



Center
for WISE
DEMOCRACY

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To those deeply concerned about our society ... good news!

All people on planet Earth are probably in agreement ... “We do not want environmental damage. We do not want wars. We do not want poverty.” Although none of us wants these problems, collectively we cause them. Why? ... Human nature? No. All these problems are more primarily caused by our *system* of relating to one another, especially how we make collective decisions. Our system orients us to serve competing “special interests” rather than to serve the “public interest.” This is deemed the best system that available. Yet our most pressing problems would just go away if we could all respect one another and work together in the common interest.

At the Center for Wise Democracy we have discovered a way to facilitate this all-inclusive “working together.” It involves a social innovation called the “Wisdom Council,” which sparks a new form of public conversation in communities, cities and probably nations. This conversation includes each of us, helps us face our most difficult issues, facilitates us to think creatively and collaboratively, and supports us to generate answers that work for everyone.

Initial tests with the Wisdom Council in cities and organizations are exciting. In the town of Wolfurt, Austria the mayor and a few others started one in 2006 and it already won a national award. In Jackson County OR, three citizens, who heard a radio interview about the Wisdom Council, convened a short experiment with it that led to a citizen movement to rewrite the town charter. (See the video, *Democracy in America*, at www.WiseDemocracy.org). In Port Townsend WA, a high school class used the process to convene a year-long dialogue among voters of the town. These small steps are generating results, confidence in the process, and interest in many places in the world.

How does it work? ... The Wisdom Council facilitates a quality of conversation far higher than what most people assume is possible. We call it “choice-creating,” distinct from “decision-making,” dialogue or deliberation. Choice-creating is similar to what happens in a crisis when people drop their roles, and pull together to figure out what works for everyone. “Dynamic Facilitation” (www.DynamicFacilitation.com) is a social invention that can assure choice-creating in small groups. The Wisdom Council uses Dynamic Facilitation plus a series of randomly selected groups to spark very large choice-creating conversations.

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Where did the Wisdom Council come from? ... In the early 1980's as a consultant to industry I developed Dynamic Facilitation to help groups address and solve difficult issues. Since 1990 I have taught public seminars on Dynamic Facilitation where participants from all over the world learn these skills and practice on big issues from society like homelessness, education, terrorism, health care, taxes, etc. They have breakthroughs. The Wisdom Council strategy arose from these breakthroughs. In 2001 a few of us formed the Center for Wise Democracy, a 501c(3) nonprofit organization to test the viability of the Wisdom Council and bring it forward.

Implementing the Wisdom Council is pivotal ... Our society is in crisis because our system is in charge of us, set on auto-pilot, driving us toward disaster. The cure is for all of us to break out of denial, become informed, be thoughtful about what we all want, and to work together to implement it ... freely and without coercion of any kind. The book *Society's Breakthrough! Releasing Essential Wisdom and Virtue in All the People* by Jim Rough (www.SocietysBreakthrough.com) articulates how this can happen through the Wisdom Council process. Lately, experiments in organizations and communities have shown that it works even when just a few ordinary people set it in motion.

What next? ... At the Center for Wise Democracy our biggest challenge is an odd one. What we offer is such good news, so powerful, all-inclusive, safe and inexpensive that it doesn't fit any preexisting map of how social change will happen. Citizen involvement strategies, for instance, assume people should become involved with the existing system. This, on the other hand, is a "We the People" strategy that promises to transform the system to approximate true democracy. We need to communicate this message well enough to excite potential funders.

This letter is too short to explain the Wisdom Council or show how it is unique, why it is essential, what it looks like in practice, the theory behind it, how it will allow us to transcend the usual Left/Right divisions, how safe it is, how freedom-enhancing it is, or the wonderful future for our children it makes possible. We invite you to explore this social innovation through videos, articles, for audios at our web site, www.WiseDemocracy.org, witness a Wisdom Council event in your area in person, or attend one of the Dynamic Facilitation Skills seminars. As president of the Center for Wise Democracy, I can be reached at 360-385-7118 or jim@wisedemocracy.org.

Thank you,



Jim Rough_