Engaging Community in the 21st Century

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Civic engagement is the process of working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. This includes promoting the quality of life in a community through both political and non-political processes.

Civic Health

- Measures of civic health include rates of volunteerism, voter registration and turnout, rates of membership in voluntary groups, contacting public officials, frequency of informal exchanges of favors with neighbors, use of the news media, and rates of discussion of current events.

- Civic health has been shown to be predictive of the performance of public institutions, the economic success of communities, and even individual health and well-being.
Florida Civic Health: State Rankings

- Voter registration in 2012: 40th
- Contacted or Visited Public Official: 45th
- Belonged to a Community Group: 47th
- Volunteered: 47th
- Attended a Public Meeting: 47th
- Donated Money to Charity: 48th
- Worked with Neighbors to Fix a Community Problem: 50th

Source: Florida Civic Health
Civic Engagement Among Florida Millennials

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OF MILLENNIALS IN FLORIDA

Florida Millennials have the depressing distinction of being the most disengaged group in one of the most civically disengaged states in the nation. In terms of volunteerism, voter turnout and other measures of civic engagement, Florida has consistently ranked near the bottom among the 50 states. The implications of this for the future civic health of the Sunshine State are enormous, given that they soon will be the largest single voting cohort in the nation: 45 million compared to some 40 million aging Baby Boomers. Even the somewhat encouraging news that nearly half of them (44%) do register to vote is diminished by the fact that only one in five actually did vote in the 2010 midterm election.

Indeed, there is not a single indicator of civic engagement in which at least half of Florida Millennials are engaged. Figures 1 through 4 show the level of civic engagement for each indicator across each age group in Florida. Table 1 (“Snapshot of Millennial Civic Engagement in Florida”) on page 4 compares the civic engagement of Florida’s Millennials with that of Millennials nationally. Registering to vote is their most widespread activity, but there is no evidence that Millennials are somehow opting for some non-electoral forms of political engagement to explain their absence at polling places. Only 3 percent contacted or visited a public official, which means that state political leaders are essentially inoculated from the views of their youngest constituents. Only 7 percent boycotted or bought a product based on the values of a company. The very real risk is that Millennials will be subjected in the coming years to policies and programs enacted in their name by lawmakers unhindered by their interests or scrutiny.

Community engagement levels were low. Just over 10 percent exchanged favors with neighbors a few times a week or more often, and only 2 percent attended a public meeting or worked with neighbors to fix a problem in their neighborhood. Indeed, on all the indicators for group and community engagement, Millennials in Florida ranked no higher than 40th nationally.

A common excuse for this lack of engagement is that young adults are, well, young. They will, like the generations that preceded them, grow into civic engagement. As they establish careers, settle down and form families, so this argument goes, Millennials will become more and more engaged with issues confronting their communities. Yet while there is clearly a relationship between age and levels of civic engagement nationally, Florida itself seems to offer a stark counter-example. Floridians aged 30 and over simply are not that much more civically engaged than Millennials.

3%

of Millennials contacted or visited a public official.
Millennial Participation

- Florida Millennials are less engaged than Millennials of other states.
- Florida Millennials are less engaged than other age groups in Florida, who themselves are generally less engaged than the nation.
- Florida’s Millennials rank 48th in participation in any type of civic, community, school, sports, or religious group.

Source: Florida Civic Health
Why Miami’s Civic Health is Lowest in Nation - And the Twin Cities is Tops

January 24, 2011

Miami, FL – January 24, 2011 – A new report released today shows Miami is the least civically engaged in the country compared to Minneapolis-St. Paul, the most engaged metropolitan area. The report helps to shed light on the contributing factors behind each city’s civic engagement in an effort to improve civic health. Researchers say that while the two areas differ demographically those differences do not explain the gap between their civic engagements.
Miami ranks 51 out of 51 cities surveyed in voluntarism rates

Volunteering and Civic Engagement in Miami, FL

Trends and Highlights Overview

Overall, in Miami, FL in 2012:

- 15.3% of residents volunteer, ranking them 51st among the 51 largest MSAs.
- 23.2 volunteer hours per resident.
- 678,600 volunteers.
- 108.1 million hours of service.
- $2.4 billion of service contributed.
- 36.4% of residents donate to charity.
- 4.8% of residents participate in public meetings.
- 15.9% of residents over age 55 volunteer.
Favors for Neighbors

