

OUTSIDE LOOKING IN: Lobbyists' Views on Civil Discourse in U.S. State Legislatures

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ABSTRACT

This WPSA paper presents an overview of a recently published book on civil discourse in the 50 U.S. state legislatures. The book was the culmination of three years of active collaboration among a dozen political scientists located at ten universities spread across the U.S. This team collaborated in the fielding of a national survey (2018-2019) and the preparation of a collection of chapters in an edited book entitled *Outside Looking In: Lobbyists' Views on Civil Discourse in U.S. State Legislatures* published by the Washington State University Press in 2021.

These scholars were seeking the answer to two basic questions: (1) Is this same breakdown in the ability to reach bipartisan agreements and demonstrate comity and civility in the discussion of potentially divisive topics taking place in their own home states? and (2) To the extent civility is breaking down in their own home states, what are the causes of this weakening of norms, customs, and traditions undergirding civil discourse?

This book was directed toward two distinct audiences. The first is composed of those political scientists engaged in the study of state politics and public policy formation. The second, equally important, is those people who are actively engaged in state legislative politics – the state legislators, state legislative staffers, college-based internship program managers, public affairs youth educators in Cooperative Extension, and public policy advocates such as the League of Women Voters seeking to influence the course of events in the 50 state legislatures across the country. In the interest of promoting further research into this important area, the research team has shared its data, metadata, and associated materials with all interested parties – academic and practitioner alike, on an active, frequently updated website: <https://labs.wsu.edu/outside-looking-in/>

This paper serves as an illustration of what can be learned from the qualitative assessment of the comments and observations made survey participants from all 50 states. The views of two subgroups among the survey participants are focused upon in this demonstration of the insight to be extracted from these survey comments: 1) former state legislators who are currently working as state legislative lobbyists; and 2) survey participants from Nebraska, the sole unicameral legislature whose state constitution prescribes a nonpartisan approach to state lawmaking. These

two groups among the survey participants offer particularly valuable insight into the civil discourse dynamics obtaining in both high civility and low civility states.

Special thanks are due to Burdett Loomis and Prof. Emeritus Gary Moncrief who provided invaluable advice and wise counsel in the course of the work reported here. We dedicate this paper to the memory of our colleague, Prof. Bird Loomis.

OUTSIDE LOOKING IN: Lobbyists' Views on Civil Discourse in U.S. State Legislatures

(Washington State University Press, 2021)

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PAPER SUBTITLE

“The Book” and “The Plan”: Promoting Productive Public Dialogue &

Facilitating Further Research on State Legislatures

Two Principal Audiences

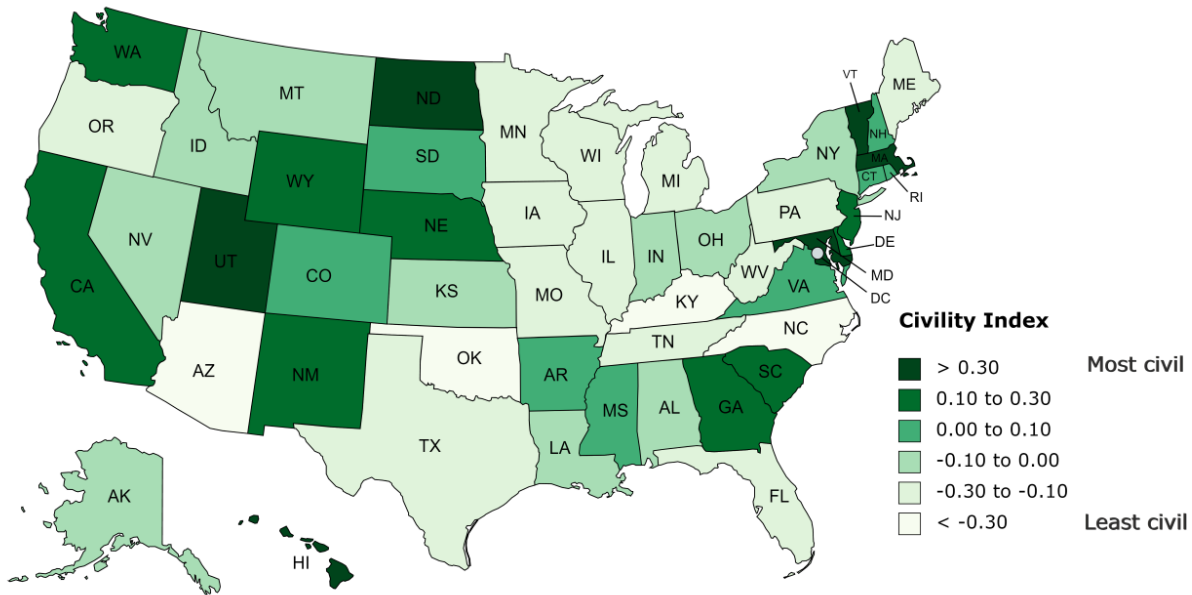
Outside Looking In was conceived and produced for two distinct audiences, one of which is the thousands of participants in the process of state legislative politics in the 50 U.S. states. This first audience includes state legislators, legislative staff, lobbyists and public agency legislative liaison officers, and those campus-based public affairs educators who supply our state legislatures with interns. Those educators likewise direct a good number of students to non-profit advocacy groups such as the state Leagues of Women Voters, state chapters of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and the state chapters of the American Civil Liberty Union. These civil society

organizations typically provide internship opportunities for college and law school students seeking to learn about the state public policy process through active engagement in legislative hearings, bill tracking, the offering of testimony, the drafting of amendments, and face-to-face lobbying with state legislators and their staff. Likewise, the hundreds of university-based public affairs educators working in Cooperative Extension's longstanding "youth in government" programs in the nation's Land Grant colleges and universities who work with high school students interested in public affairs are seen as a key part of this first "world of practice" audience (Zellin & Calvert, 2003; National League of Cities, 2010).

The second audience is composed of academics and their students for whom the preferred subject of study is the state legislative process. For these scholars, the advent of gridlock and hyper-partisanship in the U.S. Congress has raised two key questions related to civil discourse addressed directly for readers in this book: (1) Is this same breakdown in the ability to reach bipartisan agreements and demonstrate comity and civility in the discussion of potentially divisive topics taking place in their own home states? (Brooks and Geer, 2007; Ahuja, 2008); and (2) To the extent civility is breaking down in their own home states, what are the causes of this weakening of norms, customs, and traditions undergirding civil discourse? The principal findings reported in *Outside Looking In* are that this decline in civil discourse is occurring, to varying degrees, in all 50 state legislatures. Eight chapters in *Outside Looking In* explore the effects of political culture, legislative professionalism, the urban/rural divide, inequality, term limits, gerrymandering, dark money in campaigns, social media, limitations on entertainment of legislators by lobbyists, and other factors using data from a national survey of state legislative lobbyists fielded in 2018-2019.

