

SNCC 60TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE, 2021

Controlling Local, State and Federal Budgets

Speaker 1 (02:10):

We

Speaker 2 (05:00):

Welcome to the 60th anniversary of the student non-violent coordinating committee. Good afternoon. I'm Kwame brown and I am honored to be your moderator for the importance of controlling local state and federal budgets. It's been said that government is all about the allocation of resources. He or she who understands the resources. And the allocation actually is control of the policy decisions that will be able to be implemented today. We will hear from two of the top experts on local and federal budgets. That's right. One the importance of the budget. Two. Why is it important to really understand the budget and three, how as an elected official or government executive to create change and policy change using the budget, I would like to welcome to this panel to experts. One Carol Thompson Cole, who is one of the first woman city administrators in the country. She is president of adventure, philanthropy partners.

Speaker 2 (06:04):

She holds a BA from Smith college, a master's in public administration from NYU and is also, uh, like myself, a fellow alumni of the JFK school of government at Harvard university, senior executive state and local program. She was the former senior advisor to president Clinton. Also the district of Columbia's former city administrator and a honorary member of alpha Kappa. Next, we have Elijah Rogers, president emeritus, senior advisor, Dalan Hampton and associates. One of the largest minority owned consultant engineering firms and design firms in the city. Former assistant manager partner at grant Thornton, CPA firm, former city administrator, Richmond, Virginia, former city administrator, Washington, DC, and also has taught urban policy and politics at the university of Maryland. Welcome both of you to the panel, Mr. Rogers, I'd like to start off with you on the budget and why is it important in some historical perspective around the budget?

Speaker 3 (07:05):

Okay. 1979 in January, mayor me Barry was elected mayor of the district of Columbia. At that time, the district was a part of the federal budget. The district's budget was a part of the federal budget. We did not know how much monies we had. We didn't know how many employees we had. Basically we were flying by the seat of our pants, but a part of the home rule act that gave the district limited home rule said by April of 1979, the district had to establish its own checking account. So that meant we had to get out of the federal treasury and set up an independent checking account. We had never been audited in a hundred years. We didn't know whether we had a deficit or ER surplus. It took us 18 months working with Arthur Anderson night and day to get the district's first balance sheet audit. And what we found was we had an accumulated deficit of 279 million, 279 million out of a \$2 billion budget. When I came, the district budget was about 2 billion now, the next year, the first. So we had a balance draft audit and it said district you're in the whole 279 million. The next year, 1980, we added another 105 million. So we had an accumulated deficit of 384 million.

Speaker 3 (08:48):

So we had to basically stop and scratch and start getting the budget under control so we could carry out some of the mayor's priorities, but another role we had to play being a creature of the federal government. We had to work with the congressional members on the hill who controlled

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our budget. The late Charlie Wilson was chair of the house district committee. And they controlled all our monies. So we had to please Charlie and his staff, and we cut a deal. Charlie says, Mr. Mayor, if you want more independence, you gotta demonstrate to us that you can get your budget under control. So it took us another year, 18 months, we had to make staff reductions, but we finally start seeing the, the light at the end of the tunnel. So for the next six years, we had surplus first time in the history of the district. Over a hundred years, we had our surplus, but that took a lot of work on everybody's part, Carol, the mayor, the council members, thousands of employees, but we had to do it in order to get the credibility, to get legislation passed by the council. So Congress would let it go into effect. And that's why we had to start off that every city county state, if you get elected, you need to understand what authorities do I have.

Speaker 3 (10:26):

Every state constitution gives you authority. The county government has a charter. Each city has a charter, and the charter says to you what you can do and what you can't do. So once you take over, you need to get organized, understanding the organic documents that gives you the authority to do the things you want to do. And I, I keep preaching this to everybody, understand what authorities you have, so you then can organize and plan and work and bring people on board to move towards what you want, want to do.

