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- PRESS RELEASE -

2016 CONNECTICUT CIVIC HEALTH INDEX LAUNCHED

IN-DEPTH REPORT MEASURES CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN THE CONSTITUTION
STATE IN VOTING, VOLUNTEERISM AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

HARTFORD: A coalition of groups — including the Secretary of the State, Everyday Democracy, the National Conference on Citizenship and DataHaven — launched the 2016 Civic Health Index Report today. The survey evaluates the depth of citizen engagement through a variety of indicators such as voting, volunteering and other forms of community involvement.

[The report](#) gives Connecticut relatively high marks compared to the national average for volunteering (29.1 percent vs. 26.2 percent) and charitable giving (57.9 percent vs. 50.7 percent) in 2011, 2012 and 2013. Residents in Connecticut are also more likely than the rest of the country to have attended a public meeting (10.5 percent vs. 8.7 percent) or worked with neighbors to fix or improve something in the community (9.2 percent vs. 8.2 percent) during those years.

However, there are areas that reveal a stark need for improvement and subjects that are considerable cause for concern.

Deep inequalities in income in Connecticut have had a negative impact on the civic engagement of people living in those communities. The report notes: “The stark contrast between the wealthy and the poor in our state — the so-called ‘Two Connecticuts’ — is as evident in statistics on voting behavior as it is in educational opportunity. Despite a generally higher level of educational attainment in our state, people who are poor or who have lower levels of formal education participate less in our government at all levels. This continues to be the primary challenge for the state, one that the data and findings in this report corroborate.”

In addition to socio-economic issues, the report raises question about how to engage particular demographics in political life. Young adults (18-to-24-years-old) in particular show lower levels of political and civic engagement. The report finds, “In 2013, young adults were significantly less likely than others to attend a public meeting (2.1% of adults 18 to 24 years compared to 11.8% of all other adults) or to give to charity (23.9% of adults 18 to 24 years and 62.5% of adults 25 years and older). Meanwhile, older people were much more likely to engage civically. Of the Silent Generation, 18.6% had attended a public meeting, and 70.2% donated to charity.” The report also notes that young adults were less likely to register and cast votes.

More work must be done to engage other communities as well. For example, voter turnout in the Latino community (47 percent in the 2012 presidential election) is considerably lower than among whites (65.8 percent) and African-Americans (62.2 percent). However, the report does identify

programs that are working to increase participation, such as the Hartford Vota Coalition's Latino Voter Engagement Project. An evaluation of the project found that 64 percent of the canvass participants voted in the 2012 Presidential Election and that those who were canvassed twice voted at a rate of 21 percent higher than the others. In addition, voter turnout among those who were part of the canvass was 9.1 percent higher than overall turnout in the same voting districts and 6.7 percent higher than the citywide turnout rate.

In 2011, Connecticut released its first Civic Health Index. The project has grown nationally to more than 30 communities nationwide.

The findings of the report are based on an analysis of the Census Current Population Survey, as well as other locally-available data sources, by the National Conference on Citizenship, DataHaven, and other partners involved in this project. The National Conference on Citizenship is a congressionally chartered organization dedicated to strengthening civic life in America.

Secretary Merrill said, "One of the most obvious metrics of civic health is voting. In recent years, we've made great improvements on voting access and convenience. However, democracy does not begin and end on Election Day. Strong communities depend on citizens who are working with each other as well as their elected officials. This report will help us identify areas of democratic participation that are in need of improvement and to focus our energies toward making them better."

Martha McCoy, Executive Director of Everyday Democracy, said, "Knowing the state of Connecticut's civic health can help us gauge how well our communities are prepared to deal with economic adversity. Two studies commissioned by the National Conference on Citizenship and conducted by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University in 2011 and 2012 found that communities with stronger civic health are more resilient when hardship hits, have more effective governance, and are better places to live."

Jeff Coates, Director for Research and Evaluation at the National Conference on Citizenship said, "The Connecticut Civic Health Index serves as an important tool for innovation and exploration to get people more involved in their democracy. This report reveals Connecticut's civic health strengths and weaknesses. Working together, I know Connecticut residents can leverage their strong volunteering and neighborhood networks towards greater community action and an even better civic life."