In addition, two chapters by Rob Boatright and Karl Kurtz describe the work of the National Institute for Civil Discourse and the National Conference of State Legislatures, respectively, to address the phenomenon of rising levels of incivility in our politics – occurring not only at the national, but also at state and local levels as well. One of the key contributions to this book was the development of a civility index and the generation of a map for cross-state comparisons by Stephanie Witt, Luke Fowler and Jaclyn Kettler at Boise State University (Fowler, Witt & Kettler, 2021; Kettler, Fowler & Witt, 2021).

Map of State Civility Index



Origins of the Book: Washington State Precursor Studies

During the second of three terms of office as Washington’s Secretary of State, Sam Reed, who served as the president of the National Association of Secretaries of State 2006–2007, noted

some serious concerns mounting among seasoned observers of the Washington State legislature. Those concerns arose over flagging adherence to some well-established norms, rules, and customs supportive of civility, comity, and mutual respect — and the less frequent public display of these qualities by state legislators — in the Evergreen State. The new legislator orientation and training provided for first term, newly sworn in members was commonly provided by the legislative career staff along with the active assistance of the state’s research universities. This longstanding training session was increasingly less faithfully attended and progressively viewed as less impactful than had been the case in the past. Secretary Reed made a request to the Division of Governmental Studies and Services at his *alma mater* Washington State University for active assistance in conducting research among the state’s legislative community to assess the degree to which this concern for the well-being of the state legislative process was justified — and, if justified, in exploring what might be done to effectively address concerns for the health of the process.

In collaboration with Secretary Reed, and later his successor Kim Wyman, researchers at Washington State University worked with Lieutenant Governor Brad Owens, Governor Jay Inslee, and the leadership of both party caucuses in both houses to initiate data collection and the subsequent discussion of findings. The shared goal of the collaboration was to conduct a series of leadership-endorsed mail surveys of **legislators** (current House and Senate members and those who had served over the course of the past 20 years), **legislative staff** (caucus staff and permanent nonpartisan professional staff), state legislative **lobbyists** and public agency legislative liaison officers, and **legislative interns** from the past 20 years (Benjamin, Lovrich & Parks, 2011). In 2013, the findings from those multiple surveys were presented at well-attended public events held in the state capital of Olympia (memorialized in the archives of TVW), and

the state's two major cities of Seattle and Spokane. These events featured reaction panels made up of current state legislators, past legislators, prominent lobbyists, print and broadcast journalists, and academics all commenting on findings drawn from the surveys. The public events were hosted and/or supported by the Thomas S. Foley Institute for Public Policy and Public Service at Washington State University and the William D. Ruckelshaus Center at the University of Washington (Benjamin & Lovrich, 2011).

Upon his retirement, Sam Reed was honored by the creation of the *Sam Reed Distinguished Professorship in Civic Education and Public Civility* in the Foley Institute at WSU. This honor came in recognition of his long record of public service and devotion to bipartisanship and civil discourse in governance. Professor Steven Stehr (founding director of the Foley Institute) was appointed to that Distinguished Professorship. The Foley Institute would later support the development of *Outside Looking In*, which included a foreword authored by Sam Reed and Steven Stehr.

The National Institute for Civil Discourse Connection

Word of the state legislative work being done in Washington reached the *National Institute for Civil Discourse* at the University of Arizona. NICD Director of Research Rob Boatright and his colleagues were working with over a dozen state legislatures at the time, and they were interested in teaming up with researchers at Washington State University for the collection of survey data from legislators in states beyond Washington. A meeting of key actors from the NICD and WSU was arranged at the New England Political Science Association annual conference held in Providence, Rhode Island in April of 2017. Attending from the NICD were Ted Celeste and Rob

Boatright and attending from the WSU-connected team were John Pierce (University of Kansas), Bill Schreckhise (University of Arkansas), Christopher Simon (University of Utah), Nicholas Lovrich and Francis Benjamin (WSU).

It was agreed at that meeting that WSU-based researchers would assist with collecting survey data from state legislators in other states, using an online version of survey instruments employed earlier with the Washington legislature as a foundation for that work. It was also decided that survey data collected in Washington from state legislative **lobbyists** provided the most insightful information on the decline in civil discourse in the Washington state legislature. Registered lobbyists and their public agency legislative liaison officer colleagues demonstrated a clear readiness to share their views based on direct personal experience. The substantial number of former legislators and legislative aides and staffers among the lobbyists were particularly knowledgeable and articulate concerning changes away from civility and comity they have witnessed and were willing to share their views as to causes of this decline and what might be done to address it.

The NICD provided a grant to researchers at WSU who undertook the task of compiling contact lists for registered lobbyists and public agency legislative liaison officers in all 50 states, and subsequently conducted online and follow-up mail surveys providing for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. Over a dozen scholars located at twelve universities across the country collaborated in the survey process. Researchers from Boise State University, Oregon State University, the University of Utah, UNLV, California State University at Sacramento, the University of Kansas, the University of Arkansas, Bradley University, Kent State University, Shippensburg University, the University of Arizona, and Duke University assisted in compiling the contact sample. In the end, over 1,200 completed surveys (and many

extended commentaries and follow-up emails and phone calls) were generated from the online and mail surveys fielded in 2018 and 2019. Among those lobbyists taking part were 72 former state legislators and 288 former state legislative aides and committee staffers.

Post Survey Public Events and Conference Papers

Public events concerning civil discourse in a particular state legislature, such as those held in Olympia, Seattle, and Spokane described above, were held in six states -- namely, Arkansas (Fayetteville), Utah (Salt Lake City), Idaho (Boise), Oregon (Corvallis), Nevada (Reno), and Washington (Olympia). These public events all entailed the reaction panel format, except for Washington, and were each well attended. One or more of the WSU-based research team of Lovrich, Benjamin, and Stehr made the presentation and interacted with the reaction panel members and the audiences in attendance. Sadly, the COVID-19 pandemic put a halt to holding similar planned public outreach events Kansas, Pennsylvania, California, Texas, Indiana, and North Carolina. In 2022, plans are being made (COVID-19 conditions permitting) to hold similar events at the *Dole Institute* at the University of Kansas, the *Biden Institute* at the University of Delaware, and at Texas A&M International University.

In order to reach out to the academic audience Burdett Loomis and John Pierce at the University of Kansas engaged in discussions with the organizers of the 2020 annual conference of the State Politics and Policy Section of the American Political Science Association to include a special panel on the national survey of state legislative lobbyists. That panel was in fact scheduled for March 21st during the 2020 annual meeting hosted by the University of California at San Diego (La Jolla). The panel was to feature four papers: 1) Loomis and Pierce writing on

differences in perceptions of civil discourse on the part of non-profit group advocates and other lobbyists; 2) Schreckhise and Benjamin writing on the effects of legislative professionalism on perceptions of civil discourse; 3) the Boise State University team of Luke Fowler, Jaclyn Kettler and Stephanie Witt writing on an appropriate analytical framework for multivariate cross-state comparisons and the development of a civility index; and 4) Lovrich and Christopher Simon (University of Utah) on the connection between political culture and perceptions of civil discourse in the 50 state legislatures. Sam Reed and Steven Stehr were scheduled to serve as panel co-chairs at the conference.