Speaker 2 (11:04):

I mean, the budget is all about the allocation of resources. He or she that understands the allocation of resources, understands the budget. Um, Carol, you have an extensive experience in understanding the role of budgets in the government. You know, how important, uh, is the budget really

Speaker 4 (11:22):

Well? I think the budget is probably the most important thing, uh, to anyone who's in government, regardless of whether they're, uh, in the legislative branch or the executive branch, uh, it's about resource allocation. It's about understanding what you're trying to accomplish and being able to, to do those things. And so it's important for you to understand what the budget is that you have overall for the government and then in the various, um, components of, of, of the government. So it's, it's the way you get things done.

Speaker 2 (12:01):

You clearly, you know, one, one of the first female city administrators, uh, in the country, um, clearly you had your hands full when you, when you took over in a male dominant, uh, environment, did such a phenomenal job. Um, what are some of the first things that you, um, noticed as you started to develop a, a city budget in terms of working with elected officials and advocates?

Speaker 4 (12:30):

So for me, uh, I wanna step back. I really underst I really understood budgets in my earlier years in government. So, uh, Mr. Rogers came on as the first, uh, city administrator within, uh, our mayoral administration. And I remember, uh, the, the city was just full of excitement. We had a new mayor, a new team of administrators coming in, and we were full of hope for our city and for our community. Uh, and it, within about 90 days of that, uh, term, we found out that we had serious fiscal problems. And so I think as a, a young person in public administration and in government, that's when I started to focus, because if you don't understand the budget, know

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what it is and understand the process, then you really will not be able to get things done. And so, um, for me, uh, when I became city administrator, uh, we had been in really good shape as a city.

Speaker 4 (13:31):

Uh, and we had had many balanced budgets and, uh, Mr. Rogers and others led the way, uh, for that creation. So the question for me was how to maintain it. Uh, and then the revenue started to really decline. Uh, so we had to manage constantly, uh, day to day to look and see what we had, what we needed to get done and how we would have accountability. Uh, so to your point, you know, the process is between the executive branch and the council. So you've gotta get alignment with the council, uh, committee, the finance and budget committees, and you need to work on, you know, where you're trying to take the city from both sides of the government. So you've gotta build those relationships. You have to understand, uh, the expense and the revenue sides of the budget and try to work in tandem. And that doesn't always happen.

Speaker 2 (14:25):

Okay. No, that's, and it's interesting because both of you, uh, have been a part of a, a phenomenal organization early on when that is the mayor Barry administration in Washington, DC, Mr. Rogers, um, you know, you always tell me that government is about the allocation of resources and, uh, and how you use those allocation of resources. You know, we go back and forth, right? We, we, we, we got two, two schools of thoughts, but you always, you know, tell me, you know, you always give me the right way. You tell me how, how to get there. Now I tell you, I thought you early on, I was young and it gets back to, uh, miss Mrs. Cole's your point as a young elected, uh, running for office. And I was just running for office in 2002, and I thought I knew everything, right? Let me know.

Speaker 2 (15:09):

You see young people, they think they got it right. I said, okay. I worked for the Walmart corporation under was responsible, uh, for 20 million budget. I got it. Right. I worked for Citibank in first union and on brokerage services. I, I understand that I, I got it. Then I said, okay, then I worked in the Clinton administration in which, you know, we was always talking about the budget and how to improve the budget with Koland Cox and how we get more money and advocating and understanding. But I got it. And then I ran a nonprofit and I said, you know, nonprofit, you're responsible for, you know, raising money, spending money budgeting. So I thought I got it. So I went to go see Mr. Roger. And I thought, okay, he's going, here's, you know, older guy, he's gonna try to tell me, I don't know anything.

