

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/in-brief/build-a-big-tent/>

Stockton mayor Michael Tubbs describes how he strives to enable coalition building without sacrificing personal passion. The key, he says, is working with the other side of the aisle on mutual goals and actively listening to how people from other political backgrounds think and frame issues. Solving the biggest problems, he finds, often means building respectful relationships with people who don't agree with you on all or even most issues.



## Transcript

- So there's a question that 00:00:05,520 a lot of people are curious about.. Politics is very divisive right now.. What is your approach to building coalitions to get meaningful things done? - Yeah, I think, in Stockton 00:00:19,360 I'm lucky in a sense because my council is four Republicans and two Democrats.. And I have to get four votes to get anything done, so anything we voted on, I've had to work with both Republicans and Democrats, and some of the most influential people in the business community, in my community, are Republican.. So I think part of it is understanding that you have to work together.. That as someone who's a pragmatist at heart who likes to get things done, I understand I have to work with people I may not agree about on a hundred issues, but if I agree with you on this issue I will work with you and congratulate you and amplify you for your great work on this issue while knowing we may have to fight about an issue tomorrow.. So I think that's part of it.. I think for me, even though the policy is personal, the politics isn't.. Meaning that I am deeply impacted, like the work I do is personal.. And I try to be hard on policy, but soft on people..

So I try to go drag hard, this is what we need to do, this is what we need to do.. If we have to disagree about it we'll disagree, if we have to have a public rebuke, public rebuke.. And then the next day realize I may need to work with you.. So the next day it's like bygones be bygones, let's figure out where we are, can we agree on this issue? So I think that's part of it.. I think part of it is also, especially at the local level, you could invest the time in relationship building.. Because I think because of the diversity of Stockton not just ethnically, but politically, I've learned so much about how my more conservative constituents and more conservative colleagues think about things, or how they hear things.. And I think it's made me a more effective communicator, more effective messenger, and it's allowed me to consider issues from a different vantage point which may not be my frame.. Even if I don't always agree with it.. So I think it's been a useful tool and skill, but underlying all this is this idea that I wanna get things done.. Things I could get done, you won't get anything important done just working with people who agree with you all of the time..

You'll do some things, but for the big things you need to have a big tent of people who may not agree with you again on every issue, but you found some common ground on this one..