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New York Civic Health Index 2010

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New York Trails Nation in Two of Five Civic Health Areas

Participation in Civic Responsibilities and Duties Low

New Yorkers Highly Social and Informed; Engagement in Group Meetings and Community Participation Lacking

Loudonville, NY – During this difficult economic period, New York residents score at or above national rates on social connectedness and access to local information. Using recent data from the Siena College Research Institute (SRI), they trust people and local institutions with some trepidation while still consistent with national trends. However, New Yorkers are somewhat less likely than the average American to volunteer, give to charity or participate in the duties of citizenship including voting or attending community meetings or events, according to the 2010 New York State Civic Health Index released today.

The Civic Health Index was produced by SRI and the Siena Office of Academic Community Engagement in partnership with the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC). NCoC has produced national and state civic health assessments since 2006. The report was presented today at Siena College by SRI Director, Dr. Don Levy, followed by a community discussion forum in which attendees discussed steps for enhancing civic health.

Civic health is a measure of the participation and engagement in communities and society. Healthy communities will benefit, and citizens in those communities will display social connectedness, trust in people and institutions, responsibility to address social needs, interest in current events, and participation in civic duties.

“Statewide Civic Health is tough to measure. Based on multiple questions, we provide a score for New York on Social, Trust, Responsibility, Information and Duty. With scores between sixty and sixty-eight percent of the possible, New Yorkers have meaningful social interactions, strong levels of trust in their community and keep themselves well informed. But lower rates of volunteering, charitable giving and especially attendance at community meetings result in lower measures of Responsibility and Duty for New York. Moving the needle will require not only awareness and promotion, but also, making Civic Health part of what New Yorkers do and our leaders endorse,” according to SRI’s Director, Dr. Don Levy.

According to U.S. Census data, New Yorkers volunteer, donate to charity, attend group meetings and both register to and vote at rates well below the national average. Still, New Yorkers are as, or more informed than the U.S. average, and maintain ties to friends, family and neighbors at a rate equal to the national average.

“Leaders in New York are beginning to recognize that impacting your community doesn’t happen in a vacuum—it’s part of a reinforcing cycle,” says David B. Smith, Executive Director of the National Conference on Citizenship. “It is our hope that the New York Civic Health Index report serves as a catalyst to empower others to develop new strategies and frameworks to address the systemic challenges that lie ahead.”

The New York Civic Health Index is available online at the NCoC website: www.ncoc.net/states.