Speaker 2 (15:48):

And I'm gonna tell him I know everything. And I sat down and he tells me, you know, you know, what's the budget. And I said, well, you know, it's, I think that time was about 12 billion. I said, 12 billion budget, cuz you know, I looked at the budget and I said, this is a 12 billion budget. He said, no, no, no. You know you say, you wanna do all these things, how you gonna pay for it? And then I stopped and I was like, well he, no, no I wanna know how you gonna pay for it. All this stuff sounds good. But how you gonna pay for it? You had all these bright ideas. You wanna create vocational education. You wanna, you know, get people back to work. You wanna get people affordable housing, you know, you wanna, you know, look at these charter schools and make sure kids have, I had all these ideas and within 10 minutes, I didn't like Mr.

Speaker 2 (16:24):

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Rogers. Uh, you had, you know, something different that you don't have today, right? Mm-hmm <affirmative> you have Mar Barry who came, uh, from, uh, from SNCC and all the advocacy that he's done become mayor. Then he's brought some people in during that period of time that, you know, the environment caused a situation that's quite different than today. Mm-hmm <affirmative> right. So if you talk to some of the, the, the advocates now versus the advocates in the past, we're all advocates. It was just a different approach and a different mindset, uh, to protest, to open up the doors, to create the opportunities. Now, when you see people that are, are advocating or are protesting, um, it, it, the, the, the level of understanding of connecting the two. So even those that are now going into positions as administrators, uh, those going into government executive positions that control a budget, uh, some people will say that some of the, the, the passion and the urgency is, is not there. And then therefore understanding how to the, the importance of a budget doesn't exist. Like it did then from a survival perspective, is, are they off, um, um, uh, Carol on that inception association,

Speaker 4 (17:41):

Right? Uh, yes, they're off <laugh>. The reality is, is what Mr. Rogers said is absolutely right. I mean, you know, you have to understand the authorities, you have to understand the structure and you have to understand the dynamics, um, within your community and between executive and legislative branches of government. I think most people think that when you say you mentioned \$12 million, but when you have that kind of money, a lot of that money is fixed and there's not as much discretionary money to do the things that you really wanna do. And that you commit to the public that you are gonna do when you come into office. So I, I think that people who are new they'll learn exactly what Elijah described. It may not be, you know, as, as well, DC is different from most places, but you have a system that you're coming into and you have to learn that system and then learn to figure out how to navigate within it and build relationships to get the things done that you wanna do.

Speaker 4 (18:47):

I learned very on early on as a director with the ideas that I had, I had to understand and connect with the budget director, the city administrator, and then, you know, present my ideas to the council, to help them to understand the needs and the things that they wanted to do and what I needed to get those things done. So I think sometimes people think it's a lot easier and there's a lot more resources at their disposal than there really are. So I don't think that changes. It's pretty much what new people find when they come into government.

Speaker 2 (19:20):

Right? Oh, it, it is. I'm telling you when I first, clearly at large perspective, I, I thought that, uh, you know, it's just money and I need to go get it until of course, Mr. Rogers asked me how you gonna pay for it. And then we started getting a little bit deeper into it. And I will say if it would say, if it wasn't for Mr. Rogers making me study the budget for 12 months straight, that's how I became a budget expert, because I, I started to realize in order to get the stuff done, one, you gotta understand where to get the money. Let's just, you know, a lot of people run for office. You campaign very hard. You're very passionate. We want more young folks, uh, to get involved in the budget process. Mr. Rogers, you like the fact that I'm now referring to young people as young.

Speaker 2 (20:00):

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I know, yes. I like that kick outta that. And <laugh>, so we want more young people involved in the process. And, but when you get involved in the process and you start to run for office, please understand the importance of understanding the budget, because you gotta have an understanding of how you're going to get some of the stuff you want to get done. Ms. Cole you've mentioned that it is a limited amount of resources. You think, oh, it's a 16 billion budget. Well, no, it's 16 billion not sitting there for you to this, this's available to you. Everything's not available to you. And you have to kind of figure that out. What, what are the top two things, uh, or pieces of advice that you would give individuals that are thinking about becoming an elected official or thinking about becoming, you know, leaving the corporate environment and going to work, uh, for, uh, a municipality and some sort of administrative role. And I can start with you Mrs. Cole.

