



Coffee Party Local Organizer Starter Kit

What is the Coffee Party?

Coffee Party USA is a grassroots, non-partisan movement that aims to restore the principles and spirit of democracy in America. It started on Facebook as a popular fan page in January 2010 and has since blossomed into a national non-profit organization with a network of over half a million people and dozens of local chapters.

Our path to restoring democracy in America includes:

- *Identifying and advocating for legislative fixes to reform campaign finance laws, Wall Street regulations, and the tax code;*
- *Promoting cultural changes to address political disengagement, polarization and widespread misinformation.*

Our activities often center around encouraging inclusive, civil, fact-based, solution-oriented dialogue — online and in public places such as coffee houses — in which we meet, talk, become informed and engaged as fellow Americans, rather than as members of political parties.

We believe that we share common goals as a people. We all want to live in safe communities with access to jobs that will allow us to provide for our families, help us secure a decent education for our children, and allow us to access adequate health care. We call upon the American people to transcend the hyper-partisanship that is so common today, and move toward organizing communities around the mutual desire for ongoing, responsible civic engagement.

We understand that we must act boldly to not only break the cycle of corruption, but also recommit to the concept of a government of, by and for the people. We are the government. The government is us. We want to fix the problems in our government, not turn against the idea of government.

We need more – in quantity and quality – direct engagement with our government officials and with one another. Participating in our democracy should not be about just voting every 2 to 4 years – relying only on what appears in mainstream media and in campaign ads – and then hoping for the best. We need to engage the government in a way that promotes accountability to the public, transparency, and the spirit of *E Pluribus Unum* (out of many voices, one).

We need to create effective civic engagement opportunities by:

- Demanding more officially sanctioned activities such as town hall meetings with officials and public reviews of policies with an invitation for public comments;
- Organizing informal community meetings in which we invite fellow Americans to exchange ideas.
- Encouraging the use of Internet communications, social networking and polling technologies to more effectively inform and involve the broad public community in interactive debate.

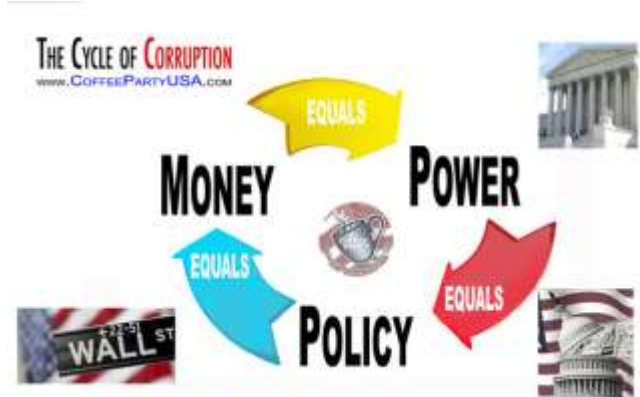
We operate entirely independently of political parties and we do not endorse candidates.



Coffee Party USA Mission Statement

The mission of the Coffee Party is to fight the Cycle of Corruption, and restore self-governance to the People.

As voters and grassroots volunteers, we understand that the federal government is not our enemy, but the expression of our collective will. We pledge to support leaders who work toward positive solutions, and hold accountable those who obstruct them. Our goal is not to destroy our government. Our goal is to fix it.



We believe that the influence of money on our political process, and the politics of fear and division, work together to stand in the way of a government of, by, for the people. Coffee Party members welcome the diversity of thought, background, and circumstance that is found in the cities, towns, and neighborhoods of our country.

We maintain independence from all political parties and labels. We are trans-partisan, but being trans-partisan does not mean we cannot take positions. It means that Coffee Party members arrive at positions based on principles and facts, not on party affiliation. By seeking and sharing accurate information, we empower ourselves and others to take action and participate in the deliberative process.

The Constitution and the common good are not in opposition. The Constitution was written for the common good, to allow the People to stand together against abuses of power. We cannot allow the Constitution to be appropriated by small factions or used to justify extreme tactics. Our love of country is not based on cultural resentment. We not only love America, we also love Americans. We are united in our shared belief in democracy, equality, liberty, and justice. These are the ideals that define us as a nation. This is the heritage we wish to pass on to future generations.



Coffee Party Values & Principles

Civil Dialogue is essential to a productive exchange of ideas. To further this end, the following Coffee Party Civility Pledge is often used to open our meetings and guides us in all that we do:

“As a member or guest of The Coffee Party, I pledge to conduct myself in a way that is civil, honest, and respectful toward people with whom I disagree. I value people of different cultures, I value people with different ideas, and I value and cherish the democratic process.”

Coffee Party is a **DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT** striving to ensure that the voices of the people, not the power of the dollar, decide the policies and the direction of our nation. Coffee Party believes in the Constitution and government “of the people, by the people, and for the people.”

Since a healthy democracy demands an educated and informed electorate, Coffee Party is deeply committed to education and fact based research. The complexity of the problems facing this nation requires **CONTINUOUS LEARNING** through thoughtful, research-based evaluation and re-evaluation.

