Arizona's 2014 Pilot Citizen Initiative Review: Final Report

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December 2015

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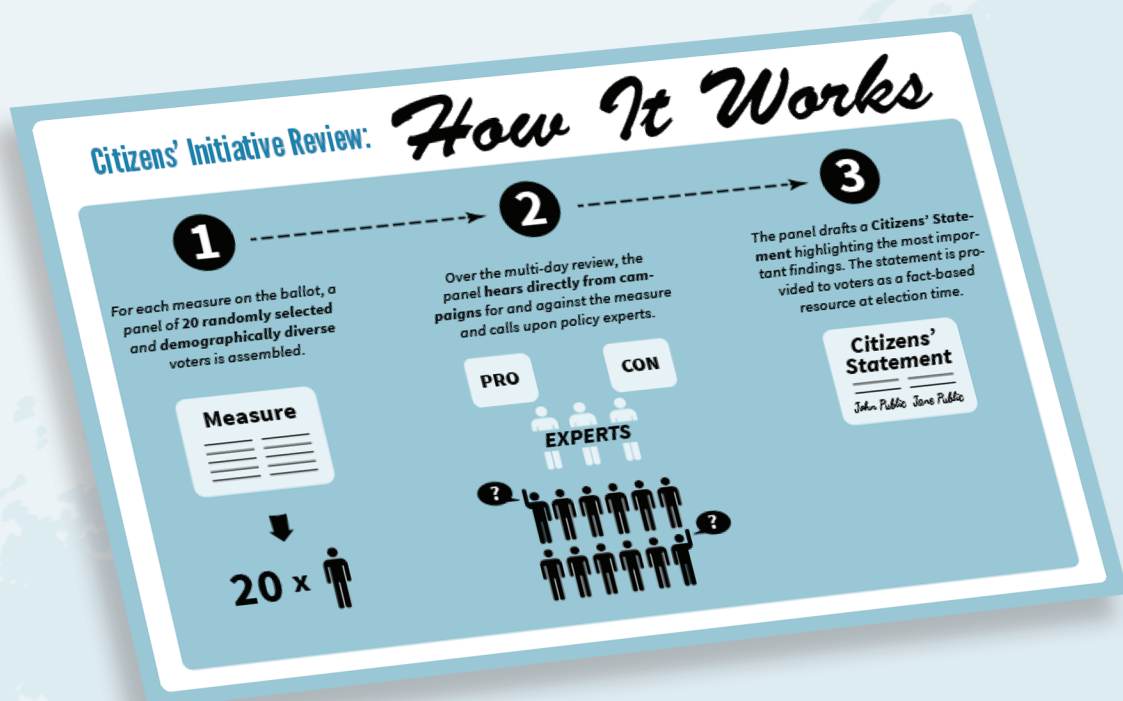David Daugherty, Ph.D.
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Citizens' Initiative Review: *How It Works*

1 For each measure on the ballot, a panel of 20 randomly selected and demographically diverse voters is assembled.

Measure

20 x

2 Over the multi-day review, the panel hears directly from campaigns for and against the measure and calls upon policy experts.

PRO   **CON**

EXPERTS

3 The panel drafts a **Citizens' Statement** highlighting the most important findings. The statement is provided to voters as a fact-based resource at election time.

Citizens' Statement

John Public Jane Public

Arizona's 2014 Pilot Citizen Initiative Review:
FINAL REPORT

> *Deliberation* – n. the long and careful weighing, or discussion, of options in light of personal values before making a decision, usually prior to voting.

Arizona is among the few states with a constitution that allows for direct democracy through the citizens' initiative process, empowering voters to submit qualifying propositions to the ballot for binding public policy and laws independent of the state Legislature. As in much of the country, Arizona presently is an environment of deep budget cuts, high poverty rates, low educational attainment, racial tensions, fragmented systems, political extremism and low voter turnout. This puts the need for public deliberation and community engagement at an all-time high. But while the ballot initiative process historically has been one method that Arizona voters have used to regain some control over the democratic process – placing an average of 12 initiatives on the state ballot each election cycle – there remain questions about voter awareness and subsequently voter engagement in such matters.

A Morrison Institute Poll conducted just before the 2012 election found a dire need for increased voter awareness concerning these initiatives. Nearly three-quarters of Arizona voters find ballot measures too complicated and too confusing to fully comprehend. As a result, 60 percent use their limited knowledge to struggle through the propositions, while more than 20 percent don't vote one way or the other. Some voters (5.5 percent) just vote "no" on ballot propositions they feel they do not have enough information about to understand. Thus, most citizens remain disenchanted with the current political process as well as feeling that politicians are out of touch with voters.

> *Nearly three-quarters of Arizona voters polled said they found ballot measures too complicated and confusing to fully comprehend.*

In response, Arizona joined two other states – Oregon and Colorado – to pilot its first Citizens' Initiative Review (CIR) September 18–21, 2014, in Phoenix. Morrison Institute for Public Policy, a nonpartisan public policy center at Arizona State University, invited 20 participants to deliberate for 3½ days over a municipal pension reform measure on the city ballot. Participants in the CIR project were representative of Phoenix's demographics across age, ethnicity, educational attainment and political party.

The intent of the CIR is to engage, empower and educate voters in a forthright, transparent and credible manner separate from the slick, high-powered, well-funded (and often-misleading) campaigns on either or both sides of a particular ballot proposition. While CIR is somewhat similar to a deliberation process by a jury, under Arizona's project model participants did not take a vote for a "verdict" on whether they believed the measure should or should not pass. Instead, participants deliberated over the initiative's reliability, relevance and real impact to develop a factually vetted, one-page Citizens' Statement with the pros and cons of the initiative with the goal of helping other voters make a more informed decision before going to the ballot box (See Appendix A for Citizen Statement).

This second and final report submitted to the Kettering Foundation examines the CIR experience and its short- and medium-term impacts on the participants. Two main questions drive this project:

a) Does the CIR have a transformative impact on participants, meaning does it profoundly change their values, beliefs and/or behaviors towards democratic habits, public action and community engagement?

b) If so, how?

This report provides an overview of the CIR process, describes who the participants and panelists were, and what they thought about their involvement. These responses set the stage in determining how individual transformation may have occurred. This report will next share the findings of participant surveys and short- and long-term interview data conducted six weeks and six months after the CIR. These follow-up interviews and surveys will highlight participants' traits that may have changed as a result of participation in the CIR, including their intrinsic values, knowledge base and external behaviors (See Appendix B for additional information on methodology). The report will conclude with recommendations to incorporate lessons learned and the contributions of the CIR to creating a more democratic Arizona.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ARIZONA CIR

Healthy Democracy, a nonpartisan nonprofit based in Oregon that has coordinated several CIRs, was an active partner in the Arizona CIR project in Phoenix, providing facilitators experienced in the deliberative process. Over four consecutive days 20 CIR participants reviewed Phoenix's Proposition 487, which would change the city's employee retirement plan from a defined benefit system into a 401k contribution plan, as well as place limits on increases in current pension plans.

CIR AGENDA

Day 1: Orientation to the CIR and introduction of the ballot measure

Day 2: Subject matter experts and identification of questions for experts

Day 3: Advocate panels 1 and 2 and identification of additional findings

Day 4: (1/2 day): Key findings' prioritization and development of arguments in favor of and opposed to the measure

CIR participants met and heard from advocates and opponents of the measure, as well as an initial presentation by neutral experts to provide CIR participants with a basic foundation of complexities associated with government pension plans. CIR participants began deliberations with two sets of claims developed by proponents and opponents of Prop 487, and worked to prioritize and edit these claims for inclusion in the eventual Citizens' Statement. The full text of the ballot measure, neutral expert presentations, panel discussions with opposing points of view and written materials from advocates were included in the exercise.

At the end of their deliberations CIR participants created a list of findings relevant to the measure and then used these findings to craft their Citizens' Statement, which included 10 key findings and five pro and con statements. An excerpt from a small group discussion in Appendix C illustrates how these deliberative processes took place within a small group of participants who were deciding what claims from advocates are reliable, needed to be edited, or if a new claim needed to be created. There is significant discussion between participants about seemingly minor revisions to a statement, clearly demonstrating how much they valued their roles in the process and details in order to provide an easy-to-understand, factually based Citizens' Statement.

It should be noted that – based on decisions by the Arizona CIR Advisory Board, Healthy Democracy and Morrison Institute – there were four notable changes in the Arizona CIR that were different from other states' CIR processes. These four alterations may have varied the outcomes slightly compared with other CIRs:

1. Rather than asking advocates to create the initial pro and con claims for the ballot measure, as had been done with other 2014 CIRs outside of Arizona, Healthy Democracy and Morrison Institute developed an initial set of claims, due to the absence of information available from advocates;
2. Morrison Institute invited neutral subject matter experts to provide background on the initiative, as opposed to relying solely on advocates to provide such information;
3. The Citizens' Statement was distributed via Healthy Democracy's and Morrison Institute's websites and direct e-mail, as well as covered by some local news media outlets;
4. Unlike previous CIRs, which were sampled based on the demographics of registered voters, selection of the Arizona CIR participants also factored in demographics of the general Phoenix population – both voters and non-voters. This allowed the selection team to recruit a larger proportion of Latino citizens who are underrepresented at the polls but constitute Arizona's largest minority group.

Table 1. CIR Participant Demographics

	Frequency	Percent	City Percent
Age			
18-39	6	30	46
40-64	12	60	42
65+	2	10	12
Gender			
Male	11	55	50
Female	9	45	50
Race/Ethnicity			
Caucasian	8	40	46
Hispanic/Latino	8	40	39
African American	2	10	6
Native American	1	5	2
Pacific Islander	1	5	0
Education (Highest Level Completed)			
Less than High School	0	0	20
High School	10	50	24
Associate's/Bachelor's	6	30	47
Graduate	4	20	9
Party Affiliation			
Independent/Other	9	45	38
Republican	6	30	30
Democrat	5	25	32

Table 1 provides demographics of Phoenix CIR participants. It should be noted that the sample was heavily dominated by those with a high school degree. None of the participants had less than a high school education, and there was an under-representation of those with college degrees and higher. In addition, the sample skewed older. The youngest participant was 23 years old, with younger potential participants not responding to requests. This fact underscores the challenge of getting a younger demographic to participate in future CIR projects. Across all other demographics, the sample accurately represented the city's population.

Four researchers collected observations during CIR events to determine how participants interacted with experts, advocates, facilitators and each other throughout the process. The following are some highlights drawn from this observation data that were later found to impact participant opinions about the overall process.

Participants remained engaged and encouraged each other throughout the process. Although the process lasted for 3½ days, participants became increasingly engaged through the final day as their comfort and confidence with the exercise grew. By the last day, everyone seemed to freely provide feedback. Even in the group discussions with all participants, most spoke up without any apparent hesitation if they were confused by a certain request/instruction or had comments to share. If there were any participants who seemed disengaged, facilitators would attempt to include them – and sometimes even other CIR participants would encourage their peers. Although they were strangers to each other just a few days prior, there was a feeling of camaraderie within the groups, even when there was disagreement. At the end of each day, most CIR participants remained actively involved in the decision-making process.

