



# INTHRIVE

ADVOCACY  
SOLUTIONS

**Monthly Digest:** April 2024  
Your source for policy and advocacy guidance.

## What's inside?

 *Empathy Leads to Policy Change*

 *2 Upcoming events in Northern Virginia!*

by **David Smith** on April 5, 2024

In Richmond we're watching the governor set the pace to veto more bills than any Virginia governor in recent history. In Arizona crossover is happening and, with their divided government I'm expecting the same there. When we are forced to work across the aisle to implement, not just pass, legislation we have to find new ways to bridge the divide. Empathy isn't talked about much in lobbying and advocacy but it could be your key to implementing your policy goals in a bipartisan capitol.

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC  
**Empathy For Policy Change**



Before I launched my own firm and before I staffed a senior Delegate in Richmond, I got my start in the advocacy world working in the grassroots to change the criminal justice system in Virginia. (And, based on [this recent article in Axios](#) I think we've been very successful—at least in reducing prison populations) In the grassroots world you often hear about empathy as a strategy to transform an opponent to a supporter of your policy. You do this by finding shared values and use those values to create a bridge to your policy. This is a great tactic, whether you're a grassroots advocate or a high paid lobbyist. If you can build a bond on values then you have a way to talk about your issue and advance your cause.

But what if we take empathy a step further in our advocacy and lobbying?

In [\*Learning To Disagree: The Surprising Path to Navigating Differences With Empathy and Respect\*](#), John Inazu, the Sally D. Danforth Distinguished Professor of Law and Religion and professor of political science at Washington University in St. Louis School of Law, explores how we can use empathy to connect with people we disagree with—in our case people with opposing policy views.

Dr. Inazu argues the key to using empathy with people you don't agree with is by starting where they are. You want to understand why they hold the beliefs they do. (And, no, the reason can't be that they're stupid or evil!)

When we start with understanding, and being sympathetic to, the reason for our adversaries views we will discover the root causes of their opposition and understand their values, worldview, and experiences that created that policy belief. When we know this we can frame our conversations with them in new ways that speak not only to shared values but to their reality, in a way that resonates with them and will bring them to support your policy.

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🤔 If you're looking for ways to understand your adversaries better to turn your passion into policy email David Smith at [David@InthriveAdvocacy.com](mailto:David@InthriveAdvocacy.com) to see how we can partner to achieve your goals!

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### Upcoming Events:

#### **Back From Richmond**

SALT's (Social Action Linking Together) annual General Assembly wrap up with Northern Virginia legislators and Virginia policy leaders is happening on April 13th at The Oak Room in the Lubber Run Community Center in Arlington, VA, from 1pm-3pm. Kim Bob, Executive Director of Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, will deliver the keynote and members of the Northern Virginia delegation will be sharing their 2024 success and hopes for future policy change. More details on the attached flier [Follow SALT on Facebook](#) for details.

#### **Inthrive Film Festival-NOVA**

Inthrive Film Festival celebrates the voices and talents of folks who survived incarceration. The festival is coming to Mason Square's VanMetre Auditorium in Arlington, VA, on Sunday, April 14, from noon-5pm. Join us as we screen films created by or featuring the authentic voices of incarceration survivors, hear from people who have gone from incarceration to thriving, and meet nonprofit and business leaders that are removing barriers to successful reentry from incarceration. Interested in participating or getting your free tickets? Check out the [website](#) and email [info@inthrivefilmfestival.org](mailto:info@inthrivefilmfestival.org) for more details! And, you guessed it, a flier is attached!

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