Sadly, the COVID-19 pandemic occasioned the cancellation of the 2020 conference. In response to this cancellation, a “Plan B” was drawn up and a proposal for an edited book was submitted to the Washington State University Press featuring these four papers as the core, with additional chapters, a foreword, and three prefaces added in due course. The book manuscript was developed over the course of 2020 and 2021, reviewed in its entirety by Max Neiman (UC Berkeley) and Jim Thurber (American University) for the WSU Press, and published in late 2021.

Along with the pre-COVID-19 practitioner audience events, in 2022 several contributors to *Outside Looking In* will be giving newly prepared papers at the annual conferences of the Western Political Science Association (Portland), the Western Social Science Association (Denver), and the Midwest Political Science Association (Chicago). Each of these papers will explore areas of interest beyond those covered in *Outside Looking In*. In addition to this paper, the paper to be given at the WSSA annual meeting explores the differences in views expressed by male and female legislative lobbyists. The paper to be given at the MPSA annual meeting

will explore the connection between the civility index and governance, in particular the connection between civility and state public policy innovation.

Since the publication of *Outside Looking In*, the extensive comments made by survey participants – many of them being former state legislators and legislative aides and committee staffers – have been transcribed and coded. Findings drawn from these comments are now available to supplement earlier quantitative analyses presented in *Outside Looking In*. This WPSA paper serves as an *illustration* to other researchers interested in civil discourse issues in state and local government of how these transcribed texts of survey comments can be used to gain insight into the state of civil discourse across the country. In their commentaries on their experiences in the fifty state legislatures, the legislative lobbyists and public agency legislative liaison officers provide an account of how state legislatures are either succumbing to incivility and the debasement of political discourse or maintaining their longstanding norms for veracity and proper conduct in carrying out the people’s business in our state capitals.

Open Invitation to Broaden the Use of Our Data by Scholars & Practitioners Alike

Outside Looking In is the **interim** result of a three-year collaborative effort involving the hard work of more than a dozen scholars and their graduate students spread across the country. The co-editors are working diligently to sustain and expand upon this collaborative effort. To maintain this group effort and broaden its scope, we have developed an active website being updated frequently that includes several resources we believe readers will find useful. The website is housed at the Political Interaction Lab in the Department of Psychology at Washington State University; it can be accessed at <https://labs.wsu.edu/outside-looking-in/>.

Scholars interested in exploring the topic of legislative civility further will find the survey instrument developed by the 12-member research team on the website (and attached hereto as an appendix). They will also find the actual dataset in SPSS, Stata, and Excel formats, pertinent survey metadata, along with a searchable database for the written comments made by the state legislative lobbyists participating in the survey. The website also contains information about the contributors to *Outside Looking In*, a listing of the research team's primary findings, and links to research papers and published articles that have grown out of this collaborative research effort. Practitioners engaged in state legislative public policy advocacy will also find video recordings and PowerPoint slide decks used for public presentations made by the book's editors and contributing authors in Arkansas, Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Nevada, Washington, and Utah.

For those readers interested in hosting a public presentation of their own using survey data collected and the survey comment archive, the contact information for the editors is also included on the website. When conditions allow for public events, the co-editors of *Outside Looking In* would be happy to work with others to stage a presentation for more states to promote public dialogue and build stronger foundations for civil discourse in American politics – national, state, and local. The presidents of seven state League of Women Voters state organizations – in Arizona, Wyoming, Montana, Wisconsin, South Carolina, Ohio, and Washington – have shared *Outside Looking In* with their state legislative advocacy teams. Some of these state LWV leaders plan to host state League events where the survey results from their own states will be discussed. Those events will feature League members who are active in state legislative public policy advocacy and the partner organizations with whom they seek to strengthen democratic institutions through non-partisan advocacy.

Two Examples of How the Analysis of Comment Texts Provide Insight

What follows is an illustration of the kinds of insights into contemporary civil discourse phenomena that can be gleaned from the analysis of two particular types of survey respondents: 1) *former state legislators* who are now working as state legislative lobbyists; and 2) survey respondents from *Nebraska*, the lone unicameral state legislature where a longstanding tradition of commitment to the nonpartisan operation of the state legislature obtains. In the case of former state legislators, their views are particularly of interest given their ability to contrast past and present practices and offer informed commentary on the extent to which (and why) civility norms are being strained (Loomis, 2000). In the case of survey participants from Nebraska, there is the ability to learn about how this state's longstanding tradition of nonpartisan operation is weathering the current storm of incivility and hyper-partisan division present across the country as it pursues its legislative work (Miewald, 1984; Luebke, 2005).

The following section features the transcribed texts of comments provided in the course of the national survey of state legislative lobbyists fielded in 2018-2019 by a combination of online and mail surveys. The *Outside Looking In* website features a 75-page document containing all comments of 10+ words, with each comment author being profiled with respect to five key characteristics. For each comment the survey respondent's **state, background prior** to becoming engaged in lobbying practice (e.g., former state legislator, former service as a state legislative aide or staffer, former service in the U.S. Congress or federal agency, former service in local government), the **type of lobbying employment** (i.e., contract lobbyist, lobby firm employee, in-house lobbyist), **years of service** in state legislative lobbying, and **sexual identity** are provided. It is this document that is used to provide the following two illustrations of the potential for insightful inquiry to be drawn from the analysis of these qualitative data.

A second comments-based resource for researchers and practitioners is also displayed on the *Outside Looking In* website. All comments transcribed in the survey have been coded, and those coding values have been added to the survey data for each respondent. A detailed COMMENTS CODING MANUAL developed by Francis Benjamin and his lab staff in the Washington State University Political Interaction Lab in the Department of Psychology is located on the website. This document describes the multiple coder process used to develop coding topics, and the follow-on multiple coder process utilized to assign specific coding values attached to survey records for each national survey participant for each coding category. Researchers who are interested in the use of these data for quantitative analyses can review the CODING MANUAL, can see the categories coded for, and can view the values under each coded topic in that source. Researchers also are encouraged to direct their questions about how to access the comment coding-enhanced survey dataset to Francis Benjamin (at benjamin@wsu.edu). Questions pertaining to the use of the comment texts can be directed to Nicholas Lovrich (at n.lovrich@wsu.edu).

A Revealing Glimpse into State Legislative Past and Present Operations

Among the 1,200+ respondents to the national survey of state legislative lobbyists many provided lengthy, articulate, often woeful and richly detailed views on topics related to the quality of legislative deliberations, the standards of conduct relating to veracity and comity of behavior past and present, and the reason why change in and/or persistence of longstanding legislative norms supportive of civil discourse and across-the-aisle problem-solving was taking place in their own state legislature. Some comments do describe the persistence of some

longstanding norms, but most express concern for the serious weakening of civil discourse norms and traditions. The following four comments are rather typical of the *quality of reflection* displayed among the respondents to this nation-wide sampling of the state legislative lobbyists. These comments bring to mind M.I.T. social scientist Donald A. Schön's classic study *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (1983) (see Mezirow, 1990). These comments are displayed here so that readers can form an accurate impression of how the survey comments have been gleaned from the online and mail survey instruments and have been prepared for use by our two target audiences – academic researchers and people in the world of practice of state legislative advocacy. BOTH audiences are equally important to the research team as we endeavor to analyze the data collected by the team and disseminate findings to people who can benefit from this work through publication in peer reviewed journals, preparing conference papers, and taking part in public events.

