

Presidential Candidate Tulsi Gabbard at Utah Valley University

On February 21st, 2020, democratic candidate for president of the United States Tulsi Gabbard spoke to Utah Valley University (UVU) students, presenting her perceived issues and solutions on which she is building her campaign.

Mrs. Gabbard began by addressing the widely discussed topic of bipartisanship. As a member of the US House of Representatives for the State of Hawaii, Mrs. Gabbard discussed the dangers she was witnessed in the struggle for power in U.S. Congress. These personal and partisan agendas determine the activity of U.S. Congress, rather than the needs of American citizens. She claims the “deep divisiveness” in Washington creates a dangerous “us versus them” mentality among politicians. They take action in government to empower themselves, rather than serve their constituents.



Presidential candidate Tulsi Gabbard responds to student questions

When the session opened for questions, a UVU student asked Mrs. Gabbard how she would work through the dangers of bipartisanship. Mrs. Gabbard’s response included building personal relationships with those outside of the labels of Republican or Democrat. She shared a personal story of how she shared a family recipe her mother made with the rest of U.S. Congress. As representatives thanked her for the treat, she was able to discuss other issues with them. These connections and relationships helped her to pass her first bipartisan bill. The bill was created by and supported by Republicans and Democrats alike. Mrs. Gabbard’s experience illustrated the kind of attitude needed by officials in government. There is so much value in the ability to not use differences as a reason to fight against someone, but to view differences as an opportunity to innovate and create a solution that supports the needs of the diverse population of Americans. As president, Mrs. Gabbard would utilize this mindset by inviting leaders of congress from both parties to participate in real discussion and her multiple points of view about the country’s issues.

When asked about the hot topic of gun control, Mrs. Gabbard continued her warning against intense bipartisanship when she suggested viewing the issue as an opportunity for open dialogue. Mrs. Gabbard is a gun owner herself, and has concerns about the dangers of a government with too much control over weaponry. However, she understands that if she pushes her personal agenda over all others, it creates a “cancel” culture. This occurs when a group of people who hold a certain ideology “cancel” any other

ideologies or beliefs. In order to have effective changes made, or to even determine if reform is necessary, open and equal discussion needs to occur, we have to give permission to all points of view to be heard.

In response to a student question about President Trump's recent airstrike order, killing Iranian commander Qasem Soleimani, Mrs. Gabbard expressed deep discontentment in the decisions taken. As a major in the US National Guard, with multiple tours to the Middle East, Mrs. Gabbard offers a unique and informed perspective towards war and acts of violence. She was disturbed by Trump's complete disregard for the legal structure by not taking the issue to Congress. She holds deep concerns for the results of the issue, and lack of consideration of the effects of his decisions. Because of the incident, troops stationed in Iraq had to completely shift focus from their purposes, removing their forces from controlling the activity of Al Qaeda. This provides Al Qaeda the opening for a power resurgence in the area. Similarly, President Trump's decision to back out of the Iran Nuclear agreement holds major concerns and potential consequences. Mrs. Gabbard's own priorities for military use is US citizen focused, rather than involvement in controlling or supporting activities in other countries that don't concern US safety. She is concerned about many instances in which the US has been involved and spent millions of taxpayer dollars in other countries' regime change wars that don't always affect or support the provision of safety for the American people.



Tulsi Gabbard speaking to UVU students

Mrs. Gabbard spoke briefly about the possibility of modeling American healthcare after the single payer plus plan system utilized in Australia. She discussed the corruption in pharmaceutical industries, and provided examples such as the extreme cost of insulin, despite the low cost to produce it. She also discussed preventative healthcare, such as holistic methods, healthy eating, and more.

I was impressed with Mrs. Gabbard's informed and intelligent responses to student questions. Mrs. Gabbard's campaign is impressive in that it runs on the goodness of the American people. Mrs. Gabbard believes that civic participation is vital. Our representatives are there to serve us, but we have a responsibility to speak up and become engaged. It is our responsibility to begin to have the same kinds of conversation as those in government. She is not relying on hate speech or intense divides, like many of her opponents. I hope each of us can take something from Mrs. Gabbard's ideas, and choose to push through the lines that separate, in order for real needs to be met and protected. The sovereignty belongs in the hands of the people, and Mrs. Gabbard is trying to encourage us to take it. I am excited to see what is in store for Mrs. Gabbard and her political career.

Yana Andersen, UVU Student