN ARGUMENT.
- ~ MAKING PERSONAL ATTACKS OR QUESTIONING SOMEONE'S PATRIOTISM BECAUSE THEY HOLD VIEWS DIFFERENT FROM YOUR OWN.

Respondents to an April 2010 national survey conducted by the Center for Political Participation (CPP) considered these behaviors over the line, or “against the rules” of civil conduct in politics. The American people have witnessed countless breaches in standards of politeness as well as several ad hominem personal attacks in Washington since Barack Obama was elected President. The nastiness and mudslinging that was part of the debate over Obama’s health care reform plan stunned the nation. CPP survey respondents reported feeling ashamed of the way that our elected officials behaved, regardless of whether they actually supported health care reform or not.

In a March 2010 article for *The Wall Street Journal*, former presidential speechwriter and political commentator Peggy Noonan warned that while America has always had its moments of “hurly-burly debate,” she had noticed a distinct and dangerous shift in the way Americans currently practice politics. Other commentators have lamented that this shift has worked to reduce patriotism, political compromise, and decent standards of behavior, resulting in a democratic process that is possibly broken beyond repair.

Considering all the rancor transfixing political proceedings, one is inclined to ask: Is this all too much, too different, too harsh and harmful for America? What is it that has made this present moment so incredibly uncivil?

Scholars have accused the growing influence of new media and the 24-hour news cycle, the intensification of party polarization and partisanship, and the negative nature of political campaigns of being perpetrators of incivility. While quick news reporting and spirited party politics first served to sharpen the debate of public issues and to increase levels of citizen participation in politics, the CPP’s survey data confirmed that the tone of politics has gotten so contentious that many disgusted Americans have been turned off from participating in a broken system.

But the divisive issues presently in play—such as health care reform, rising public debts, and environmental concerns—are not resolved easily. The most important political movements toward democratic progress in American history were fraught with bitterness and contention; the enfranchisement of minority voices after the Civil War and during the Civil Rights Movement come to mind as examples. Incivility as a strategic tool can be used to great effect to persuade people toward accepting political change. For this reason, it is important that politics possess the proper balance between passionate contention and respect. If civility and politeness are strictly defended as the only means of having a political discussion, the quality of those debates over public policy will surely suffer. Obsessive civility would promote complacency within the American public. Put in other words, in order to move toward a more perfect democracy, sometimes Americans must get a little dirty in the process. ■

*But the divisive issues
presently in play...
are not resolved easily.*

Editor’s Note:

This is an excerpt from Katie Janocksko’s essay that won the Walter Jacobson Memorial Prize last spring. The award is made possible by the Class of 1937 Electoral Politics and Research Support Fund. The Walter Jacobson Memorial Prize recognizes a thoughtful, comprehensive student reflection on important developments in American electoral politics.

Higher Education and Multiple Modes of Engagement

BY BRIAN HARWARD AND DANIEL M. SHEA, ALLEGHENY COLLEGE



Editor's Note: The following is an excerpt from an article written by CPP Research Fellow Brian Harward and Director Daniel M. Shea, both political science professors at Allegheny College. The paper will be published in "From Service Learning to Civic and Political Engagement," edited by McCartney, Bennion, and Simpson (Washington, D.C.: APSA Publications).

Given the role that young voters played in several of the early presidential nomination contests, it seemed to make sense that *Time* would dub 2008 the "Year of the Youth Vote" (Jan. 31, 2008). ...In the aftermath of the election, those fretting about the long-term stability of our system breathed a sigh of relief. It seemed that young citizens had rediscovered the potential of politics and they were once again making their voices heard. ...

The problem, of course, is that the reemergence of young voters was likely a temporary surge, rather than a sea change. The first indicators of the fleeting resurgence were the 2009 gubernatorial elections in New Jersey and Virginia. In both contests, young voters stayed home. Exit polling found that voters under age 30 accounted for just 9 percent of voters in New Jersey (compared with 17 percent in 2008) and 10 percent in Virginia (down from 21 percent in 2008). According to one analysis, "Young voters were Obama's biggest supporters [in 2008], but their uncertain turnout makes them a less reliable base" (Langer, Nov. 3, 2009). The explanation, at least for Heather Smith of Rock the Vote, lay not with young voters, but instead with neglectful candidates and party operatives: "[T]he engagement of young people does not occur without investment by candidates and campaigns" (Smith, 2009).

But they also stayed home during the critically important special election to fill the Massachusetts Senate seat vacated by the death of Ted Kennedy. All eyes were turned to the Bay State because it represented the "60th seat"—the number of seats the Democrats would need to overcome GOP filibusters in the Senate. By holding that seat, Barack Obama's agenda of "change," seemingly so important to young voters one year earlier, could continue. Without that seat, the Obama agenda would likely grind to a halt. Many watched as money and activists poured into Massachusetts. On Election Day, turnout was high for a special election, a robust 54 percent. Yet, generational differences were stark: Turnout for those older than 30 was nearly 60 percent, but for younger voters it was a scant 15 percent (CIRCLE Press Release, Jan. 20, 2010). Young voters

overwhelmingly supported the Democratic candidate, but with so few going to the polls the upset was inevitable.

