

## Tulsi Gabbard and Working Across the Aisle



*Presidential Candidate Tulsi Gabbard at Utah Valley University*

On February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020, Representative Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii came to Utah Valley University (UVU). Representative Gabbard is currently running to be the Democratic Candidate for President of the United States.

Her stop at UVU was one part of her visit to Utah which included visiting multiple universities and town hall visits in part to win support and engage with local people. Her message here at UVU, however, was less about her campaign and was a more general message concerning proper statesmanship, civic involvement and working across the aisle.

Throughout her campaign, Representative Gabbard has criticized politicians who place too much of an emphasis on winning re-election and playing "party politics", instead of trying to make a difference and govern for the people. During her visit, she echoed her belief that government officials are supposed to act for the benefit of their constituents which means sometimes acting against their party's ideology.

One of the most impressive stories she shared during her visit to UVU was regarding her efforts to work with members of the Republican party, despite being a Democrat from an overwhelmingly Democratic state. Her story started when she was elected into the US House of Representatives as a new congresswoman when the House was firmly controlled by Republicans and it seemed unlikely that there was any chance at Democrats being able to pass legislation until they were in power. That did not sit well with the young representative who knew there had to be a better way.

When she decided she needed support from Republican representatives she decided that she would do her best to befriend them. Though it might seem extremely simple, she did this by asking her mom to prepare a box of homemade macadamia nut toffee for every single member of the US House of Representatives and another box for their staff. Though this might seem very small, Representative Gabbard stated that this small act of goodwill to those who opposed her politically showed that she was not simply trying to tear down the opposing party, but that it was simply her policies that differed from theirs and that she truly seeks for the best of her constituents.

Representative Gabbard noted that as she made that initial step to show that she was not an enemy of members of the opposing party, Republican representatives would do the same. She mentioned that because of a small act she was able to meet with many Republicans and discuss the concerns of her constituents with them. Representative Gabbard tributes the simple act of sharing some snacks with other representatives with her being able to pass the first piece of legislation she brought before the House, despite Republican control.

I find Representative Gabbard to be quite a unique individual. As someone who considers themselves to be more conservative-leaning, I do not agree with all of her proposed policies though she might have more conservative-friendly policies than other Democratic candidates. I appreciate and respect her ability to work across with members of the opposing party and even criticize those of her party if she believes they need to be criticized.

I also have a deep respect for her as someone who was raised in Hawaii and of Samoan descent, as she is. Putting politics aside, Representative Gabbard is someone who is truly able to say that she works to serve her people. I remember when I was young, I would see her signs around as she was running to be a Hawaii State Representative. She won a seat at the age of 21 BY being the youngest person in Hawaii history to take the position. As someone in the Samoan community, my mom, relatives, and others from the community would often note on her dedication and hard

work. It was also impressive that despite having a strong Samoan base in the community her focus was never on them exclusively, but on how she can serve the entire community.



*Antony Jackson with Presidential Candidate Tulsi Gabbard*

For her dedication to service, both as a politician and also as a solidier, I hold Representative Gabbard in high esteem. It is quite clear at this point that she will not be the Democratic presidential candidate, but she did an impressive job doing her best to serve in what she truly believes would be the best way for her to do so. I even got the opportunity to shake hands with her

and take a picture being able to share the Hawaiian “Shaka” with someone who was able to appreciate the significance of the gesture, especially far from home.

*Antony Jackson, UVU student*