



NEWS RELEASE

ARIZONA CIVIC HEALTH LAGS THE NATION, CFA REPORT FINDS Center for the Future of Arizona Study Prescribes Remedies for State's Anemic Civic Health

(PHOENIX – September 23, 2010) Most measures of Arizona's civic health lag those for the rest of the nation according to a report released today by the Center for the Future of Arizona and the National Conference on Citizenship. The study, entitled the "Arizona Civic Health Index," provides a detailed look at the serious disconnect between Arizona citizens, their elected leaders and their neighbors. The study also identifies opportunities for improving the state's civic health.

The report was presented at a public event at the Wyndham Phoenix Downtown by CFA Chairman and CEO Lattie Coor. In addition, NCoC Program Director Kristen Cambell presented data from the newly released national assessment entitled "Civic Life in America: Key Findings on the Civic Health of the Nation." NCoC began publishing a national index for civic health in 2006, and it has become the leading gauge of how well Americans are connecting to each other and to civic life. The Arizona report is the first of 13 state civic health studies to be published in 2010. It was sponsored by the Whiteman Foundation and the Flinn Foundation.

Five Overarching Results

The Arizona report provides a deeper understanding of the opportunities available and a yardstick for measuring the state's progress going forward.

Its five overarching results are:

1. Arizonans are not as well informed as people in other states.
2. Voter turnout continues to decline.
3. Arizonans are not as strongly connected to one another as people in other states.
4. There is an educational divide in citizen participation.
5. Arizonans feel a growing disconnect with the leaders they elect to represent them.

The "Arizona Civic Health Index" builds upon "*The Arizona We Want: Gallup Arizona Poll*" released in October 2009 by the Center for the Future of Arizona. One of the key findings of the Gallup research was that only 10 percent of Arizonans believe their elected officials represent their interests. In addition, only 12 percent of citizens believe the people in their community care about each other.

Whereas the Gallup Arizona Poll examined attitudes, the "Arizona Civic Health Index" measures citizen behaviors that influence government and actions that build community. Arizona citizens were benchmarked against citizens in the other 49 states and the District of Columbia. The report underscores the significant variations in participation rates among Arizona's citizenry based upon education, age, ethnicity and income. It finds that education and degree of social connectedness are the two key predictors of civic involvement.

Study Highlights: Citizen Actions that Influence Government

- With the exception of Tucson, Arizona lags national averages for voter participation, based on the 2008 election.
 - Arizona voter registration (68.9%) lags the national average (71.0%).
 - Arizona voter turnout (59.8%) lags the national average (63.6%).
 - Tucson voter turnout (64.5%) exceeds the national average (63.6%) and Arizona overall (59.8%).
 - Latino voter turnout (36.6%) trails other ethnicities. If Latino voters participated at the same rate as other ethnicities, Arizona's voter turnout would increase to approximately 65.5%, slightly above the national average of 63.6%.
 - Young adult (18- to 29-year-olds) voter turnout (47.0%) lags the national average (51.1%) for young adults.
 - Rural Arizona voter turnout (47.3%) is lower than urban voter turnout (61.7%) – the opposite of the national trend; 59.8% of rural Americans vote compared with 53.2% of urban citizens.
- Education level is a key predictor of voter turnout. College graduates participate at a significantly higher rate than other segments:
 - High school diploma (48%)
 - Some college (69%)
 - College degree (80%)
- Political voice among Arizona's young adults (18- to 29-year-olds) is especially strong.
 - Young adults have the second highest rate (40.9%) of any age group of Arizonans when it comes to having political discussions several times a week. Nationally, young adults are the least likely to discuss politics.
- Arizonans are not as well-informed as people in other states.
 - Arizonans have the lowest rating for news consumption across all forms of media (traditional and online) compared with the 12 other states developing 2010 state-level civic health reports.
 - More than 37% of Arizonans say they do not follow the news regularly.

Study Highlights: Citizen Actions that Build Communities

- Arizonans are not as strongly connected to one another as people in other states. Overall, Arizonans are below the national average for involvement with community organizations and being connected with family, friends and neighbors.
 - 24.8% of Arizonans volunteer, two percentage points less than the national average (26.8%). However, Arizona volunteers contribute more time than the national average; 55.9% of volunteers give 12 weeks or more annually. They give less time to religious and social/civic organizations than the national average and more time to educational organizations and those that serve children.

- 64.1% of Arizonans do *not* belong to any community organization that meets at least once a month, attend no group meetings, and have not served as an officer or committee member – 3.4 percentage points higher than the national average.
- Latinos are less likely than other ethnicities to belong to an organization, the most common way for people to affiliate with others around a common interest or cause. An estimated 25.5% of Latinos are members of at least one organization – 12 percentage points lower than estimates for other ethnicities.
- Latinos participate in community meetings at half the rate of other ethnicities.
- 25% of Arizonans never talk with neighbors.
- Arizona ranks 48th in the nation for "exchanging favors with neighbors," a measure of social connectedness. Forty-nine percent (49%) of Arizonans say they never trade favors with neighbors.
- Tucson reports the highest rate for trading favors with neighbors (18.8%), four percentage points higher than the urban corridor as a whole and nine percentage points higher than rural areas.
- At 49.6%, Arizona ranks 38th in the number of individuals who gave at least \$25 to charity in 2008-2009. The national average was 52.0%.

Next Steps

The "Arizona Civic Health Index" offers remedies for Arizona's anemic civic health, ranging from increasing voting rates in rural areas to encouraging greater participation in local community meetings.

Coor challenged Arizona communities to work with the Center for the Future of Arizona to create individualized local plans that empower citizens, increase civic involvement, and foster citizen well-being and a sense of connection to one another. The effort builds upon *The Arizona We Want* initiative, CFA's citizens' agenda based upon the issues for which the Gallup Arizona Poll found there is broad consensus.

"During the coming year, we will endeavor to create an action agenda, a timeline for implementation and a budget involving up to five communities," Coor said. "In addition, CFA will seek a partner from among the state's civic organizations to facilitate and coordinate a statewide civic renewal initiative."

"The center understands that the most powerful force in American democracy is the connection between and among citizens," said NCoC Executive Director David B. Smith. "It is our hope that Arizona can be a leader in the nation to use the Civic Health Index as a vehicle to help citizens solve local problems."

The "Arizona Civic Health Index" is available online at www.TheArizonaWeWant.org. The report is based upon an independent analysis of U.S. Census Current Population Survey data by The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), based at Tufts University.

###

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR THE FUTURE OF ARIZONA

The Center for the Future of Arizona (www.arizonafuture.org) is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization based in Phoenix. It is helping to shape and define Arizona's future through an action-oriented agenda focused on issues and topics critical to the state. More than a think tank, the center is an independent "do tank" that combines public-policy research with collaborative partnerships and initiatives that will create opportunities and quality of life for all Arizonans.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Rebecca Heller

Heller & Associates

c: 480-216-4550; hellerllc@cox.net