

## **Press Release: UNH Prof. Druskat Offers Guidelines for Thoughtful Voting**

**Raymond**--The Raymond Voter Information Project at [www.raymondvip.org](http://www.raymondvip.org) presented “What Influences Your Vote?” by Vanessa Druskat, PhD, associate professor of organizational behavior and management in the Whittemore School of Business and Economics at the University of New Hampshire. Professor Druskat has spoken and consulted widely in the field of leadership and team effectiveness and has written extensively on the part that emotional intelligence plays in making group decisions.

Opening the nonpartisan talk, Prof. Druskat referred to her semester in Budapest, Hungary where she spoke with students concerned about the lack of political truth-telling despite the demise of communism. “They lied to us then, and they lie to us now,” students complained, wondering how they could find the truth.

“Democracy is based on the idea that the collective intelligence of the group is smarter than any one individual,” Druskat explained to the audience. “Research shows that under the right conditions, especially when the way forward is not clear, and as long as outside influences don’t interfere, groups almost always make the best decisions. While we assume that we think for ourselves when we vote, we can be influenced by our desires to conform, to hear only the familiar, to rush to judgment, to bypass listening, and to respond to the status of the speaker rather than his or her ideas.”

To think for yourself when you vote, and thus increase the likelihood of a good group decision, Druskat explained that you must learn to recognize when your emotions are being manipulated and not let your feelings shut down your thinking. You must also avoid snap judgments and respond to new ideas with curiosity, questions, and careful listening.

Raymond VIP member and spokesperson, Colleen West-Coates, asked how Druskat’s ideas could be applied at town and other meetings to make the conversation more productive. “That is the role of the leader or the facilitator,” Druskat replied. “He/she must stop behaviors like bullying, domination of the conversation by a single individual, and other tactics that interfere with the collective intelligence of the group doing its best work.” Druskat suggested that specific communication rules, laid out at the beginning of the process, are the facilitator’s best friend.

See [www.raymondvip.org](http://www.raymondvip.org) for slides and the video provided by Raymond Community Television (RCTV), and for more information about Raymond VIP. Members of the Raymond Voter Information Project come from a broad range of careers and municipal experience, and have many personal viewpoints. However, within Raymond VIP, they are committed to neither support nor oppose any political party, candidate or warrant article and to focus on providing objective voter information. Raymond VIP is registered with the State of New Hampshire and with the Town Of Raymond as a nonprofit corporation and a charitable trust.