

PRESIDING OFFICERS CHALLENGE DELEGATES AND EXPRESS EXPECTATIONS

John Ball, OH:

“For many of you, the YMCA Conference on National Affairs will be the most diverse space you have ever been a part of. On the mountain, you will come across many unfamiliar viewpoints, and I hope all of you take the time in debate to genuinely consider the perspective of your peers. The most persuasive, compelling arguments are often times the most thoughtful, considerate and validating of their oppositions’ viewpoints. I challenge you all this week to go beyond simply stating your own opinion in debate. Work to relate with your peers and find common ground.”

Julia Khan, CA:

“I’m going to arrive on the mountain fully expecting to hear the merits and demerits of innovative new policy. My challenge to delegates coming to this conference is to learn to take full advantage of feedback. I know criticism can be difficult to hear, but the structure of CONA really creates spaces that allow for difficult but productive self-improvement.”

Parker Bunton, MI:

“The beauty of the mountain is the isolation from the world and the existence of a new culture away from one’s home – a culture of open ideals and dialogue that allows intellectual minds to grow and learn. With the current culture of our great country, I hope every delegate feels comfortable with expressing their ideas as well as welcomes the challenge of another’s. Do not remain stubborn in belief but bendable. To live in a society of rigid views is one that is bound to collapse.”

Natasha Menon, AZ:

“I expect this conference to be gratifying and to meet some of the most incredible people I will ever meet. I’ve had this experience the last two years at CONA. I hope that the delegates can have similar experiences because CONA can be a place of immense growth. I challenge the delegates to embrace the spirit of Blue Ridge and be open to the perspectives of all delegates, no matter how different they may be.”

Raghavendra Pai, OK:

“I’m looking forward to amazing debate and discussion about hard-hitting topics that our nation and the world are grappling with. My one challenge to the delegates is to go out of your comfort zone. Meet new people, speak up on topics that you feel really passionate about, and put yourself out there! The delegates at this conference are absolutely fantastic and each one of them deserves to be heard and feel welcomed.”

Andie Flanigan, LA:

“Everyone has expectations for events in their lives. These expectations often lead to disappointment and confusion when the pieces don’t fall into the exact place you imagined. My challenge for all of the 2017 CONA delegates is to cast away any expectations you have for this conference and take it day by day. Give this challenge your all. You will be surprised at the fulfillment and sense of thankfulness it brings. My goal for the conference is to meet every delegate. If we haven’t met yet, please introduce yourself! I wish you the best of luck!” ★



LEADERS ARTICULATE HOPES FOR THE CONFERENCE ★ THE PRESIDING OFFICERS OF 2017 FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: RAGHAVENDREA PAI, OK; JOHN BALL, OH; JULIA KHAN, CA; PARKER BUNTON, MI; NATASHA MENON, AZ; ANDIE FLANIGAN, LA

PHOTO FROM THE CONFERENCE OFFICE ARCHIVES

EUREKA! WE FOUND THE CONA SWAG SHOP!

The 2017 Swag Shop in Eureka Hall lobby is a one-stop shop for all your CONA merchandise needs. All of the products are available while supplies last, so make sure to go ahead and purchase what you want!

This year there are a variety of shirts featuring the 50th conference logo. The conference short-sleeved shirts are available in a limited supply in navy, maroon, light blue and white for \$10. This same 50th conference design is being sold in long-sleeved navy and light blue for \$15, and a hooded sweatshirt in maroon and navy for \$25.

Buy any two items and get a free sticker!

The YMCA CONA comfort colors T-shirts are also back this year. Short sleeves are available in mustard, emerald, purple, granite and red for \$15. Long-sleeved shirts are available in granite and red for \$20.

The shop offers two types of Camelback water bottles. One is a 1L Granite water bottle with a CONA logo for \$22 and a .75L bottle in red or blue for \$22. Stickers featuring the red, white, and blue CONA logo are \$3 each. Twenty note cards cost \$10.

An only-this-year item is 50th CONA cufflinks for \$15, while supplies last.

