

 *By the People*



# By the People: Hard Times, Hard Choices Michigan Residents Deliberate

Report: January 2010

Project funded by:





## About the project

The “Hard Times, Hard Choices” program is a By the People civic engagement initiative launched by MacNeil/Lehrer Productions, working in partnership with the Center for Deliberative Democracy (CDD) at Stanford University. By the People seeks to bring the views of informed, “ordinary” residents into the discussion of the important issues of the day. Since its launch in 2002, BTP has supported well over 200 Resident Deliberations around the country and more than 100 national and local PBS broadcasts, on issues ranging from national security to healthcare to education. By the People received a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for this Michigan-based project entitled “Hard Times, Hard Choices.” The Kellogg Foundation believes there is no separation between the future of children, the future of our state, and of our nation, investing nearly \$50 million in Michigan this year, all toward improving lives for vulnerable children.

On November 13-15, 2009, a random, representative sample of over 300 Michigan residents engaged in a face-to-face statewide Deliberative Poll around critical issues related to the state’s economy and budget choices leading up to the 2010 election. The participants travelled from all parts of the state to Lansing, Michigan. Kwame Holman, correspondent for The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, served as event moderator.

Michigan Public Television Stations, including WDCQ-TV Delta College, Detroit Public TV, WCMU, and WKAR, participated through community outreach projects, which engaged local communities through additional discussions, as well as broadcast and interactive Web elements.

## Results on taxes and the green economy from an informed microcosm

**F**or the first time, a scientific random sample of the people of Michigan gathered together to deliberate about the hard choices facing the state's economic future. Results of Michigan's first Deliberative Poll show what the people of the state would think if they could all become more informed and discuss the issues in depth. Highly representative in both attitudes and demographics, a sample of 314 participants deliberated for a long weekend in Lansing, with both small group discussions and questions answered by competing experts in plenary sessions. The resulting changes of opinion in the final survey offer some dramatic recommendations for both policymakers and the public. These results will be broadcast first on Michigan public television stations January 18 and then on stations around the country.

