

Your Voice, Your Vote – A Civic Engagement Toolkit

Main Library • 301 York Street • Tuesdays, August 9 –September 13, 6:30 p.m.

Course Summary

Voting is an expression of our voice, but there is more to being engaged in our community than simply showing up at the polls. To understand the issues and enact positive change in our communities we need a range of tools and the knowledge of how to use them. In this short course Dee Pregliasco, VP of the League of Women Voters, will be joined by experts on topics from education to the environment to criminal justice. They will help you fill your civic engagement toolkit and prepare you to be an agent of change in your community.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, participants should be able to answer the following questions:

- *Who are my elected representatives? (local, state, and federal)*
- *How can I contact my representatives?*
- *How can I find community action groups whose goals align with mine?*
- *How can I start an action group?*
- *What are important issues affecting my community in each of the following areas?*
 - » *Health*
 - » *Criminal Justice*
 - » *Education*
 - » *Environment*
- *What are my voting rights?*
- *How can I learn about public meetings and hearings that affect my community?*

Course Outline

Week 1 - Tuesday, August 9

Voting: The Importance and Role of Voting in a Civically Engaged Democracy – Dee Pregliasco

The polarization of present-day politics highlights two critical civic responsibilities: voting and citizen engagement at every level of our communities, states, and nation. Voting has not become simpler, but rather more complicated. The history of voting rights and new 21st century challenges to voting rights are the basis for our review of the role voting and voters play at all levels and in all endeavors.

Week 2 - Tuesday, August 16

Health – Dr. Wayne Tuckson

Community and individual health have been topics of recent concern because of the COVID-19 pandemic which has laid bare problematic issues with our health system. How we deal with these issues depends upon our understanding of individual, community, state, federal, and healthcare providers responsibilities. How do we help all of these groups work together to tackle all these many health issues? What changes are needed? What didn't work? What will work? In this class we hope to search for answers.

 **Course Outline cont...**

Week 3 - Tuesday, August 23

Criminal Justice – Jeff Cooke and Lana Fazio

In Louisville, the George Floyd and Breonna Taylor cases shined a bright light on criminal justice and first amendment issues: search warrants, bail, arrests, police, protests, crime and freedom of speech. Kentucky's high incarceration rate and the state's role as one of only three states to strip felons of voting rights, exacerbates these issues. All of these issues have constitutional and statutory constraints that increase the time required for any possible reforms. Navigating these issues requires an understanding of the system, its officials and the law.

Week 4 - Tuesday, August 30

Environment – Dr. Lauren Heberle

Environmental issues impacting Louisville residents are numerous and profound. From extreme heat and weather events exacerbated by climate change to the constant challenge of improving and monitoring our air, water, and soil, addressing these life altering problems can seem overwhelming for any one person to have an impact. During this session, we will examine a few examples of how people have come together to make changes to improve and protect our environmental well-being in Louisville and discuss opportunities for engaging with and becoming an environmental decision maker.

Week 5 - Tuesday, September 6

Education – Chris Harmer and Geneva Starks

Our Public schools are supported by public funds, whether grants or taxes, and local schools and school boards are often the voice of the local community. The need for citizens, regardless of whether they have children, to be engaged in their local schools, is increasingly significant in our polarized world – especially considering that the future of our society will eventually rest on the shoulders of the younger generations. In this class, we'll discuss issues facing the education system in Louisville, and how we can help address them.

Week 6 - Tuesday, September 13

Putting It All Together – Councilwoman Nicole George and Rosalind Welch

Getting things done in your community often requires mobilizing neighbors and fellow citizens, as having more voices makes more noise. Forming coalitions and grassroots movements takes initiative, drive, and a knowledge of the issues. In this session, we'll learn how to use the tools we have added in the past five weeks to amplify our voices and speak to those who can help us get positive results.