Comment example *number 1* from Wyoming is rather common for the many non-profit sector public policy advocates taking part in the survey. This lobbyist opines as follows:

This is what I remember about the Wyoming political scene:

I started watching the Wyoming Legislature as a reporter (AP) in 1980. I became a lobbyist for the League of Women Voters in 1995. The Wyoming legislature was kind of a reasonable, practical place for people to put the state and citizens first, above partisan ideology, and where people could disagree with respect. You could say they were naive and insulated from bitter partisan battles on the national level. You could make an argument and win it on the merits.

In about 2000, national interest group representatives blew into the Capitol Building and legislators were like deer in the headlights. Another analogy would be bulldogging at a rodeo, when a new steer is caught by surprise, blindsided, and just knocked down. No wrestling at all. Suddenly, the Wyoming Legislature wrote rules for decorum, mostly for people in the lobbies and galleries who were openly haranguing and intimidating.

Maybe we just joined the rest of the world. Sadly.

Wyoming, 10+ years of experience

Comment *number 2* recorded by a lobbyist in Pennsylvania is rather common of the advocates for public agencies and local government associations who work as *legislative liaison officers*. They are people whose work entails moving legislation through the legislative process OR – often much more important – work to prevent bad legislation from becoming state law. Many are trained in political science, public administration, or public policy and are highly attuned to and knowledgeable concerning the broader currents of societal change and have thought about how those dynamics affect the operation of state governments. They are engaged in the “down in the weeds” work of bill tracking, preparing amendments, and preparing testimony for legislative work sessions and hearings; but their personal cognitive frameworks for assessing the broader enterprise of legislative deliberation and lawmaking are often very keen.

Witness the following:

Most people are thinking about political campaigns, pending elections, the legislative process, and governing in terms of what things looked like in the past. However, contemporary communication via the Internet, smartphone, and on-demand sources allows world dynamics and conversation to change every 36 hours. What is currently happening in the fall of 2018, thus, might not be a true like-kind comparison to what was going on even one or two or five election or legislative cycles ago.

Modern day communication not only makes it much more difficult to comprehend what is going on today, but likewise to predict the immediate future in elections. And certainly, there are many other variables to consider beyond modern-day communication platforms that impact the legislative process and the level of civility within it.

Working through long-term, big picture issues and allowing people the time needed to relate to and work with each other, to build understand and trust, is a significant issue in a society that is pushing more toward a short-term focus and quick resolution.

Pennsylvania, 10+ years of experience

Comment *number 3* is from a Michigan state legislative lobbyist. It is quite typical of the commentaries recorded by professional lobbyists (contract lobbyists and lobby firm-affiliated lobbyists) who represent private (rent-seeking) interests.

The pervasive attitude that anyone who disagrees with you is both wrong and bad has made for a more contentious work environment in a business where you have to be able to disagree without being disagreeable.

It has also made many professional lobbyists gun-shy when it comes to telling a legislator that his or her idea is likely unsound. Instead, the prevailing approach is to work for carveouts and amendments to try to neutralize bad legislation so the lawmaker can get something passed with his or her name on it, whether or not it is a good idea in terms of public policy.

The downside is that the legislature passes a great deal more unwise or unsound legislation, only some of which is successfully neutralized and some of which has significant unintended consequences.

Michigan, 10+ years of experience

Along similar lines, another professional lobbyist employed by a lobby firm recorded this astute observation.

I hope your survey leads to future discussions on the way polarizing partisanship is taking over State legislatures. In the 1990's (I think) there was a bipartisan commission (Tom Daschle was on it) to promote bipartisanship in pursuit of better public policy and less special interest-driven results in the Congress. I would strongly urge you to review that study, and perhaps use your findings to advocate for its resumption. Good luck.

North Dakota, 10+ years of experience

Similarly, this experienced Texas lobbyist who brings formal legal training as an attorney (common among the people participating in the survey) to bear on his thinking opines as follows:

I don't think that this (civil discourse) is fundamentally a process problem, I think this is a **cultural** problem. Our contemporary popular culture is no longer truly interested in understanding what another person has to say. People don't enter the discussion with the intent of learning anything. They don't pursue policy issues with the intent to find a solution, but instead they find a "solution" they like and look for a policy issue that they can use to push it through. Procedural fixes may have a limited effect on the problem, because at its root this problem will have to be solved culturally.

We have to end our cultural love affair with *tribalism*, viewing ourselves first and foremost as a member of a particular group or interest rather than as a multi-faceted individual. Adopting group mentality, like America has done in large part, produces the predictable effect that people sacrifice other broadly shared values they might otherwise prioritize in order to further the interest of their own group. Finding the "best" solution or identifying the truth comes second to furthering the interests of your group because your identity is determined by your group affiliation.

Eventually, the competitive environment of politics produces an equivocation between the betterment of "my" group and the detriment of an opposing group. We view it as a zero-sum game where anything good for my group must be bad for their group, and anything bad for their group must be good for mine. That's why this problem has to be fixed culturally and be enshrined in the law.

Texas, 10+ years of experience

These typical comments, and many more like them, are found in the 75-page document on the *Outside Looking In* website under this title: **WPSA PAPER APPENDIX: NOTEWORTHY COMMENTS WITH BRIEF SUBJECT PROFILES. It is worth noting that all comments of 10+ words are included (excluding respondent IDs, per IRB guidelines).**

As informative as these comments might be, of particular are those recorded by the 72 former state legislators who are now applying their experience, expertise, and knowledge to lobbying. As a distinct group within the survey subject pool, they are among the most deeply concerned for the decline in civil discourse. We have selected only eight from among these many comments to serve as examples of the kinds of observations made, causes suggested, and remedies offered regarding civil discourse.

Former State Legislator Comments

The first former state legislator comment comes from a state which scores among the highest on our cross-state civility index, Washington. This former state legislator observes the following regarding the “lost art of compromise” which was once highly prized:

The current environment in which future participants (elected officials, lobbyists, journalists, think tankers, interest group activists, and even just average citizens and voters) in the public policy process too often glorifies hyper-partisanship, hyper-incivility, and hyper-self-absorption. Bipartisanship, civility, common courtesy, any shared sense of anything, and that dastardly outdated ever-to-be-hated-and-shunned idea called **compromise** (aka com-promise, meaning "with promise") or co-promise (meaning "shared promise") has gone the way of the dodo bird, or the floppy disk, or the 80's, or the latest big-splash, *gotta-have-it app*...that went busy after 38 days "in the app store"...whichever colloquial cliché fits your demographic.

You can't soak the current and next generation in 100-proof partisanship and expect them to suddenly go bipartisan when they grow up.