The process did not allow room for power or politics. To assess the validity of the advocate statements, the larger group of 20 participants was divided into three smaller groups, which were changed in roster each time they met. This significantly reduced any power dynamics that could have arisen if the same groups remained intact. Those who were more soft-spoken seemed to find their voices in these circles, and the people who held influential power in other groups were counteracted with others who spoke up and did not recognize their previously held influence. As a result, power did not hold with the constant changes in the group dynamics. Groupthink was minimized, allowing everyone to voice an opinion.

Participants consistently educated each other on civil discourse. The rules for the deliberative process were established at the beginning, repeated at the beginning of each day and continually reinforced by the facilitators. The rules to engage constructively in deliberative decision-making were as follows:

- Stay in learning mode: Be open to new ideas and information, seeking to hear and understand a wide range of perspectives. Avoid "campaigning" for a specific position.

- Maintain a positive attitude: Assume good intent. If the intent of another person is not clear, ask questions and seek to clarify their meaning.

- Listen with care: Make an effort to understand the perspectives of others. Limit interruptions. Make a genuine effort to understand others before seeking to get them to understand you.

- Keep focused on the issue at hand: Pay attention to and focus on the most significant issues. Limit digressions; minimize stories unless they are pertinent to the issues discussed. Focus is on issues not people.

- Speak clearly and briefly and share "air time": Speak clearly and concisely. Limit discussion on an issue or item to as short a statement as possible. After you have had opportunity to speak, wait for others to speak before contributing again.

- Participate fully: Participate and contribute to the discussion but try not to dominate. Speak up when your views differ from the current discussion. Your perspective will enrich the interaction.

- Disagree positively: Express your views when you disagree but do so in a positive way. Direct your energy toward the issues, not people. Be a problem-solver by suggesting alternative approaches or solutions. Adopt a cooperative attitude; look for opportunities to make changes.

With the help of these rules, participants learned how to deliberate effectively and across political party lines and ideology, taking their roles as unbiased participants very seriously. Group members often were observed clarifying their thoughts with each other, educating each other and changing each other's minds throughout the course of civil discussion focused on policy, not politics. Regarding assessment of the validity of one claim, one participant stated: "Based on what we heard, I feel it's accurate, although I don't agree." So, the claim stayed.

In fact, when any participant seemed to break one of the rules or seemed to be campaigning for a particular position, another participant would remind them of their responsibilities to be impartial. For example, when a group member started introducing emotion into the dialogue about "what firemen deserve" in the form of pensions, another participant stated: "Let's not speak with too much passion. Let's not be too biased in conversation here." In addition, the facilitators diffused tensions, and were often seen patting on the back those in dispute, reassuring them that respectful debate was a natural part of the deliberation process.

*When outsiders were biased, participants took notice. Polarization becomes such a mainstay of American politics it almost goes unnoticed or unquestioned. This study shows that teaching a group of citizens the rules of deliberative decision-making can motivate them to look at the world differently. As a result of the CIR process, they came to have an immediate adverse response to any information viewed as biased, not factual or based on emotion rather than evidence. At a certain time on Day 3, when the advocates were stating their positions by offering campaign rhetoric instead data or facts, some of the CIR participants looked down, sighed, started writing and appeared irritated. One participant asked an advocate who supported the measure: "Who was involved in drafting (the ballot measure)?" The advocate responded: "I don't really know who is involved outside of the Free Enterprise Club, (the official sponsor of the initiative), but I don't think it should matter." This caused a few participants to twist in their seats, with some participants briefly whispering to each other about the validity of such a claim.

Advocate responses such as these were viewed as "snarky" by some CIR participants, and impacted the likeability and overall credibility of the speaker. As a result, some participants floundered with determining a statement's credibility – having difficulty untangling an advocate's likeability from unencumbered fact.

However, others in the citizens' group served as fact checkers to each other to ensure that issues such as likeability did not interfere with the objective's outcome for true statements.

*Language was a barrier to the process for a few. Some panelists spoke English as a second language, with Spanish their first language. At times, observers noted that a language barrier appeared to prevent some panelists from fully comprehending the information or from fully engaging in discussions. In some instances, this barrier seemed to prevent the facilitators and panelists from fully comprehending one another. During one session, a participant was unclear about the assigned task, and the facilitator had difficulty steering the participant towards the group's goals. In the end, the participant grew frustrated with the facilitator, mistakenly thinking that the facilitator did not find her input valuable. Preparing for such language and cultural barriers will be important for future CIR processes to enable democratic discussion as it expands to more diverse settings.

PARTICIPANTS' OPINIONS OF THE CIR EXPERIENCE:
WERE PARTICIPANTS TRANSFORMED?

Many Arizona citizens are looking for effective methods to engage with political leaders and have the opportunity to impact the political process through the Citizens' Statement. In fact, survey data revealed that 14 of the 20 members were motivated to attend the CIR because they were "looking for a chance to get involved in the political process." We wanted to know what participants thought about the overall CIR process and its outcomes, and what they told others about it immediately after the CIR, six weeks later and six months later. Did enthusiasm for the process wane?

Overall, they all had positive things to say about the CIR project and encouraged others to participate in the CIR, if invited. There were a few criticisms regarding the process and outcomes (i.e., not enough time for drafting the Citizens' Statement, advocates who argued with emotion over fact, not enough exposure of the Citizens' Statement to the general public). But overall, they did not impact their feelings towards the process itself.

**Did they feel their voice was heard, and were they satisfied with the process?**

Figure 1 **How Important of a Role Did You Play in Today's Panel Discussions?**
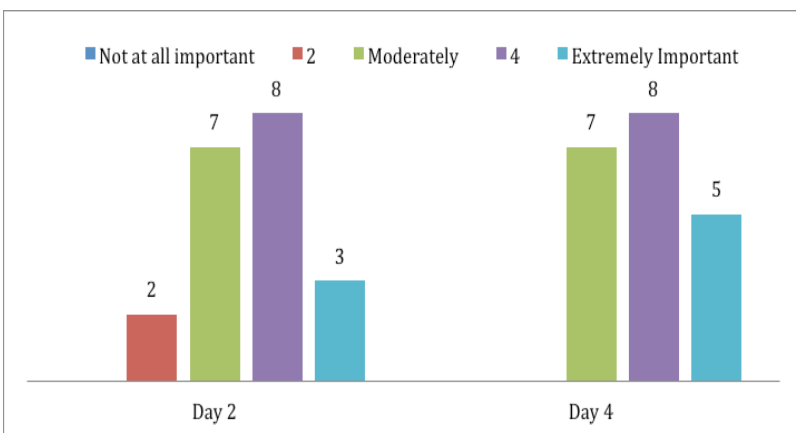
Process Strengths In other CIRs when *m*oderators were not present, there had been some issues with dominant participants overtaking the process. However, in the Arizona CIR facilitators were available in every instance to prevent this from happening. In effect, facilitators helped teach CIR participants how to listen to and respect each others' views. When participants were asked if they felt their voices were heard throughout the process, 16 out of 20 said they felt they were almost always heard through the process and

process and four said they felt heard "often" (Figure 1). Almost all felt respected by other participants often or almost always.[1] Early in the process, on Day 2, two panelists did not feel very important to the process, but by the last day everyone felt at least moderately important, and the majority felt very or extremely important.

Figure 2. **Expressing Views/Considering Other Views**
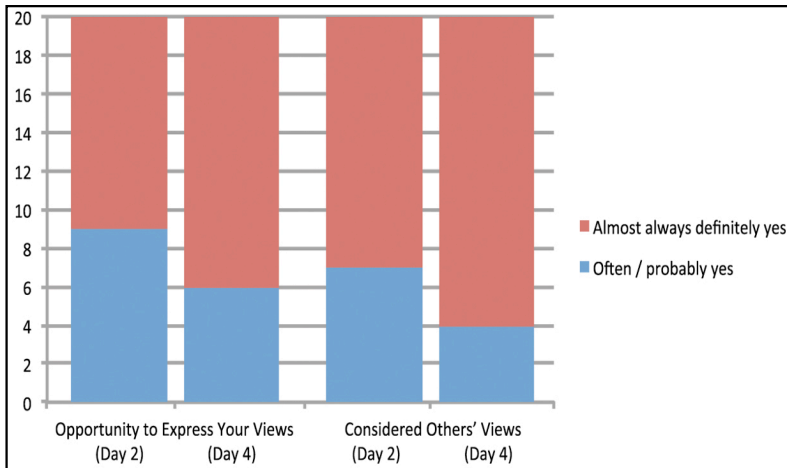
As the CIR progressed, participants increasingly felt they had the opportunity to express their views and were able to consider disparate views (Figure 2). One participant stated: "We got to participate in the democratic process in a way that I think Americans should be able to, but we don't get that opportunity."

Subsequently, all of the panelists were either very satisfied (16) or satisfied (4) with the overall CIR process. When asked "what aspects of the CIR did you find the most valuable," the top values shared by participants were:

1. Listening to subject matter experts and advocates on both sides of the issue (9 participants)

2. Deliberations (5 participants)

3. Ability to ask experts questions (3 participants)

One participant stated: "That three and a half day session showed what can be done with talking and hashin' things out. Settle any kind of conflict that you had." Another participant noted: "I'm glad that I did get the chance to learn about that process and really get to learn about a proposition in depth and weigh in on it for other citizens to know." At the end of the CIR process, most participants commented about the respectful nature of collaboration. For instance, one mentioned "this is what democracy is," and when one participant offered, "this was something I'll remember forever," many other CIR participants nodded in agreement.

The CIR required consensus in the development of the Citizens' Statement, which brought citizens who had different ideologies together to accomplish a common goal. One participant stated why the CIR assembly was so different than others:

> "That's why people defend their political positions so intensely, because it's tied to who you are. That's why it's hard for people to get over that barrier, but I think the CIR helps you because you have to. You feel the pressure to cooperate and work together, versus just being at a coffee shop and having a conversation."

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[1] One participant was coded as Unsure on Day 4

Process Criticisms Because a diverse group of citizens was involved, there were mixed reactions about some aspects of the process. While many participants appreciated having the advocates present, four participants felt that some advocates "muddied the waters," "weren't prepared" or were "very biased." In addition, some participants noted that a couple of the advocates "were very rude." One participant observed that the advocates were not held to the same rules of deliberation as the participants:

> "I understand emotions run high in these things, but we were asked not to show any physical emotion one way or the other. Panel members were definitely not held to that at all because there were several times that they were speaking on behalf of their side, no doubt, but it was loud enough that everybody in the room could hear when the opposite side was talking."

Another participant shared this sentiment: "A lot of the information so it seemed we were getting, even from the panelists, the advocates, when they came in, seemed as if it was based heavily on opinion. Or their interpretation of a fact."

One CIR participant suggested that the advocates provide source information so it would be easier for participants to discern between fact and fiction.

In addition, the deliberation for some was taxing. Three participants felt frustrated when working with other participants: "Things that were simple to me weren't simple to other people, and I couldn't understand sometimes some of their thinking." Other comments alluded to some certain participants being "too emotional" or "not contributing to the process." One participant expanded on his frustration:

> "I had gotten frustrated with some people that, not that I thought they needed to be talked outta their vote, as it were, but just that I thought they should've been a little more open-minded to things they seemed to be closed against considering."

Eight participants thought 3½ days was enough time to deliberate on the initiative and write the Citizens' Statement, but seven thought it was too short. Only two thought it was too long. One participant stated: "It seemed a little bit rushed at the end generating the actual work product. Which, if that was the whole goal, that should've been what we spend a little more time on."

