



A **Make Shift Coffee House** is a place where people with different political views get the chance to understand each other better. It happens in face-to-face conversations where people listen to each other with curiosity and civility.

The Divide

America has been strong because of its unique political system, which works best when people with different views work together.

Right now, though, people are so politically divided that we're not working together. The incivility and contempt people show to "the other side" threaten what we love about America.

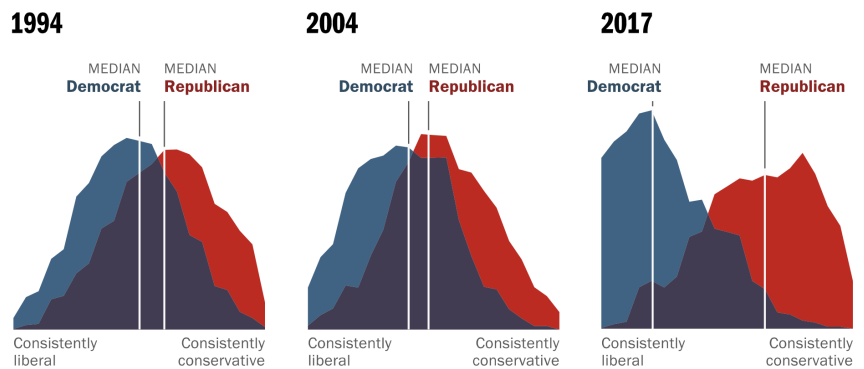
A 2017 Pew Research Center study confirmed that we are becoming dramatically more partisan.

Along with the political divide, there is an erosion of civility in political conversations. This is leading to gridlock in Augusta and in Washington.

"The partisan divide on political values grows even wider."¹

Democrats and Republicans more ideologically divided than in the past

Distribution of Democrats and Republicans on a 10-item scale of political values



Notes: Ideological consistency based on a scale of 10 political values questions (see methodology). The blue area in this chart represents the ideological distribution of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents; the red area of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents. The overlap of these two distributions is shaded purple.

Source: Survey conducted June 8-18, 2017.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Bringing People Together

Make Shift Coffee Houses bring people together face-to-face across our political divides, to learn from our differences and listen to each other with civility and respect.

When we understand and respect each other, we can find positive solutions, even if we disagree. Our conversations help reduce conflict and gridlock so we can work together to build our state and our country.

Research has proven that "people are more hostile to others in the abstract than when they meet them in person."² The experiences participants have in their conversations with "the other side" at Make Shift Coffee House often surprise them.

"If we can't find a civil way to discuss different viewpoints, we will be hard pressed to continue with democracy. That's why Make Shift is so important right now."

- Pam Plumb, former Chair of Portland City Council

How It Works

Make Shift Coffee Houses are held in libraries, on college campuses, in churches, veterans' centers, and many other places. They are free to everyone who attends. So far, 36 coffee houses have happened in 7 Maine counties, with over 2,000 attendees.

Remarkably, the co-chairs of the Advisory Board are the Chair of the Maine GOP and the Chair of the Maine Democratic Party. Make Shift was founded by Craig Freshley, a professional facilitator who has worked with hundreds of organizations all across Maine. Launching Make Shift was an act of Craig's love and respect for dialogue as a means to bring people together.

*"I appreciate the chance to hear different viewpoints in a non-confrontational way. The wide variety of opinions and respectful dialogue is unique and very valuable."
- Laura Young, Maine Community Foundation*

The Need

If you're alarmed by the gridlock and polarization of today's political climate, you're not alone. Make Shift Coffee Houses are very popular and we can't pull off nearly as many as are needed. Your gift helps bring civil dialogue to communities in rural Maine, to communities across the country, to a hometown like yours.

"Understanding each other opens the way for creative solutions. Make Shift Coffee House is doing exactly that and it's so needed right now!" - Carol Wishcamper, Donor

You Can Build Bridges

If you want to support civility and the democratic process, please make a gift online at MakeShiftCoffeeHouse.com. Or send a check payable to Friends of the Maine State Library, our 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor. Make a note that your gift is to support Make Shift Coffee House and mail to: Kristna Evans, Treasurer, Friends of the Maine State Library, 4 Mast Landing, Bath, ME 04530.

You can contact Craig at Craig@Freshley.com.

Thank you for your curiosity and concern.

Together, we can support each other to be good neighbors and good citizens!

October 14, 2019

¹ Pew Research Center, October, 2017, [The partisan divide on political values grows even wider.](#)

² Arthur Brooks, The New York Times, January 21, 2018, commenting on [Richard LaPiere's 1934 study of attitudes vs. actions.](#)