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BY: COMMON CAUSE GUEST BLOGS

🕒 JUNE 23, 2011 [💬 0 COMMENTS](#)

California Common Cause, in association with other academic and civic organizations, could not be more excited about taking a major step towards repairing California's broken system. With the indispensable help of Stanford's Center for Deliberative Democracy, we are immersing ourselves in healthy democratic discussion that will yield a plan for California that comes from the people.

This coming weekend, June 24-26th, three-hundred randomly selected Californians will gather in Torrance, CA to help test the waters for viable solutions to pressing issues facing the Golden State. These volunteers will be polled Friday on their feelings about major issues, engage in informational debates for two days, and be polled again at the end of the event. James Fishkin, of the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford, believes we will not only see the volunteers' opinions change following the educational sessions, but also see the stage set for a more wide-spread public dialogue.

Fishkin hopes that this small group of ordinary citizens, "a microcosm of the state," will thoughtfully set the agenda for California's public debate and that through the initiative process, the state's voters will make informed decisions about the future. It is a model based on ancient Athens." (["A Group of Randomly Selected Citizens, Engaged in a New Kind of Polling Developed at Stanford, Gathers this Weekend to Tackle California's Problems."](#) Dan Stober. Stanford University News. June 22, 2011)

Titled "What's Next California?", the Deliberative Poll strives to give the volunteers ownership of the solutions by engaging them in a multifaceted debate and inspiring the consideration of competing arguments, while allowing all questions to be immediately answered by public officials and policy experts. Through such means, the Poll invites volunteers to form their own conclusions and decide the best solutions to California's pressing issues for themselves.

Using this innovative poll-educate-poll method, public discourse and the effort towards real change are guaranteed to take a step in the right direction. Many will join California Common Cause in working to ensure the Deliberative Poll's most promising ideas will be seen on the November 2011 ballot. For more, visit [What's Next, California](#).

What's Next California? Partners: [California Forward](#), [The New America Foundation](#), [The Public Policy Institute of California](#), [The Nicolas Berggruen Institute](#), [The Bill Lane Center for the American West at Stanford University](#), [The Davenport Institute for Public Engagement and Civic Leadership at Pepperdine University](#), [California Common Cause](#), [The Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University](#), and [MacNeil/Lehrer Production's By the People](#).

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By Dean Searcy: A senior at UCSD, studying Political Science with a focus on American Politics and a summer intern in Los Angeles.

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