Some participants complained on the last day that they felt rushed. They just did not have enough time to read through the final statement to be assured of accuracy. Future CIR efforts should allocate more time to create the final statements and review.

What did they learn?

Participants were asked to reflect on their own skills prior to and six weeks following the CIR, rating themselves on a 1 to 5 scale (1 for low, 5 for high). They were asked the same question six months later. Figure 3 shows the average scores that participants reported. "Knowledge of citizen initiative processes," "knowledge of pensions and pension reform," and "confidence in your ability to help voters" posted the most significant improvements before and after the CIR. All of these areas are mutually reinforcing.

Participants reported more than a three-point change, on average, in their knowledge of the citizen initiative processes. Knowledge of the subject matter – pensions and pension reform – and confidence in ability to help voters resulted in an average change of more than two points. But perhaps the most interesting finding was what happened over time. Six months later, although there was some decline in average scores, the improvements were sustained in all areas except one. Indeed, "confidence in ability to help voters" fell to an average score of 3.5. This demonstrates that certain skills require practice and reinforcement.

Figure 3. **Average Participant Self-Reported Level of Competence Over Time**
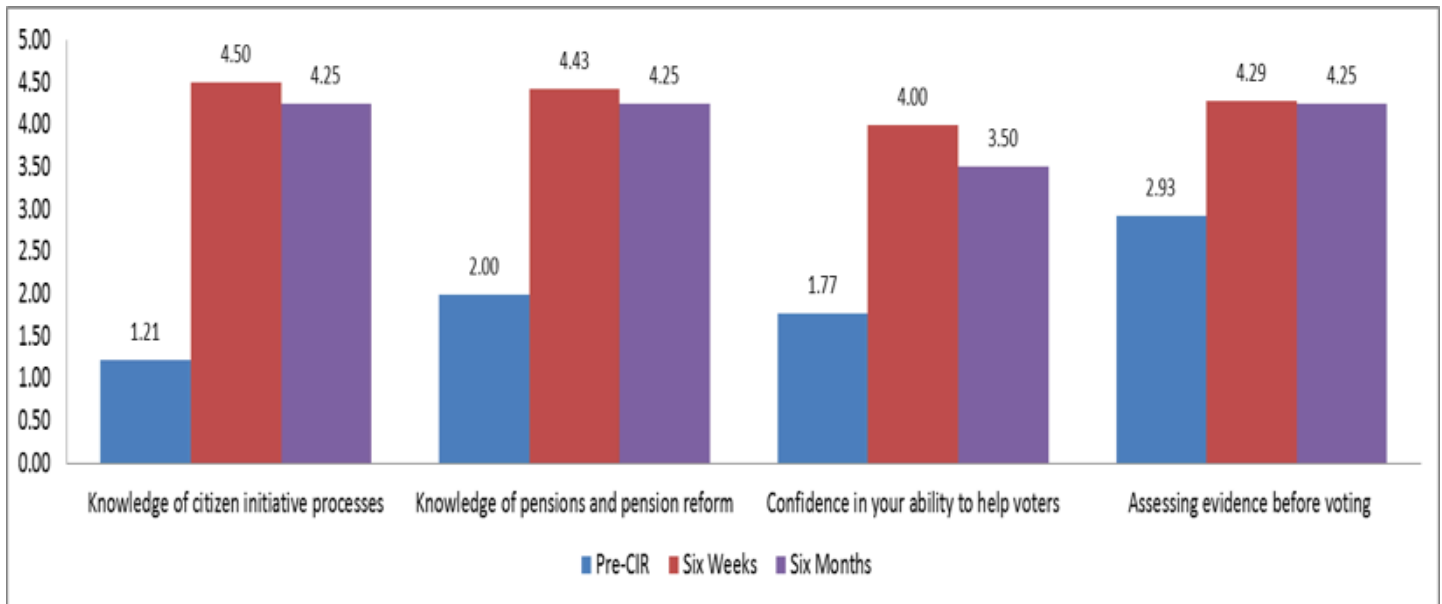
Participants expanded on what they learned from the process and how it increased their confidence in talking to others:

> "Yeah, I think I learned other ways to learn about legislation. Understanding, first of all, better how it worked and how they pass all the way through — how to learn about a piece of legislation itself, some background information up into reading a proposition. Then talking through it. I think that helped me to learn a little bit more about the skills I would need to be able to help inform voters."

> "I'm a lot more confident that I know what I'm talking about. And also I feel that this is stuff that people need to know, not just sort of vote 'no' on all the initiatives either 'cause they didn't know anything about it. People need to realize that they need to know what they're voting for."

Although many of the participants were apathetic toward politics or paid scant attention prior to the citizen ballot initiatives, after the CIR they felt they were better able to understand and meaningfully participate in the voting process. Many commented that before the CIR they simply depended on the ballot language, and if they didn't like the sound of it, they voted no. Now, participants comment that their voter behavior had changed to become better informed about ballot issues. Many realized how important their vote was:

> "After the CIR, I actually felt somewhat embarrassed that my initial attitude (regarding the weekend project) was that I'm going to miss football games this weekend. (Laughing) At the end of it I felt

ashamed that I even thought that way. Now I realize that this is a very important and it affects so many people, and it has for so many years. The decisions we make now will affect us for years to come."

So, while most did not change their opinion regarding the pension issue, they were at least more open to considering other perspectives:

> "Now I will open myself up to look at the other viewpoints, and not just be — not think that my way is the right way. I'm more open now to take out my prejudices and look at the other side of things."

> "It just forced me to look more at the sources where I'm getting information. It made me look in a different way at that — which side of the argument I'm looking at instead of giving the argument. It was easy to look at an argument from the people who have the same perspective as me. Not someone — the other side of it, which this process definitely encouraged me to think about that."

> "I realized listening more to both sides was something that would benefit me, ultimately, in solving any local issues. Or hearing out other things that are going on."

Many also mentioned how it improved their critical-thinking skills. CIR participants took their vote more seriously when they realized there was a way for Phoenix voters to become more informed. One participant stated: "It slowed me down and made me think more about the propositions and what's actually in them." Another mentioned: "It educated me as to sort of what the proposition was and how to look at the proposition and sort of to think about it and read more about it."

In fact, almost all of the participants felt their critical-thinking skills had improved, especially related to voting. Surveys supported the interview findings. The following are the pre- and post-survey outcomes of participants who rated themselves on how often they "critically evaluated information related to political issues."

Figure 4. **Frequency of Critically Evaluating Information Related to Political Issues Before and Six Weeks After CIR (% CIR Participants)**
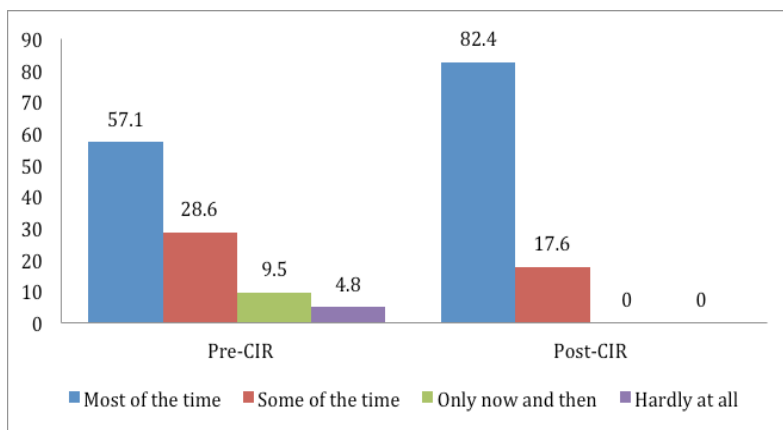
Were they satisfied with the outcome?

Taking a final vote. The Phoenix CIR was different than other CIRs in that it did not take a final vote of the participants on whether they favored or opposed the proposition. This change was intended to move away from the scoreboard of a CIR exercise and instead focus on the substance of the pros and cons of the ballot initiative. CIR participants were asked what they thought about taking or not taking a final vote, and were divided over this question. The six who supported taking a final vote felt that it better captured how participants were leaning based on the information provided: "I think it shows the strength of our pros or cons." Five participants were against taking a final vote, because they

thought that everyday voters, the news media and advocates would only focus on the final vote, resulting in the democratic process of the CIR and the Citizens' Statement getting lost in the hype: "We were not there to vote. We were there to gather information about the proposition … and provide that information to the citizens of the city of Phoenix."

All agreed if the decision were made at an upcoming CIR to take a final vote, there should be a secret ballot to respect each participant's privacy.

The Citizens' Statement. Although there was not a final vote, most were very satisfied (13) or satisfied (5) with the key findings and stated pros and cons. There was only one person dissatisfied with the key findings and opposing statement. One participant commented: "I feel like we weren't all satisfied with it because it was at the end of the day. It was the last thing. Everyone was like, 'I'm just outta here.'"

Dissemination. All wanted to help their fellow citizens understand the ballot measure and to make a difference in the lives of others. Accordingly, most participants educated others about the initiative and the CIR exercise after it was over, but were concerned about the actual reach of the Citizens' Statement. Participants were initially optimistic with the final product and their efforts to educate other citizens, but satisfaction with the Phoenix CIR outcomes waned over time due to their thoughts on its efficacy. The CIR project was discussed in local news media prior to the exercise, and the CIR Citizens' Statement was released to the local newspaper, television stations, online media and included on the Morrison Institute website. But after the CIR event, almost all of the participants (16 out of 17) said there just wasn't enough exposure:

> "We did a lot of hard work, came up with a statement on the proposition, but it wasn't released to the public. It wasn't used properly. I mean, my impression was we're gonna help those voters out there decide on this proposition, and it wasn't put into the voter's guide or anything of that nature."

Another participant felt that the process itself held little merit among political elites:

> "I think when I started the first couple days at the CIR, I was beginning to think maybe it would be an avenue for more dialogue. Then, I saw in some ways it kinda fell apart at some levels. I got a little more skeptical, I guess, about what prospect there is, really, to influence people outside of, like I say, those I already think I have some influence over. … I went to a Republican precinct committee meeting a few weeks after, and one of the city council members was one of the scheduled speakers. As he was leaving early, I stepped out just to have a quick word with him, and I told him I had been part of the (CIR) process. Our conversation was very brief. He wasn't that interested, really."

Regardless of participants' disappointment with overall media exposure, all of them still valued the process and saw its potential over time to "earn a reputation for being an impartial process" so that the information could be more widely used. Participants suggested including it in the voter guide in the future. They believed that greater distribution of the statement is key to its success:

> "If the CIR could engage more people and the findings could be seen by more people, I think it has the potential to give a lot of insight to the citizens to make an informed vote. In addition, people would have to be aware of how the process works when they read the findings for that to be true."

A participant also suggested that the CIR be covered by news media throughout the process so that citizens could be educated like the participants.

What did they tell the media and their friends?

Newspaper reporters from The Arizona Republic and Cronkite News Service interviewed five participants immediately after the CIR, and they all focused on the benefits of the process itself and the ability to come to a consensus in these interviews:

> "Coming in I kind of joked that I was excited to engage in 'the democratic process,' but as we actually did it, that's exactly what we did in every way possible. … The way we spoke to each other and the way that the (CIR) process was structured it really felt that we were engaging with the democratic process in a way that I think in an ideal world the democratic process would occur."

