Political Science Releases Report on "Democratic Imperatives: Innovations in Rights, Participation, and Economic Citizenship"

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WASHINGTON, June 4, 2012 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The APSA task force report, Democratic Imperatives, argues that in emerging and established democracies alike, the promise of democracy remains unfulfilled. The report focuses on policies and institutions designed to deepen democracy by increasing respect for human rights, promoting participatory governance, and securing the economic bases of democratic citizenship. It documents how these measures can help to reduce democratic deficits by making government and politics more responsive, more accountable and more transparent and by enabling citizens to take a greater role in governing themselves.

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In this recently released report, the task force offers insight from the field of political science into innovations that can help to reduce democratic deficits, increase legitimacy, and make democracy work better in new and long-established democracies. These are not abstract philosophical blueprints but rather policies and institutions being used successfully around the world today.

The report focuses on three arenas in which promising democratic innovations are emerging: 1) human rights-based approaches to democratization, welfare, and development; 2) participatory governance; and, 3) economic citizenship. The task force draws attention to crucial themes and common objectives: deepening democracy; enhancing collective and individual agency; reducing poverty; achieving greater equality of wealth, income, power, respect, influence, legal status, or opportunity; and, cultivating solidarity in democratic communities. The task force presents key innovations for revitalizing democracy in our volatile world.


Focus of the Task Force

Formed in 2009 by APSA President Carole Pateman (2010-11), the Task Force on Democracy, Economic Security, and Social Justice in a Volatile World formed to rethink familiar assumptions about democracy, economic security, and social justice in light of worrisome global trends. Its aim was to refresh and reinvigorate debates on the articulation between democracy, economic security, and social justice in developed and developing countries.

The task force began its work amid the convulsions triggered by the global economic and...
The tumult had already spread far beyond the economy, with bank bailouts sparking popular outrage that shook democratically elected governments in many countries. Today, the repercussions of the crisis are still being felt, from turmoil in the euro-zone to a spurring global economy and growing popular rejection of the politics of austerity. Meanwhile, global inequality is increasing, poverty remains stubbornly high, and evidence is mounting that traditional aid and development programs are not working.

The global economy, however, is hardly the only source of volatility in the world today. The upheavals of the Arab Revolutions of 2011 — and the harsh reprisals that have followed across the region and beyond — have once again thrust democratization, with all its promise and perils, to the center of the global stage. Protest movements like Occupy and the Indignados are spreading within established and more recent democracies. The 10th anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, in a context of growing war weariness and lingering security concerns, has led to renewed questioning of the costs, wisdom, and future of the so-called War on Terror. Climate change poses growing and diverse threats that politicians and policy makers have frankly failed to meet.

These developments have created an opening for consideration of new ideas and innovative models to advance democratization, development, and social justice. Events in the Middle East and North Africa vivify the continuing appeal of democracy and human rights and sharply challenge conventional thinking about the stability of authoritarian rule and the "dangers" of popular mobilization, and innovations in participatory governance highlight exciting new democratic possibilities. New approaches to development and democratization anchored in human rights point toward hopeful, if so far rarely realized, possibilities. New ideas about economic security and social justice offer a clear alternative to the politics of stagnation and retrenchment.


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**About APSA Task Forces:** APSA task forces bring relevant and timely research in the field of political science to the attention of policy makers and the public and promote interest in important policy questions within the discipline.

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