Speaker 4 (20:56):

Um, I think the important thing is to understand that you are in a bureaucracy, uh, and that, you know, it's a very structured environment. I think the environment and government is, is tighter, uh, than it is in the business world. But I've also been on that side and understand, you have to learn that, that environment as well. But I would say again to what we've been saying over and over is you have to understand what your budget is. You have to understand your programs and the impact they have on community. So you've mentioned advocacy a few times. You have to understand who your constituents are and then how do you really find out their needs, develop your budget and then get it through the process so that you can deliver on the things that, um, you have said you will do.

Speaker 2 (21:46):

Wait, Mr. Mr. Rogers,

Speaker 3 (21:47):

I think she makes an excellent point. You, you need to develop coalitions at different levels. So as Mr. Cox is gonna make his presentation, he wants to talk about early on in the early days of SNCC, it was about protesting. Now it's about accumulating some power and authority to really have an impact on people. We say, we want to help. So we need to step back and recognize that we need help. You know, you got talent all around us, but we need to try to focus that talent and energy in a constructive manner, an example, the recent discussion about defund the police. What does that mean? Practically, as Carol talked about, budgets have already established resources have been allocated in different areas. So if you want to modify the police department budget, what is gonna be the impact to some of your colleagues on the council who may have a different opinion?

Speaker 3 (23:01):

How do you get the, those individuals to buy off and accept your philosophy? So you gotta build some relationships on that city council, county council, or state government, but you also need to understand somebody before you allocated the monies in a certain way. If you decide to try to take the money away, you got a big political fight, and then you'll end up spending a lot of unnecessary energy fighting each other and not accomplishing some of the goals that you said you want to accomplish. So you need to understand the financial aspect, but you also need to understand people cause government is made of people.

Speaker 4 (23:43):

And I,

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Speaker 4 (23:45):

You have to understand people from all the different places that they sit. So Elijah mentioned defund the police. First time I heard that in the context, I heard it with the young activists that mentioned it. He didn't mean defund the police and the way that everybody has responded to it. He talked about relocating resources to get the right types of professionals and programs to work with police departments. Mm-hmm <affirmative> that you would have a different result in the community and on the ground, but everybody picked up on defund, right? Between take away money from the police department. And they were talking about, you know, using money differently. Right. And we still can't get away from that. It's become something that anybody that wants to be, you know, confrontational or create confusion uses. So I, one of the things I learned early on in government is that you have to really think about what you say, who you're saying it to, and then what you really need. And so it, it is this makes Mr. Rogers point, it's all about reallocation of resources to get a specific thing accomplished.

Speaker 2 (24:56):

Well, I, I wanna say that that both of you are absolutely right when it came to defund the police and Mr. Rogers, you and I had this conversation back to back defund the police and, and, and what does that actually mean? Right. And I, I really think that you had a certain segment of people create the narrative to what that actually means. And it caught on because it was just, you know, it, it became a fire. Like, so every, it was hot. Everyone was talking about it, but that's not. I've had, you know, people on my always real talk show that came through advocates who was adamantly opposed and wanted to defund the police. And as we start to unpeel that onion, it was very clear that the reason why they just said defund everything, because they did not understand and be able to articulate how to fund what they wanted, because they didn't understand the budget.

Speaker 2 (25:47):

So for an example, they wanted to cut everything outta the police department budget, because that's where they said all the waste and abuse and was going and they wanted to reallocate it. They didn't look at anywhere else in the entire budget of a municipality that there might have been excess dollars. That could be that go towards what they wanted. Right. Which, whether it was training, whether it was all the different things that advocates want to see included, but within a police budget. And when, and I'm not sure that, you know, we start to talk to elected officials, how they could understand that too, right? How to reallocate resources within entire government to meet an objective that everyone agrees to as opposed to just, just defund the entire police department. Mr. Rogers.