> "We did not come to a conclusion of agreeing to disagree. We agreed to meet somewhere … and agree on an outcome. It'd be nice if politicians could do the same thing."

> "Our goal as analysts, was (to determine) what information was reliable, and should be put out there for the public to be able to make an informed decision. Good or bad, against or for, it didn't matter as much to us as putting out good, quality information."

> "It restored my faith in the democratic system and the voice that citizens can have. I think this is an effective process and a good means of having citizens come together and get information out there that is more neutral to help citizens in the process."

Most of the participants said they were proud of being involved in the CIR and despite the relatively short time talking about pensions (3½ days), they told their friends, families and colleagues how interesting the CIR exercise was, and how much they enjoyed it. A few discussed with their friends, family, and colleagues how initiatives are placed on the ballot, and others discussed the CIR experience and the measure itself. They all shared the overall benefits of the CIR with one of the participants telling others: "I think the CIR process did a pretty good job of at least getting rid of most of the confusion on the issue with the participants" and "we really got to delve into the information and take it apart and discuss it and really come up with some ideas for both sides."

Many participants shared the following sentiment with their respective audiences: "It's best to do your research. You weren't just based on emotion, you can base it on facts."

But six months later, the lessons they learned about deliberation and allowing individuals to assess the facts on their own before making a decision did not reflect the same enthusiasm, commitment or openness.

Half the participants shared with their family and friends how they would vote on the measure and why: "I basically told them what the panel discovered when we come up with stuff, based on what we found to be credible or not." Here are some participant comments relating to the measure itself:

"I sort of talked about the initiative for the sake of (it). I felt, yeah, maybe changes need to be made, but that initiative wasn't the one for it."

"I just told people, 'You know what? Don't get me started.' … The soldiers do not need help to feed their families. If they make the wrong choices with their money, with their salary, hey, so be it. We don't have to pick up the tab. The same thing with the fire departments … I expect more integrity, and that's basically what I nicely and sugar-coated told to people."

"Well, in particular, like I said before, the dark money. I was really surprised about that. That brought a lot to — light to me and I mentioned that a lot."

"There's no reforming it. It's a good thing. It's a bad thing. You've already established a pattern of having — you can reform it a little bit, but it's going to be very slow because otherwise you're not going to have people that want to take those jobs because there's not really the pensions there once were."

In sum, the expectation that participants could be educators of the deliberative process, over time, by using a balanced approach was realized to some degree, but responses were mixed. Half of the participants gave their opinion on how they were voting, and supported their opinion using the claims they prioritized from the Citizens' Statements, while the other half spoke only about the process itself. Although very few reported that these conversations resulted in people changing the way they thought or believed, the CIR process was viewed as an overall positive by their respective audiences. In effect, this particular CIR did not necessarily change – on a larger scale, at least – public discourse through these citizens' conversations, but local news media did help to highlight its benefits.

What did they say six months after the CIR?

Enthusiasm with anything can dissipate over time, so we wanted to know what participants thought they would say about the CIR as more time passed. Six months after the CIR, researchers asked participants if their friends were invited to be in a CIR two years down the road, what would they tell them? Despite some of the criticisms pertaining to the CIR, there was unanimous agreement that they would recommend their friends participate in the exercise. Most shared they would recommend friends' participation because it offered them a chance to be engaged in a meaningful way with a diverse population that is currently missing from the political process:

"Because it's a way to become part of a process that I think to a certain extent has disenfranchised voters, even if you are a registered voter. You — there is a feeling, a sense of disenchantment and disenfranchisement that, yes, you have this right to vote, but it just doesn't seem like it means as much as it used to. I think this is a way for us to feel like we're a part of the process again. I think as it expands then it will actually have more of an influence on what's going on."

"I would tell them if they have the time to do it, a hundred percent, do it. You feel like you're con- tributing to making things better."

> "People may not be educated enough to speak on one side or the other. This gives us the opportunity to be educated and then to speak for one side or the other based on the full education of the whole process and of the whole bill itself."

> "It opened up my eyes to processes and everything. I met a lot of good people and it was interesting. The last day of that was one of the neatest things I'd ever done in my life, really."

In essence, almost all participants saw this process as transformative. This feeling towards the process itself had not changed over time. They had never before participated in an experience like CIR, and they believed everyone should have the opportunity to do so, partly as a result of how much they learned.

Would they support a statewide CIR in two years?

Phoenix CIR participants were unanimously in support of the CIR going statewide. One participant explained: "I think a statewide one is very much needed. I think personally, that's where our issues in Arizona most come up that really affect our state."

Some mentioned the unique opportunity for all citizens to play a part in the political process:

> "It gives a chance to your regular, average person, whether you're employed, unemployed, whatever your status is, regardless of anything else, the chance to get a closer look to what really is going on in our community and on the decisions of where to take for the benefit of our community."

Participants also relayed the importance of informing the voters, in light of the current partisan process. One participant shared what he learned about the political process from his participation with the CIR and listening to the advocates:

> "I realized that there's always, on pro or anti, the people who are for or against the propositional or an idea, it seems like they have their own motives. Instead of telling you the truth, they tend to tell you 50 percent of the truth. They don't tell you the whole story, that there is always alternatives to what they are suggesting. … The common voter will not — does not – recognize that, I think."

Overall, the CIR process had a significant short-term impact on participants' knowledge base and their political engagement. They were excited by a new space where they felt they could potentially benefit and educate other voters, and recommend others be involved if they have the opportunity. Medium-term effects (after 6 months) show significant benefits to critical thinking and voting decision-making, but it did not necessarily lead to other citizens learning the same way through their conversations. Furthermore, participants' confidence in helping voters waned over time.

AFTER THE CIR: ASSESSING PARTICIPANTS' BELIEFS AND ACTIONS

The CIR may have impacted the participants' thought processes, but did it lead to change as a result? For example, did the process of hearing both sides change their minds about how they were going to vote, or did it at least allow them to see the issue differently? Did their enthusiasm with the process itself translate to other societal benefits, such as public action and community engagement?

Did they change their mind, and if not, did they at least learn more?

With the entrenched polarization of politics, many voters wind up voting according to political party affiliation or with biased and incomplete information from campaigns. CIR participants may think they are "open" to change as a result of the process, but find that it is actually quite difficult to accept new ideas. The question arises: Could the deliberative process of the CIR that is driven by facts change people's minds on how they were going to vote, regardless of their political ideology? Out of 12 participants interviewed, eight said the process affirmed their position, one said he/she changed his/her mind, and three out of the 12 said they held no opinion before the CIR, so the information provided helped inform their vote.

For the majority who already took a position, they prioritized the CIR information drawing from the side they supported and used the information to further support their views.

> "I came in sorta of a (with) view on the proposition, and I had to hold myself back a lot of times, but it helped me reinforce my idea 'cause I was against it. I'm against it. What really turned me even more was when we had the politicians come in and give their presentation, and I'm sayin', 'Whoa, now I really know why I'm against it.' I didn't even know about the dark money was bootin' the bill, and that disturbed me."

> "Usually it gets very heated and people may not be educated enough to speak on one side or the other. This gives us the opportunity to be educated and then to speak for one side or the other based on the full education of the whole process and of the whole bill itself."

For the one person who changed his mind, he stated:

> "I mean, I'm of the opinion that the pension needs to be reformed, but after going through the process on this particular thing, I think they were trying to go about it the wrong way. It has the potential to break the bank of the government."

While most did not change their minds, it did allow them to assess information from the other side:

> "I flip-flopped a lot because I thought, 'Well, they presented the evidence on both sides. Maybe we shouldn't do this. Maybe we should.' Eventually I ended up voting the way I had originally had anticipated I was going to vote, but I did flip-flop a lot because of the information given. It was really good."

While one participant felt himself perhaps changing his mind, he ultimately did not:

> "I was supportive of the proposition throughout all my process of getting more information on it. I continued to read about it after we finished out (the) weekend. Obviously it was helpful in getting the opinions of people who were opposed to it and understanding more fully why they were opposed to it, some of the weaknesses of the proposition itself. … Yeah, through the process of hearing the testimony of the people that came in a couple days to answer questions, I saw that, yeah, there might have been a better solution to the financial situation with the city and how to

protect the interests of the public employees, and yet not put the city in such a financial hardship for the future."

In fact, some better appreciated both sides of the debate, which helped them build trust towards fellow citizens and motivated them to work together – that collaboration is indeed possible. But, ultimately, one-third of those participants interviewed made voting decisions based on the results of the CIR while two-thirds maintained their previous position.

The Citizens' Statement is indeed useful for all voters. It separates fact from rhetoric, as well as offering pros and cons without advocating a particular position. But for many voters who already know how they are going to vote, the Citizens' Statement only reinforced their views as they drew from evidence supporting their position and values. For those who held a weak position or no position at all, the Citizens' Statement is clearly valuable in providing important information necessary for them to make an educated decision.

Were they able to see things differently?

Several characteristics were examined to determine if participants see things differently as a result of their participation with CIR. Much was positive. But there were some unintended negative outcomes as well, due to raised awareness. When participants were asked to rate themselves from 1-5 with 5 being high, they showed some improvements in listening skills, self-awareness, and the ability to work in teams (Figure 3). A particularly noteworthy change was their trust in democratic processes. They continued to believe and had hope that the CIR could precipitate positive changes in current political processes.

Figure 5. **Pre-CIR and Six Months Later**
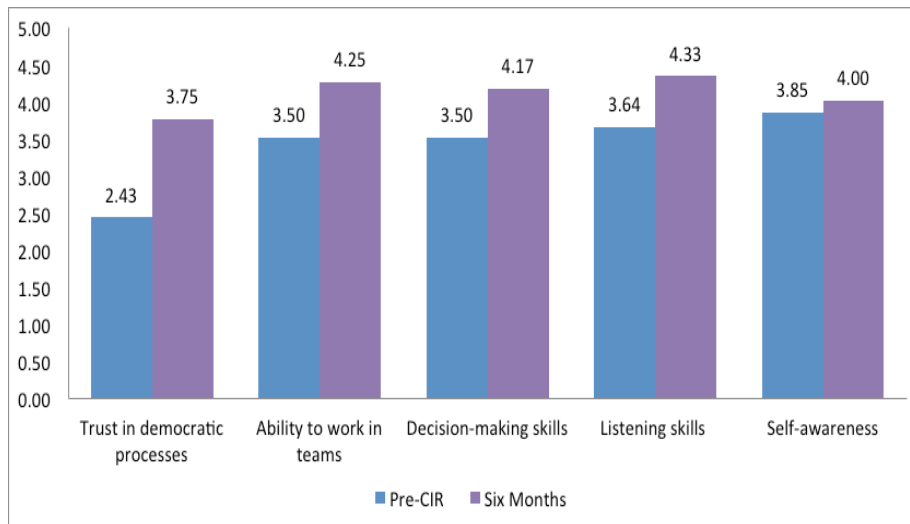
Listening respectfully. The CIR exercise itself was a course in deliberative decision-making. The moderaors respectfully intervened if participants interrupted each other, educating participants on how to remain open to others' views and have a respectful discussion. One participant stated: "It taught me how to behave in a way that shows people I value their opinion, rather than just knowing that I do."

Participants were able to listen to each other more respectfully after participating in the CIR. Many said they had thought they practiced good listening skills until they were engaged in a facilitated discussion:

> "I had assumed I would rank myself higher. If you had asked me these questions going in I probably would have not given myself a particularly low grade. From this perspective going back I would say that to be a little more frank I probably only rated about a 1 when I started the process and hopefully I have learned something from it and would give myself a 3 now."

