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Project Civil Discourse  
Attention: Barbara J. Sutton  
1242 N. Central Avenue  
Phoenix, AZ 85004

I am pleased to join with many in our state in commending the Arizona Humanities Council and its partners for establishing Project Civil Discourse. This is a most timely initiative given the significant national policy issues that are currently under discussion in our country.

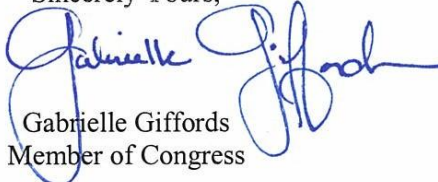
Since I was elected to Congress, I have become even more aware of the passion with which many Americans approach issues such as immigration reform, energy policy, healthcare, education and the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. I have received thousands of contacts regarding these matters and have heard directly from constituents at community meetings and town halls. I welcome this high level of engagement. Our democracy is well served when the people clearly and strongly advise those they have elected.

Over the past several months we have seen an increase in public involvement in the major policy debates about energy policy and healthcare and also a new intensity of feelings and language regarding these topics. This has too often served to repress the expression of opinions on these issues. It does not promote useful public discourse when we are unable to hear opposing views. This has been a particular problem at the various public meetings on healthcare legislation.

Your upcoming program *Speaking, Not Shouting: A Community Conversation About Health Care Reform*, is most timely as legislation is now moving forward in the Congress. There are many valid and important concerns with how healthcare reform should be addressed and we need to find ways to welcome and encourage meaningful dialogue. I wish you every success with the program and I look forward to future events sponsored by Project Civil Discourse.

Yours is a critical mission and you have my full support for your efforts to encourage respect for diverse points of view, listening with an open mind, and speaking with integrity. These are principles that should be used by all of us in public office and should guide citizens' involvement with their government. Thank you for all that you are doing to promote civil discourse.

Sincerely Yours,

  
Gabrielle Giffords  
Member of Congress