How do "We the People" move forward as a country?

At our fall Constitution Day Roundtables, nearly 100 of our fellow citizens spent several hours deliberating three key questions reflecting our 2025 theme: We the People. Seven groups met in individual classrooms, and every person was encouraged to participate, but more importantly, to listen and consider the perspective of others. Then, everyone came together to hear reports from each group on their areas of common ground. We heard many thoughtful, diverse ideas reflecting people's many beliefs.

The first question: ***What values do Americans share?*** It was clear that there is much that we have in common, including: the importance of family and community safety; and the opportunity to pursue happiness as we envision it. Freedom of speech and justice. Respect for individual choice. Being part of a community.

Next, we asked ***How can we make our political conversations more productive?*** High on the list was having an appreciation for a diversity of perspectives; remaining curious; valuing the experiences of others; and to "listen first to understand." We must create more places to come together in person, especially at the local level. Another urgent issue: the need for reliable information.

(continued)

Perhaps our most challenging question was ***How might we adapt the Bill of Rights for today?*** Nevertheless, it produced a fair amount of common ground. According to our deliberative groups, an updated Bill of Rights would recognize the need to modernize the Constitution for new technology: protecting the privacy of our online information; clarifying the 2nd amendment for the current age (we no longer have militias); and a clarification of the meaning of "free press." Other suggestions: Do we need an amendment to protect the environment? Should there be "rights" to work; to education; and to healthcare?

It is unlikely that we will ever come to a universal agreement on all issues facing our country. But that's not how democracy works. The Constitution was forged over months of deliberations and debates by representatives of 13 colonies with diverse economics, cultures and backgrounds. It has endured for 238 years and strengthened our country, always with room for change and growth. Let us recognize that differences are not problems to be fixed but resources to be mined.

The following charts offer a sampling of each group's most common comments to the three questions. If the groups had more time to compare notes, I suspect we would have found more areas of agreement between the groups. In fact, we might be surprised to discover that a significant majority of Americans agree on many of our most challenging issues. But *only if* we can create spaces for us to listen to one another with curiosity and respect, while believing that the solutions lie with us, as "We the People."

The task before us: Spread the word. Talk to your neighbors, friends and workmates. Let them know that it *is* possible to have meaningful, productive conversations with people with whom you might otherwise disagree -- sometimes strongly. Let them know that you still believe in American democracy: that "We, the People," collectively, have the capacity to set the direction for our country.

The new American Revolution series present largely untold stories about how it was a war for independence, but also a war of conquest, a civil war, and a world war, fought by neighbors on American farms and between global powers. As Ken Burns recently said: "Maybe there could be some understanding that during this revolutionary period, we were more divided than we are now. And maybe by going back and reinvesting some time in this origin story, we'll be able to put the 'us' back in the U.S."

2026 is the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the birth of the United States of America. We invite you to join us again at Constitution Day 2026 to continue making our voices heard and to redefine We the People for the 21st century.

By David Hutchinson, President of Constitution Day Centre Inc.

What values do most Americans share?

GROUP 1	**GROUP 2**	**GROUP 3**
Family	Freedom/Liberty/Choice	Free speech
Safety	Collective responsibility, Action	Security/Food
Pursuit of Happiness/Dreams	Equality of opportunity	Clothing/Shelter
Being Part of a Neighborhood	Individual responsibility	Peace
Taking Care of Each Other	Innovation	Value of Truth
We Can Make Things Better		
Justice & Rule of Law		

GROUP 4	**GROUP 5**	**GROUP 6**
Individual freedom	Religious freedom	Caring for our family
Family/Community Safety	Safety and Security	Justice is served.
Pursuit of Happiness	Freedom of Speech	Freedom of choice
Opportunity to create	Individuality	Freedom from harm
a better future	Pursuit of Happiness/	Shared experience &
Freedom of speech	Life/Freedom	homogeneity
Right to vote	Equality	Pluralism/Diversity
Diversity/melting pot	Right to Vote	Access to health & education
Education	Consumerism	Difference in what we value &
		what we actually do

GROUP 7
Safety, Health
Pursuit of Happiness
Freedom of religion
Right to Work (cont.)

(G-7) Opportunity for upward mobility
Civic engagement
Independence/Individualism
Critical thinking
Respect for others

How Can We Make Political Conversations More Productive?

GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3
Appreciating a Diversity of Perspectives	We need places to come together Listen first to understand Be less connected to our devices Need for reliable information	Listen; Remain curious. Humility; Civility Respect for diversity of opinions Have courage to start the conversation Barriers: current system designed to sow division, peer pressure; need for validation

GROUP 4	GROUP 5	GROUP 6
Create the space to disagree Moderators Civility & Respect Access to Quality Information	Have at the local level Value life experiences People over the Issue Put yourself in other's shoes Non-judgmental Be curious	Reasonable expectations Accept compromise Conversation in good faith Be curious; not judgmental Treat people as humans Accept Facts for discussion Be kind and be civil

GROUP 7
Build empathy Listen; Get out of our silos Ask questions; be curious How can we support each other? Create spaces for conversation

How Might We Adapt Bill of Rights for Today?

GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3
Privacy of online information Government transparency	Clarify 2nd amendment Redefine/Clarify "the Press" Right to Privacy i.e. EU Need for Constitutional Convention	Address balance of power Remove money from politics Term limits A Right to Work, Education, & Healthcare Universal Declaration of Human Rights Modernize for current technology

GROUP 4	GROUP 5	GROUP 6
Add Environmental Concerns Accountability for three branches Address technology and AI	Executive branch shall not restrict 1st amendment Modernize definition of "militia" Rights of individual?	Most Rights are fine Clarify "who" have rights (all residents or citizens only?) Update for modern language

GROUP 7

Modernize the process for updating Constitution
Limitations on executive power
Clarify the 2nd amendment (define "militia, arms")
Amendment for Environmental Impact

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