Governor Granholm speaking at the event

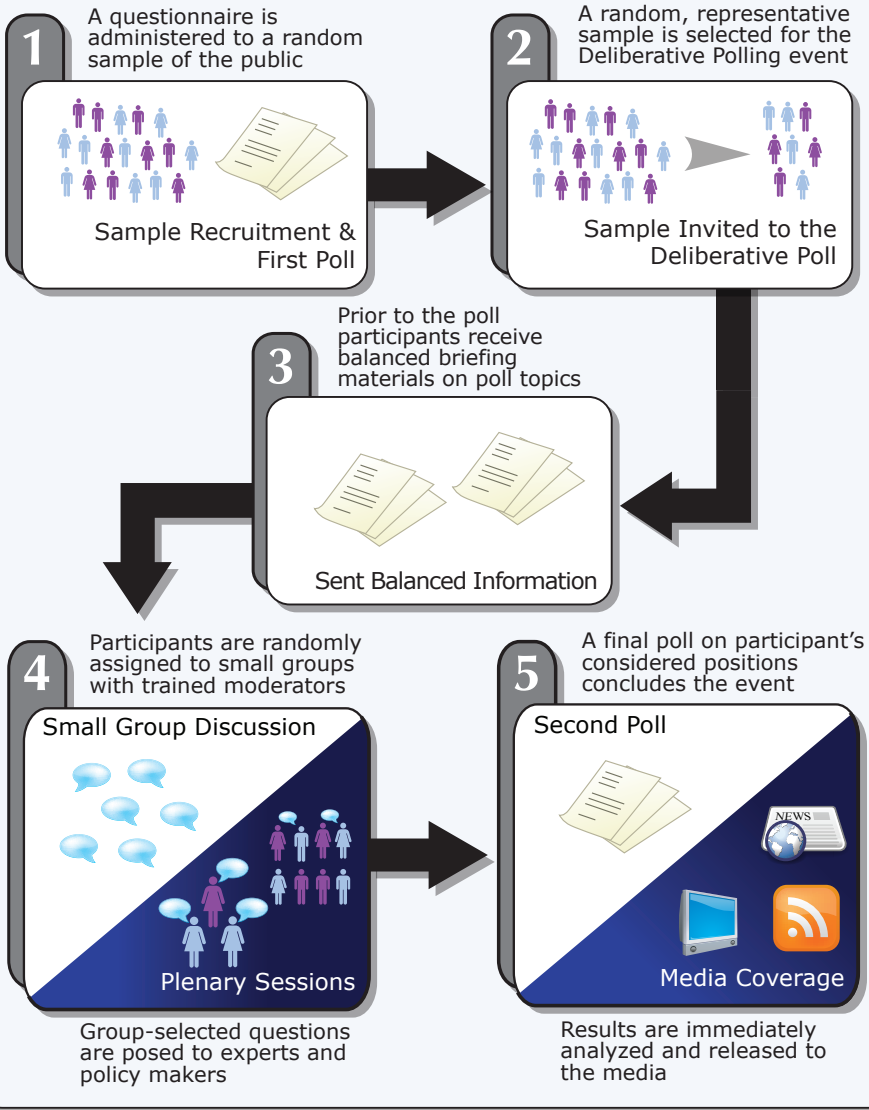


### Deliberative Polling<sup>®</sup>

**C**onventional polls represent the public's surface impressions of sound bites and headlines. Deliberative Polling<sup>®</sup>, by contrast, is an attempt to use social science to reveal what the public would think if it were more engaged and informed. Scientific samples are convened to deliberate under transparently good conditions for considering the issue—vetted and balanced briefing materials, small group discussions with trained moderators, questions from the small groups directed to competing experts and confidential questionnaires before and after deliberation. The process has been used in many countries around the world, ranging from the US and Britain, to the entire EU, Brazil and Argentina, China and Japan. Deliberative Polling was first proposed by James Fishkin in 1988 and has been developed since then in collaboration with Robert C. Luskin.

For more information see the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University online at <http://cdd.stanford.edu> or James S. Fishkin's *When the People Speak* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

## The steps of Deliberative Polling® From initial polling to the reporting of results



## Previous Deliberative Polling® events

Deliberative Polling® has been used to consult with the people on a wide range of issues in a number of different countries and settings. The same underlying methodology is rigorous, yet flexible enough to open many topics of deliberative consultation.

### European Union

In the Fall of 2007, for the first time ever, Tomorrow's Europe brought together a representative microcosm of 362 residents from all 27 EU member states for a weekend of deliberation in Brussels, Belgium. Tomorrow's Europe was thus the first Europe-wide, indeed the first transnational, Deliberative Polling project. Using simultaneous translation, a total of 21 languages were used by participants. Issues included what the EU should do to preserve its pension systems, what role it should play in the world, how it can remain competitive in an increasingly global economy, and what, if anything, it should do about admitting additional member states.

### China

Since 2005 Deliberative Polling has been used in China for local decision making. In Zeguo Township, Wenling City, China's first Deliberative Poll helped local officials decide which infrastructure projects to build, yielding investment in sewage treatment and clean water rather than some road projects. In the same town the process is now being employed on a yearly basis for the entire budget. Other towns and university partners are participating in training on how to conduct similar projects at the local level in other parts of China.

### Texas

Deliberative Polling has been widely implemented for the topic of energy choices over the years in the U.S. and Canada. From 1996 to 1998, eight Texas utilities companies polled their customers to determine what energy options they preferred to meet future electric requirements. As a direct result of a series of Deliberative Polling projects, Texas has become the leading state in wind power in the United States.

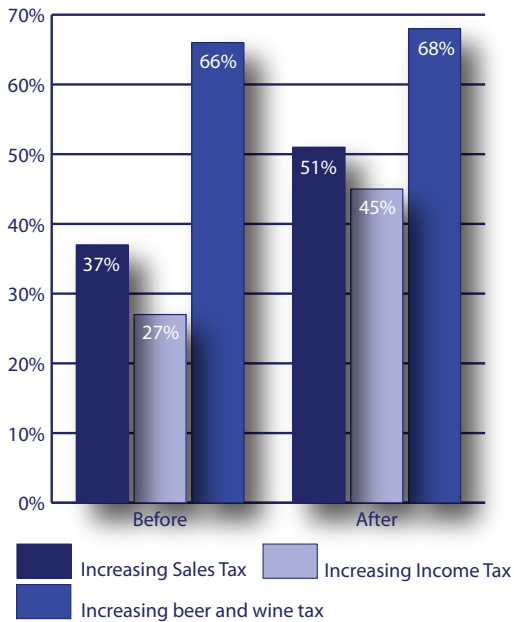
### Brazil

The State Government of Rio Grande do Sul conducted a state-wide Deliberative Poll in Porto Alegre, capital of the state, on the issue of civil servant career reform. The percentage thinking "years in service" was important in awarding pay increases began at 66% before deliberation but dropped to 49% by the end of the weekend. The participants greatly appreciated the opportunity to know their fellow participants, coming from all across the state and from all walks of life. Over 90% agreed that "I learned a lot about people very different from me--about what they and their lives are like."



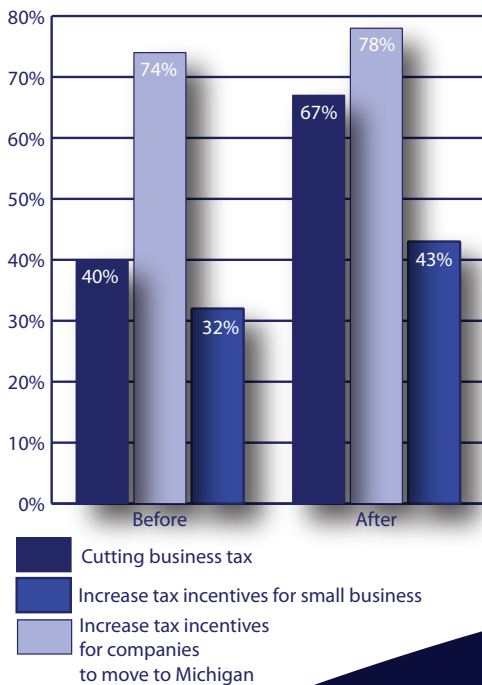
## Results from Michigan's deliberations

### Taxes: What should we increase? What should we cut?



As Michiganders confronted the budget crisis and the demands on scarce state resources, they moved strongly to support increases in certain taxes and decreases in others. They also held the line on essential services but expressed increased willingness to pay for them. Strikingly, the taxes they were willing to increase were the ones that affect their lives most obviously--sales and income taxes--while the taxes they moved to cut affect their lives only indirectly through the stimulation of new jobs. Their final deliberative views on taxes are dramatically different from "top of the head" conventional polls.

Support for increasing the sales tax went up by fourteen points from 37% to 51%. Similarly, support for increasing the income tax went up by 18 points from 27% to 45%. Support for increasing the beer and wine tax was high both before and after deliberation (increasing from 66 to 68%). People were willing to shoulder new burdens they could feel.



By contrast, support for cutting the business tax rose by a gigantic 27 points from 40% to 67%. More generally, "supplying tax incentives for companies to move to Michigan" had high levels of support both before and after (moving only from 74% to 78%). After deliberation participants were interested in certain tax cuts that might stimulate jobs but they were willing to accept the pain of tax increases that might help the state's difficult finances.

### **A comparison: thoughts on taxes from the 2005 By the People on-line deliberative poll on healthcare and education**

**B**efore and after deliberation, 58% of participants agreed that the “US should increase funding for Medicare and Medicaid even if that means increase in taxes.” The percentage of participants that disagreed with this statement decreased after deliberation from 32% to 26%. Over 70% of participants, before and after deliberation, felt the “US should offer business tax deductions, tax credits, or other financial assistance to help them provide health insurance to their employees.” About 40% of participants, before and after deliberation, felt the “US should require individual coverage, where individuals must buy minimal coverage, perhaps funded by a tax credit.

### **A comparison: thoughts on taxes from the 2004 By the People on-line deliberative poll on the US federal general elections**

**T**he proportion of participants saying that the tax cuts made by the Bush administration should be made permanent decreased from 52% to 42% after deliberation. Participants also thought that US companies should be penalized for outsourcing and that the tax cuts made by the Bush administration made the deficit too large.

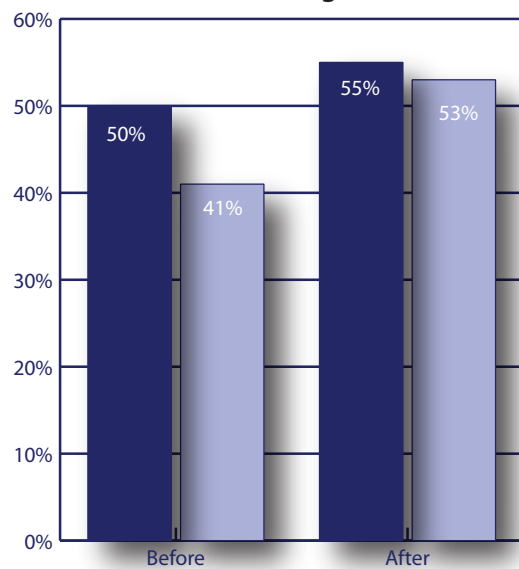


## Results from Michigan's deliberations Spending and benefits

**A** key rationale for tax increases was the need to maintain (and sometimes even increase) essential services. Support increased from 50% to 55% for the notion that “the state government should spend more on programs like education, healthcare, and pensions even if this means increasing taxes.” In considering these trade-offs, they were increasingly mindful of budgetary limitations unless there is further revenue. For example, agreement that the state government cannot afford to increase unemployment benefits went up 12 points from 41% to 53%.

Despite the difficult budget constraints, they wished to maintain essential services, particularly those affecting the more vulnerable. On a series of policy issues, substantial majorities supported key services, both before and after deliberation.

**The state government should spend more on programs like education, healthcare, and pensions, even if that means increasing taxes**



- State Government cannot afford to increase unemployment benefits
- The State Government should spend more on programs like education, health care, and pensions, even if that means increasing taxes





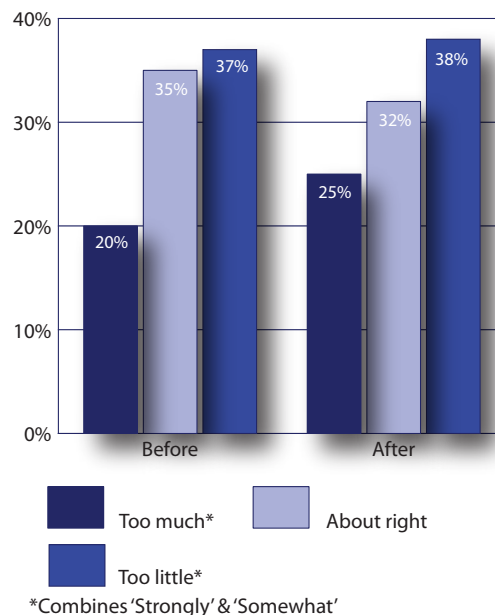
## Results from Michigan's deliberations

### Spending and benefits

However, support for “increasing the minimum wage” actually dropped significantly from 58 to 52%, presumably because of arguments about effects on employment. And “increasing cash assistance for families” had minority support throughout and dropped from 35% to 31% but with 35% neither favoring nor opposing after deliberation.

Overall, however, there was support after deliberation for increasing many services and benefits to poor families in the face of a difficult budget crisis. And this support was coupled with a realization that the budget might require significant tax increases.

Amount of money the state spends on assistance to the poor



Question	After deliberation
Increasing tax credits for low income workers	61%
Spending more for medical care for those who cannot afford it	64%
Providing more subsidized day-care	57%
Spending more for low-income housing for those who cannot afford it	53%
Spending more on public schools in low-income areas	67%
Providing emergency aid to poor families who do not qualify for welfare	73%
Extending unemployment benefits to part time and temporary workers who are looking for work	60%

## Results from Michigan’s deliberations

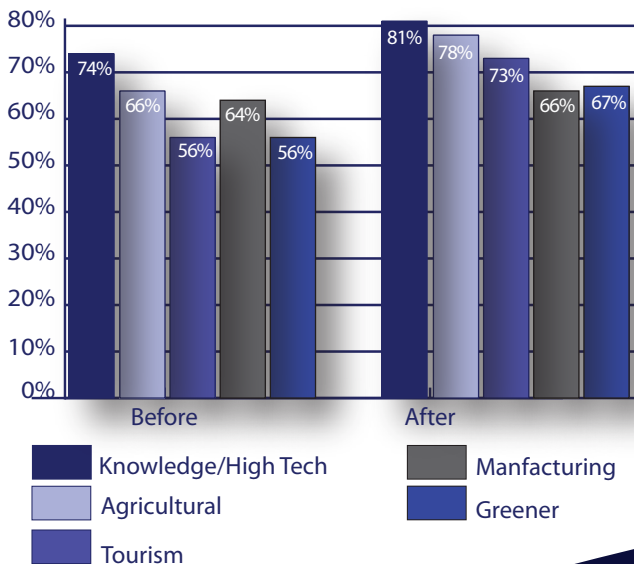
### The environment

Another major result was the consistent focus of the deliberators on the environment. In one policy domain after another, the green economy and environmental concerns more broadly went up significantly in the post-deliberation results.

Question	Before	After	Change
Making Michigan a greener economy	55%	67%	+12 points
Increasing incentives for businesses to produce green products and services	60%	75%	+15 points
Designing and redesigning buildings to be energy efficient	52%	61%	+9 points
Increasing tax credits for energy efficient homes and businesses	54%	66%	+12 points
Encouraging people to use less energy	61%	68%	+7 points
Creating and maintaining state parks	46%	52%	+6 points
Training people for green jobs	58%	72%	+14 points
Requiring a greater percentage of electricity to come from renewable energy	58%	66%	+8 points

### Michigan’s future

The State Government should focus on which of following for improving Michigan's economic future?



Participants were asked about different policy directions the state government could emphasize in building Michigan’s economic future. Both before and after there was strongest support for “making Michigan a knowledge/high tech economy” (74% before deliberation, 81% after).

After deliberation, all the options had strong support but none predominated. It was as if the participants found a number of ideas compelling but none reached the level of an agreed solution.

## Results from Michigan's deliberations

### Volunteerism

While the primary focus of the deliberations was on state policy, some questions were also asked about whether “the efforts of volunteers working outside government” could lead to significant improvements. For education, the percentage believing volunteers could help a great deal rose significantly from 73% to 81%, for “services to those in need” the percentage rose significantly from 77% to 84%, for the environment the percentage rose significantly from 70% to 81%. In other areas such as healthcare, job training and the skill level of the workforce, there were strong majorities both before and after for the notion that volunteers could help a great deal.

### Efficacy, trust & tolerance

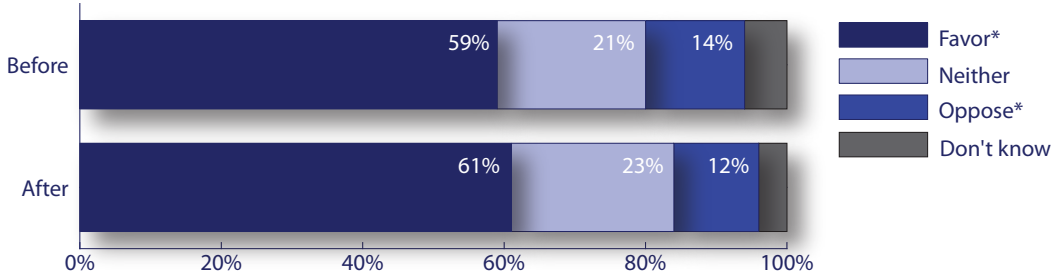
The project took place in a time of widespread disaffection from government. The participants' sense of efficacy increased but from an initially low level. For example, the percentage who thought “Public officials care a lot about what people like me think” was only 25% before deliberation. It rose significantly by ten points, to 35%. Similarly those disagreeing with the statement “People like me don't have any say about what the government does” rose significantly from 42 to 48%. However, even after deliberation, “trust in the State Government of Michigan to do what is right” stayed low (25% before, 26% after).



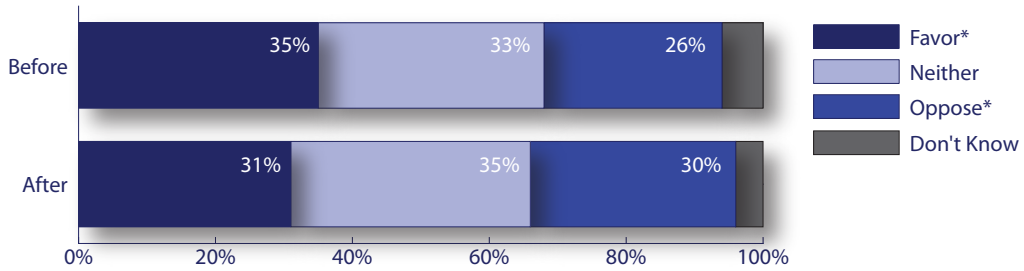
Despite the strong feelings and evident political differences, the very fact of dialogue led to a greater sense of toleration. The percentage agreeing with the statement “People with views very different from mine often have good reasons for their views even when they are wrong” went up 10 points from 58% to 68%.

## Potential options for the Michigan government to help those who are struggling financially

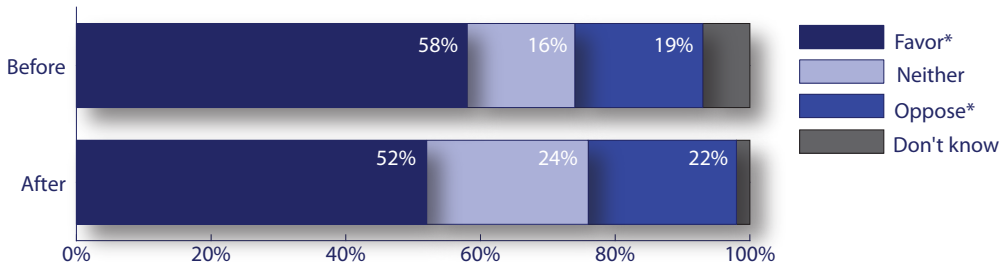
### Increasing tax credits for low income workers



### Increasing cash assistance for families



### Increasing minimum wage



\*Combines 'Strongly' & 'Somewhat'

## Knowledge: before and after the deliberative poll

Participants were asked a battery of five factual knowledge questions and six party placement knowledge questions related to the topics discussed. The majority of questions showed statistically significant increases over the course of deliberation. The overall knowledge index, for participants who answered the questions correctly, for all eleven questions increased from 38% before deliberation to 46% after deliberation.

Factual questions	Before	After	Change
Which political party holds the majority in the Michigan State Senate?	26.1%	43.2%	+17.1%**
How about the Michigan State House of Representatives?	44.2%	53.2%	+9.0%**
Which of the following states has unemployment rates similar to Michigan's?	4.5%	8.1%	+3.6%*
People who have reached the 48-month limit can stay eligible for the Family Independence Program if...?	11.0%	18.4%	+7.4%**
About what percentage of African American children in Michigan live in poverty?	27.7%	29.0%	+1.3%
Factual Knowledge Index	22.7%	30.4%	+7.7%

Party Placement Questions	Before	After	Change
Standard of living: Where would you place the Democratic Party?†	63.2%	62.3%	-0.9%
Standard of living: Where would you place the Republican Party?†	67.4%	65.5%	-1.9%
Taxes: Where would you place the Democratic Party?	53.5%	63.5%	+10.0%**
Taxes: Where would you place the Republican Party?	48.1%	55.8%	+7.7%**
State intervention: Where would you place the Democratic Party?	46.1%	68.4%	22.3%**
State intervention: Where would you place the Republican Party?	46.1%	55.8%	+9.7%**
Party Placement Index	54.1%	61.9%	+7.8%

Overall	Before	After	Change
Overall Knowledge Index	38.4%	46.1%	+7.7%

† Question at arrival, before deliberations  
Significance: \* p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*P<.001



## Deliberative Polling® Evaluation

The participants were asked to evaluate each component of the event. They gave it very high marks. The overall process was rated valuable by 83%, the small group discussions by 89%, “meeting and talking to other delegates outside the group discussions” by 83%, the large plenary sessions by 75%. 76% agreed that “my group moderator provided the opportunity for everyone to participate in the discussion.” 63% agreed that “the members of my group participated relatively equally in the discussions.” 85% disagreed that “my group moderator sometimes tried to influence the group with his or her own views.” 53% agreed that “my group moderator tried to make sure that opposing arguments were considered.” And 57% agreed that “I learned a lot about people very different from me—about what they and their lives are like.”

## Deliberative Polling® Representativeness

The 314 Michiganders who gathered for the weekend in Lansing from all over the state can be compared to a separate sample of 300 who took the same questionnaire. The weekend participants were highly representative in terms of age, race, gender, income, and geography. 29% of the participants were non-White, including 17% African Americans. There were few differences in terms of all the attitudes on the issues to



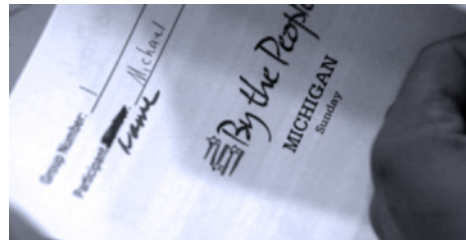
be discussed. For example, 97% of non-participants (those who did not deliberate) and 98% of participants thought unemployment was a problem for Michigan and 81% of non-participants and 83% of participants thought poverty was a problem for Michigan. Demographically, in terms of gender, among participants, men and women were roughly equal and among non-participants, 52% were women and 48% were men. And, for age, the average age of participants was 45.7 years, with 12% from 18-24 years of age, and non-participants, the average age was 49.5 years, with 9% from 18-24 years of age. In effect, the entire state gathered in microcosm in one place to consider the issues. While there were somewhat fewer Republicans among the participants, there were no significant differences on the liberal-conservative scale between participants and non-participants.

## By the People previous events

Since its launch in 2002, By the People has supported well over 200 resident deliberations around the country and more than 100 national and local PBS broadcasts, on issues including national security, healthcare, education, and citizenship in 21st Century America.

### Deliberation Week 2005

**F**ifteen By the People Resident Deliberations on two critically important issues before the nation—healthcare and education—were the centerpiece of a PBS national program on November 10, 2005. The television broadcast “By the People: Residents Voices” covered more than 1,000 Americans at forums hosted around the country during Deliberation Week, October 22-29, 2005, by local PBS stations and their civic partners.



### Community colleges and civic groups

**B**y the People resident deliberations have included events on community college campuses, youth forums, conversations at local libraries; and presentations and discussions hosted by community groups and broadcast on local radio-- all on topics ranging from humanitarian issues to security and terrorism.

### Local PBS broadcasts and activities in 2004

**P**Bs aired two national specials in 2004. One focused on By the People’s Deliberation Day of discussions on “America’s role in the world” in ten communities. The other was an election special called “Time to Choose.” In all, 23 local PBS stations took part in By the People projects in 2004. Through these station partners, at least 60 local TV programs were aired and more than 130 events took place.

### National Issues Convention 2003

**T**he inaugural event of By the People brought together more than 300 Americans in Philadelphia, birthplace of the U.S. Constitution, to discuss America’s role in the world in a National Issues Convention broadcast on PBS on Sunday, January 12, 2003. Local PBS stations and community groups extended the conversation with follow-on events.

## Event coordination and support

### Center for Deliberative Democracy (CDD)

<http://cdd.stanford.edu>

**Professor James S. Fishkin**, *Director*  
**Dr. Alice Siu**, *Associate Director*  
**Professor Robert C. Luskin**, *Research Advisor*  
**Nuri Kim**, *Research Assistant*  
**Sean Westwood**, *Research Assistant*

### By the People - MacNeil/Lehrer Productions

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/btp/>

**Dan Werner**, *Executive Producer*  
**Gail Leftwich Kitch**, *Executive Director*  
**Lisa Larrogite**, *Producer*

### Project funded by:

[www.wkkf.org](http://www.wkkf.org)



## Advisors and panelists

### Advisory Panel For Hard Times, Hard Choices

**Danielle Atkinson**  
*Field Director, Michigan Voice*  
*Center for Civic Participation*

**Dan Gilmartin**  
*CEO and Executive Director, Michigan Municipal League*

**Matt Wesaw**  
*Chair, Michigan Civil Rights Commission*  
*Director of Government Relations, Michigan State Police*  
*Tribal Chairman, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians*

**Rob Fowler**  
*President, Small Business Association of Michigan*

**Nanette Reynolds**,  
*President, The Imagine Fund*  
*Senior Advisor to the President, Grand Valley State University*

**Don Stypula**  
*Executive Director, Grand Valley Metro Council*

**Martha Gonzalez-Cortez**  
*Chief Executive Officer, Hispanic Center of West Michigan*

**Faye Richardson**  
*Director of Global Learning and Development, Steelcase*  
*Chair of the Standards and Credentialing Committee,*  
*Partners for a Racism-Free Community*

### University/Academic Subcommittee

**Nicholas A. Valentino**  
*Associate Professor, Department of*  
*Communications Studies*  
*Research Associate Professor, Center for Political Studies*

**William (Bill) G. Jacoby**  
*Professor, Department of Political Science,*  
*Michigan State University*  
*Research Scientist, University of Michigan*

### Panelists

Poverty, Unemployment and Education

**Martha Gonzalez-Cortez**, *Chief Executive Officer, Hispanic Center of West Michigan*  
**Stephen Rapundalo**, *President and CEO, MichBio*  
**Luther Keith**, *Executive Director, Arise Detroit*  
**Jack McHugh**, *Senior Legislative Analyst,*  
*Mackinac Center for Public Policy*

Spending Cuts and Taxes

**Rob Fowler**, *President and CEO, Small Business Association of Michigan*  
**Jim Eliason**, *Director, Stem Cell Commercialization Center, Wayne State University Tech Town*  
**Felicia Wasson**, *Associate State Director Government Affairs, AARP*  
**Mitch Bean**, *Director, Michigan House Fiscal Agency*

Michigan's Future

**Ken Sikkema**, *Senior Policy Fellow, Public Sector Consultants*  
**Dr. Soji Adelaja**, *Director, Land Policy Institute, Michigan State University*  
**Sharon Parks**, *President and CEO, Michigan League for Human Services*  
**Jake Miklojcik**, *President, Michigan Consultants*

### Special Thanks

**Jennifer Granholm**, *Governor, State of Michigan, Keynote*  
**Mary Sue Coleman**, *President, University of Michigan, Keynote*  
**Anne B. Mosle**, *Vice President of Programs,*  
*W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Emcee*