



# WEALTH Policy, Civic Engagement, and You! Integrated Voter Engagement

Excerpts from a series of CEP LIVE on Facebook events that highlight policies impacting Kansas WEALTH and outline effective civic engagement strategies

WATER – ENERGY – AIR – LAND – TRANSPORTATION – HEALTH = KANSAS WEALTH

## OVERVIEW

Elina Alterman of the Kansas Health Foundation and Kristee Paschall of Wellstone Action joined the Climate + Energy Project on February 13, 2018, to discuss the launch of a three-year [integrated voter engagement project](#).

The Kansas Health Foundation partnered with the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City and REACH Healthcare Foundation to fund the project, “Kansas Integrated Voter Engagement: Health Depends on a Vibrant Democracy,” which aims to connect the importance of voting and civic engagement to long-term health outcomes.

During the project, 10 organizations—including the Climate + Energy Project—will work to engage populations that are new to the political process and integrate year-round voter and civic engagement into their programmatic work in Kansas or the Kansas City metropolitan area.

## ORIGINS OF INTEGRATED VOTER ENGAGEMENT IN KANSAS

- **Elina:** In March 2016, KHF partnered with the National Conference on Citizenship and released the [2016 Kansas Civic Health Index](#). That looked at measures of civic engagement, ranging from voting in local and general elections to attending public meetings to other facets of being involved in the community. In a lot of ways, Kansas was actually doing really well. Where we really scored low—41<sup>st</sup> in the nation—was **voting in local elections**.
- As noted in the Civic Health Index report, “community engagement through volunteering can contribute to better physical and mental health. At the same time, political engagement can lead to public policies that reduce disparities and improve health—for example, by successful advocacy for policies that lead to healthy recreation options in all neighborhoods.”
- **Elina:** If you think about where the decisions are made that affect our health, where funding and policy decisions are made, all of that is done by decision-makers we elect into office. What the Civic Health Index showed us is that in general there is an upward trend in voter registration and turnout in Kansas. But **when you look at black, Latino, or immigrant communities, you have significantly lower voter registration and turnout numbers. Those same groups have the worst health outcomes.** The policies that lead to poor health outcomes are made by decision-makers who maybe aren’t necessarily representative of all communities in Kansas. The Kansas Health Foundation decided that if we really want to see improvements in health policy and systems change, we need to **make sure that every Kansan has access, has a voice, has the ability to get involved.**



The Climate + Energy Project seeks to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions in America's Heartland through the ambitious deployment of energy efficiency and renewable energy, in policy and practice.

Join the Conversation at [climateandenergy.org](http://climateandenergy.org), on Facebook & Twitter @CEPHeartland

## ABOUT INTEGRATED VOTER ENGAGEMENT IN KANSAS

- **Elina:** With this initiative, we're not just looking at election cycles. In the years between elections, people are **developing leadership within their communities** so that not only are people voting but they are running for office. They are engaging community members in all facets of our democratic process.
- **Kristee:** Integrated voter engagement is a fancy term for organizations that are working to invite people to cast a ballot and engage them. It isn't just voting for voting sake, which is really important. It's also **inviting people to be a part of public life**, and it's really the first step of engaging and having a really authentic voice in our communities. The difference from the way a typical candidate campaign would do engagement is that it's really integrated—not just thinking about one specific election, but really thinking about how we build election to election, so that **more people have a voice in our process**.

## POTENTIAL OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED VOTER ENGAGEMENT IN KANSAS

- **Kristee:** During our training we shared survey results that show 60% of adults in the United States have never been asked to register to vote. Part of the hope is that we are **engaging people who are currently not casting a ballot**, whose voices aren't being heard. We are inviting them to get registered and to get really informed about what is happening in their communities, and hope that **voting becomes a habit**. Once somebody casts a ballot, it actually becomes fun and habit forming, and this is a great habit to start. One of my hopes from this training is that we start to engage in new relationships and new conversations in our communities and create connections with people who currently aren't part of the process.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

Learn about and advocate for Water, Energy, Air, Land, Transportation, and Health (WEALTH) in Kansas with the Climate + Energy Project and other sponsor organizations at WEALTH Day on March 15, 2018, at the Kansas Statehouse.

- Get up-to-date on current environmental advocacy
- Visit the Solutions Showcase
- Participate in WEALTH Forums throughout the day
- Enjoy the Local Foods Luncheon
- Sample new ideas at the Cookies and Conservation Conversation
- Meet with your legislators

Connect with CEP on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and sign up for our [email updates](#).

**Join us for WEALTH Day on March 15<sup>th</sup> at the Kansas Statehouse!**

RSVP: <http://bit.ly.2018WEALTHDay>



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