In the search for fact-based knowledge on the issues, Coffee Party reaches out to those of all age groups, backgrounds, and political perspectives in a spirit of **INCLUSIVENESS and OPENNESS to DIVERSITY OF OPINION**, promoting a free and vigorous exchange of ideas. Maintaining independence from parties, Coffee Party’s **TRANSPARTISAN** approach to decision-making and policy formulation seeks a dialogue with others that goes beyond ideology and labels.

ENGAGEMENT IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS by the electorate is an essential requirement for the effective operation of a democracy. Coffee Party urges universal participation in the democratic process and offers opportunities at many levels for members to become engaged.

Individual and group support of National Coffee Party initiatives, as outlined in the Coffee Party USA Position Paper, is strongly encouraged. However, individual members and groups are also invited to champion **NATIONAL, STATE AND LOCAL POLICY INITIATIVES** of their choosing as long as they are in alignment with the principles and values of Coffee Party USA.

COMMUNITY BUILDING is not only a necessary strategy for success in achieving **CONSENSUS** on issues and implementing desired goals, but is also essential as a means of creating unity of purpose among Coffee Party members and Chapters. **COLLABORATION** with other local groups to advance common goals and Coffee Party policy priorities is also encouraged.



Getting Started: Meeting Preparation

- **Contact and register with the Coffee Party USA's Director of Chapter Development at local@coffeepartyusa.com.** This is a grassroots organization and each chapter will develop its own identity within the Coffee Party USA community, but we ask that all new group organizers contact Coffee Party USA as early as possible to let us know who and where you are. Our Chapter Development Director will explain the requirements for using the Coffee Party trademark name and logo and assist you in listing your local events and group on www.CoffeePartyUSA.com
 - Coffee Party USA is in the process of rolling out enhanced Coffee Party Community group organizing tools that will replace the ICED COFFEE group listings at <http://www.coffeepartyusa.com/my-groups>. More information about these new groups will be available soon. In the meantime, if you have any questions about whether there is an active group in your area, please contact Diane Owens at local@coffeepartyusa.com
- **You don't have to do it alone!** Identify friends, members of other groups in your community who may be interested in working with you to start a local Coffee Party group. Ask to join the [Coffee Party Organizer National Team FB group](#) to network with other Coffee Party activists and organizers.
- **The Coffee Party started on Facebook.** One of the first steps in organizing your group is to make your presence known via Facebook. Since there are already many FB Coffee Party pages and groups, we ask that you first contact Coffee Party USA at local@coffeepartyusa.com to find out if there is an existing FB page or group that you can use to promote your new group.
 - If you create a new FB page or group, we ask that you provide us with ADMIN access as a condition for using the Coffee Party trademark name or logo.
- **Find a location.** A coffee house is great, but if you don't have one in your area that has suitable space, a restaurant with a private dining area may be available at no charge. Other possible locations are public libraries, community centers, or churches with conference rooms open to the public. Contact your location and set up a date and time for your first meeting.
 - **TIP:** You may need to explain that the Coffee Party is a recognized non-partisan, non-profit organization to reserve space at these locations.
- **Register your meeting or event on www.CoffeePartyUSA.com** so that Coffee Party members and supporters can easily find and RSVP online. You can choose to receive an email when people register for your event. This can be very helpful in compiling your own local email contact list.
 - To create an event, click on the Event Menu at the top and select the "Create an Event" option and enter the zip code and type of event you are planning. If you have not already logged in, you will be asked to either log in or create an account on the next screen.



- **Use the event feature on your Facebook group or page** to get the word out to friends and fans of your Coffee Party page or group. If you use Twitter, tweet about your event. Print fliers and post them in the places where you know they will be seen. Post details about your event on community event calendars in local newspapers and on online media sites.
- **Send a press release to local media outlets.** Invite members of your local press to your meetings whenever you plan an event that is newsworthy such as a noteworthy speaker, candidate forum, or public rally.
- **Prepare an agenda.** (See below)
- **Don't forget to print sign-in sheets** to collect email & other contact information and provide blank **name tags** for people who attend the meeting to help break the ice.
 - Ask for email addresses to add to your mailing list. Provide opportunities for people to volunteer to help with future events on your sign in sheet or a separate volunteer sheet.
- **Be prepared to take photos/video of your event** to share on social media sites and with Coffee Party USA.

Preparing Meeting Agendas

- Welcome and provide introductions for first-time attendees. Ask how they found out about the meeting and why they came.
- Distribute agendas, handouts, or provide an outline of the planned agenda. Handouts should include links to your Facebook page or group, Coffee Party USA web site and your local web site, if you have one.
- Introduce the Coffee Party Civility Pledge and Mission Statement and provide a brief overview of the Coffee Party (see pages 1-3 of this Starter Kit).
- Update on national and/or local Coffee Party issues and initiatives.
- Introduce guest speaker or subject on the agenda for the meeting and provide opportunities for questions and discussion. Large group discussions may benefit from creating small breakout groups to allow people to get to know each other, examine an issue in detail, and report back to the whole group.
- Determine group consensus when planning future actions, positions, or strategies for the group and get commitments from volunteers who will work on action items between meetings.
- Ask for feedback: "Did the meeting meet your expectations? What would you like to see happen at future meetings?"
- Announce the date, time and location of the next meeting and explain how to keep in touch with your group on Facebook, your web site, or by email.



