

November 11, 2016

## Seventy's thoughts on where we go from here

This political season has been a tough one for those who, like us, believe in the democratic process. The Presidential election revealed a divided electorate who literally see two different Americas, and who seem to share little common ground except their distrust of each other. Fueled by inflammatory rhetoric from the campaign trail, voters expressed an ugly cynicism about the electoral process itself, and enormous dissatisfaction with the political parties and candidates.

A [survey](#) conducted by the nonpartisan research organization PRRI in late October revealed that 61 percent of Americans say they feel that neither of the two major parties represent their views, up sharply from 48 percent in 1990. Fewer than half of the public viewed either candidate favorably. All the while, aided by cynical gerrymandering that exacerbates political division even further, our country has become shrouded in a hyper-partisan pall—even as 43 percent of the Americans consider themselves politically independent.

So, now that the election is behind us, we all have work to do. How does the Committee of Seventy—one of the nation's oldest and most respected advocates for better politics and better government—respond to these challenges? We are determined to be part of the solution, to help knit back together a fragmented, divided, angry country as we pursue a commonsense, reasonable, problem-solving approach to governing. As we do so, we will continue to expect more from our public leaders, from political candidates, and from ourselves. Philadelphia and Pennsylvania must lead by example, and become known for:

- A political process that is open, transparent, inclusive and competitive.
- Public leaders of the highest integrity whose vision marries a practical ability to achieve results.
- A government that works to solve problems that matter.

Amid the rubble of this Presidential campaign, here in Philadelphia we must rebuild from the ground up, engaging our young people (especially) in pursuit of an ethical political culture and an approach to effective governance that, ominously, they have never seen for themselves.

As we move from the circuslike surreality of this Presidential election to state and municipal elections in 2017, we have an opportunity to encourage voters to remember that participation in the political process drives decisions on issues, such as schools, jobs, parks, transportation, and the arts, that matter to them and their daily lives.

To quote a line from David Bradley's *Voices of Voting*, the play about voting rights and responsibilities Seventy commissioned this summer that's now been seen by almost 2,000 young adults in the area:

***Just got to tramp some more.***