Speaker 3 (26:31):

No, I think just, that's an excellent point. I mean, governing is exceedingly difficult. You need the outside people pushing the government. You need elected officials who are very sensitive to trying to achieve something. Then you need inside public administrators who are committed to using the system to get things done based on the priorities set by the elected officials. Now, during the first term, mayor Barry came from quote, unquote, the streets. He understood people. He understood politics. So he was Mr. Outside. Then I played the role of Mr. Inside. And we worked hand in hand. He was the chief elected official. He articulated verbally where we wanted the city to go. And it was our job, Carol, myself and others inside pushing the government in a direction to go where the mayor said we need to go. And that requires everybody pulling in

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understanding and working together. But the key in America, I keep preaching. This, everything comes around money.

Speaker 4 (27:47):

That's right.

Speaker 3 (27:48):

That's America. Whether we like it or not. And if you do not understand the money, you are not gonna make the kind of change you say, you wanna make, yeah, look, look at the United States, trees. Don't states trillion down budget every year. When you start stepping on certain tolls, the by administration is talking about reallocating funds for a human infrastructure. And you see all Hellers broke those because if you reallocate money from over here, you impacting people with money and they're gonna fight you. Okay. And it's the same thing at the local level. That's why it's so important. And we keep preaching, understand the financial aspects of your local county, state, or federal level. And you can make a tremendous difference.

Speaker 4 (28:41):

Quality is that, that you have, again, as you find amount of money, and if you're going to, to take it and put it somewhere else, that means someone loses while someone wins. Right. And that's how people see it. And that's why they are always ready to fight for what it is they want. I think one of the most important things that happened, I, I think it happened under your administration. Um, Elijah is that we created a community, um, budget process. Mm-hmm <affirmative> that we went out and we explained the budget process to the community. But we also, as we were building our budget, we got their ideas of what their needs are and what they wanted. And we work with them to try to help them understand why we couldn't do certain things and then had them be ready to come to the council and to, to articulate why the things in our budget were important to them in the community. The thing that always amazes me is we are really not that far apart in the different, but we have different priorities that we put on things. And so you want this first, but I think I need this before you get what you get. And that's where the tension comes on a day to day basis. And, uh, and, and, and people, people fight to win <laugh> right.

Speaker 2 (29:57):

Right. Well, it's, it's, it's interesting because we, you know, hearing the, the, the past hearing years ago, how things involve, how it started from advocacy, from people being part of the advocacy on both sides, then coming into government and having, as you mentioned, uh, former mayor Barry had knew the folks on the outside because he worked with advocates. Now, he was on the inside. He brought you in, and I'm still trying to figure out how all that worked out together. But, um, because I know how <laugh>, I know how you are when it comes to the budget, but you had a perspective. And I, I have to say this because I, you know, today I'm, you know, do we still have those perspectives from those people that are now or becoming elected officials? And I think it's important, uh, to, to throw this out. I was the former chairman of the council of the district of Columbia.

Speaker 2 (30:48):

And I can tell you that, you know, you know, I, you know, I'm a, I'm a SNCC baby. So I grew up with you guys. I understand the perspective and the philosophy. And I had all the opportunity to, to create this change within the budget. And as I started to create this change within the budget, it's a heavy lift. It's, it's not something that's gonna be easy. It's not something that's gonna be

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well received. It's not something that necessarily will even get you reelected. And I think it's important for people. Cause that's what happens. I I've been around. I've seen people that go through, have a philosophy, have a feeling, have something they advocated before, fight for it and then lose office the next year. Right? And then some people take a look at that and they don't want, even though they, they believe that they want to create this change.

