



Sent: July 21, 2009

Subject: Wrap up From No Better Time Conference

July did indeed prove to be No Better Time to talk about the challenges and opportunities facing our democracy!

Despite pressure to cancel because of the economy and a looming flu pandemic, the organizers (the [Democracy Imperative](#) and the [Deliberative Democracy Consortium](#)) felt a real sense of urgency. The strong response we received in the form of surprising registrations - more than 250 civic leaders, community organizers, policy makers, academics from across disciplines, students, and campus leaders - and a brilliant array of session proposals, confirmed our decision to go forward.

We identified several trends:

- Renewed interest and capacity of everyday citizens in political and social action
- Stronger connections between scholars and practitioners interested in deliberative democracy
- The power of groups of citizens - particularly youth - to shape election processes and outcomes
- Growing interest on campuses in deliberative democracy as academic and co-curricular content and pedagogy, and as a foundation for community engagement
- Exciting new technologies to facilitate and accelerate these trends

And we asked all participants to consider,

- How do we move from diffuse democratic experiments to more comprehensive democratic systems?
- How do we educate and prepare citizens to be more effective participants in a just and deliberative democracy?

If you want to see what we discussed at NBT, read the descriptions of the learning exchanges and some of the posted reading materials, on [the conference page](#). Or you can read more about NBT09 on Twitter (search for hashtag #nbt09), and the considerable blog coverage - which you can access at our [conference wiki](#).

Over the next few weeks, we'll be analyzing summaries and survey responses to craft specific next steps. Watch for announcements, and also for announcements of our next gatherings at other national conferences.