



For Immediate Release

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Civic Leaders Kickoff LA Civics Initiative

USC Bedrosian Center and City Impact Lab launch Civic Literacy Effort to Support Greater Understanding of Local Government in Los Angeles

March 23, 2016, LOS ANGELES:

Los Angeles has a civics problem. Moving beyond the statistics of voter turnout, the City Impact Lab and University of Southern California's Bedrosian Center on Governance have launched a year-long effort to explore the concept of "civics" in Los Angeles. The "LA Civics Initiative" kickoff saw 75 civic leaders at USC's Galen Center who were introduced to this initiative with the challenge of defining what "civics" means in Los Angeles and the assumptions about "civics" in the City of Angels.

Moderated by City Impact Lab Founder, John Bwarie, our distinguished morning panel identified the challenges of civic engagement and civic understanding in Los Angeles' unique metropolitan environment.

"I am excited about today's program and Bedrosian's partnership with the innovative City Impact Lab." according to Dr. Raphael Bostic, Chair of the Department of Governance, Management and the Policy Process at USC Price School of Public Policy, "Civic awareness is so important, because good governance and good government depend critically upon informed and engaged citizens."

Moderator, John Bwarie and Dr. Bostic were joined on the panel by Hon. Ardy Kassakhian, City Clerk of Glendale; Hon. Steve Zimmer, President of the LAUSD School Board; Nate Kaplan, Founder of See Political; and Raquel Beltran, Associate Director of the Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs.

Following the panel discussion, attendees were tasked with continuing the conversation at their tables in a workshop designed to identify the "biggest" barriers to civic literacy in LA. Some of the issues raised included lack of access to awareness,

information, and tools; disenfranchisement; unclear process information; scale of the city; and disconnect between place and community.

“Those in attendance identified barriers that were both well-known and surprising,” observed Bwarie. “We will take the information developed here and use it to shape the way we address this gap in civic literacy in Los Angeles.”

These barriers and others will be addressed in a series of follow-up events focused on specific barriers to identify solutions to address each one. These additional workshops will be held throughout the year, and the results will be shared in an action plan released at the LA Civics Summit in early 2017.

Other components to the Initiative include the City Impact Lab’s Ideal Candidate project (looking at what makes an ideal local candidate), Lunch with a Leader (a monthly lunch at USC), and activities at the monthly Social Impact Breakfast.

As a preview to the kickoff event, City Impact Lab hosted a webinar on Monday, March 21, 2016 as a primer for attendees. “Government 101: How Los Angeles Works” had 50 attendees engaged in learning about how city government works in the City of Los Angeles.

About the USC Bedrosian Center: Founded in 2005, the Judith and John Bedrosian Center on Governance and the Public Enterprise is an applied research center with the goal promoting effective government by building the professional capacity of public and nonprofit institutions; shaping public dialogue across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors on governance and institutional reform; and promoting and supporting innovative governance scholarship. For more information: <http://bedrosian.usc.edu/>

About the City Impact Lab: Powered by Stratiscope, the City Impact Lab was founded in 2014 to be a resource for civic leaders and those working to make a positive impact in Los Angeles. For more information: <http://www.cityimpactlab.com/>