



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 8, 2014

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Voice Of the People Announces Partnership with University of Oklahoma for Citizen Cabinet Initiative

Public Opinion Learning Laboratory to manage recruitment; Carl Albert Center to share in data analysis, dissemination

NORMAN, Okla. – Voice Of the People (VOP) President Steven Kull today announced a partnership with the University of Oklahoma’s Public Opinion Learning Laboratory and the Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center for VOP’s launch of the statewide Citizen Cabinet. OU’s Public Opinion Learning Laboratory will be responsible for managing the recruitment of Citizen Cabinet members in Oklahoma and the Carl Albert Center will help interpret the data and add a local perspective through events that it will help convene to present the Cabinet findings.

“We are extremely pleased to be working with the University of Oklahoma on our Citizen Cabinet initiative in the Sooner State,” Kull said. “The Public Opinion Learning Laboratory will be meeting the highest scientific standards in putting together a Citizen Cabinet that reflects the state’s demographic makeup. The Carl Albert Center is an ideal institution for analyzing the data on each issue. It will be an impressive team endeavor.”

VOP is a non-partisan organization that is working to give the American people a more impactful voice in the policymaking process. It seeks to do this by creating Citizen Cabinets at the national, state and district levels. These are large standing panels comprised of a representative sample of the citizens in each jurisdiction, to be consulted on current issues, using new online interactive tools called ‘policymaking simulations’ to give voice to the people on an unprecedented scale. Oklahoma is one of three states selected for the pilot phase of the program (joining Virginia and Maryland).

Over the next two weeks selected Oklahoman households will receive a letter inviting them to join the Citizen Cabinet. Once recruited, the Citizen Cabinet will consist of more than 800 households in Oklahoma, which will include an “oversample” of the 4th Congressional District. The households will be scientifically selected to be representative of the state and the 4th District. Internet access will be provided to those who do not have it.

Every few weeks, members of the Citizen Cabinet will go through an online policymaking simulation which simulates the process elected officials go through when dealing with an issue.

In each policymaking simulation, Citizen Cabinet members will:

- Be briefed on the issues, with unbiased background information reviewed by experts and congressional staff from both parties in advance.
- Weigh the arguments, learning about the policy options that are actually on the table and evaluate the pro and con arguments on each option.
- Make choices from a menu of policy options, or go through a more in-depth process that requires making trade-offs (e.g. creating a budget), and finally, make their recommendations on the pressing issues facing Congress.

Once the Cabinet findings are presented, the public is invited to do the policymaking simulation at [VOP's website](http://www.vop.org/consultations/) (www.vop.org/consultations/) where each participant can let their member of Congress know what they think about the issue at hand.

“We’re all looking forward to helping put together Oklahoma’s Citizen Cabinet,” said Public Opinion Learning Laboratory Director Amy Sue Goodin. “We stress objectivity in the collection of data and impartiality with respect to the political process. The Citizen Cabinet’s non-partisan nature matches wholly with our professional goals and values.”

“The Carl Albert Center is eager to support this initiative in an effort to increase citizen awareness and participation in critical policy debates confronting the U.S. Congress,” said Director and Curator, Cindy Simon Rosenthal.

The University of Oklahoma's Public Opinion Learning Laboratory is a state-of-the-art survey research facility established to conduct research on public opinion to foster knowledge about public affairs and conduct research on public policy important to University departments, state and local governments, media organizations, other public and private entities. It has maintained telephone, mail, web-based, and in-person survey capacity for more than 10 years and offers an array of services including computer-assisted telephone interviewing, study design and planning, questionnaire design, focus group research, Internet surveys and mail surveys.

Established in 1979 by the Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education and the Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma, The Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center is a nonpartisan institution devoted to teaching and research related to the United States Congress and more broadly to strengthening representative democracy through engaged and informed citizens.

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Voice Of the People is a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that uses innovative methods and technology to give the American people a more effective voice in government.