Washington, 10+ years of experience

A second former state legislator is more sanguine in his judgement of the state of affairs, but likewise concerned that change may be moving things in the wrong direction. This one-time state legislator from Arkansas observes the following:

Arkansas's political scene hasn't fully recovered from its *Clinton hangover*. But we nevertheless still recognize "good government" when we see it.

We've had a long history... dating back to the embarrassing 1957 Little Rock school desegregation battle...of trying to rectify that misdeed by electing moderately progressive governors--Rockefeller, Pryor, Bumpers, Clinton, even Huckabee and Hutchinson to some extent—who, through the decades, have espoused a brighter future, higher expectations, and a nobler calling.

I think that legacy is still largely reflected in our elected state legislators, regardless of their party stripes and the incivility of the modern discourse...convicted felons aside.

Arkansas, 10+ years

Perhaps more representative of the former state legislators as a group is this brief but poignant comment penned by a former state solon from Oregon. This is a common refrain heard

among veteran legislators discussing “the good old days” when legislators and the legislative process were held in somewhat higher regard.

It seems as though younger lobbyists, legislators and staff do not respect the "institution" of the legislature.

Respect of legislators, "appropriate" attire, respect of the process seems to be waning... seemingly contributing to a more casual, less professional, less efficacious state government.

Oregon, 10+ years of experience

Another former state legislator from Wisconsin offered these informative comments while completing the survey. It is interesting to note her observations, as a female legislator, that some barriers to across-the-aisle bridge-building by women legislators were opposed by legislative leaders. This survey respondent wrote in his regard:

As a former legislator, having the opportunity to interact with elected officials across the aisle was key. Whether it was sharing lunch or talking about matters outside of work or within our families, it was important to have these informal interactions. It is harder to demonize someone when you know them more personally. You can be friends or collegial, and still disagree on policy.

Redistricting is also playing a large role when districts are drawn to be heavily partisan. The elected official acts as their constituents want, and the officials are rewarded for being hostile, difficult, or highly partisan.

Too much power is also vested with party leaders who exercise control over who gets some resources, committee assignments or challengers in primaries. In some cases, they also determine which legislation you can introduce.

For example: when come colleagues and I tried to start a bipartisan women's caucus in the early 2000s, the GOP Assembly leadership always scheduled a competing meeting so that members were not able to attend. Similarly, as freshman Assembly members we invited our GOP freshman colleagues and their staff to lunch, but the Speaker of the House instructed them not to attend. While the staff did not show up, the legislators did -- 15 minutes late! This was back in 1998.

Wisconsin, 10+ years of experience

One survey respondent among the former state legislators stands out in that he served in one state legislature (Colorado) and now lobbies in Wyoming. His observations and commentary are particularly interesting in that he is able to make cross-state comparisons as he muses on the state of civil discourse. He writes:

Civility has eroded substantially in Washington DC and many of our states as well. The Wyoming experience has been extraordinary to observe and participate in because the party numbers are so significant. Their ability to focus on the subject at hand while voting their district is refreshing.

As a legislator years ago in Colorado, my service was during a time then both chambers and the Governor were Republican. Did that soften the tenor somewhat, yes it did. When the chambers became divided again, the rancor and incivility quickly escalated.

This is not to suggest that state legislatures should be run by a strong majority. It is just an observation that when party politics and public policy are determined by quite close representative margins, the fervor cannot be avoided... unless the body **has extraordinary leaders**.

Unfortunately, what we are witnessing now is an extreme lack of statesmanship, scant recognition of the importance of compromise, and the presence of many legislative leaders feeling pressured to toe-the-party-line rather than take a lead.

A recognition of the country's growing diversity and the need to maintain civility in the process of adjustment are called for. I am thankful that I lobby in Wyoming!

Wyoming, 10+ years of experience

Finally, one former state legislator paints a picture of enduring trust in the legislative process and the norms by which it should conduct the public's official business. He notes that in Virginia there obtains a shared view that in areas of public policy where these conditions obtain – namely, there are important decisions to be made, the issues are complex, and political parties have not taken sides -- a delegation of responsibility for studying the issues in a bipartisan way through a professional facilitated process and subsequent referral to the legislature is frequently relied upon. This former state legislator and now professional lobbyist observes the following:

It's worth noting that in Virginia legislators are increasingly open to "mediation" -- i.e., on important, non-partisan, and complex policy issues, where the part-time legislature agrees on importance but also agrees doesn't have the time or resources (staff or funding) to tackle in a single session, it will generally agree or encourage stakeholders to employ (truly, get together and pay for) a neutral public policy mediator to work with them on the issue over the summer/fall in hopes of gaining consensus and coming back the following session with suggested, consensus-based legislation.

In recent years, public policy mediators have been used on complex energy legislation and environmental (water supply policy) legislation. It has worked quite nicely.

Virginia, 10+ years of experience

Finally, perhaps most representative of the general point of view of former state legislators now working as lobbyists are the following three woeful comments from lobbyists in Montana out West, in Delaware in the East, and in Missouri and Kansas in the Midwest. Their comments merit our attention.

Term limits prevent legislators from building relationships that promote bipartisan activity; polarized elections cause new elected officials to come into the legislature from a bruising election battle and they continue their partisan approach as a legislator.

Finally, perhaps worst of all there is much less appreciation for or understanding of the role of government in society.

Montana, 10+ years of experience

Their constituents are key.

People have strong feelings and tend to elect legislators who represent those predilections. Plus, the parties have sorted themselves to an extent not usually seen in the past -- i.e., GOP has no liberals, Dems have no conservatives. Less need to find middle ground within the party leads to less need to find it between parties.

Delaware, 10+ years of experience

Polarized politics in recent years has drastically changed the dynamics of dealing with sensitive issues. I chaired the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture from 1987 thru 1994 and we had many divided reports---13 farmers on a committee often meant 13 opinions---never one report in 8 years was on party lines.

Missouri, 10+ years of experience

In our state we essentially have two Republican parties, the conservatives, and the moderates. The Dems and the moderates align much more naturally in philosophy, but the inherent pressures of the system prevent that from happening more. Moderates fear of being primaried, the lack of in-house advancement to more senior legislative positions prevent them from voting how they truly believe. Democrats resist working with moderates to some extent because they believe if not a moderate in the seat Democrats have a better chance of retaking the seat. Special interest groups needing to forge a coalition often get frustrated that the two parties closest to agreement in a three-party system can't trust each other.

Kansas, 10+ years of experience

Nebraska Lobbyists and the “Nonpartisan” State Legislature

In the same way that comments from state legislative lobbyists who were once state legislators provide an uncommon insight into civil discourse and the capacity for effective legislative deliberation, so too does another subpopulation of participants in the national survey of state legislative lobbyists. That group is the survey respondents from **Nebraska**, state legislative lobbyists who work in the nation’s sole unicameral state legislature (Miewald, 1984; Luebke, 2005). By design, the founding fathers of Nebraska state government sought to minimize the adverse effects of “factions” – a danger against which President Washington had warned the country in his *Farewell Address* (September 17th, 1796, Library of Congress). As one participant in the national survey from Nebraska observed:

Nebraska has the nation's only unicameral, non-partisan legislature. Traditional rules and norms in the body have been designed to promote nonpartisanship, but our current Republican governor is working diligently to break them down and get (buy) his own way. As the son of a billionaire, he is able to outspend virtually any possible opposition, not only in his own elections but in legislative races as well.

