

## From the Director:

As Spring 2015 approaches, we at the Institute are planning the launch of two major new initiatives even as we roll out programs already on our agenda for the spring semester. We are excited at the potential for both of these new initiatives to shine a national spotlight on St. Petersburg College and our work in promoting civic engagement.



The first of the new programs is the New Ideas Conference, set for March 27. We are pleased to work with the office of St. Petersburg Congressman David Jolly on what we hope will become an annual event that will offer new ideas for solving some of our most pressing national policy issues. Congressman Jolly will guest-host and moderate discussions by four panels of distinguished experts from national, state and local perspectives.

The second new project with national potential is called the Climate Change Arctic Program. We are partnering with the Institute on Science for Global Policy in Washington to present a two-day workshop at SPC to discuss the potential impact of climate change on individuals and their communities. The project includes a visit to the Arctic Circle aboard a National Geographic expedition ship by a Pinellas delegation to see climate change up close.

Also in this edition of the newsletter you will see a report on our upcoming programs. Please note especially the Village Square dinner on March 26, where Same-Sex Marriage will be the topic for discussion. And also, the special early purchase bonus on new Village Square memberships for 2015-2016.

Thank you for your continued interest in the work of the Institute, and enjoy our glorious spring before the storm clouds of summer roll in.

--David Klement  
Executive Director



The Institute for Strategic Policy Solutions at St. Petersburg College provides a forum to help people deal with the uncertainty around them. The Institute addresses real-world problems and the needs of the community in a strategic and technologically savvy way and also prepares its students for careers in a global marketplace.

## ON THE WEB

Learn more about the Institute by visiting our website:  
[solutions.spcollege.edu](http://solutions.spcollege.edu)

[Click here](#) to connect with us on facebook.

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

**March 26, 2015, 6-8:15 p.m.:**

The Village Square dinner program: Same-Sex Marriage: *Saying "I Do" Does Not End the Debate*. Conference Center, Seminole Campus of SPC, 9200 113th St. N. Admission (includes dinner): \$25 members and educators, \$30 guests, \$20 students. [Register here.](#)

**March 27, 2015: 9 a.m.-4 p.m.:**

Free public forum, *New Ideas Conference* hosted by Congressman David Jolly. Digitorium, Seminole Campus of SPC, 9200 113th St. N. Limited seating. [Register here.](#)

**April 22, 2015, 6-8 p.m.:** Free Public Forum: *Speed Date Your Local Leaders - St. Petersburg.*

Museum of Fine Arts, 255  
Beach Dr. NE, St. Petersburg.  
[Register here.](#)

## New Ideas Conference: A New Approach to Consensus



A line-up of national, state and local leaders will address some of the nation's most difficult policy issues at the New Ideas Conference on March 27 presented by the Institute for Strategic Policy Solutions and hosted by Congressman David Jolly.

The workshop, co-sponsored by the Tampa Bay Times, Bright House Networks, and Boston Capital Leasing, will be held at SPC's Seminole Campus, 9200 113th Street N. The public is invited and admission is free, but advance registration is required.

At a time when partisan rancor too often reduces political dialogue to shouting matches or echo chambers, there is a need for a centrist approach to policy debates. That is the goal of the New Ideas Conference, said Congressman Jolly, R- St. Petersburg, who is honorary host of the event. "This is an opportunity to engage in a productive conversation with some of the brightest minds on these topics," said Congressman Jolly, R- St. Petersburg. "This type of open dialogue is critical to building consensus that can lead to real solutions for our most difficult challenges."

The conference will be held in the Digitorium on the Seminole Campus of SPC, 9200 113th Street N. Seating is limited and will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. [Register here.](#)

[Click here to read more](#)

## Same-Sex Marriage: Taking It to the Supreme Court

The implications of same-sex marriage, newly legalized in Florida, will be explored at Thursday's Village Square dinner on March 26. Titled *Same-Sex Marriage: Saying 'I Do' Does Not End the Debate*, the forum will be from 6 to 8:15 p.m. in the Conference Center of the Seminole Campus, 9200 113th Street N. Media co-sponsors are the Tampa Bay Times and WEDU Television.

