



Hello!

You recently received an invitation to participate in a free non-partisan focus group, “Exploring Citizen Accountability”, that will occur on March 14th in Princeton, New Jersey. This project is sponsored by the Inquiry Institute and Dr. Marilee Adams, who also created National Question Day. This letter provides some background and context for that invitation.

The notion of citizen accountability grew from a desire to contribute to the strength, well-being, and direction of our country. The spirit of citizen accountability is apparent in this quote from Judge Louis Brandeis, “The most important political office is that of the private citizen”. It is also reflected in one of the questions you read on the invitation:

How would our country and our daily lives be different if we thought of democracy as a *partnership* between accountable citizens and accountable politicians?

This can be illustrated on the Choice Map. (Please go to www.InquiryInstitute.com for a free download of the Choice Map.) Citizen accountability would be alive and strong on the Learner path. It could be actively or passively impeded on the Judger path. For the sake of our country, our democracy, and our shared future, we need to operate as Learner citizens, not Judger ones. As citizens, we must learn to be much better at *how* we think and communicate. Ideally, this would help us become more effective with *what* we think and communicate about. These are skills that should be basic for every single one of us. Then, despite some inevitable differences, we might be able to reach resolutions that each of us can own. That’s why a national conversation about citizen accountability cannot be focused on parties or even solely on issues. *This is about how we come to the table rather than what we come to the table about.*

We are not inviting any press to the March 14th event. We designed this evening as a “research opportunity” to explore and shape how a conversation about citizen accountability could best be articulated before it becomes public. We want to be very careful to develop and cultivate it as something anyone can be *for*, not as something with which anyone could take umbrage.

The size of this focus group is limited; our next event will be larger and definitely public. That date will soon be set; it will be before the conventions with the hope that the issue of citizen accountability can become part of the national agenda before the November elections.

Any genuine national conversation about citizen accountability must be broad-based in order to be broadly owned. Therefore, we are inviting supporters for Clinton, Huckabee, McCain, and Obama to participate in this focus group. This conversation must be inclusive and widely supported so it can take root, grow, and make the kind of difference we hope it will. We also invite you to consider the meaning and behaviors associated with being an accountable citizen in each of our own daily lives. Thank you.

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