Nebraska, fewer than 10 years of experience

Another survey respondent from Nebraska opined the following:

Even though we are a non-partisan legislature, we are divided more and more deeply by party lines than we have been in the past. It has changed dramatically in my brief six years of work, and other lobbyists have experienced an even greater shift toward partisanship.

Nebraska, fewer than 10 years of experience

Yet another Nebraska survey respondent observed the following:

Nebraska generally has a very respectful and judicious approach to evaluating proposed legislation. The officially (constitutionally) non-partisan legislature has much to do with this, though the body has effectively become more partisan in the past 10 years, particularly under the current Governor.

Nebraska, 10+ years of experience

Clearly, there is evidence that even in Nebraska, which scores high on our civility index and has a long history of non-partisan problem-solving in the state legislature, the level of civil discourse has declined as the level of partisanship has increased. Other states such as Nebraska which have similar histories of institutionalized norms and traditions supportive of civil discourse report that such norms are in some danger of being eroded. For example, a survey respondent from Utah recorded this comment about civil discourse developments in the highest scoring state on our civility index:

Utah is a beacon of enlightened, rational legislative activity -- with the occasional stupid things that occur and the odd legislator who is unconcerned with civility. We solve problems and work together as a general rule. The hard right, and now the Trump acolytes, make it difficult to operate in the unpolarized environment which used to prevail. The Ds are increasingly strident, per national examples as well. The traditions and norms that have long prevailed in Utah are still strong, but there is clear weakening in evidence.

Utah, 10+ years of experience

A similar narrative is offered by a survey respondent (former state legislator) from the state of New Hampshire, another state which scores quite high on the civility index. She writes the following:

NH is a genuine citizen legislature. Unlike any other state, the legislators' total pay for 1 year is only \$100. This fact stops the frequent gross corruption seen elsewhere. You must have a deep desire to want to do the right thing to serve in our state. This heritage of public service has served us well and continues to do so. The current period of heightened partisan divisiveness is placing a very serious strain on our honored traditions.

New Hampshire, 10+ years of experience

In yet another state scoring high on the civility index with a long tradition of legislative comity and strong civil discourse norms and traditions, we found this description of contemporary political life in the state legislature:

Vermont has always bucked the national partisan trends -- we have lots of active independents and third parties elected to the Legislature, and Vermont voters really like balance, bipartisanship, and independence. However, since the election of Trump, we have seen the cut-throat method of politics begin to seep into discourse at the State House.

Vermont, 10+ years of experience

Likewise, in North Dakota where one of the highest scores was recorded on the civility index calculated from survey responses, a state legislative lobbyist offered this comment on a question in the survey asking about the status of civility-supportive norms and traditions:

A good question. It is getting so bad in North Dakota that good legislative proposals and bills dropped by the minority are often hijacked. They are either defeated and then re-introduced by the majority, or they are defeated and then amended into a bill by a majority member as a prime sponsor with no offer of bipartisan sponsorship as tradition would call for.

North Dakota, 10+ years of experience

Finally, in Washington where a long tradition of across-the-aisle collaboration obtains and survey results merited a high score on the civility index, a long-time state legislative lobbyist offered this sobering assessment of civil discourse in contemporary legislative politics in the Evergreen State:

Leadership doesn't value it nor exhibit/model it, and newer legislators have neither the capacity nor interest in it.

Bipartisanship used to be the way to get things done "at the end of the day." Now, partisanship is the (only) way to get it done...and stopping the other party from doing something/anything is now the standard for whether you/your party is getting something done/winning/succeeding.

It's incredibly frustrating and, worse, disheartening.

Washington, 10+ years of experience

Likewise in Oregon, where a high level of legislative staff professionalism has characterized legislative deliberations, these concerning remarks occasion pause:

Oregon Senate Republicans walked out because they did not have the votes to block a bill, but they had the votes to block a quorum. Is that what is going to happen every time they are on the losing end? Democrats in other states have also walked out and left the state, so this is a bipartisan problem. This is shameful; they should do the jobs they were elected to do.

Oregon, in-house, 10+ years of experience, Female

Concluding Remarks

This paper has sought to accomplish one primary goal, that being a discussion/demonstration of how the careful study of survey comments from the national survey of state legislative lobbyists and public agency legislative liaison officers can inform us on the status of civil discourse in our 50 state legislatures. The 1,200+ participants in the 2018-2019 survey, administered online with two mail survey follow-ups, completed the survey (see Appendix for survey instrument used)

and in many cases provided multiple substantive comments on open-ended survey items. All of those survey comments have been coded, and the comment code values have been added to the fixed-format item values in the survey dataset available on the website for *Outside Looking In: Lobbyists Views on Civil Discourse in U.S. State Legislatures* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2021). The *Outside Looking In* website features a COMMENTS CODING MANUAL [see: <https://labs.wsu.edu/outside-looking-in>] and contact information for Francis Benjamin for those persons wishing to make use of the dataset and the comments coded-enhanced version of that dataset.

The website for *Outside Looking In* also features a document entitled: **WPSA PAPER APPENDIX: NOTEWORTHY COMMENTS WITH BRIEF SUBJECT PROFILES**. For those scholars and practitioners interested in reading all comments of 10+ words, this 75-page document provides the “raw data” for this qualitative inquiry into our survey results.

What seems clear from a review of both the survey’s fixed-response item results, a close reading of the comments registered by former state legislators, and review of survey respondents’ comments from Nebraska (a nominally nonpartisan state legislature) and many other survey participants working in “high civility” states, a serious challenge to civil discourse norms is taking in virtually all states. In states in which such norms were weak, they have been further weakened. In states in which such norms were strong, erosion is in evidence. Of particular concern is the sense that there are multiple contributors to the problem of ebbing support for civil discourse norms, problems relating to how the agenda for state politics is being infiltrated by a toxic form of politics being practiced in Washington, DC. As one survey participant from Vermont observed:

This is a relatively new phenomenon in Vermont, but chaos in DC trickles down to uncertainty (vis-à-vis budget/policy) at the state level. Our traditions and norms are strong, but they are being tested to be sure in recent years.

Vermont, former state legislator, contract lobbyist, 10+ years of experience, Male

The authors invite both scholars and graduate students sharing our interest in state politics and policy AND those persons actively engaged in the state legislative process to make use of the survey data we have collected, and peruse the supplementary information displayed on the *Outside Looking In* website. While this paper displays a select group of comments from the survey, we invite you to look through **all** of the comments and derive your own sense of what is being communicated by the state legislative lobbyists participating in the survey. The data for any particular state may be of interest; if so, please contact the authors for assistance in compiling those findings for your use. It should be noted that supplementary data collection was carried out in 13 states where state-level explorations of data and follow-on public engagement has been planned; those states are Washington, Oregon, Utah, Idaho, Nevada, California, Kansas, Arkansas, Illinois, Ohio, Iowa, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina.