Speaker 2 (31:34):

When you start to create the change, it's not easy when you're sitting there to do it. And, and that's why some people do it alone, do it once. And they're gone. Mm-hmm <affirmative> what advice would you have? Young folks that are, that are, are, are, are, are they're they're ready to go. They know exactly what they want. They kind of understand the pro the budget process, but they also are ambitious. Right? And they want to go far, uh, in the political process. And some of them see that as the ability not to go far. So they, they don't push the policies and stuff that they really care about once they get in office. Because that's the number one thing you hear from the people on the street is that people get elected and everything they said they were gonna do. They don't do. And the people say, I don't do it because I won't get elected again.

Speaker 2 (32:17):

What advice would you have for those individuals as it relates to the budget, because this is about moving the money. And when you understand how to move the money and you understand the allocation resources and you start to then create the change, that's where the fight really begins. Everyone agrees on all the stuff that people talk about. We need to help those who need it. The most. We need to have more affordable housing. We need to have, everyone should be educated and everyone should have economic, uh, access to contracts in the government. But when a person of power that's elected starts moving in that position, that's when the fight becomes that's when they they're a target. And that's what many of them no longer exist. Can any of you, either one of you speak to that,

Speaker 4 (32:57):

So I'll start by saying, you know, you said they don't have a perspective. Everybody has a perspective. And so you have to understand and learn what people's perspective is, and, and then figure out how that fits in the broader scheme. And so I think it, everything is relational based. And so I think one of the things that, um, you've gotta make sure that you understand, uh, the power bases. So, you know, when you wanna get involved in government and decision making, you wanna be involved in the finances. You wanna, if you're in the legislative branch, you wanna be on the finance committee or the budget committee. So you understand that process and then figure out how, you know, um, what you want is possible or not possible what you have to do to make it possible. And then I think, uh, you've also got to make sure that you build that constituency on the outside to advocate and be there to present with you.

Speaker 4 (33:57):

So it is a play across all stakeholders to make it possible. But if you go in and you say, this is my one thing, and this is the way I wanna get it done, and I'm gonna push that. You're not likely to be very successful. On the other hand, I would say, you know, if you have a big issue, it it's gonna take a while to get it done. And so, you know, you may lose because it's not its time, but I think it's building the relationships, helping communicate issues and, and, and build up the education across the stakeholder groups inside and outside of government to, to be ready when the time for your issue comes

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Speaker 3 (34:35):

Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And I, you know, again, going back to the early days of our administration, 1979, we had a cross section of talented professionals. We had advocates from the SNCC movement. We had professionally trained lawyers, but one of the things, but we had a commonality of wanting to try to improve the perception that people of color men and women could run a city and demonstrate to the world that we understood the financial aspects of running the city and doing good. Now that required a lot of work. All right. We had a lot of fights about how do we do this, but the common goal we had, and it is still today, that was a connection of people. In the first term, we wanted to demonstrate to ourselves and to the public that we knew what we were doing, and that kept us, we put it 15, 16 hours a day, trying to get our arms around the government so that mayor Barry could take his leadership skills out in the community to explain what we are doing, but also on Capitol hill to get the support from Southern Congress, people who did not want the district to get independence, but Charlie Wilson, the late Charlie Wilson said, if Elijah you an American demonstrates, you can get control of the budget.

Speaker 3 (36:11):

I then will support you in some of the things you want to do. What a lot of people didn't understand when we came in, it was 25% of all the district contracting was supposed to go to minorities. We wanted to increase the 35%. We cut a deal with Charlie Wilson. He said, Elijah, if you and the staff can get a handle on the expenditures in the government, I we'll look the other way. And let you go from 25% to 35%. That's how we got 35% of minority participation. But we had to demonstrate to the people on the hill that we knew what we were doing. And we had a lot of sacrifices. We worked 15, 16, 17 hours, 18 hours a day for, for 18 months, trying to get our handle around the financial aspects of the district. So that's why it's so critical. But once we did, we gained credibility,

Speaker 4 (37:11):

We gained gain credibility, but also something else happened. Okay. And I, I use this as an example, quite a bit. It's how do you implement? So Elijah's working on the vision and the policy and the legislative process to get us the authority to do that. And I think we were all excited about the possibility. One thing that mayor Barry did, he really did leave and he pushed us mm-hmm <affirmative>. And so he said, we're gonna do this. Are we all on board? And we all said, yes, we went off to our respective departments. And then we got to a cabinet meeting one day. And the mayor called on a, one of the men in the cabinet and said, so what is your department done over the last month to move more money into, you know, the minority community? And you, I think the room almost froze because most of us really did.

