



# NonPartisan Coalition

- Strengthening Communities
- Advocating for Government that Serves the Community

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**Please visit our web site at:**

[www.NonPartisanCoalition.net](http://www.NonPartisanCoalition.net)

**Contact us at:**

[NonPartisanCoalitionNPC@gmail.com](mailto:NonPartisanCoalitionNPC@gmail.com)

## *Wishing Everyone a New Year of 2020 Positivity*

Let's ring in 2020 by recognizing the good example each of you sets in the community, in your neighborhood, and in your family.

### **Recognizing What You Already Give**

As community leaders, it is often easy to focus on the issues have not been solved.

Let's start the new year and the new decade by giving credit for what you have accomplished:

### **Top Five: Thank you for all you do!**

1. You set an example, through word and deed, of living the goal of "Making the World a Better Place".
2. You take a leadership role in your community.
3. Your efforts make a difference, even though others might not know how to tell you that they appreciate what you do.
4. You try to solve problems rather than just sitting back and complaining.
5. You do what is right, not what is easy.

Thank you for being a role model. You never know who might be watching and will take a cue from you.

## Steering Committee Report

- The steering committee will be planning a meeting for community leaders. At this meeting, people from throughout our area will share "Best Practices" and brainstorm solutions for issues.

NonPartisanCoalitionNPC@gmail.com

## Web Site- Check it Out!

- Thanks to Carol Relitz our web site has undergone a big change! We are truly becoming a place where community members can find resources. Please visit our web site at: [www.NonPartisanCoalition.net](http://www.NonPartisanCoalition.net)

- Submit articles for our web site or newsletter to:  
NonPartisanCoalitionNPC@gmail.com

## Our Leadership Team

Carol Jenkins- founder

Jeff Jenkins- co-founder

Anita Brown- recording secretary

Joseph Jones- vice president

Carol Relitz- web administrator

## Ken Burns: The secret to bridging political divides

Updated 10:56 AM ET, Tue December 3, 2019

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/03/opinions/secret-bridge-political-division-burns/index.html>

*Excerpt from an editorial by Ken Burns*

"How do we decide to recognize what we have in common with someone rather than what is outwardly different?

These are very personal, intimate questions. But they are also the big questions of faith and values. We have to learn, and then reteach the rest of us that equality -- real equality -- is the hallmark and birthright of all Americans.

**We must draft everyone we know into a new American army that is committed to preserving these values and the sense of cohesion which have long been a part of our American nature, even when the experience of being American is often divided.** Our shared aspirations as a people, while by no means unanimous, have long been a driving force for us to strive to achieve that goal of equality. It continues today, and we must embrace it.

It is tempting to segregate our lives -- red vs. blue, black vs. white -- and erroneously presume that we have little in common. But, as we noticed with "Country Music," as we traveled from small towns in the south to large cities on both coasts, and as we met with people of all backgrounds, faiths and political beliefs, it is the diversity of our experiences that creates something new and better, something even more American."

***Thank you for being the change we wish to see in the world.***

**Isn't this what NonPartisan Coalition is trying to do?**  
*If you substitute "Community Leaders" for "Veterans" in the article below, can you see that we are working to build a "shared identity" that helps community members transcend their political difference.*  
*Scroll down to the highlighted part on page 2 to see the big "take-away".*

## **How do we reduce political polarization? America's veterans can show us the way**

By Grant Davis Reeher, Opinion contributor

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/opinion/how-do-we-reduce-political-polarization-america-s-veterans-can-show-us-the-way/ar-BBYolg7?ocid=msn360>

Last month, I had the honor of helping a group of military veterans prepare for a new expedition — a foray into politics as candidates for elected office.

The participants in the newly launched Veterans Program for Politics and Civic Engagement, created by Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and its Institute for Veterans and Military Families, were a varied lot.

Most were men, but in other demographic and geographic respects they reflected the diversity of America. The group included firmly conservative Republicans, progressive Democrats and moderates.

As the sessions began, I wasn't sure what to expect in our discussions of politics. Given their ideological differences, how would the participants get along with each other? The topics, after all, were the very things on which they disagreed the most.

Veterans support one another

Yet, what immediately struck me and stayed with me throughout the program was the genuine support the veterans offered each other, despite their political differences.

In our meetings with current and former office holders, consultants, and other experts and practitioners, the veterans worked together on how best to organize a campaign, develop an effective message, counter political attacks, and raise money. In other sessions, they floated their nascent campaign plans and stump speeches, and shared constructive criticism.

What united these men and women across party lines? They shared, of course, a profound life experience centered on service, mission and sacrifice. But there was something more: They had each other's backs in their shared commitment to engage in the political process and to serve in a new capacity.

"Nobody joins the military who doesn't want to help people," Rick Paxton, a "pretty darn conservative" white Republican, said. "It's in their DNA."

The veterans also talked about the military's priority of getting the job done. "In the military everyone is held accountable for the outcome," Stewart Payne, a moderate African-American Democrat, said.

Veterans set aside differences

**As veterans, they had to learn how to set aside differences to achieve common goals.**

Because of that, Pete Colbert, a conservative white Republican, said, "we all try to make each other better, and try to learn off each other."

**The participants agreed that there is an immediate respect that comes from their shared identity, and that enables them to listen to each other.**

"I've been on a ship for six months, and I'm closer to those people than people I've known all my life," Alicia Barnes, a progressive white Democrat, said.

The veterans also said the diversity of the program's participants was a strength. Being with fellow veterans, Barnes said, provided "a safe place where you could get exposure to other sides. We're in these bubbles, we get stuck in them."

So what's the political lesson here?

We can't all have the kinds of shared experiences that bind veterans together. And while encouraging more veterans to seek elected office might reduce polarization, it won't deter the forces that continue to pull us apart as a nation.

Nevertheless, the veterans program does point to the importance of highlighting shared experiences and values. What if, like these veterans, we focus first on what binds us together before we clash over those things that separate us?

What if we saw America's diversity as a strength rather than an obstacle? What if we followed the lead of our nation's veterans by learning to set aside differences to achieve common goals?

*Grant Davis Reeher is director of the Campbell Public Affairs Institute and professor of political science at Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs.*

*This article originally appeared on USA TODAY: [How do we reduce political polarization? America's veterans can show us the way](#)*

