Coping with the Cost of Healthcare at the Carter Library

Report by: Jan Levinson

On Wednesday, September 17th a dedicated contingent of students, faculty, and staff associated with the Russell Forum for Civil Life in Georgia traveled to the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library in Atlanta to co-host the first forum in the statewide Georgia Deliberations Fall Forum Series. The forum focused on weighing strategies for coping with the rising costs of health care.

The forum at the Carter library drew a crowd of almost sixty people who turned out to deliberate this issue on a rainy Wednesday afternoon—a sure sign of the issue’s growing significance. Tony Clark, of the Jimmy Carter Library, welcomed the enthusiastic group and Jill Severn, who manages civic engagement and outreach work for the Russell Library shared some details about the national forum initiative and the nine upcoming forums in Atlanta, Athens, Albany, and Tifton. Dr. Margaret Holt, who is retired from the UGA faculty, and Matt Garrett, who works in student affairs at Emory, co-moderated the forum. Jill Severn served as the scribe-recorder for the event and Matt Brandenburgh, a senior physics major at UGA served as the official observer. Jan Levinson, Assistant Outreach Archivist at the Russell Library also attended the forum and oriented participants as they arrived.

The forum focused on weighing the pros and cons and the tradeoffs and tensions associated with three approaches for addressing the problems associated with the current U.S. healthcare system.

“Considering how divisive the issue of health care has been in the past and currently, the comments from forum participants were remarkably non-partisan,” commented moderator Margaret Holt.

Participants expressed diverse opinions to the approaches, but invested great energy in listening to one another and remaining open to changing their perspectives. At the close of the meeting, many in the group remarked that they felt a real energy among the participants to begin to tackle component
problems associated with health care as first steps in dealing with the issue as a whole. The tenor of the
discussion and the great turnout also made many hopeful that civil civic life was alive and well in
Atlanta. Indeed, many participants expressed plans to return to the Carter Library for the two upcoming
forums (energy challenges, Thursday, October 2nd at 3 p.m. and the future mission of education,
Monday, October 13th at 3 p.m.) or even to venture to one of the other forums that will be held in
Athens and Tifton throughout this fall. After wrapping things up around 5:00 pm, the moderating team
celebrated success with a good meal at Manuel’s Tavern – and then headed home to Athens just before
dark.

For more information on the Russell Forum for Civic Life in Georgia, visit
http://www.libs.uga.edu/russell/rfclg, call (706) 542-5788, or email russellforum@gmail.com