Speaker 4 (38:12):

We may have said we were gonna get it done, but had we really focused on it. And were we prepared to give that answer to the mayor? No, but I bet after that meeting Mr. Rogers and mayor Barry, every meeting, someone knew they were gonna be called on and they were gonna be held accountable to the goal. We set mm-hmm <affirmative> and it worked, uh, we were reported it and we started moving it. People are competitive. So one department head wanted to outdo another department head. So it it's about having vision, having people in place that can deliver, you know, implementation is as important as having the right policies. Right. And I think so many things fall down on not having the professionals in place that understand that they're about administration, but they have to do it in the political context. Mm-hmm

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Speaker 2 (39:07):

<affirmative> in points when it relates to how do you, because you have to maneuver, do this, right? You have to, it can't be a one approach. And that's it because you won't be successful. Even if you become elected and you say, this is, this is this or nothing that doesn't work. Let me give you just two quick examples, you know, and this is interesting because here, both of you, you know, former city administrators talking about, you know, Marberry in 1970s, right? And then here I am, I, I joined the council in 2004 with mayor Marberry who sat right next to, and it, this is, this is, I can't make this up. Right. I can't make this up. So I, you know, we won the council and then I, I decided, and you know, he did the 35% and everyone talked about how great that was.

Speaker 2 (39:58):

And then we talked about equity participation. And that is how do we allow local, uh, firms to have equity, real equity and participation in government funded projects from the land up. And that was a very, very difficult battle. It wasn't a battle that most people really, you know, thought was, uh, was, was doable. Matter of fact, many people laughed at me and said, you'll never get that done. And I wanna go back to your thing, Ms. Carol, when you said we had to have a collaborative of working together, right. Understanding what people wanted, understanding what I wanted and how do we come together? And we create a win-win situation. And that's how that was, that was created. Was now there is a, and Marion looked at me when we actually, he told me don't stop. Don't stop. You know, he don't stop. Don't stop. Keep going.

Speaker 2 (40:41):

Don't give up. Don't let don't tell. Don't let the win. And he quietly tell me it, you keep fighting, you keep fighting. And then, and he said, cause I support you. I support you. And we got it through. So the first time, I think in any, uh, city where, you know, local businesses, where, where we were had to present 20% non-usable equity participation in government fund projects. So we can own more than a block. We can own a block. We own two blocks. I, I got that. But just for the audience, I think is also important is that everyone knows about baseball stadiums. Everyone knows about fully funded baseball stadiums and the fight. No matter if you're in Cleveland, no matter you're in LA, no matter where you always always fight over stadiums, or should you fund the stadium or should you not fund the stadium and public money and why should we not use it?

Speaker 2 (41:25):

I think this is a perfect example. And I'll be brief. We got on the council, me, uh, Mary Barry, and we talked about this. We all campaigned we're against publicly financed the stadiums. We're just against it all. It's the worst thing that ever happened. And Elijah was saying, you can't let them spend all that money on the baseball stadium. And you know, it's not, you need to do something with the budget. And we just, we won. And then once we won, it was time to actually vote on the baseball stadium. And that was that moment. And I think this is a moment that many people run into and it's a very, uh, uh, historic moment. I can always remember, do you wanna vote for baseball? Do you not have to use told everybody you wasn't gonna vote for it. Then he comes mayor, uh, we need to talk.