A panel of experts will explore these undetermined implications. Panelists are:

- Ben Diamond, Attorney at Williamson, Diamond amp& Caton, P.A.
- Dr. David Liebert, Professor and Department Chair for Social and Behavioral Sciences, St. Petersburg College
- John Stemberger, President of the Florida Family Policy Council
- **Hannah Willard** Central Florida Field Organizer and Statewide Marriage Equality Coordinator, Equality Florida
- Moderating will be Craig Kopp, Station Manager of WMNF FM

Admission to the dinner and program is \$25 for Village Square members and educators, \$30 for guests, and \$20 for students. Advance registration is required. [Register here.](#)

[Click here to read more](#)

The Village Square at St. Petersburg College  
Institute for Strategic Policy Solutions presents:

## Same-Sex Marriage: Saying 'I Do' Does Not End the Debate

**Thursday, March 26  
6-8:15 p.m.**

Moderated by:  
**Craig Kopp**, Station Manager, WMNF FM

**Panelists:**

- Ben Diamond, Attorney, Williamson, Diamond & Caton, P.A.
- Dr. David Liebert, Professor and Department Chair for Social and Behavioral Sciences, St. Petersburg College
- Nadine Smith, CEO, Equality Florida
- John Stemberger, President, Florida Family Policy Council

Seminole Campus Conference Center  
Seminole Community Library  
St. Petersburg College  
9200 113th St. N.

In 2004, 65 percent of Floridians opposed same-sex marriage -- and four years later amended the Constitution to ban it. In October 2014, 56 percent approved same-sex marriage -- and three months later it became legal. What caused this dramatic shift in public opinion, and what does it mean for a culture that has prohibited gay marriage for millennia? A panel of experts will discuss the pros and cons of the issue, its impact on society, and the prospects for national legalization by the U.S. Supreme Court this summer.

Seating is limited and online registration is required.

Register now

Includes the dinner and program  
\$25 for Village Square members  
\$30 for guests  
\$20 for students

<http://solutions.spcollege.edu>  
or call 727-394-6942 for more information

Presenting Media Sponsors

Tampa Bay Times WEDU

SPC St. Petersburg College  
INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC POLICY SOLUTIONS

## A Great Time to Join Village Square! Three Months Free!



If you like in-depth analysis and community conversation about our most current policy questions, now is a perfect time to join the Village Square. The 2014-2015 Village Square season draws to a close with the [Same-Sex Marriage program on March 26](#). But you can join the Village Square now, get a jump on the 2015-2016 season, and get your member discount on this month's program. Members receive a reduced admission price for all Village Square events and discounts at our partner restaurants. In addition, members are the first to know about special events presented by the Institute.

As a member of the Village Square, you can also feel good about supporting a venue for meaningful and respectful dialogue on critical policy concerns facing our community, state and country. There's a special atmosphere in a room where people arrive because of a sincere interest in seeing problems solved in a fair and thoughtful way. Village Square's instant polling lets you see how your dinner mates feel about the issues being discussed.

Please consider joining this traditional yet timely model for community engagement. You can register to attend the March 26 program and become a member at the same time by [clicking here](#). Your membership will be valid through June 2016. So you will gain over three months at no cost!

[Follow this link to learn more about Village Square membership and join or renew your membership at now.](#)

## A Second (Speed) Date with Local Leaders



The Institute's unique and fun design for civic dialog, *Speed Date Your Local Leaders*, is coming back for an encore after its debut in Clearwater last fall. This time, it will focus on St. Petersburg leaders and will be held at the Museum of Fine Arts in downtown St. Petersburg on April 22 from 6 to 8 p.m.

The *Speed Date* format, modeled after a program by the same name offered by The Village Square Tallahassee, gives community members a special way to connect with community leaders in an informal setting. Like the brief "dating" format created by young singles, this event has leaders rotating from table to table every seven minutes, offering each group of participants an opportunity to ask questions or offer ideas that might never have prompted a phone call, email or public testimony. Plus there will be free pizza, free soda, free valet parking and free museum admission.

