Why is it getting harder to reach agreement?

Political Polarization
What is happening?

We live in a time of

• near historic levels of distrust in (federal and state) government
• intense focusing on our differences
• fast changing communication formats that are very hard to manage or keep in front of

Partisan Identity has become our most important ‘Identity’
There is a growing political polarization between Democrats and Republicans.

Source: Pew Research
There is a growing political polarization between Democrats and Republicans.
There is growing animosity towards the other political party

Source: Pew Research
There is less acceptance by parents of political diversity in their children’s marriage.
Why is this happening?

• Media / social media and overheated rhetoric

• Division makes for good fundraising (and $ for the media)

• Fast changing global economics (increased migration, anxiety about the future, etc.)

• Some research shows that the people who care the most about politics have the least understanding of their political opponents!

• “Nutpicking”
Why does it matter?

• Our complex world has too many silos

• If people hold wrong-headed visions of the other side it may exacerbate breakdowns in trust and dialogue

• We are getting ‘stuck’ on issues more often than in the past (for example, transportation funding)

• In order to work through stuck issues you need to have a base of understanding and a pool of trust
What can we do about it?

• Perhaps... Americans are not only polarized due to differences in their beliefs, but also due to an overestimation of the magnitude of those differences!

• However, it feels like we are getting better at facing and taking on harder issues than we were in the past

• We need to work harder to better understand (not necessarily agree with) the views of the other side: understanding helps people identify solutions
What can we do about it?

• **Demonstrate civility** in the face of tough situations; exercise restraint; try to consider other viewpoints with an open mind

• Appreciate there are **shared values** and **assume good intentions**

• Get to know people and their multiple identities, not just their political identity (know them as a Mom/Dad, a coach, etc.)

• Build your identity as a Problem Solver
One of today’s goals...

To try a new process to talk with others who may disagree with you on an issue.