The store accepts credit, debit and cash payments. ★

YOUTH AND GOVERNMENT, CONA EMPHASIZE CIVIL DISCOURSE



DELEGATE, PLEASE DISPLAY YOUR PLACARD ★ DELEGATES VIE FOR ATTENTION IN HOPES OF BEING CALLED ON DURING THE 2016 PLENARY SESSION

ERIN HENRY, NY; ASHLEY HATCH, CO ★ STAFF WRITERS

OPINION

“Every action done in company ought to be with some sign of respect to those that are present.” That statement by George Washington expresses the significance of civil discourse, which is an interaction within a discussion that is meant to provide understanding.

In the Youth and Government program, delegates honor the code of civil discourse by approaching debating with courtesy and open mindedness. The Conference on National Affairs, or CONA, promotes a better understanding of governmental issues, teaches the importance of democracy and creates long-lasting friendships, all of which can only happen when people respectfully discuss policy.

Having the opportunity to write and debate proposals without hostility is truly a gift.

In Washington, leaders often hold grudges and speak poorly of the opposing party, attempting to trip up the opposition as opposed to

collaborating. In October 2013, the government shut down when the parties could not come up with a fiscal resolution that was appealing to both sides, because each party refused to compromise. When we do not use civil discourse, “it creates political gridlock,” says Carolyn J. Lukensmeyer, executive director of the National Institute for Civil Discourse. “Furthermore, it destroys the deliberative nature of democracy.”

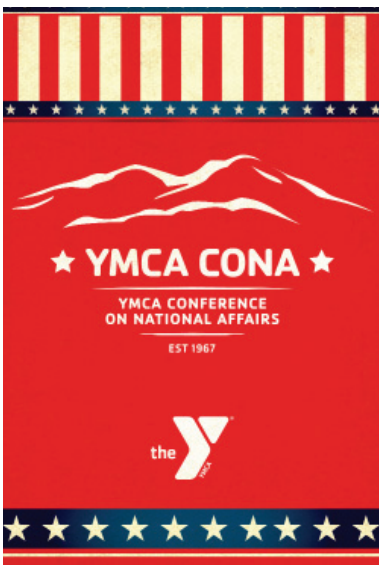
Civil discourse is also lacking in Washington through disrespectful language, an important issue in the previous presidential election, with Donald Trump’s controversial remarks about Latinos and Hillary Clinton’s famous “basket of deplorables” line.

“With messaging tailored for each of our liking, it’s inevitable that many cannot even imagine another perspective than their own,” states The Aspen Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based nonpartisan forum for

values-based leadership and the exchange of ideas. “We need to create more opportunities to sit in a room and discuss values and ideas, to acknowledge differences in perspectives and yet be able to engage in discourse whose final end is to appreciate the other’s perspective, even if we do not agree.”

At CONA, delegates must be mindful of their rhetoric as they review and debate proposals on controversial issues. The conference is about cooperation, and in committees and pre-CONA state gatherings, individuals prepare their peers by offering constructive criticism, regardless of whether they agree with the aim of the proposal, to help others strengthen their proposals, so they can confidently debate.

Within a democracy, ideas are meant to be discussed, exchanged and deliberated. We are meant to form our own opinions, while the people around us do the same. We grow when those ideas are shared. ★



UTILIZE TECHNOLOGY ★
BE PREPARED
AND STAY INFORMED
WITH THE YAPP APP

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY THE
CONFERENCE OFFICE

MOBILIZING CONA WITH THE YAPP APP

YAPP is the official mobile application for the YMCA Conference on National Affairs. The app includes information such as the conference schedule, news feed/announcements from the Conference Office, committee names, conference map, committee assignments (as they’re made), finalized GA and plenary calendars, videos and more!

Many delegates find that using the app contributes to their positive conference experience, as it provides them with easily accessible information in a clear and simple delivery platform. ★

You can download the app at:
<http://my.yapp.us/YMCACONA>

Some information also will be posted at
ymcacona.org/info

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