In fact, participants were asked to rate themselves before the CIR and after the CIR. It was no surprise that their scores for themselves were lower after the process based on what they learned about themselves. A participant reflected the sentiments shared among many regarding how this learning took place:

> "I think there were a couple of times where the mediator just called me out and told me I wasn't listening, when I — I thought I had heard someone out and maybe I had cut them off before I even got to that point. Before they'd even made their point. Just having them call me — and it wasn't offensive in any way. It was just — they said, 'You didn't listen to what they had to say.' It just made me self-reflect during that process. I think that was something that was really an important learning tool for me there."

> "I think as the program went on, I got better at knowing that other people had valuable things to say, and to just try to shut up. It's made me self-reflective. I catch myself doing it now. If I cut some one off, I almost realize it instantly. I apologize and then I listen to them fully before I take my turn to talk. Sometimes it changes what I'm gonna say."

Many stated that they were able to recognize the value of the other person by going through the CIR process:

> "This process made me step back and say, 'Hey, don't take this as a party discussion. Take this as a discussion between real people. Take it as something where you need to hear all of that in order to be able to make an informed decision. The other side is just as important as what I think.' Being open to and listening to that is — it's really important to shaping my opinion. … This process really, really opened my eyes to that."

Decision-making. In addition, CIR participants learned how to research initiatives on their own. After leaving the CIR, an overwhelming majority researched more about the initiative to ensure they were casting their vote in the way they intended. Many stated they would continue that practice on future ballots and tell their fellow voters to do the same. Thus, the process motivated participants to become more educated on the issues:

> "If there's something that I'm not clear about before going to the ballots, I'm gonna try to go to City Hall or someplace where I can get more accurate information on what's really going on."

> "I felt like I needed to look more closely at the issues and the candidates this past election. I guess I felt a little inspired to look more closely than I normally would have."

One participant suggested a potential barrier that impacted her behavior regarding last year's election. She said: "Honestly, I would've liked to have looked up more information. It was just more a time constraint." Thus, it is unclear whether this behavior held in the most recent elections this year. Future research should explore if this self-education persists.

Trust in Democratic Processes. CIR participants learned a significant amount about the political process – so much so that it left some more disenchanted after CIR than before. Twenty-one participants rated the

following statements in Figure 4 before the CIR, and 17 rated the same statements six weeks following the CIR. Across all areas there was a decline in positive feelings towards government and individuals' abilities to contribute.

Figure 6. **How Do You Feel About Government? (% of CIR Participants Agree)**
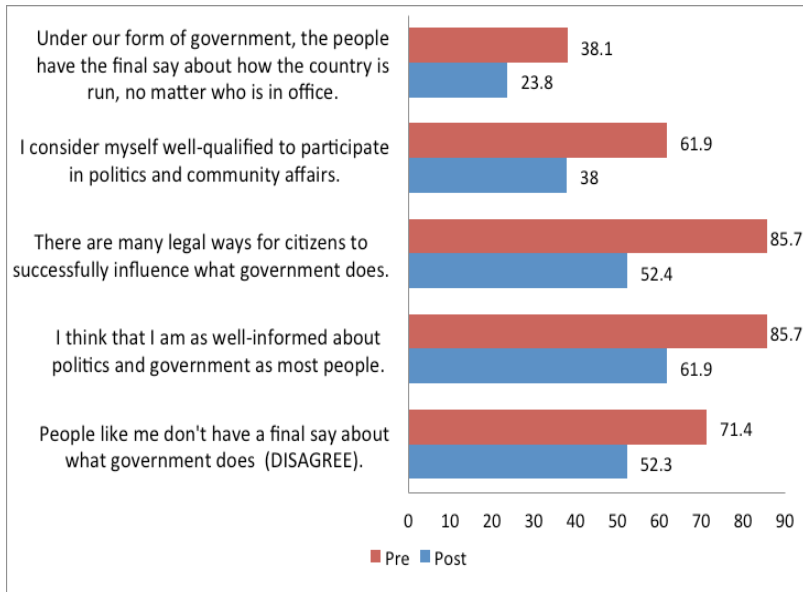
Paradoxically, when participants were interviewed about their feelings on government and current political processes, most reported more positive feelings about the CIR and its potential to be a catalyst for change. Unlike the pre- and post-surveys, the interviews offered the luxury of hindsight. Like the previous listening question, CIR participants were unaware when they took the pre-survey what they didn't know about government processes.

Interview data revealed that participants were awakened to the bias within the current political process they were not aware of before the CIR:

> "Yes, and I think in a negative way maybe, cuz now that I see that people will do anything to get what they want. That's not good."

> "I'm definitely more cognizant of what types of arguments they're using, like: Is that a fact or is that an opinion? Is that a fear tactic or an emotional, provoking tactic? Yeah, I'm a lot more, I guess, analytical and critical about political campaigns like commercials and things like that, media, and all that kind of stuff."

> "You got to look at it deeper than what they're telling you. I realize that a lot more since I was involved in that just 'cuz somebody's telling you that doesn't necessarily mean that something's true. It's their opinion. There's a lot of false information that gets thrown at people in TV ads and every thing, I think. Even the news programs and stuff don't get people full view of anything. Most of them go from one side or the other where they talk about the issue."

But while participants took a more negative view of current government processes based on what they learned in the CIR process, they also were more hopeful that activities like CIR could improve the political system:

> "I think it showed me that people can make a difference. We can get involved, anyway. I don't know if we can make a difference but we can get involved and try to make a difference, anyway."

"I think participating in the CIR gave me the feeling that hey, what I think does matter. I can make my vote count and I can make my voice count by participating in this process."

"I have more hope in the political process, if CIRs are — become part of the system. In that respect, yes, I see things differently than I had prior to participating in the CIR."

"It gave me that ray of hope that maybe participating in stuff like this, maybe going —you don't have to get paid, but maybe going to forums, stuff like that, then you really know what's going on. Maybe you can do something to change the things."

Their Fellow Voters. Not only did CIR participants have higher hopes about the CIR process itself, they viewed their fellow citizens differently. It gave everyone the opportunity to have their voices heard. As one participant stated: "It's something that makes you feel better because you know it's real people. It's not just politicians, lawmakers. No, it's everybody involved."

As a result, their preconceived ideas about their fellow voters were challenged. CIR participants realized that people did care and when given the opportunity, they would step up:

"I also had the impression that because people didn't think their voice counted, that maybe they were not educated on the issues. Sitting around with that group of random sampling of Phoenix people, it was cool just to see how many people were really well informed and how much they did care. That really changed my perspective on that."

"I thought that we lived in a pretty apathetic area of the country, and it always frustrated me that I thought that my neighbors and things didn't care as much about the issues. What the CIR process showed me is that there's really a variety of people out there that really care, that are willing to take the time to really look at an issue and make decisions."

Because of the polarization of politics, many were unsure if they would truly be able to work together. They were excited and proud to be part of a process that is rarely offered or accessible. Participants learned how to communicate with each other in a constructive way with the majority gaining respect for each other's views in the process. Some said it made them more tolerant of others' views:

"I think we all worked together better than I thought we would have, probably. For having that many people from different political places and different walks of life and everything, I think we all did what we had to do and we did it well."

"It was a cross section of the population. Everybody had different ideas, but we were all — you know, eventually we were all able to come together and put something down on paper sort of thing. It was, yes, everybody can work together. Regardless of wealth, education, ethnicity or age, the CIR process showed everyday voters how they could be involved in the political decision-making process and that their input mattered."

One participant was doubtful about what could be accomplished based on previous experience:

> "(Previously) I was always able to walk away and call them an idiot basically. [Laughing] On this one you were not allowed to walk away. We had to come to a conclusion, even if we did not agree with each other. This forced us to work together."

Figure 5 shows that seven out of 16 participants trusted others more than they had previously, and 12 out of 16 realized that typical groups of people are able to have intelligent and product group discussions about political issues.

Figure 7. **How CIR Participants Viewed Other People and/ or Groups**
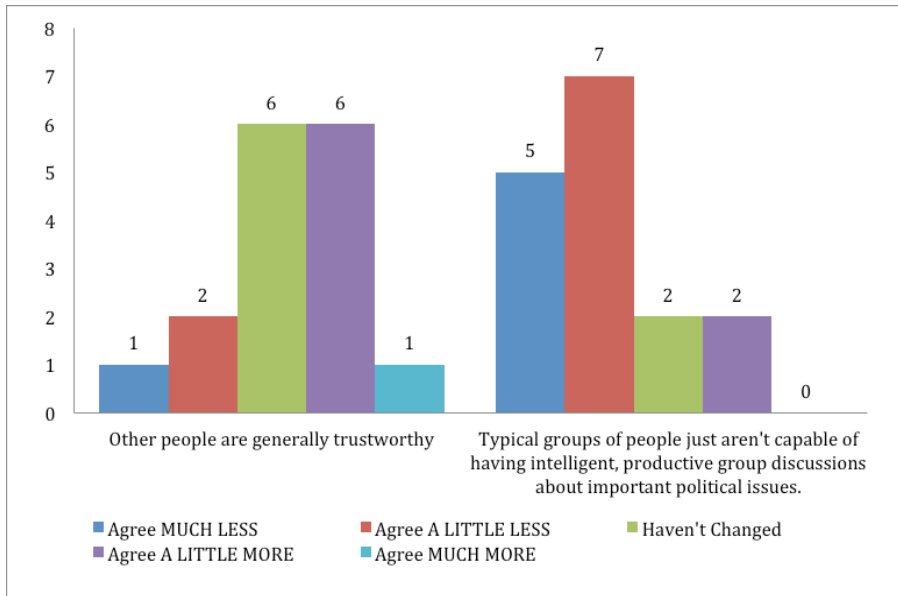
CIR participants realized that fellow voters are simply ill informed due to the present political process – not apathy. But when given an opportunity, this apathy can be eliminated.

In addition, this change in paradigm from "debate" to "deliberation" among a diverse group of citizens created the space needed for these participants to engage in deliberative decision-making free from unequal power, partisan politics and the rhetoric of interest groups. In this context, participants regained faith in their fellow voters. As a result, participants built skills and knowledge that led to value changes that embraced the ideas of deliberative talk, community engagement and public action that lasted even six months after the CIR.

DOES A TRANSFORMATION IN VALUES LEAD TO ACTION?

Has participant involvement in the CIR created a ripple effect for the greater good? Is there a renewed commitment to public action and local involvement?

CIR participants felt they learned the key to democracy through this exercise, and it sparked some of them into community action. In the interim report, participants were seeking spaces to become engaged. One stated he looked at joining his local political party. Another was going to attend city council meetings, and others stated that they would continue educating others about the CIR and how to vote critically.

Now, six months after the CIR event, the question is whether this enthusiasm sustained? Were they able to find the spaces they were looking for and continue promoting democratic behavior?

Does it create a WLLINGNESS to engage in other, or local, opportunities for deliberation?

Using a scale from 1 to 5 (with 5 being highest), participants were asked to rate their "interest in local issues and state problems" but by comparing how they felt before the CIR to now – six months later. Six of the 12 participants had slightly more interest in local issues or state problems than previously – with the average score rising from 3.25 to 4.17. When asked what this meant to them, a participant shared that he had "a better sense that we as citizens can make effort towards impacting the process, if we're willing to put the energy and time and effort into it." Another participant who had never involved himself in politics felt he could now do so after participating in CIR: "It did get me involved, thinking I could be involved in stuff."

