

The Glastonbury MLK Community Initiative, A Community Conversation
“Does Your Vote Count? An Examination of the Issues”
January 31, 2018, 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Glastonbury Riverfront Community Center

The Glastonbury Martin Luther King Community Initiative will host its first Community Conversation for 2018 on Wednesday, January 31, 2018, at the Glastonbury Riverfront Community Center. There will be a free reception from 6:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. The Conversation will be from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. This Community Conversation, entitled “Does Your Vote Count? An Examination of the Issues,” will explore issues pertaining to citizens’ rights and privileges relating to voting, on-line voter registration, voting by mail, accountability, the integrity of the voting process, cyber-security, election audits, and the National Popular Vote movement.

A number of Advocacy Groups committed to advancing social justice will have tables where participants will have the opportunity to learn about the mission and work of the various groups and explore volunteer opportunities.

Our panel includes Denise Merrill, Secretary of the State, Luther Weeks, Executive Director of the Connecticut Citizen Election Audit and CTVotersCount, Jonathan Perloe, an organizer of the National Popular Vote movement and the Director of Programs and Communications at CT Against Gun Violence, and Paul Herrnson, Professor of Political Science at the University of Connecticut. Our moderator will be Dean Alfred Carter.

As Connecticut’s Secretary of the State, Secretary Merrill is the chief elections official. As such, Secretary Merrill has focused on modernizing Connecticut’s elections. Since taking office, she has supported democratic participation in elections and has ensured that every vote is counted accurately. Secretary Merrill has worked to expand voter participation through “Election Day” and online voter registration. She has also improved Connecticut’s democratic accountability and integrity with a series of rapid response processes to Election Day problems.

As Secretary Merrill noted, “Connecticut voters can be proud that we have some of the most stringent audit laws in the country. Between making it easier for Connecticut citizens to register and vote, an increased focus on cyber-security, and our scrupulous audit process, the rights of the voter are our highest priority.” Connecticut boasts one of the strictest audit statutes in the country and was the first state in New England to require a comprehensive audit of election results. In addition, in the run-up to the last Presidential election, the Secretary’s Office successfully ensured the integrity of Connecticut’s online voter registration system. According to the Department of Homeland Security, Connecticut was one of the 21 states targeted by Russian agents, but that the attempted Russian intrusion into the online voter registration database was stopped by Connecticut’s intrusion detection system.

Prior to her election as Secretary of the State, Ms. Merrill served as a State Representative for seventeen years, during which period she served as the House Majority Leader and as the House Chair on the Appropriations Committee. Also prior to becoming a legislator, Ms. Merrill worked for the organization now known as Civics First, developing civics curricula for the classroom. Once in the legislature, then-Representative Merrill succeeded in passing a law mandating that civics be taught for at least one semester of high school in Connecticut.

Secretary Merrill received her undergraduate degree from Alliant International University and her law degree from the University of Connecticut School of Law.

Luther Weeks is a computer scientist and grassroots activist relating to election integrity, civil rights, citizen-lobbying the Connecticut Legislature and the U.S. Congress. Mr. Weeks’ efforts in Connecticut contributed to the passage of the paper record law in 2005 and the selection of optical-scan over touch screen voting equipment in 2006. Since 2007, he has organized citizens to observe and independently report on Connecticut’s post-election audits, examining the sufficiency, reliability, and effectiveness of the election processes. Mr. Weeks is the Executive Director of the Connecticut Citizen Election Audit and CTVotersCount.

Mr. Weeks is member of the State Election Audit Working Group which helps advocates and officials write state audit laws and regulations, and a member of the Election Verification Network – a national group of about 200 computer scientists, security scientists, activists, election officials, and civil rights activists focused on election integrity:

Mr. Weeks will address election integrity and security, the need for paper ballots, election audits, cyber-risks, electronic vulnerability, and the results of auditing the 169 local election websites in Connecticut. He will also address issues raised in the 2016 election based on allegations of cyber-attack and that some results were rigged.

Mr. Weeks received a B.S. in Mathematics from Clarkson University, a M.S. in Computer Science from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and is a Master Fellow of the Life (insurance) Management Institute.

Jonathan Perloe is one of the grassroots leaders of the National Popular VoteCT. Mr. Perloe organizes and engages supporters of the movement and facilitates legislative advocacy at the state and federal level. He also manages communications to supporters, legislators and press across digital and print channels.

The National Popular Vote Interstate Compact is an agreement among states to elect the President according to the will of the majority in a manner consistent with the Constitution, a nonpartisan solution to make everyone’s vote for president matter, ensuring that the Presidential candidate with the most votes wins, just the way members to the CT General Assembly are elected. States that join the Compact pledge to award their electoral votes to the candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states. The Compact comes into force once it has been adopted by states that collectively have 270 electoral votes, the number needed to elect the President.

Mr. Perloe is also the Director of Programs and Communications at Connecticut Against Gun Violence. Mr. Perloe graduated from the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business.

Paul S. Herrnson is a Professor of Political Science at the University of Connecticut. Professor Herrnson will address money and politics; voting technology and election administration. Professor Herrnson has served as President of the Southern Political Science Association, Chair of the Political Organizations and Parties section of the American Political Science Association, and as an American Political Science Association Congressional Fellow. Professor Herrnson has advised the U.S. Congress, Connecticut General Assembly, Maryland General Assembly, Federal Election Commission, and other government agencies and non-governmental organizations on matters pertaining to campaign finance, election administration, and political reform.

Professor Herrnson has a PhD from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a BA from Binghamton University.

Our moderator / facilitator will be Alfred L. Carter. Mr. Carter was a Dean of Students at Manchester Community College, is an experienced educator, sociologist, and humanist who has been active in the field of higher education for approximately forty years. Dean Carter has provided training in the areas of diversity, team building, stress management, leadership, communications, conflict management, mentoring / advising, managing change, and teaching effectiveness. Dean Carter was a founding partner in Rodgers and Carter Educational Consulting. Since retiring, he has continued participating in higher education, serving as Special Assistant to the Dean of Students at Capital Community College, training and speaking as well as continuing to mentor students and professionals.

The Glastonbury MLK Community Initiative is an all-volunteer, nonprofit organization, formed in 2001, to increase knowledge about, and understanding of, the philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We believe that bringing people together to discuss openly and honestly important issues relating to social justice will help build a more inclusive and tolerant community. We, thus, invite you to participate in a forum on a contemporary issue of social importance where our panelists will provide both a starting point and a resource for what we hope will be a lively, informative, and thought-provoking conversation.

This is a free event open to all. For additional information, please contact Darwin Kovacs at 860-559-2900 or darwinkovacs@aol.com or Leslie Ohta at 202-538-1161 or leslieohta@gmail.com, or www.glastonburymkci.org.