



Faith and Civic Life Brief

Discussion Guide

Let's review

At the start of each discussion, review the conversation ground rules for returning and new members alike to set the stage for active participation by all. You may want to use a timer as you go around the room.

And don't forget to decide who will take notes and post a discussion recap.

- **Be open and curious:** Everyone has a unique perspective, so be prepared to hear a different point of view. Listen first, and focus on the facts.
- **Be respectful and engaged:** Be sure that everyone has a chance to speak before adding a second comment or perspective. Encourage each other's participation.
- **Be focused and concise:** Keep the conversation centered on the issue and the brief.

The "Table-it" Rule: If the group has gone off-topic but the area is of interest, the group can table the conversation and save it for another time to be addressed in a different manner.

Let's begin

- Take five minutes to walk through the brief. Highlight the main point of each section and key statistics.
- Each member is invited to answer the following questions in a **two-three minute reaction** to the brief:
 - Introduce yourself, and share what "lens of care" did you wear when reviewing this brief (e.g. personal, professional, community, state, nation, global)?
 - What did you find most interesting or surprising from reading the brief? What matters?

Spread the Word: Some Facts to Share with the Group During Your Discussion

1. Frame the problem from a quality, quantity and freedom of choice/responsibility lens).
2. Highlight current government spend.
3. Highlight community based or individual action.

Let's discuss

Below are 4 questions for the group to consider and discuss, or choose your own.

- Nearly 200 years ago, Alexis de Tocqueville explored the American propensity for forming various associations in *Democracy in America*. He noted that Americans establish associations for diverse purposes, including political, religious, business, civic, cultural, and recreational activities. Reflecting on this, how have associations played a role in your life? What experiences or stories can you share about your involvement with these associations?
- Considering the significant role that religious organizations play in American civic life, how have you or your community benefited from such groups? Discuss any specific programs or initiatives that have made a notable impact.
- Reflect on the shifts in civic and religious participation since the mid-20th century. In your view, what are the key factors that have contributed to these changes, and how can communities respond to these evolving challenges to strengthen civic engagement today?
- Given the decline in civic and religious engagement, what concrete steps could you take to increase community participation? How might your actions inspire others to get involved?

Let's act

1. **Take it local.** Identify the status of the issue in your community.
2. **Explore the impact of the issue and issue laws in your community.** How issues is being implemented, planned or strategized on. Any key links.
3. **Investigate community programs.** Links to state/county agencies/task forces, key players.
4. **Research your elected representatives' positions.**
5. **Establish a relationship with your legislators.** It's easy to establish a relationship with your legislators. Start by introducing yourself. You can also learn to write to your representatives or set up a meeting with a legislator on [The Policy Circle website](#).
6. **Consider writing a letter to the editor or an op-ed on your stance on ____ in your local paper.** Learn how on [The Policy Circle website](#).

Next Steps for Your Circle

- **Post a Recap:** Summarize your discussion to share thoughts with members not present, and share planned actions from group members. Designate who will post a meeting recap on your circle page.
- **Decide your next meeting topic.** Want to discuss a related brief at your next meeting? Suggestions include:
 - The Civic Engagement Brief
 - The Stitching the Fabric of Neighborhoods Brief
 - The Rebuilding Trust in America Brief
- **Dive Deeper into the issues.** If this is an area you would like to pursue further, consider taking possible steps to influence policy. The Policy Circle offers resources for [developing a message about your issue](#) and [organizing a petition](#) to amplify your voice and raise awareness. Don't miss our [latest events](#) that help you dive deeper on this issue and more.