The CIR also taught participants how they could be involved in the political process in a way that was meaningful to them:

> "Like I say, being — knowing you can make a difference. Maybe it's just a small difference but you can be involved. I thought we were just normal people; we're there but we don't have much to do with it. Looks like we do."

> "It was a big part of even getting involved in it. … I've never been into politics or anything that much, so it was nice. It was a change. It's nice when you think you're doing some good for the community."

This positive feeling of helping others motivated a few of them to want to be more involved:

> "I would like to get involved in more stuff now. That was kind of always a goal of mine as my kids got older. I think the CIR kinda pushed me a little more where I'll seek out more opportunities."

> "I'm more interested than before. Before it was probably just stuff that affected me personally. The way I look at stuff. … Yeah, I'd like to get involved in stuff if I had time and I had any — if I could benefit something in a way — yeah."

Does it spark a sense of responsibility for – and a commitment to – public action?

Six weeks following the CIR, participants were asked to rate themselves regarding their frequency of engagement in particular activities. These listed activities included:

- Attended a public forum
- Contacting an elected official
- Discussed local community affairs with other members of your community
- Attended a meeting for a political or charitable organization
- Organized a local forum or meeting to discuss community affairs.
- Talked to people to learn more about a political issue or candidate

"Discussing local community affairs" and "attending a meeting for a political or charitable organization" both

showed slight upticks after the CIR (Figure 6). However, there were no changes in frequency of the other activities. Meaningful one-on-one engagement proved to be important to these participants and it carried over for some of them in their community life.

Figure 8. **Pre-CIR and post-CIR Community/Political/Charitable Engagement**
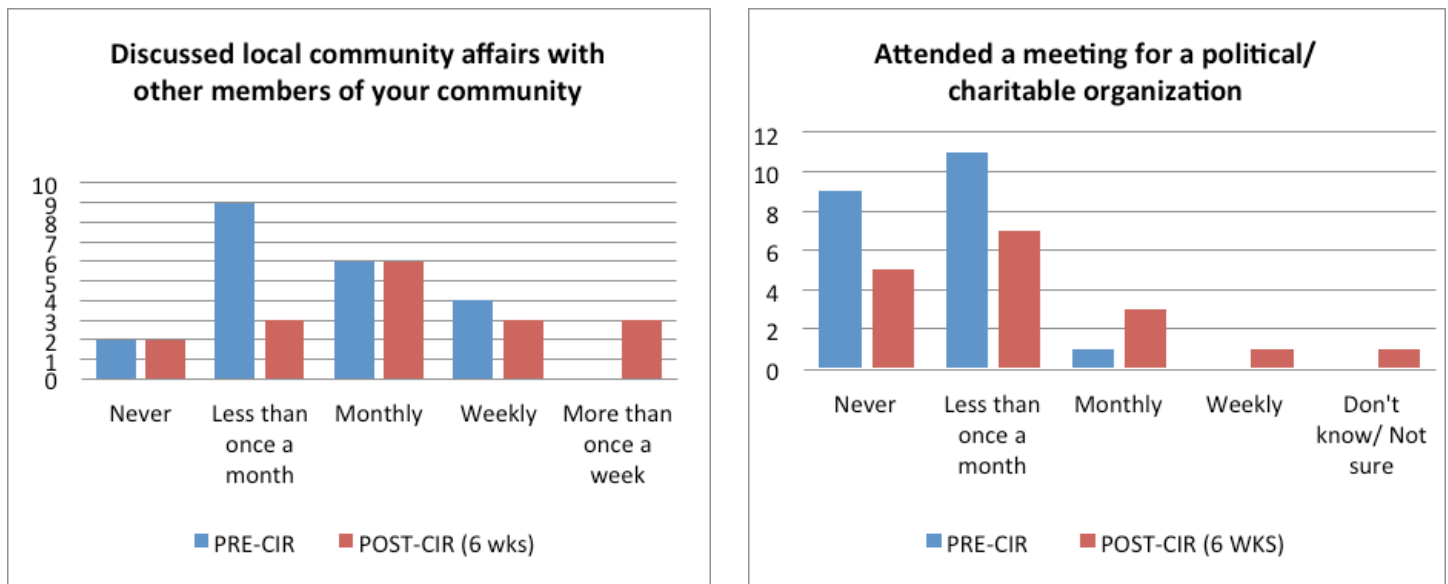
One participant shared her experiences at a community meeting:

> "I've gone to some of our community meetings for our neighborhood in the City of Phoenix. … Right now, our neighborhood is very frustrated [laughter]. I'm not. I think it's kinda cool, but our neighborhood's very frustrated with the air traffic. I just went as a viewer to observe and listen.

Participants were still looking for ways to engage six months later, but the issue of "time" became a barrier for many. One participant said:

> "I mean, I still don't know that I can do much as a person, as a [laughter] single, solitary person. To change things. Which is kinda sad, but true. I think that there are things you could do if you were really, really inspired and had the time to devote to a cause. I think you need both things, though. … I still have to put food on the table for the family, you know what I mean? You might wish you had the time, but you just don't."

In addition, a few participants commented on the lack of public space or forum for genuine deliberation like the CIR:

> "I have been living in the United States for the longest time, but this is the first time that I got the chance to look at data, to look up numbers, to hear both sides. Even though it was not a state-level (initiative) or national elections, that — it was something really important."

"You go away with this great sense of, 'Hey, I can make a difference.' Then — and then you don't know where to go. … It felt like it would be easy to just go back into the old way of thinking … so there needs to be some sort of a support (follow-up). Something there to catch you and go, 'OK, yeah. I can still make a difference' and still make you feel like you can make a difference."

Thus, while some were motivated to do more, the majority did not engage in their communities more or change their behaviors. Time and a lack of space or venue that offered meaningful engagement prevented the CIR transformative experience from translating into public action. However, it did change them in other ways.

Who ends up transformed, and why?

The effects on participants lasted well beyond the CIR event. Six months later they reported that their critical-thinking abilities and their ability to assess both sides before voting were still improved. They had more positive feelings about their fellow citizens and realized that even in a polarized environment, if they were driven towards a common goal and followed the rules of respectful deliberation, they would be able to come to a consensus. It also gave everyone hope in democracy again. One participant stated: "I think if there are more opportunities like this, I definitely see the role of the general citizen opening up."

There were some interesting patterns in the data that emerged based on demographics, but because the sample is so small, they are not generalizable and merit more investigation. Of the 17 total participants interviewed six weeks and six months following the CIR, nine were minority. Participants were asked to rate themselves across the following measures six weeks after the CIR and again six months after the CIR on how skilled they were in these areas before and after the CIR:

- Knowledge of citizen initiatives processes
- Knowledge of pensions and pension reform
- Knowledge of municipal politics
- Confidence in your ability to help voters
- Trust in democratic processes
- Decision-making skills
- Listening skills
- Assessing evidence before voting
- Public speaking
- Conflict resolution
- Self-awareness
- Interest in local issues or state problems
- Ability to work in teams

Of the participants who had the largest cumulative self-reported point changes across all measures, the top five were Latinos or African Americans. The average point change for such groups as a whole was 16. Meanwhile, Caucasians only reported an average point change of nine – half as much as the minority groups.

[1] Gimpel, James G., Lay, Celeste J. and Schuknecht, Jason E. (2003) Cultivating Democracy: Civic Engagements and Political Socialization in America. Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press.

Previous research may provide an explanation for this occurrence. Gimpel, Lay, & Schuknecht, (2003) found that political efficacy is lower and political disconnection is higher in Latino and African-American households when compared to White and Asian households.[2] Stemming from decades of institutional discrimination, the researchers conclude that some within these groups view the system as closed and unchangeable, and thus political efficacy is not prioritized. However, more data need to be collected across all of the CIRs to determine if this is an anomaly or a pattern.

If the experience is truly more transformative for politically disenfranchised groups, then if replicated in other areas of community life, the CIR process has the potential to empower a group of people that has historically never felt part of the political process. CIR impacts on minority populations may be something that deserves special attention moving forward.

CONCLUSION

Over 40 percent of the population does not vote. Many are apathetic, overwhelmingly do not trust government and do not believe that political leaders represent their interests. This final report describes how the CIR process has transformed many of its participants by including them in a democratic deliberation, minimizing the influence of political party affiliation, power, wealth, and group status. It effectively highlights for these participants that deliberative decision-making is indeed possible, and exemplifies how it can be achieved through every day behaviors and actions.

As some participants observed: "This is how our government should be run." However, at the same time, the participants acknowledged that there are very few spaces that encourage these types of meaningful deliberations.

The CIR experience has several interesting implications. One of the goals of the CIR was for individuals to become better informed on pension operations – from which it appears all benefitted. Through this process, individuals significantly improved their decision-making capacity. Further, facts and figures to better inform individual voters create a more politically savvy voting body. And while participants did not necessarily change their initial opinions and thoughts even when exposed to viewpoints different from their own, these individuals became more "open" to dialogue and consideration of candidates from opposing political affiliations.

The perception of others changed, as individuals began to see other people beyond their political stripes and ideologies. In fact, the CIR process encouraged participants to engage in self-reflection. It caused individuals to pause and "step back" and re-think what they thought they knew about people who affiliated with an opposing political party.

CIR participants learned through the process constructive ways of working with people with opposing views. Without mutual respect for one's fellow citizen, progress could not be realized in this process. In closing, the CIR gave participants some faith in the democratic process again with the hope that CIR could catalyze a change, but there needs to be more for this transformation in beliefs to translate into public action.

For citizens to become more involved in their communities, they need to have access to spaces that engage participants in deliberation like the CIR where they know they can have a direct impact and help others.

With these opened up spaces, the CIR can begin to transform, not only initiative processes, but also local communities, so that everyone's voice can be heard.

"This is the way things should be done on all issues, not just one proposition, but this is how our government should be run." – CIR Participant

Phoenix Proposition 487 was defeated on Nov. 4, 2014, with 58 percent of voters casting a "no" ballot and 42 percent casting a "yes" ballot. A total of 263,349 ballots were cast. *(Maricopa County Elections)*

APPENDIX A: Citizens' Statement

Key Findings / Pros & Cons (Sept. 21, 2014)

Key Findings

• In 2013 Phoenix voters passed pension reform backed by both the firefighters and the business community. The measure raised employee contributions to their retirement accounts and required employees to work longer before getting a pension. Additionally, contract negotiations addressed many of the pension spiking concerns.

• Adopting a defined contribution plan for new city employees offers more control to the employee over their retirement plan. Under Proposition 487, the city will deposit an amount less than or equal to 8% of an employee's salary, and the employee will have the option, but will not be required to contribute. This allows the city more predictability in budgeting.

• Transitioning employees into a 401K style defined contribution system can make city budgeting more predictable, which may help the City of Phoenix encourage business and job growth.

• Both sides expect legal challenges due to the unclear language of Proposition 487, which may delay the implementation of the Proposition and incur legal costs to the City of Phoenix.

• Police and firefighters are covered under a state retirement program. They do not receive social security and are not intended to be affected by Proposition 487. However, as written, Proposition 487's impact on police and firefighters is unclear, and may contribute to unintended financial and legal consequences for employees, the city, and taxpayers.