Source: Current Population Survey Civic Engagement Supplement
Neighborhood Trust

Source: Current Population Survey Civic Engagement Supplement
Civic Capacity

Community & Economic Development Nonprofits per 10,000 Residents

- Denver: 4.8
- Los Angeles: 3.8
- Miami: 3.1
- New York: 4.9
- Minneapolis: 6.0
- New Orleans: 4.3
- Detroit: 3.5
- Phoenix: 2.8
- U.S. Median MSA: 4.2

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of ATL

2008-2012 Average
Civic Capacity

Community & Economic Development Nonprofits per 10,000 Residents

Tampa: 3.2
Orlando: 2.9
Miami: 3.1
Jacksonville: 3.3

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of ATL

2008-2012 Average
Grant Activity

Grantmaker Assets Per Capita (2013)

- Denver: $2,118
- Los Angeles: $2,334
- Miami: $700
- New York: $4,212
- Jacksonville: $507
- New Orleans: $451
- Phoenix: $279

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of ATL
Grant Activity

Grantmaker Assets Per Capita (2013)

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of ATL
Miami-Dade

Brain drain? Many young South Floridians seek brighter economic prospects elsewhere

Three recent studies reveal that South Florida suffers from an unhappy confluence of economic and demographic factors that prompt younger residents to seek a brighter future elsewhere.
Meaning of Participatory Politics

*Participatory Politics* are interactive, peer-based acts through which individuals and groups seek to exert both voice and influence on issues of public concern; leads to democratization of political discourse.

**Forms of Participatory Politics**

- **Investigation:** Members of a community collect and analyze online information from multiple sources, and often provide a check on information circulated by traditional media outlets.

- **Dialogue and feedback:** Commenting on blogs, or providing feedback to political leaders through other digital means, is increasingly how young people are joining public dialogues and making their voices heard around civic and political issues.

- **Circulation:** In participatory politics, the flow of information is shaped by many in the broader community rather than by a small group of elites.

- **Production:** In addition to circulating information, young people increasingly create original online digital content around issues of public concern that potentially reach broader audiences.

- **Mobilization:** Members of a community mobilize others often through online networks to help accomplish civic or political goals.
Those under 30 have been identified as heavy and early adopters of new media and rely on digital media for political information at higher rates than older generations.

Engagement with civic issues via social media can lead to more broad-based civic participation.

43 percent of white, 41 percent of black, 38 percent of Latino, and 38 percent of Asian youth participated in at least one act of participatory politics during the previous twelve months.

DREAM Act demonstrations 2010

- Trail of Dreams: students from MDC walked 1,500 miles from Miami to Washington, DC
- Led rallies, sit-ins, and direct action throughout the Southeast
- Multi-pronged approach to social change led by undocumented youth
Purpose: Build new solutions using publicly-released data, technology, and design processes to improve our communities and the governments that serve the Miami-Dade community.

The project themes have included Climate Change, Disaster Preparation and Relief, Open Data, and Transit.
The yearly PhilanthroFest event is a community resource fair that celebrates philanthropy and arts in a carnival-like atmosphere with entertainment for the entire family.

Between 80 and 120 groups were present. This included dozens of artists and scores of sponsors and vendors with thousands of attendees looking to engage with great causes and brands.

Event often includes special zones like Centerstage and Art Village, dedicated to unique engagement opportunities focused on arts and culture-related causes.
More than a dozen community organizations met at Parcel B behind the American Airlines Arena to voice their support for a public park along the waterfront. Children and young adults enthusiastically chalked the asphalt with creative designs as well as powerful messages.
Habits of Civically Engaged Citizens

**Awareness:** Be aware and cognizant of issues facing your communities at the local, national and global levels. Don’t be oblivious to the world around you.

**Empathy:** Put yourself in someone else’s position and try to understand what it feels like to live his or her life.

**Critical consciousness:** Question why conditions are the way they are. Understand what social, cultural, political and economic factors have shaped society in ways that promote inequality, oppression, poverty and violence.

**Courage:** Take risks. Have the courage to act on your knowledge. Being aware of injustice can lead to anger and frustration. Channel that anger into innovative solutions to promote social change. Don’t be afraid of making your voice heard or challenging existing power structures.

**Humility:** Recognize that you don’t have all the answers. Approach community engagement with the goals of promoting reciprocity, shared power and collaboration.

New Measures of Civic Engagement

- Participate in cross-cultural community activity (social, political, artistic, religious, etc.)
- Create digital platforms that raise awareness of an issue and are accessible across geographic boundaries
- Use social media to present followers with toolkit to advocate for a cause
- Engage directly with neighbors
- Send remittances and philanthropic gifts to community in country of origin
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