Participants opened by introducing themselves and discussing particular concerns they have with politics at time.

Has money tainted politics so much that candidates who self-fund seem automatically desirable?

- Those who self-fund have greater flexibility in terms of what they say and do because they are not directly accountable to others. Some participants agreed that self-funding appeals to voters, but at the same time, they also recognized that few politicians have the financial resources and the capacity to self-fund that Donald Trump has.

- Participants generally agreed that elected officials tend to have more money than the average citizen.

- Participants favored publicly financed elections, which would enable candidates to get money from the government instead of the lobbyists, the wealthy and other special interests. Public financing could also result in shorter election cycles, which people found desirable.

- Participants were concerned about the low approval rating of Congress. People felt that both the influence of money and partisan politics have negative effects on the political system. Journalism has also declined, at least in part because of media ownership and control.

Has the media driven cult of celebrity and anti-Washington rhetoric unduly deflected attention from matters of public policy and governance?
What sort of campaign conduct should we expect from political candidates?

- There are at least two different ways to view political campaigns. One way is to focus on the substantive positions of the candidate. Another is to recognize that candidates are chosen by a party that expects candidate positions to align with the party.

- Participants were generally surprised by the amount of public support Trump has received and continues to get.

- Some felt his straightforward style is actually more relatable than more polished politicians. However, others felt style should count for less than content.

- People generally agreed that candidates are currently elected by too few voters and more people should participate in elections. Citizens have the power to do something about this.

What is the value of a democratic system where people can vote to represent their personal interests? Has money in politics made it impossible for the non-wealthy to have a candidate that represents their interests?

- Voting can be the lesser of two evils especially when it forces a binary rather than a more nuanced view.

- It was generally agreed that it is morally reprehensible that we are spending so much money on these campaigns. People felt that more money should be spent on education, for example.