Among more than a dozen local leaders who have committed to participate are: Bridgette Bello, Publisher, *Tampa Bay Business Journal*; Kathryn Gillette, CEO, Bayfront Health St. Petersburg, Anthony Holloway, Police Chief of St. Petersburg, and Tim Nickens, Editorial Page Editor of the *Tampa Bay Times*.

The event is free and open to the public, but participants are required to register in advance. [Register here.](#)

## Welcome to New Board Member



The Institute welcomes Debra A. Prewitt as the newest member of its Board of Directors. Ms. Prewitt is Director of Public Policy and Strategic Partnerships for the Juvenile Welfare Board. She has 26 years of experience in public policy creation and analysis leading to systems application, improvement, and implementation. She is a former mayor of New Port Richey following service on the New Port Richey City Council, and served two terms in the Florida House of Representatives from District 46 in West Pasco from 1994 to 1998.

During the economic stimulus years, Ms. Prewitt led a Resource Development Team that secured

over \$1 million in grant awards including a \$600,000 Teen Pregnancy Prevention Grant (recurring for five years), and a \$350,000 public benefits access and retention demonstration project (Heart amp& Hardware).

## Climate Change Project Could Lead to Arctic Circle



As the Director's Report at the top of this newsletter states, the Institute is planning a major new project for this fall with the potential for national and even international coverage. We are partnering with the Institute on Science for Global Policy (ISGP) in Washington to present a two-day workshop to discuss the potential impact of climate change on individuals and their communities. The project will conclude in 2016 with a visit to the Arctic Circle aboard a National Geographic expedition ship by a Pinellas delegation to see climate change up close.

Pinellas County is one of five communities around the U.S. selected as a staging area for an international project to study and report on the potential impact of climate change on the citizens' lives and their communities during 2015 and 2016. The Institute is leading the local community-wide discussion during a two-day conference that emphasizes serious debates of the issues raised by both believers and doubters of climate change. A working group of local citizens will work with ISPS and ISGP to stage the conference, which will include a cross-section of 40 to 45 invited experts and local leaders plus as many as 200 members of the general public.

Similar conferences have been or will be held at the other four designated cities (Tucson, Ariz., Whittier, Calif., Alpena, Mich., and Toms River, N.J.) throughout 2015. Following those conferences, an ISGP working group will identify up to 100 citizens from the participating communities to be part of an eight-day expedition aboard a Lindblad/National Geographic vessel sailing to the Arctic Circle in summer 2016. Participation in this project could bring national recognition to SPC. The work products of the conferences will be published as white papers, and video from the expedition likely will be packaged into a PBS documentary.

To learn more about the project, go to <http://scienceforglobalpolicy.org/>

## Casino Gambling Expansion Would Be Popular



David Blankenhorn and Nick Larossi debate casino gambling

As the Florida Legislature considers the expansion of casino gambling during its spring session, lawmakers will not face the wrath of voters as they might have 20 years ago.

At least that is what one could conclude from the Institute's straw poll conducted at its Jan. 29 Village Square forum on the issue. Titled *Rolling the Dice: Is Casino Gambling a Good Bet for Florida?*, the program sparked spirited debate between the panelists advocating for and against the proposition and a substantial margin of support. Asked at the start of the program whether Florida should expand gambling to include Las Vegas-type casinos, 52 percent of audience members voted yes, 30 percent voted no, and 17 percent were undecided.

That's a sharp turnaround from Florida's last statewide referendum on legalizing casino gambling, held in 1994, when it was soundly defeated at the polls. But that outcome also reflects a national shift in attitudes toward gambling. A 2009 poll showed that 81 percent of Americans think casino gambling is acceptable and it is legal in 37 states.

Nick Larossi, lobbyist for the gaming industry, argued that gambling is a potentially rich source of tax revenue for the state and, when properly regulated, poses no significant problems for its host community or state. Arguing against expansion of gambling, David Blankenhorn, founder and president of the Institute for American values, cited numerous studies that show gambling has negative impacts on host communities, exacerbating the problem of gambling addiction and contributing to increases in crime.

[Video of the program is available here.](#)

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