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NATE GARVIS, founder and author of "**Naked Civics**," and Michael Allen, a professor at Stetson University College of Law, examined the politics of public discourse at the Old Capitol in Tallahassee.

'Engaged, Not Enraged: Civility, Politics and Civic Engagement'

Nate Garvis, founder and author of "**Naked Civics**," and Michael Allen, a law professor and associate dean at Stetson University College of Law, spoke at a forum held at the Old Capitol August 27 examining the politics of public discourse.

The theme of "Engaged, Not Enraged: Civility, Politics and Civic Engagement" was: "It's not about moving left or right. It's about moving forward." About 80 people attended — from high school students to legislators to retirees and former public officials.

Evidence of polarity in politics is easy to find — from votes on controversial subjects sharply divided along party lines to political discourse aimed at inflaming passions and pointing fingers. Via cable news and other media outlets, many people follow only the news reports that confirm what they already believe.

The two speakers put forward the theory that the United States cannot find common ground when civility is discarded in favor for one-upping the other side. The nation needs to rebuild the skills of civility, including learning how to listen, discarding a winner-take-all attitude, and acknowledging that the path to common ground is paved with compromise.

Allen, who teaches courses on constitutional law and the federal courts, cited a handful of compromises necessary to get the Constitution passed, including the addition of the Bill of Rights.

Garvis is a former vice president of government affairs and senior public affairs officer for Target Corp. His book "**Naked Civics**" is about using cultural tools to effect positive social change. As for pointing out how to begin on a less polarized path, he said: "It is easier to act your way into a way of thinking than to think your way into a way of acting."

The event was sponsored by the Florida Law Related Education Association, the Florida Historic Capitol Museum, The League of Women Voters of Tallahassee, and The Village Square and was the kickoff for a new exhibit in the Florida Historic Capitol Museum called "Choosing to Participate: The Power of Civic Engagement."

The program was part of a national dialogue on civility funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities in cooperation with the American Bar Association Division for Public Education.

The PowerPoint and video from the session will be posted on the Florida Law Related Education [website](#). Future sessions are planned that will include teaching civil discussion skills with opportunities to practice those skills while addressing public issues. Dates have yet to be announced. For more information, email Annette Boyd Pitts, executive director of The Florida Law Related Education Association, at abpflreaed@aol.com.

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