



Dole Institute Photo Journal
The Civility Project

The Consensus KC team shared their findings from 20 focus groups in Lawrence and metro Kansas City on defining civility, involvement in public issues, and ideas to raise the level of civility. Kansas City-based Consensus is a nonprofit organization striving to give citizens a voice in public policy.
 September 27, 2011

ROBERT J. DOLE
INSTITUTE OF POLITICS
The Civility Project
 with
Consensus
Tuesday, September 27, 2011
7:30 p.m. at the Dole Institute

In August of 2009, the Consensus team watched in dismay as public hearings about health-care reform just drove people further apart. To civic engagement experts, it was painful to see the yelling and rancor and consider it a people problem. Kansas City Consensus disagreed. The incivility was the predictable result of using an outdated process that was disastrous for the situation. So they asked, as the nonprofit that puts the *public* in public policy, what is our responsibility? That question led to The Civility Project, intended to help communities consistently solve problems in a civil manner.

Since then, Consensus has met with hundreds of citizens in 20 focus groups in Kansas City and Lawrence, and with city managers. They've asked them to describe their experiences at public meetings, what they like and don't like, and their ideas for changes that would increase civility. They have used those findings to create a one-day class that explains how to rethink the problem, the people and the process to build civility into public engagement. The class has drawn participants including a mayor, city council and school board members, state legislators and city managers along with neighborhood and nonprofit leaders. Consensus (consensuskc.org) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization. Since 1984, Consensus has provided the research, the process and the safe, neutral space where the public can deal with public issues. Consensus Consulting (consensusconsultants.com) is the social enterprise arm of Consensus. Partners Dan Bloom, Mary Jo Draper, and Jennifer Wilding provide services like meeting design and facilitation and strategic planning for clients in metro Kansas City and around the U.S. with a portion of the proceeds used to support Consensus.



CONSENSUS TEAM: JENNIFER WILDING, DAN BLOM, MARY JO DRAPER



DURING THE PROGRAM, PARTICIPANTS MET IN SMALL GROUPS TO OUTLINE AND AGREE ON GROUND RULES THAT THEY THINK SHOULD GOVERN BEHAVIOR AT PUBLIC MEETINGS.