• The City of Phoenix Employee Retirement System (COPERS) board retained legal counsel to review Proposition 487. Based on that analysis, they determined that only one section would not likely be challenged legally. According to that review, Proposition 487 will cost the taxpayers $350 million.

• When the City Council requested a full review of the entire proposition, actuaries found it would save taxpayers up to $500 million.

• According to city statistics, the average pension of a civilian City of Phoenix retiree retiring under City of Phoenix Employee Retirement System (COPERS) is less than $30,000 per year.

• In 2013, the City of Phoenix pension system was funded at 64% due to factors related to the economy. According to the deputy city manager, the City of Phoenix has been contributing 100 % of the actuary-recommended amount to the fund. If the fund remains at 64%, this could lead to cuts to city services and increased tax liability.

• Proposition 487 should end the practice of pension spiking, which is adding non-base compensation to the pension calculation. This results in significant savings to the city and taxpayers. The city's own actuarial analysis shows that by limiting pensionable pay to the employee's base salary may save taxpayers $385 million over the first 20 years.

These findings were agreed to by a supermajority of the citizen panel.

Citizen Statement in Opposition to the Measure

• Police and firefighters are covered under a state retirement program. They do not receive Social Security and are not intended to be affected by Proposition 487. However, as written, Proposition 487's impact on police and firefighters is unclear, and may contribute to unintended financial and legal consequences for employees, the city, and taxpayers.

• Both sides expect legal challenges due to the unclear language of Proposition 487, which may delay implementation of the proposition and incur legal costs to the City of Phoenix.

• In 2013 Phoenix voters passed pension reform backed by both firefighters and the business community. The measure raised new city employee contributions to their retirement accounts and required employees to work longer before being eligible for a pension. Additionally, contract negotiations addressed many of the pension spiking concerns.

• Retirement benefits for City of Phoenix workers do not make the majority of employees any more than middle class. According to city statistics, the average pension of a civilian City of Phoenix retiree retiring under City of Phoenix Employee Retirement System) (COPERS) is less than $30,000 per year.

• Proposition 487 has been written and funded by the Arizona Free Enterprise Club, which does not share the source of its financial support.

These statements were agreed to by a supermajority of the citizen panel.

Citizen Statement in Support to the Measure

• Proposition 487 better aligns retirement benefits that new city employees will receive with what is typical in the private sector without diminishing what current employees and retirees receive.

• A ballot measure approved by the voters in March 2013 made changes to the current pension system. Proposition 487 gives the voters a chance to make additional reform while continuing to honor previous commitments to current employees and retirees.

• In 2013, the City of Phoenix pension system was funded at 64% which has contributed to an increase to taxpayer liability. Continuing to fund at this rate could lead to cuts to city services and increased taxes and fees.

• Adopting a 401K style defined contribution plan for new city employees offers more control to the employee over their retirement planning.

• Proposition 487 should end the practice of pension spiking, which is adding non-base compensation to the pension calculation. Ending pension spiking will result in significant savings to the city and taxpayers. The city's own actuarial analysis shows that limiting pensionable pay to the employee's base salary may save taxpayers $385 million over the first 20 years.

These statements were agreed to by a supermajority of the citizen panel.

APPENDIX B: Methodology

This report draws upon observation data of the CIR, participant survey data from before the CIR and six weeks after the CIR, participant interview data from six weeks after the CIR and six months following the CIR to determine short and long term impacts to their knowledge base, values, and actions that could contribute to the greater good after the CIR is over.

Although this study is primarily a qualitative study, relying on CIR participant interviews and field observations of the CIR process, quantitative data obtained through participant surveys was also used to triangulate and ensure the trustworthiness of this study's findings. Following is additional information about each method employed.

CIR Participant Interviews

Interviews comprised the majority of the data for this study. Participant interviews were conducted six weeks after the CIR and six months after the CIR to obtain more in-depth information on how the CIR may have affected the individual and what they thought about the process – both strengths and weaknesses – over time. Since Colorado State University was conducting an on-line survey six weeks later as well, the team from both universities coordinated efforts to recruit participants. Participants were paid $25 for a 30 minute interview. The first phase of the interview process conducted six weeks after the CIR attracted 14 participants. The second phase six months after the CIR attracted twelve participants for a total of 17 of the CIR participants (nine participated in both interviews) having been interviewed. The questions were asked in semi-structure interview format, and all sessions were recorded, and later transcribed. The interviews were conducted wherever the person was comfortable – either by phone or in person at a public location. Research staff as well as graduate students assisted in interviewing the participants. The interview protocol for both interviews follows:

Interview Protocol - 6 weeks after CIR

- Was the CIR a worthwhile effort? Would you support a statewide CIR in two years, meaning a CIR that is devoted to a statewide initiative? Why or why not?

- Are you satisfied with both the process and the outcome of the CIR? Why or why not?

- Do you see things differently than when before you came to the CIR? Why or why not?

- What are your previous experiences working with others that have different viewpoints than you?

- Has this process shaped how you view others with different views (for example, different political parties) than you? If so, how? What about the process changed your perception of others?

- Do you view your role in political processes in a different way now? If so, how?

- Did you research more about this initiative after you left the CIR? Why or why not?

- Are you involved in any community organizations or political groups? If so, which ones? How long have you been involved?

- Are there any changes in how you view your own civic involvement, such as joining clubs or organizations, due to CIR? What are they?

- Do you look at electoral campaign ads differently since CIR? Why or why not?

- On a scale of 1-5 (1 is low, 5 is high) please rate yourself before and after the CIR in the following areas. If there is a change, please explain.
  Before: _____   After: _____

  1. knowledge of citizen initiatives processes

  2. knowledge of pensions and pension reform

  3. knowledge of municipal politics

  4. confidence in your ability to help voters

  5. trust in democratic processes

  6. decision-making skills

  7. ability to work in teams of people with different views

  8. listening skills

  9. assessing evidence before voting

  10. public speaking

  11. conflict resolution

  12. self- awareness

- Have you noticed any other benefits of CIR? Any challenges? Any final comments or anything we are overlooking?

Interview Protocol – Six Months after CIR

- Are you still satisfied with the process of the CIR? Why or why not?

- Are you still satisfied with the outcome of the CIR? Why or why not?

- Would you do it again?

- Did it change your mind regarding how you were going to vote?

- If a friend was solicited to do the CIR in two years, what would your recommendation to them be and why?

- Should we take a vote as part of the CIR process in the future? Why or why not?

- Did your perceptions and assumptions about people from other political parties change?

- If so, how, e.g., what did you think before, and what do you think now about them?

- Since the CIR, have you talked with others about being involved in the CIR?

- If so, what did you say about it?

- How did you talk with others about it? (e.g., In person? Using social media, etc.?)

- Did you talk to others about what you learned about the initiative process?

- If so, what did you say?

- How about pension reforms? Did you talk to others about it?

- If so, what did you say about it?

- How do you receive most of your information about current state policy issues? (e.g. newspaper? Friends? TV? Websites?)

- Has the way you receive information about current issues changed since CIR?

- If so, why?

- On voting day this past year, besides the pension reform initiative, did you collect any outside information on any of the candidates or other propositions? Why or why not? Was this different than before the CIR?

- If you did collect information, from where did you gather the information, and how did you know where to go?

- Are there any changes in how you view your role in solving local problems due to CIR? Have you engaged in any public action devoted to a cause? Why or why not?

- On a scale of 1-5 (1 is low, 5 is high) please rate yourself before and after the CIR in the following areas. If there is a change of more than 2 points, please explain.

    1. knowledge of citizen initiatives processes (how initiatives are placed on the ballot and decided)

    2. knowledge of pensions and pension reform

    3. confidence in your ability to help voters

    4. trust in democratic processes

    5. decision-making skills (How do you examine pros and cons of any argument)

    6. ability to work in teams of people with different views

    7. listening skills (i.e., are you more open to opposing arguments)

    8. assessing evidence before voting (For example: On voting day with other candidates and initiatives, how would you rate how you collect info before you vote)

    9. self- awareness (e.g., fully understanding your strengths and weaknesses in working with others)

    10. interest in state/local public issues and problems

The interview questions were derived from an initial literature review, input from experts, and grant guidelines for this study. The second round of interviews took lessons learned from the first round, revised some of the questions, and devised new ones. The purpose of the interview questions was to determine if transformation took place, how it took place, and why it took place.

Recordings were digitally recorded and transcribed, and MAXQDA was used to code, organize, analyze and interpret data. Inter-coder reliability was established with three members of the research team coding the transcripts. The data were analyzed using a constant comparative approach. The transcripts were imported into MAXQDA analytic software and open coded to identify key themes. The coding team included the researchers involved in the study. The codes that were developed represented overall content themes, ideas, and feelings that emanated from each group. MAXQDA was used to analyze the codes between the groups – how they were interconnected, how often they were mentioned, and whether or not there was agreement or disagreement in each thematic area.

As patterns and themes began to emerge across transcriptions, and relationships between categories became apparent, each one was revisited using axial coding, memoing, and other inductive analytical strategies. Using a constant comparison method of interpretation enabled us to revisit and locate a conceptually relevant literature to make sense of the patterns and themes captured.

Surveys

Although not funded by Kettering, ASU had research to CSU's survey data from before the CIR was conducted and six weeks following the CIR. The instruments are attached at the end of this Appendix. The data from these surveys ensured that the interview responses were reliable. In addition, it provided additional information that was not always shared in interviews. The interviews, however, explained some of the measurement errors in the survey as well, so this mixed methods strategy helped to ensure the findings were credible. Twenty-one participants completed the pre-CIR survey and seventeen completed it six weeks later.

Field Observations

Field observations were conducted over the course of the CIR event utilizing four research staff. These observations allowed the team to better understand the context in which survey and interview responses of the CIR participants were made. Each day an observer documented and described as many interactions as possible to best capture the nature of the relationships. These interactions included participant-participant; participant-moderator; and participant-advocate. Observations were at least half a day at each site, and all of the large and small group sessions were recorded and later reviewed. A few of the later sessions were transcribed to provide a thick description of what deliberation looks like.

Analytical thoughts and additional questions were documented throughout the course of the day as the observations were made. These analytic memos and themes were compared with other data sources (e.g., interviews and surveys) to assure consistency of findings and to confirm that observations were reporting a typical CIR day – not an outlier and that they were not simply the researcher's perceptions, but the perceptions of the participants as well. These observations triangulated existing data, and also introduced new behavior patterns of which researchers were unaware. This led to additional pertinent research questions that were discussed with the CIR participants in follow-up interviews.

Study Limitations

The limitation of interviews is that participants would just tell the interviewer what he or she wanted to hear. To mitigate any Hawthorn Effect, survey data was used to triangulate interview responses. Although a full team of researchers were involved in data collection, findings were overall consistent across interviews and survey data. The research team discovered similar themes and patterns when "comparing notes." In addition, only nine participants were able to be interviewed both times. Researchers aggregated the data to determine if there were overall changes made over time as well as used the survey data from CSU to ensure consistency of results. Regarding the nine individuals who participated in both sets of interviews, a mini-analysis was conducted to determine if there were effects of these individuals over time. Although a small sample, findings still show improvement, although the changes reported were not significant.

Original Proponent Claim: Under 487, the City will deposit an amount equal to up to 8% of an employee's salary, and the employee will have the option, but will not be required to contribute. This is a generous match that is fair to both employees and taxpayers.