By the 2010 midterm election it appeared quite clear that the youth engagement bubble had burst. Turnout for those under 30 reached just 22.8 percent, slightly less than in the previous midterm election (2006).

In the wake of that election, the folks at CIRCLE suggested, "the most reliable conclusion is that youth turnout has stayed between 20 percent and 23 percent in all midterm elections since 1994" (CIRCLE Fact Sheet, Nov. 17, 2010). While falling within the average range might seem unexceptional, a few items should be kept in mind. First, that just one in five young Americans would come to the polls in 2010 would seem especially meager given the salience of many issues for young voters, particularly the economic crisis, health care reform, the DREAM Act, etc.

Second, turnout for all voters actually increased in 2010, to 41 percent. This implies that the gap between young and older voters is actually growing. Finally, coming off the heels of the "Year of the Youth Vote," the drop in engagement seems to run against a long line of scholarship that once a citizen votes, repeated acts become habitual.

So what happened? ...Many youth engagement programs, both partisan and non-partisan, are guided by the idea that once a young citizen is brought into the system their engagement will continue. Registration and voting are "gateway activities," leading to continued voting and other political activities. There is, however, a qualitative difference between involvement designed to change the outcome of an election and engagement directed at shifting the course of government. Malcolm Gladwell (2010) makes an analogous argument regarding the relationship between social networking sites and democratic engagement. Contrary to the hopes of the "evangelists of social media," he suggests new modes of communication have not drawn young citizens into the political fray in significant ways. He writes, "[s]ocial networks are effective at increasing participation—by lessening the level of motivation that participation requires." For example, the Save Darfur Coalition Facebook page boasts

The reemergence of young voters was likely a temporary surge, rather than a sea change.

1,282,339 members, but the average donation is just nine cents. People surely care about what has happened in Darfur, but little is expected of them beyond linking to the site. Social media are designed to allow access to information, he argues, but do little to forge connections to other political actors or to the larger political system. “It makes it easier for activists to express themselves, and harder for that expression to have an impact.”

We suggest that at the heart of truncated, episodic youth engagement is an important distinction between “horizontal” and “vertical” behaviors (Harward 2011)...

Horizontal, “drive-by” participation is risk averse, insulating us from dismay and at the same time limits the resources we must bring to bear to create change. We get the t-shirt or the bumper sticker that conveys our sensibilities without deepening our commitment in a way that involves risking our resources (time, reputation, or well-being, for example). ... Vertical participation entails a deeper understanding of the obligations and opportunities for substantial, prolonged engagement to alter the course of government. It builds upon the cultivation of information by calling upon the participant to apply information in strategic ways, and by merging with like-minded citizens in concerted, specific activities. It necessarily entails both commitment and risk. ...

Historically, two of the most important institutions for deepening the involvement of new generations to the political process have been political parties and schools. ... [I]nstitutions of higher learning can play a lead role in helping young Americans develop an understanding for the importance of the broad range, depth, and efficacy of democratic activities. “If there is a crisis in education in the United States today, it is less that test scores have declined than it is that we have failed to provide the education for citizenship that is still the most important responsibility of the nation’s schools and colleges” (Newman, 1985, 35).

Movement from an episodic form of political engagement to sustained forms of engagement... is a critically important goal for us to explore.

Writing of college courses more generally, the authors of an important new volume, *Educating for Democracy: Preparing Undergraduates for Responsible Political Engagement*, suggest several reasons why college instructors should pay special attention to political education (Colby 2008). Whereas we might expect primary and secondary schools to provide a strong foundation for young citizens to understand the breadth of political and civic responsibilities, mounting evidence suggests most high school civics programs do not impart sufficient information. In part, then, education is about intellectual emancipation. ...

Our colleges and universities must encourage students to extend themselves, deepen commitments to important ideas, become self-reliant, and take responsibility for knowing. But to do this, students and faculty must overcome a deep, understandable, aversion to risk. Such a reconceptualization of the purpose of higher education demands

a great deal more from both faculty and students than a model of higher education that is premised upon the notion of “information transfer.” It requires that students accept a level of risk that involves exposure to criticism and the rejection of fundamental assumptions that run counter to new evidence and new arguments. The increasing depth of student engagement carries with it the opportunity for greater failure.

The same holds true for political engagement. The greater the commitment, the greater the exposure to criticism and risk. Movement from an episodic form of political engagement to sustained forms of engagement—like the movement from a passive view of student learning to a “deepened” view of the obligation of learners—is a critically important goal for us to explore. As teachers, we must remove students from the familiar and provide the contexts where students can deepen their engagement with ideas and their consequences. This is education’s emancipatory value, and a principle that would go a long way toward encouraging patterns of political behavior that sustain and deepen youth commitment. ■



Brian Harward, Ph.D.

Our colleges and universities must encourage students to extend themselves, deepen commitments to important ideas, become self-reliant, and take responsibility for knowing.



THE SOAPBOX

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