These are difficult times for democratic institutions in our country, with our state legislatures being no exception. Our research project, and this paper as part of this group effort, is intended to promote our collective understanding of governance problems in our contemporary turbulent times. We stand ready to share what we have learned and share the data and supplementary information gathered for the benefit of fellow scholars and the good folks working to secure the blessings of democratic government in our state legislatures.

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Appendix

National Survey of State Legislative Lobbyists

Dear Registered Lobbyist:

As a registered lobbyist you have been selected along with your counterparts in all 50 states to participate in a national study of state-level public affairs focusing on the operation of STATE LEGISLATURES. This message represents a request for completely **voluntary** participation; your responses and comments will remain **confidential**. All reports and publications will feature exclusively grouped results, with no reported findings being attributable to any single person.

By consulting you and your counterparts involved in legislative advocacy work across the country we hope to gain a better understanding of how those of you who are directly involved in state-level public affairs view the state legislative process in your respective states. This questionnaire will take you about 30 minutes to complete. Your candid answers to our questions will be greatly appreciated, and any supplementary comments you wish to make in the several “additional comments” boxes will receive **very close study** by a multi-university team of researchers.

This survey is sponsored by the **National Institute for Civil Discourse** at the *University of Arizona* working in collaboration with researchers at *Washington State University*, the *University of Kansas*, the *University of Utah*, *Kent State University*, *Boise State University*, *Oregon State University*, *Bradley University*, and the *University of Arkansas*. The **Thomas S. Foley Institute for Public Affairs and Public Service**, the **Division of Governmental Studies & Services**, and the **William D. Ruckelshaus Center** at Washington State University are serving as supporting units for the national study being conducted out of WSU in Pullman.

Washington State University strongly supports the rights of research participants and the provisions established for the protection of respondent anonymity. This study has been approved by the university’s *Institutional Review Board* as in compliance with those safeguards and protections.

Thank you in advance for your valuable answers to our questions, and for your thoughts and insights on state legislative affairs in your state. If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints regarding this research, please call us at 509 335-7146. The primary investigator for this project, Nicholas Lovrich, can also be reached by cell at 509 432-4358 or by email at n.lovrich@wsu.edu. If you would like to receive a summary of survey results, please send a separate e-mail to Prof. Lovrich.

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I: General views and nature of your lobbying activities

Questions in this section ask about your work with legislators. Please answer the following questions based on your experience during the two most recent legislative sessions in which you worked, unless otherwise specified.

1. Prior to becoming a lobbyist, in which of the following public policy-related occupations did you have experience? *[Please check all that apply]*

Areas of prior related experience	
Served as state legislator	[<input type="checkbox"/>]
State Legislative aid/legislative staff	[<input type="checkbox"/>]
Staff for state or federal agency	[<input type="checkbox"/>]
Local agency or government or	[<input type="checkbox"/>]
Policy-related nonprofit (e.g., ACLU)	[<input type="checkbox"/>]
Other (please describe below)	

2. On which of the following types of issues have you lobbied? *Please check the number corresponding to the frequency with which you have lobbied on **each** of the types listed.*

	Very often	Often	Occasionally	Never
a. Environmental regulations	1	2	3	4
b. Labor/employment/unemployment	1	2	3	4
c. Land use	1	2	3	4
d. State lottery	1	2	3	4
e. Health care/hospitals	1	2	3	4
f. Utilities	1	2	3	4
g. Transportation	1	2	3	4
h. Military/veterans issues	1	2	3	4
i. Taxation	1	2	3	4

- j. Criminal justice/law enforcement/corrections 1 2 3 4
- k. Pensions and retirement 1 2 3 4
- l. Social regulatory (e.g., abortion, guns) 1 2 3 4
- m. Social services (e.g., public assistance) 1 2 3 4
- n. Immigration status-related issues 1 2 3 4
- o. K-12 education 1 2 3 4
- p. Higher education 1 2 3 4
- q. Cannabis (medical and/or recreational) 1 2 3 4
- r. OTHER: (fill in type)

3. Do you work as an **in-house lobbyist** for a firm, organization or agency, or are you employed by a lobbying firm? *Please check the appropriate box.*
 In-house [] b. Lobbying firm [] c. Self-employed []

4. **How many days per month do you normally lobby? Check one number in a. and b.**

	2 days or less	3-5	6-10	11-20	21 days +
a. During session	1	2	3	4	5
b. Outside of session	1	2	3	4	5

5. How many years have you worked as a lobbyist? (Round to the nearest year, e.g., 1 year, 8 months = 2 years.) years

Do you lobby more than one state? If so, please list them here _____

6. How often do you lobby on behalf of each of the interests listed below:

Check number for items a-e.	Very often	Often	Occasionally	Never
a. Businesses or business associations (e.g., chambers of commerce)	1	2	3	4
b. Professional trade or occupations (e.g., doctors', attorneys' associations)	1	2	3	4

c. Organized labor/labor unions	1	2	3	4
d. Public interest non-profits (e.g., MADD)	1	2	3	4
e. Other (please specify below) (open-ended)	1	2	3	4

7. In terms of the **QUALITY OF LEGISLATIVE DELIBERATION** – that is, fairness of process of hearing of differing views, due consideration of evidence and testimony, and commitment to “doing the right thing for the people of your state” – how would you characterize your experience with the legislature’s deliberation **in representing your clients**? *[If different for different types of clients, please note in your comment.]*

Quality of Deliberation	Quality of Deliberation	Quality of Deliberations		
<i>Uniformly Poor</i>	<i>Mixed – good & poor</i>	<i>Uniformly Good</i>		
1 []	2 []	3 []	4 []	5 []

Additional Comments:

8. The cover of the June 2017 issue of *Governing: The States and Localities* bears the caption “Checks & Imbalances: With a Constitutional Crisis Consuming Washington, state lawmakers are upending their own norms as well.” Alan Greenblatt’s article gives several examples of hyper-partisanship putting strains on the observance of long-established norms of proper legislative conduct and processes. Do you think that norms of fair play are breaking down in the state(s) in which you lobby or advocate for clients?

Not occurring 1[] Uncertain 2[] Occurring 3[] Recovering after a period of decline 4[]

Additional Comments:

II. Bipartisan collaboration

*Questions in this section request your views relating to **the ability of legislators from opposing political parties to work together in your state capitol.** Unless otherwise specified, please answer the questions as they relate to the two most recent legislative sessions.*

1. Please list two issues upon which legislators from opposing political parties in your state seem to have the **greatest potential for bipartisan collaboration.**
 1. _____
 2. _____

2. Please list two noteworthy issues that legislators in your state treat as **non-partisan (both parties view as not relevant to their party’s electoral interests)** areas of public policy.
 1. _____
 2. _____

In your state, are there *fewer, the same* or *more* non-partisan areas today than in the past?

[] 1 Fewer

[] 2 Same

[] 3 More

- 3. In your view, what are **some of the greatest impediments** to legislative bipartisan collaboration among legislators in your own state capitol?