Mark Abraham, Executive Director of DataHaven, said, "This report is a measure of whether Connecticut residents feel included in the workings of society and government — key factors that along with other determinants such as income and health are among the major drivers of well-being and happiness at a population-wide level. We were pleased that we could supplement the national data from the Census with new neighborhood-level information from the DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey's recent interviews of over 16,000 representative adults throughout Connecticut. The 2016 Civic Health Index report and future work by the partners involved will enable local communities to have the information that they need to effectively promote civic health."

Michelle Riordan-Nold, Executive Director of the Connecticut Data Collaborative said, “This report adds to a growing base of civic data available in Connecticut and will enhance the ability of citizens, policymakers, and organizations to engage in data-driven decision making at the state, regional, and local level. We were pleased to be able to build an interactive [website](http://civichealth.ctdata.org) (<http://civichealth.ctdata.org>) to facilitate greater distribution of the important findings presented in this report.”

The majority of the data used within this report were collected through two supplements to the Current Population Survey: the Volunteer Supplement and the Civic Engagement Supplement. The Current Population Survey is a monthly survey of about 60,000 households (approximately 100,000 adults), conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau on behalf of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The selected supplements collect data on the volunteering, voting, and civic activities of adults age 16 and older for volunteering and 18 and older for the civic supplement. Volunteers are considered individuals who performed unpaid volunteer activities through or for an organization at any point during the 12-month period (from September 1st of the prior year through the survey week in September of the survey year).

To access the full report, [click here](#).

Connecticut Civic Health Indicators and Findings

	<i>Latest Connecticut Estimates (from 2013, except for voting and registration)</i>	<i>Latest Ranking</i>	<i>Latest U.S. Estimates (from 2013, except for voting and registration)</i>
Volunteering	27.8%	22	25.4%
Charitable Giving (\$25 or more)	56.2%	12	50.1%
Attended a public meeting	10.4%	19	8.3%
Working with neighbors to fix or improve something in the community	8.6%	22	7.6%
Voting (2012)	62.7%	26	61.8%
Registration (2012)	70.5%	34	71.2%
Exchanging (giving or receiving) favors with neighbors (Frequently) [1][3]	11.7%	33	12.1%
Eat dinner with a member of household (Frequently) [1][3]	88.7%	28	87.8%
Talk about politics with friends and family frequently (Frequently) [1][3]	27.8%	29	27.0%
Contacted or visited a public official [1]	13.8%	19	10.8%
Bought or boycotted a product [1]	14.0%	21	12.8%
Voted in local elections (Sometimes or Often) [1]	63.5%	24	58.5%
Group membership [1][2]	35.1%	36	36.3%

Leadership role in organization [1]	11.3%	25	9.7%
Confidence in Corporations (some or a great deal of confidence) [1]	63.9%	36	64.5%
Confidence in Media (some or a great deal of confidence) [1]	59.2%	12	55.0%
Confidence in Schools (some or a great deal of confidence) [1]	88.1%	13	84.5%

Notes:

[1] For all of the indicators from the Civic Engagement Supplement (such as talking about politics and doing favors for neighbors), data are available for 2011 and 2013 and the pooled data represents those two years, as the Civic Engagement Supplement was not administered in 2012.

[2] The percentage point estimate refers to the portion of people who said they belong to any of the groups presented (religious, school, neighborhood, civic or sports/recreation). If you would like separate estimates for different types of organization, please contact your liaison at NCoC.

[3] Frequently is a few times a week or more.

[4] Connecticut's raw sample size was 1904 in the 2013 Volunteering Supplement and 2056 in the 2012 Voting Supplement. The 2013 Civic Supplement was administered to a third of those surveyed and samples sizes for questions ranged from 509 to 767. The size of margin of error can vary depending on the sample size, and the estimated rates. Based on our calculations, MOE range from +/- 4.2% for confidence in media to +/-1.3% for "working with neighbors."