Follow-up After Meetings

After your meeting, here are some ideas for things you can do to keep the momentum going:

- Upload photos to your Facebook page or group (and tag members to help them reach out to one another). For special events, upload video to YouTube and share the link or email photos along with a description of your event to local@coffeepartyusa.com.
 - We want to hear about what you are doing and you may find your event featured in Coffee Party USA's newsletter or on the web site!
- Submit photos and press releases describing your special events and action initiatives to local newspapers and online community web sites.
- Set aside some time after or between meetings to talk to volunteers who helped plan the meeting and get their feedback. Be sure to involve them in planning future activities to encourage them to remain involved.
- Designate one or more volunteers to maintain your contact list, post events on Facebook, on www.coffeepartyusa.com and promote your events and activities in social and traditional media.
- Reach out to other local groups aligned with the Coffee Party mission statement and policy initiatives to identify opportunities for collaboration on future activities.



Tips for Meeting Facilitators

- **Venue:** If possible, select a venue that is free from distractions and noise. In small group discussions, arrange seats in a circle so that everyone can be seen and heard. For larger groups, try, as much as possible, to arrange seating in a way that facilitates dialogue.
- **Participation:** Encourage everyone to speak at least once. The facilitator should keep discussions focused and make sure that dominating, disrespectful, or disruptive conversation is not tolerated.
- **Build Community:** Democracy depends on the active participation of “we the people.” People who feel connected with others in the group will not only want to stay “plugged in” but will bring their friends to your next event. We will build a participatory democracy by building a community. Get to know your members and build relationships.
- **Accept Imperfection:** It’s impossible to plan for everything. Structure is important, but know when to let the meeting evolve organically and when to bring the discussion back to your agenda. Above all, moderate your expectations and set attainable goals.
- **The heart of the Coffee Party is conversation:** Dialogue starts with sharing, speaking AND listening. Facilitators set the tone by sharing first. Talk about your experiences, feelings, hopes, and vision. It may become necessary to encourage shy people to speak, or to ask others to allow for a more inclusive conversation. Facilitators need to set an example by demonstrating good listening skills and a genuine interest in what people have to say.
- **Encourage volunteers:** We are creating a movement that has the potential to transform our political culture by actively engaging people who have not participated in political actions before. Show appreciation for people who step up to volunteer. Remind people of our power to effect real change if we band together to work for common goals.
- **Do not overload your events:** Set reasonable expectations for what can be accomplished during a meeting and provide opportunities for collaboration between events when necessary.
- **Email Communication:** Find the right balance between regular communication with your group members and respect for their privacy and time. Ensure that members have the ability to “unsubscribe” to emails if they no longer wish to receive them.
- **Join the Coffee Party USA Organizer National Team (ONT) Facebook group:** Share experiences with other new and experienced local Coffee Party organizers and activists and participate in the regular ONT conference calls with national Coffee Party volunteers and staff to keep up with national policy initiatives and priorities.
- **Ask for assistance from Coffee Party USA’s Chapter Development Director:** Don’t hesitate to contact Diane Owens by email at diane@coffeepartyusa.com if you have questions or need support.



Participation Guidelines for Coffee Party Teams & Chapters

I will practice *Active Listening*.

- Active listening is seeking to hear what the other person is saying and when in doubt about your own understanding, reflecting back to them what you have heard for the purpose of clarification.

I will remain *Curious and Open to Learning*.

- Ask questions for clarification and be open to hearing all points of view. Maintain an attitude of exploration and learning.

I will balance *Advocacy and Inquiry*.

- Seek to learn and understand as much as you might want to persuade. Work Conversations are as much about listening as it is about talking.

I will show *Respect and Suspend Judgment*.

- Setting judgments aside will enable you to learn from others and contribute to others experiencing being respected and appreciated.

I will seek *Alignment rather than Agreement*.

- Alignment is shared intention, whereas agreement is having a shared belief or opinion. In our work we look for alignment primarily and simply appreciate that we will disagree on some beliefs and opinions.

I will be *Genuine and Welcome the same from Others*.

- Share what's important to you. Speak authentically from your personal and heart felt experience. Be considerate to others who are doing the same.

I will be *Purposeful and to the Point*.

- Notice if what you are conveying is or is not "on purpose" to the question at hand. Notice if you are making the same point more than once. Do your best to make your point quickly with honesty and depth.

I will *Own and Guide the Conversation and the Process*.

- Take responsibility for the quality of your participation and the quality of the work conversations by noticing what's happening, and actively support getting yourself and others back "on purpose" when needed.

I will *Forward the Action*.

- Be aware of what is needed to move forward. Sometimes forwarding the action will be more conversation, sometimes it will be stopping the conversation, and other times it will be doing the work as agreed.

I will *Honor My Agreements*.

- Keep your word about doing what you said you will do, or renegotiate the agreement when necessary.