Additional comments:

- 4. Compared to when you first became involved in legislative advocacy, have legislators with whom you work become **more partisan** or **more bipartisan** (i.e., work with legislators in the opposing party on some legislation of common interest)? *Check one number.*

More partisan 1 2 3 4 5 (same) 6 7 8 9 **More bipartisan**

- 5. Compared to legislators in other states, in your estimation are **individual legislators** in your state generally more likely to work in a bipartisan fashion than their counterparts elsewhere? *Check one number.*

Somewhat more partisan	Neither more partisan nor more bipartisan	Somewhat more bipartisan
1	2	3

Additional comments:

III. Legislative Civility Norms

*Questions in this section request your views as they relate to the strength of legislative **civility norms** in your state legislature. Unless otherwise specified, please answer the following questions as they relate to the two most recent legislative sessions.*

- 1. How important are civility and the maintenance of civil discourse norms in legislative debate to producing good public policy?

Not at all important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 **Absolutely essential**

2. Overall, how would you characterize the **general level of civility** among members of your state’s legislature during the two most recent legislative sessions?

Very uncivil 1 2 3 4 5 (uncertain) 6 7 8 9 10 **Very civil**

3. Compared to ten years ago, are **individual legislators** more or less civil today?

Less civil 1 2 3 4 5 (uncertain) 6 7 8 9 10 **More civil**

4. Compared to ten years ago, are **legislative leaders** today more or less civil?

Less civil 1 2 3 4 5 (uncertain) 6 7 8 9 10 **More civil**

5. Based on your understanding of norms of civility, how civil in behavior do you feel each of the following legislative process actors tend to be in your state:

	Very uncivil				Very civil
You (as a legislative advocate)	1	2	3	4	5
Other lobbyists in your state	1	2	3	4	5
Your state’s legislators in general	1	2	3	4	5
State legislators with whom you deal	1	2	3	4	5
State legislators in general in U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
Average citizen in your state	1	2	3	4	5

6. How has the experience of incivility on the part of state legislators in your state **affected you** in your own work in legislative advocacy?

Not at all	A small amount	A large amount	A great deal
1	2	3	4

Examples:

IV. Legislative Relationships

Questions in this section examine the relationships between and among legislators in your state capitol. Unless otherwise specified, please answer the questions as they relate to the two most recent legislative sessions.

1. In your view, how important is it for individual legislators to communicate frequently with fellow legislators of the opposing party?

Not important	1	2	3	4	5 (uncertain)	6	7	8	9	10	Very Important
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2. In your view, how important is it for legislative party leaders to communicate often with the leadership of the opposing party?

Not important	1	2	3	4	5 (uncertain)	6	7	8	9	10	Very Important
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3. The following actions have been suggested to enhance adherence to legislative civility norms among state legislators. For each item listed below, please indicate how **effective** do you think the suggestion would be to **improve legislative civility** (on the left-hand column). Likewise, please indicate your assessment of how **difficult** it would be to **implement the idea** (on the right-hand column).

Effectiveness	Recommendation to Improve Legislative Civility and Relationships	Implementation Difficulty
Low High	Legislative Activities	Low High
1 2 3 4 5	a. Hold bipartisan social functions which are limited to legislators	1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5	b. Visit other legislators from the opposing party in their legislative district	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	c. Work with legislators from the other party on joint projects	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	d. Spend time with legislators of the opposing party outside of session	1 2 3 4 5
Legislators' In-session Interactions		
1 2 3 4 5	e. Eat meals with legislators of the opposing party	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	f. Change seating assignments so parties are intermixed	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	g. Change office assignments so parties are intermixed	1 2 3 4 5

Additional suggested action:

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following hypothesized **contributing causes** to the declining levels of civility in American political life in recent years. How does each hypothesized cause tend to play out in **your state legislature**?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Higher levels of hostility experienced when <i>running for office</i>	1	2	3	4
2. Less ability for legislators from opposing political parties to <i>communicate effectively</i>	1	2	3	4

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3. Legislators' increasing exposure to <i>partisan and ideological media</i>	1	2	3	4
4. Legislators' <i>respect for legislative traditions & norms and customs is low</i>	1	2	3	4
5. Legislators <i>reflecting the polarized environment of the U.S. Congress</i>	1	2	3	4
6. The tendency today for legislators to be more liberal or more conservative (<i>less moderate</i>) than in the past	1	2	3	4
7. More divisive demands imposed on state legislators by:				
a. Constituents	1	2	3	4
b. Campaign contributors				4
c. Lobbyists	1	2	3	4
d. Party leaders in the legislature	1	2	3	4
e. State party organization leaders	1	2	3	4

8. Compared to the U.S. Congress, to what extent do you feel ***partisan polarization*** is taking place in your state legislature?

Much less polarized than Congress	1
Somewhat less polarized	2
The same degree of polarization	3
Somewhat more polarized	4
Far more polarized than Congress	5

9. To the best of your knowledge, to what extent do you think ***partisan polarization*** is taking place in your own state legislature **as compared to other state legislatures?** *Check the most appropriate number on the 1 through 10 scale.*

Among <u>least</u> polarized			In the middle				Among <u>most</u> polarized		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Additional Comments:

V. Demographics

The following questions pertain to your personal background. We include them to make certain that we have a broad, representative sample of lobbyists from across the country.

1. Into which of the following age ranges do you fall?

- _____
- 29 or younger 1
 - 30 to 34 2
 - 35 to 39 3
 - 40 to 49 4
 - 50 to 59 5
 - 60 to 69 6
 - 70 or older 7
- _____

2. What is your sex?

Male	Female
1	2

3. Do you consider yourself a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or something else?

Democrat	1
Republican	2
Independent	3
Other party	4

If an **Independent**, do you lean towards *Democrat* [] or towards *Republican* []?

4. Which of the following best describes your general political views on *SOCIAL ISSUES* (e.g., gay marriage, abortion, prayer in schools, gun control, medical marijuana, Dreamers)?

Very liberal	1
Liberal	2
Slightly liberal	3
Moderate; middle of the road	4
Slightly conservative	5
Conservative	6
Very conservative	7

5. Which of the following best describes your general political views on *FISCAL ISSUES* (e.g., taxes, social services eligibility, minimum wage, right to work laws, reducing government regulations)?

Very liberal	1
Liberal	2
Slightly liberal	3
Moderate; middle of the road	4
Slightly conservative	5
Conservative	6
Very conservative	7

6. Please indicate your race/ethnicity. Please mark **all that apply**:

Native American	1
Asian & Pacific Islander	2
Caucasian/white, Non-Hispanic	3
Hispanic	4
African American	5
Other (please specify)	6

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR PARTICIPATING IN OUR SURVEY.

We would be most interested in any concluding observations you would like to make. We anticipate sharing our findings with both the academic community and the associations of elected officials pertaining to state legislative affairs. Please send an e-mail to n.lovrich@wsu.edu if you would like to receive a copy of the survey results, either electronically or in the form of a hard copy summary.

Concluding Observations: