

Location: Statewide – 8 different sites

Issue: AmericaSpeaks' "CaliforniaSpeaks on Health Care Reform"

Methodology: AmericaSpeaks' "21st Century Town Meetings"

Link to more: <http://www.californiaspeaks.org>

On August 11, 2007, one of the largest non-electoral citizen engagement events in California history took place with "CaliforniaSpeaks on Health Care Reform." The one-day engagement involved 3,500 Californians who met at eight different sites from Eureka to San Diego. All sites were computer and video-networked from the headquarters site in Los Angeles. A statistically representative group of participants was pre-selected through random number dialing and direct mail. The event was attended by Governor Schwarzenegger (who went to two sites), Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez, Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata, and Minority Leader Mike Villines.

Throughout the eight-hour day, attendees were gathered at tables of 6-10 people and participated in a series of facilitated conversations about each of the four health care reform proposals that would go before the State Legislature in September. The AmericaSpeaks' "21st Century Town Meeting" format involves trained facilitators at each of the tables with a single laptop. Each participant has a keypad for entering of individual responses to a number of survey questions that are asked throughout the day. The laptops are used to transcribe results from table deliberations.

The format of the discussions ran through each of the different plans with a factual overview of the plan and a set of "pros and cons" listed. All participants were given booklets describing each of the plans, which were used as a basis for the day's conversations.

The day was the culmination of several months of very dedicated work by AmericaSpeaks and the several foundations that supported the effort. In compiling the information that was used in the day's discussions, AmericaSpeaks convened a multi-partisan group of health care experts and political leaders that participated in "stakeholder" meetings, formulating the foundations of the booklets and discussions.

At the conclusion of the day's deliberations, AmericaSpeaks compiled the results of all the surveys into a report, which was disseminated to the press and was presented to Legislative leaders and the governor in the fall of 2007.