Proceedings of a Small Group under Deliberations over Claim Reliability

Interviewer:	Okay. Does anybody have a proposed edit that they'd like to throw into the group?
Interviewee:	I would just cross C out.
Interviewee:	Yeah.
Interviewee:	Yeah, I would take C out.
Interviewee:	Yeah, I agree.
Interviewee:	Generous and fair are big question marks. Are they really?
Interviewer:	Okay. I saw a head nod from everybody on that one.
Interviewee:	The reliability on that is a question mark.
Interviewee:	Well, I would say it's an opinion.
Interviewer:	This is a generous—
Interviewee:	We don't want opinions. We want experience and we want facts.
Interviewer:	This is a generous match that is fair to both employees and taxpayers. Cross that out.
Interviewee:	It should say Phoenix employees could be part of a 401K.
Interviewee:	Of choice, yeah, choose.
Interviewee:	They don't really need to be. They have that option, so we should put the word could. How does that sound?
Interviewee:	Phoenix city employees—
Interviewee:	Yeah, I probably would put could.
Interviewee:	Yeah, I'd put would, too—would or could, it doesn't matter.
Interviewee:	Would or could.
Interviewee:	Put would/could.
Interviewer:	You gotta pick one.
Interviewee:	It doesn't matter.
Interviewee:	We gotta pick one. Oh, no.
Interviewee:	Could be part of—
Interviewee:	Right, because they have a choice.
Interviewee:	Because they have the option.
Interviewee:	They don't have to contribute.
Interviewee:	Should be could.
Interviewee:	They don't have to contribute, but [cross talk 00:15:25]
Interviewee:	The city will.
Interviewee:	The city's gonna put money.
Interviewee:	I'd say they would.
Interviewee:	Would, because either way, they're still gonna have a 401K, whether or not they contribute is—
Interviewee:	Whether they contribute or not—okay, yeah, good point.
Interviewee:	- things that I saw that needed to be edited. Other than that—

Interviewee:	I would say B, though, under the city will deposit amount equal to or up to eight percent, the city does have the option to opt outta that because, in the private sector, with 401Ks, your company can opt out. I had it happen to me, where I was paying in a percentage, and the company says, "We're broke right now, so we're opting out," and they didn't match anymore. They did that at their own leisure.
Interviewee:	I thought that Sal said, even though—they'd still have to, even at 1.1.1 percent or something like that.
Interviewee:	Right. They might have to put in something.
Interviewee:	Right, so they'd still put something in.
Interviewee:	They don't have to, but I would expect that they would.
Interviewee:	Well, what I was thinking that we could just say, under 487, the city will deposit an amount less than or equal to eight percent.
Interviewee:	Okay, yeah. I like that.
Interviewee:	It's saying, okay, they can do less than, which means it could be zero.
Interviewee:	They could—yeah, they could bring it down.
Interviewee:	Or it could be eight percent. Then, that's it. Other than that, I think it's good.
Interviewee:	Less than, equal.
Interviewee:	Less than or—
Interviewee:	Less than an amount. An amount less than, or equal to, eight percent.
Interviewee:	Equal to eight percent.
Interviewee:	Okay, yeah.
Interviewer:	Vanessa[3], it looks like you're working on something, or are you just jotting that down?
Interviewee:	You're saying less than?
Interviewee:	Less than or equal to eight percent. It can't be more.
Interviewer:	George[4], how are you feeling about that?
Interviewee:	It can't be zero.
Interviewee:	Okay. Up to eight percent—provide the amount up to eight percent. I'm just trying to shorten the words on it. Up to eight percent. Leave that open. It was gonna run from three to eight percent, I think, isn't it …
Interviewee:	Well, they never said three percent, really, did they?
Interviewee:	That's the range, probably.
Interviewee:	That's the range, yeah.
Interviewee:	Yeah, but like I said, they can opt out any time. Happens in the private sector all the time.
Interviewee:	If you say less than—if you say less than, then that covers that, cuz they could be anywhere between eight and zero.
Interviewee:	Zero, right.
Interviewee:	I think the only time I see it, where they would opt out, is if they foresee some sort of bankruptcy in the horizon and gotta get outta here. According to everyone, we're number six—
Interviewee:	No, but the percentages will be set by the city councilmen.
Interviewee:	That's true.
Interviewee:	Right, so they could see we're not giving them anything, depending on who—depending on how much the city council wants to be elected.
Interviewee:	They're not gonna—they won't be losing. They just won't have that much more money to put in, but somebody else was running that plan out the city.
Interviewee:	Yeah, that'd be somebody that's getting paid as a percentage of the investment account.
Interviewee:	That doesn't really matter to how—all we need to express to the voters is that, okay, the city can contribute either zero or eight—

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[3] Names are disguised.

[4] Ibid.

Interviewee:	Or up to eight, or somewhere in between.
Interviewee:	- or somewhere in between.
Interviewer:	What's George[5] trying to say here?
Interviewee:	Apparently, the city is saving money by not funding these things
Interviewee:	We're saving the most money by—
Interviewee:	By not contributing, by not funding it. They don't have to. Somebody else runs the show for them. They don't have to worry about it.
Interviewee:	Yeah, they did say that that—the one side, the opponent, said that the expense of running the new thing was high, which I was surprised because I thought the expense would be picked up by the—that it can't be any higher than the pension fund they're doing now. You know what I mean?
Interviewee:	You mean the cost of the—
Interviewee:	You would think the same people would be doing that work. They already had the—
Interviewee:	That's where they're saving the money. When you say the word expense, they don't have that expense.
Interviewee:	Right. Because I see what you're saying is that they can save money, if they—well, even if they go at eight percent, they're paying in less than 15 percent.
Interviewee:	They're paying in what they can afford to pay in.
Interviewee:	Then 15 percent, yeah.
Interviewee:	Then, they're paying in what they can afford to pay in that year.
Interviewee:	Exactly.
Interviewee:	If things are bad, they don't pay in as much.
Interviewee:	It becomes a little more flexible for the city council.
Interviewee:	The city.
Interviewee:	The city council, so they can save money.
Interviewer:	Is this something that there should be a new claim around?
Interviewee:	Yeah, something along what George's thoughts are, that it's gonna save the city and cost to fund.
Interviewee:	There was disagreement about that, though.
Interviewee:	Well, then, at that point, we're getting down to reliability of sources.
Interviewee:	What's the facts.
Interviewee:	Right. It's the reliability of the source, and then we can judge from that. That's a thought for a claim, I think.
Interviewee:	Yeah, I think that is a—
Interviewee:	Definitely.
Interviewee:	We should probably write that down before we forget.
Interviewer:	I know I'll forget it.
Interviewee:	Claim number three. Will it be considered for a new claim?
Interviewee:	Yeah, cuz there was something about—
Interviewee:	Cuz it gives them more option, flexibility.
Interviewee:	The city council has more options, year to year, on how much they're able to pay in.
Interviewee:	Or more flexible.
Interviewer:	Also, would it be beneficial to—is it related enough to just add a sentence to the end or the beginning of this current claim?
Interviewee:	That's true, too. We could do that.
Interviewee:	That would be—
Interviewee:	Oh, that would be good.
Interviewer:	Cuz if it's connected enough, it doesn't really need a new claim.

[5] Ibid.

Interviewee:	Since we're getting—yeah, since we're getting rid of C, why don't we put something like the city council—
Interviewee:	If we pull in at C, yeah, we could…
Interviewee:	Yeah, this'll be our C.
Interviewer:	You guys, fyi, you could have left C and put D on, just so you know you have options.
Interviewee:	You place C with allows the city more flexibility in—
Interviewee:	Allows the city more flexibility.
Interviewee:	I like that.
Interviewee:	Which would result in savings? How do we wanna express the—
Interviewee:	What would be a good—allows them more flexibility in, say, budget crisis times, versus budget—
Interviewee:	In budget planning ability, whatever.
Interviewee:	Budget planning. I think that covers it. It allows the city more flexibility in budget planning.
Interviewee:	Budgeting.
Interviewee:	In budgeting. Okay, that's—we'll shorten it up even more.
Interviewee:	Good. Just shorten it. Tighten it up.
Interviewee:	More flexibility in the budget.
Interviewee:	There you go.
Interviewee:	Okay. Allows the city more flexibility in budgeting.
Interviewee:	Cuz I think as it is, voters are looking at these things, and they don't want a lot of complicated stuff. You go into the booth, close the curtain, and you sit. How long you gonna stand? You gotta read these propositions. You're gonna have something in your hand that you can take in, from Voters League or whatever. Oh, yeah, that's why I'm voting for this.
Interviewee:	Oh, yeah,
Interviewer:	Do we have the sentence D crafted to where you like it?
Interviewee:	Yeah. We got this allows the city more flexibility in budgeting. That was our whole—that's our D, I guess.
Interviewer:	Hands up if you wanna implement sentence D.
Interviewee:	I think majority.
Interviewer:	Feel like I got two elbows up on that one.
Interviewee:	An extra vote.
Interviewer:	Okay. Sentence two, there was an edit. I just wanna make sure I have it right. City would deposit an amount less than or equal to eight percent.
Interviewee:	One down.
Interviewee:	Okay, this allows the city more flexibility in budgeting. Oh, is that budgeting? Wait, let me find my glasses.
Interviewer:	This allows the city more flexibility in budgeting?
Interviewee:	In budgeting.
Interviewer:	In budgeting.
Interviewee:	That's what we said, right?
Interviewee:	Did I say that?
Interviewee:	That is not how I would write that sentence.
Interviewer:	All right, so everyone's happy with three? Is there any additional changes that we wanna make to this?
Interviewee:	The only thing I was thinking, maybe the last one, make it more concise. Allows flexibility in city budgeting, instead of this allows the city more flexibility. It shortens that sentence.
Interviewee:	Flexibility in city budget.
Interviewee:	I like that.
Interviewer:	Can you say it one more time?

Interviewee:	Allows flexibility in city budget.
Interviewee:	If that was a woman's skirt, it would be getting awfully short.
Interviewee:	I like it.
Interviewee:	Should that be the reason I like it?
Interviewee:	All right, I'll go with that.
Interviewee:	That's what I was always taught.
Interviewee:	Good metaphor.
Interviewer:	I'm trying to hear that as a complete sentence.
Interviewee:	Long enough to cover the subject, but short enough to keep it interesting.
Interviewee:	Allows more flexibility in city budgeting. Is that how we're gonna say it?
Interviewee:	Is that built on to the previous sentence?
Interviewee:	No, that's getting rid of the previous sentence.
Interviewee:	Instead of this, we're rewriting it.
Interviewee:	Concise.
Interviewee:	Allows more flexibility in city budgeting, so we moved the words around a little bit.
Interviewee:	Let's move on.
Interviewee:	We've only done one.
Interviewee:	We're good.
Interviewee:	I think we're good on that one.
Interviewer:	Okay, we're good. I think keeping things concise is very important. I think that's a very good thing. I know it was gonna be reading like a paragraph—
Interviewee:	That's good in its first form, okay.
Interviewee:	It already says what needs to be said.
Interviewer:	Right, okay, so let's move on.

Revised Claim: Under Proposition 487, the city will deposit an amount less than or equal to 8% of an employee's salary, and the employee would have the option, but would not be required to contribute. Allows more flexibility in city budgeting.

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