



NATIONAL INSTITUTE
for **CIVIL DISCOURSE**
STATE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

Presents

Civility, Bipartisanship, and Leadership Workshops for State Legislators

nicdlegislativeprogram.org/workshops

336-202-7043



Building Trust through Civil Discourse Workshop (3 - 4½ hours)

We are polarized - liberals one side and conservatives on the other. We can agree on that. So, how can we bridge or close that divide - by getting to know each other beyond our partisan and ideological differences. In this session, we strive to do that. A bipartisan team of NICD Facilitators – current or former state legislators from nearby states – move the large group into breakout rooms for small group work. No more than 20 Democrats and Republicans from both chambers will share personal journeys, define the current state of civility, identify barriers and opportunities to leverage change, and create an action plan. In the last hour of the workshop, all legislators return together to report action plans and discuss their priorities.

Tips for Being an Effective Legislator: Building Relationships and Coalitions (6 - 8 hours)

Despite what candidates promise in their campaigns, they cannot solve any of their state’s problems alone. To be successful, they must convince a majority of colleagues in their chamber, a majority of legislators in the other chamber, and the governor that their proposal deserves to be a law. To do that, legislators must do two things: build relationships with their colleagues and put together coalitions to get their bills passed. In this session, we examine the importance of civility and relationships in historical and contemporary legislatures and participate in activities that encourage relationships and develop strategies for working together.

What Got You Here Won’t Get You There (1¼ hours)

Governing is very different from campaigning. In order to win an election today, candidates are expected to treat their opponent as the enemy. They are expected to have a position and opinion on every issue. They win by raising money, attacking their opponent and speaking in soundbites. However, seasoned legislators know that the very skills that make for an effective campaign are the opposite of the skills necessary to govern effectively. Once elected, legislators must work with “the enemy” to get bills passed. In the legislature, members are rewarded for hard work more than soundbites and expertise rather than general knowledge. To govern, new legislators must work within the rules and norms of the institution they ran against. This session is especially effective for newly elected legislators.

The Case for Civil Discourse: Founding Fathers (1 - 1 ½ hours)

The nation’s capacity to work across our differences respectfully and with civility has reached record lows. Analyses of the more than 13 million roll call votes cast since 1789 reveal that the Congress is now the most polarized ever. The American Founders recognized that differences escalating into dysfunctional partisan animosity was the chief reason every previous republic had failed. Building a republic robust to partisan animosity was the chief problem the Founders aimed to solve in framing the U.S. Constitution. The main reason the American system takes separation of powers further than any other is to prevent parties from imposing their will on everyone else.

Engaging Differences – Civility Makes Better Policies and Better Politics

It is no secret that the majority of state legislatures, like the rest of the nation, have become more partisan more polarized. This makes it more difficult to pass legislation and to address the pressing needs of your state. In this session, we will discuss how

America's founders established a system of government that requires cooperation and explore strategies leaders can use to encourage their members to see each other more than Democrats or Republicans, liberals or conservatives. Further, we will discuss what civility is and what it is not and how treating each other respect yields better policies and better politics.

[The Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis \(1 - 1½ hours\)](#)

This session explores how to realize the benefits of diverse perspectives within a legislature or a caucus without falling into dysfunctional conflict. Drawing on research in group decision making, National Institute for Civil Discourse Executive Director Keith Allred leads this interactive, skills building session. The conversation starts with a discussion of the Kennedy Administration's decision to sponsor an incursion into Castro's Cuba and the monumental blunder that it turned out to be. Just 18 months later, the same group confronted a daunting challenge in the Cuban Missile Crisis. This time, when the stakes could hardly have been higher, Kennedy managed differences within his administration completely differently with vastly superior results.

[Getting to Yes: A Legislative Budget Building Exercise \(1½ - 2½ hours\)](#)

The only way to get a bill passed in the legislature or an ordinance passed through city council is to get a majority of your colleagues to support it. There are no dictators in American politics. While coalition building is essential for a functioning democracy, it seems to have become a lost art of late. In this session, we will help participants rediscover the art of finding common ground by examining and practicing strategies for finding that "sweet spot" in negotiations where everybody gets something and nobody gets nothing. Participants will take part in an activity where they have to find consensus as members of the House and Senate Budget Conference Committee on a variety of contentious issues.

[What Does it Mean to Lead? A Look from Plato's Cave \(¾ - 1 hour\)](#)

Leadership is never easy, especially when those being led want to go a different direction than their leaders. Using Plato's "Allegory of the Cave," this session examines the responsibility of leaders when those they lead, perhaps out of fear or ignorance, don't want to follow. Should the leader leave them where they are familiar or lead them out into a better place even if they are reluctant? We will examine what it means to lead and the "darkness" that may restrict all of us in our "caves."

[Ethical Leadership: Knowing and Doing the Right Thing \(1 - 1½ hours\)](#)

It seems that almost daily, we are reading or hearing about a public official who has behaved in an unethical manner—someone takes a bribe, harasses an employee or misuses campaign funds. In this session, we will explore the difference between ethical and legal as well as the reasons that unethical behavior seems to be on the rise. Further, we will use real world scenarios (developed by public officials) to discuss what is and is not ethical behavior. This session will give participants the opportunity to think about what they should do in the calm of hour before they get caught up in the heat of the moment.

[The Seven "Abilities" of Effective Leadership \(½ - ¾ hours\)](#)

Have you ever wondered what makes a great leader—one that can motivate and inspire others to achieve extraordinary results? Reflecting on American Presidents from the last eighty years. In this session, we explore seven qualities associated with effective leadership, linking each one to a particular president. For example, one of the reasons that Ronald Reagan was an effective president was his credibility. People, friends, and foes alike trusted that Reagan meant what he said. Effective leaders are true to their word and make promises rather than threats.

[Mediated Communication: Understanding the Impact of Social Media and Beyond \(1 - 1½ hours\)](#)

We exist in a world shaped by mediated communication. Social media has come to play an outsized role in how we access information, engage others, and think about politics. What are the benefits to always having access to information, unfiltered by traditional media gatekeepers? And what are the negative aspects of having our news and information come directly to us without journalistic integrity and expectations? We explore how to have more productive and civil discourse online and how to situate this within our lives offline.