



NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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FIRST PENNSYLVANIA CIVIC HEALTH INDEX REVEALS CRUCIAL NEED FOR INCREASED CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Philadelphia, PA (December 22, 2010) – If Pennsylvania needs a wake-up call that its residents need to be more active citizens, it just got it. The Commonwealth’s first ever Civic Health Index reveals that Pennsylvania’s civic health is suffering. This comprehensive assessment is the result of a partnership between the [National Conference on Citizenship](#) (NCoC) and the [National Constitution Center](#).

The report provides an annual measure of civic habits, much as the government measures economic behavior. These habits, including voting, volunteering and connectedness, are thought to predict and explain levels of participation in our democracy.

“Our societies are only as healthy as the social fabrics on which they rely,” said David B. Smith, Executive Director of NCoC. “By examining social interaction we see that the more citizens are informed and engaged, the more they work together to address local problems.”

Results show that Pennsylvanians have fallen behind in voter registration and turnout, ranking 35th among all states in voter registration rate and 39th in voter turnout. During the historic presidential election of 2008, when record numbers of voters went to the polls, Pennsylvania actually saw a drop in voter registration, voter turnout, and voter fulfillment, falling slightly behind the national average.

	<u>PA</u>	<u>National</u>
Voter registration	70.1 %	71%
Voter turnout	62.4%	63.6%

-MORE-

ADD ONE/CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

A bright spot for Pennsylvania came in the area of building social cohesiveness. The index shows that Pennsylvanians who are connected to families, friends, and neighbors are more likely to vote, volunteer, and participate in other civic actions. Pennsylvania ranks 20th in the nation – one of PA's highest rankings of all civic indicators – in the following categories:

- Talking to neighbors several times each week (46.9%)
- Eating dinner with family several times each week (90.4%)

Across the board, Pennsylvanians who engaged in these activities were more civically engaged. For example:

Pennsylvanians who speak regularly with their neighbors are:

- more than 25% more likely to volunteer
- more than 15% more likely to register to vote
- about 10% more likely to vote

Pennsylvanians who dine with their families are:

- fully one-third more likely to volunteer
- about 10% more likely to vote
- 25% more likely to donate to charity

“This first Pennsylvania Civic Health Index serves as a reminder of the importance of civic education and engagement, particularly as we face national challenges that impact the lives of every citizen,” said Governor Edward G. Rendell. “Through the work of state leaders, institutions such as the National Constitution Center, and organizations like PennSERVE and PennCORD, I am confident that Pennsylvania will continue to build on its strengths and improve in the areas where it is falling behind.”

“This report offers valuable benchmarks and solutions that can help Pennsylvania's leaders, policymakers, and citizens improve our civic life,” said National Constitution Center President and CEO David Eisner. “From the decades before Independence was declared and the Constitution was signed here in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania has offered America innovations in civic engagement, from public schools and libraries to debate societies and philanthropic institutions. This report challenges Pennsylvania to again lead the way in encouraging our citizens to become engaged in the critical issues facing our cities and our nation.”

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ADD TWO/CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

In 2006, the National Conference on Citizenship, in partnership with the Civic Health Index Indicators Working Group, launched “America’s Civic Health Index,” an annual report measuring the nation’s civic trends over the last 30 years. Drawn from census data, the Civic Health Index measures 40 indicators in nine categories of civic engagement including, voting, volunteerism, philanthropy, neighbor-to-neighbor connections, political expression and religious affiliation. This year, the national report was enhanced with individual civic health indices of 13 states and four cities. The National Constitution Center was selected to analyze and disseminate the results for Pennsylvania. The report follows the September release of [Civic Life in America: Key Findings on the Civic Health of the Nation](#), a joint venture of the NCoC and the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Complete survey results are available at www.constitutioncenter.org and www.ncoc.net.

About The National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC)

Founded in 1946 and Chartered by Congress in 1953, the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) is a leader in strengthening our nation's civic life. In partnership with over 250 organizations, NCoC tracks, measures and promotes civic participation. Through this work, NCoC helps define modern citizenship in America. More information can be found at www.ncoc.net.

About the National Constitution Center

The National Constitution Center, located at 525 Arch St. on Philadelphia’s Independence Mall, is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of the U.S. Constitution and the ideas and values it represents. The Center serves as a museum, an education center, and a forum for debate on constitutional issues. The museum dramatically tells the story of the Constitution from Revolutionary times to the present through more than 100 interactive, multimedia exhibits, film, photographs, text, sculpture and artifacts, and features a powerful, award-winning theatrical performance, “Freedom Rising.” The Center also houses the Annenberg Center for Education and Outreach, which serves as the hub for national constitutional education. Also, as a nonpartisan forum for constitutional discourse, the Center presents – without endorsement – programs that contain diverse viewpoints on a broad range of issues. For more information, call 215.409.6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.