

MPR News

Impact Report—August 2024



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MPR News Provides Wide-Ranging Election Coverage

Donor support powers Minnesota Public Radio’s (MPR) and American Public Media’s (APM) commitment to covering the issues and stories that matter most to our communities, members and listeners, including the need for **up-to-date and relevant election information and programming.**

MPR News covers issues that impact our community, our state and our nation, including national and local elections. Election coverage is regularly at the forefront of news coverage and special programs and is especially critical during election years. From **Talking Sense** (a yearlong reporting project designed to help navigate challenging political conversations in a way that’s aimed at preserving relationships) to **Voter Voices** (interviews with people on the street about the top issues motivating them during elections) to an “elections hub” tool that will track how elected officials have voted and will offer information on candidates, MPR News will continue to be a source of unbiased reporting and connection, understanding and learning. Generous donors inspire and enable this informative and innovative programming.

HIGHLIGHTS:

Talking Sense



Political polarization has destroyed many relationships, and many people believe they cannot discuss elections and topics like policing, abortion or climate change with family or friends who differ from them politically. In early 2024, MPR News launched **Talking Sense**, a reporting project designed to help people have hard political conversations. The project includes a **tool** that gives people tips on how to bring up difficult subjects and find common ground.

As a part of Talking Sense, MPR News and the nonprofit organization **Braver Angels** have jointly hosted several **in-person events across Minnesota** as opportunities for participants from across the political spectrum to explore how polarization is affecting communities and families. Additional events and programs will be held throughout 2024 leading up to the election including a live show at the Minnesota State Fair in late August.



Bill Doherty, co-founder of Braver Angels moderates the Talking Sense workshop in Rochester. Photo credit: Ken Klotzbach

HIGHLIGHTS: *continued*



MPR News reporter Catharine Richert introduces the Talking Sense workshop in Rochester. Photo credit: Ken Klotzbach



REACH: *continued*

Sponsored 3 Talking Sense events across the state with more than

150 participants

75

people participated in the 2022 Voter Voices project and MPR News published 12 voting vignettes on the website and broadcast them on the radio

111,492

unique visitors to election coverage and resources on mprnews.org in November 2022, including 27,953 visitors to 2022 voter guides

15,517

unique visitors to the 'Election Hub' (the area for live election results) the week of November 6, 2022

816,841

pageviews on election stories/reporting over the calendar year 2022

Voter Voices

In 2022 MPR News sponsored a program called **Voter Voices** and we will offer that programming again in 2024. Reporters will interview people on the street about the top issues motivating them this election and remind people about election engagement.

We want to know what's on voters' minds heading into the polls this year. And voters across the state will be able to answer this question candidly. The 2022 Voter Voices collection highlighted dozens of unique views from Minnesotans on how the election shows up in their lives.



HIGHLIGHTS: *continued*

Questions Minnesotans answered included:

Q: Do you have any voting traditions?

Q: Are you voting? Why or why not?

Q: Do you talk about politics with friends and family?

“I talk to my peers all the time. Like, you can’t go through your everyday life and just have the thoughts and feelings and just internal action. It needs to be external,” said Sean Fisher of Collegeville, Minn.

Q: What election issues are important to you?

Q: Do you think the election will be fairly decided?

Q: How important is party affiliation to you?

“I vote for both parties. It depends on who the candidate is and what they stand for,” Melanie Carlson of Cannon Falls, Minn. said.

Q: What does the right to vote mean to you?

“It’s something that we all need to take advantage of as Americans,” said Todd Smith of Grand Marais, Minn.

Q: How do you get information about the candidates?

COMMUNITY RESPONSE:



The historians are really clear that we are experiencing higher levels of divisiveness and polarization than any time since the 1850s. This polarization is not primarily about issues. Polarization now is more defined by social polarization—about how we feel about each other. It has invaded so much of our country.”

– Bill Doherty, co-founder of Braver Angels



The reason I’m here tonight is the polarization I’ve seen just makes me sad. I’ve left the church I was a member of for 26 years because of an undercurrent of polarizing beliefs that my value system didn’t allow me to stay with. It makes me very sad that had to happen. I lost friends along the way. And it just makes me sad. I would like to be a part of the solution.”

– Talking Sense event attendee



During any kind of conversation, I want to have a sense of curiosity. I want to set the intention of curiosity—to be open to wherever that goes and to listen.”

– Talking Sense event attendee



Talking Sense was born out of a decade of covering politics followed by a hard couple of years covering the COVID-19 pandemic. During that time, I spoke with countless people who described how important relationships had dissolved over political disagreements. It all felt pretty hopeless, but I also saw a journalistic opportunity: Instead of just reporting on political polarization, what if we also gave people tools to talk more empathetically about the issues that divide us?”

– Catharine Richert, MPR News reporter