Speaker 2 (42:09):

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And I said, okay, <laugh> we need to talk. And I said, I talked to him and he said, you know, what's important to you. I said, vocational education is important to me. So rebuilding Phelps architect, engineer, and construction high school, the most modern high school in district Columbia, that's important to me. So then Tony mayor, Tony Williams, at the time he came to see me and he, you know, that's when the mayor would come around, he'd sit down and they'd talk like Ms. Carol said, everyone's talking about what you want and how I want. And I said, look, this is what's important to me. And I named the three items that was important to me creating a, the, the architect engineering and construction high schools. So we can educate our young folks on job training and jobs and open nights. And weekends what's important to me is equity participation for, for, for, uh, black businesses.

Speaker 2 (42:55):

The third was domestic violence and creating more sh uh, uh, short term housing for women in abuse. And I vote for baseball and I voted for baseball. Baseball came to the district of Columbia, but the, but the school had to be open. And I want you to be clear for those that are legislators are looking to be legislators, understanding the budget, understanding how to create legislation, understanding how to create legislation and timing it in such a way that the school opened up the same year that the baseball stadium opened up, because that was the law right now. Nobody talks about the school that was opened up and construct. No, nobody remembers any of that stuff. Right. But they all remember the baseball stadium. <laugh> right. But that's just important to go back with, uh, what Ms. Carol said and what Mr. Elijah said, things that need to take place that took place, then that still work today.

Speaker 2 (43:49):

Um, just, just as we close, uh, this has been a, a great panel because I think people need to understand, you have to understand the budget, because guess what if you're elected official in anywhere in this country, there's a people that are already there that understand the budget. And most people aren't gonna take time to teach you the budget because they understand that the budget is power, right. And when you understand it, that's how you know how to use it as a tool to create the change that you really want to create. Uh, as you move forward, miss miss, uh, Carol, I wanna give you the, the first as any closing remarks that you like to make, uh, as, as one of the, one of the first that's there, that's had an opportunity to, I mean, people talk about you all over the country and the things that you've done and you're mentoring so many people, uh, that have fallen your footsteps. Some people may not know you, and maybe you seeing you for the first time today, what is some advice that you would give them as they move into their new roles that as an executive or as an elected official.

Speaker 4 (44:52):

So building off of your example, you know, you just described what politics is, it's the art of the compromise mm-hmm <affirmative>. So it's really, it takes everybody in that body to come together, to vote, to get what each of you want to do. And so understanding the people, developing the relationships with them is absolutely important. I think the other thing that's critical is being willing to be it, be in it for the long haul. Uh, you may not be able to carry it all the way through on your watch, but I always tell Tony Williams that a lot of the things that he bought over the finish line were things that I worked on in the Barry administration. And I was unhappy. I wasn't there to cut the ribbon or, or, or say it happened, but I was happy that it did happen. Mm-hmm <affirmative>.

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Speaker 4 (45:39):

And so I think you, you've gotta look broad, look deep, but you know, you have to be collaborative. Um, the other thing I think that's really important. So, you know, you said you were a kid of the, of SNCC. I, I encountered SNCC when I was in college because many members of SNCC, um, re relocated to the university of Massachusetts Amherst and we are teaching there. And so I got to interact with them, learn about their activism. And that helped me define what I wanted to do, uh, in my career. And so I think you've got, I got mentored by many of those people. Uh, it was actually Ivanhoe Donaldson when he realized I really wanted to be a city administrator that said, go learn from Elijah Rogers. And to your point, I learned a lot from him, but I took a lot of beating <laugh> in the process and a lot of debate, but, you know, you've gotta learn the environment you're in and you've gotta be bold, but you gotta be ready, uh, to fight the fight, to get what you want. And so I think young people have to understand that so many young people now are looking for instant gratification. That's how not that you don't win the long and important things that way you've gotta be prepared and step up at the right time.

Speaker 2 (46:53):

Oh, that's it it's, I mean, this is just amazing, right? Because <laugh> of course the same people, uh, I don't know Donaldson, right? Courtland Cox, right. Go see Mr. Rogers. I mean, 30 years later, go see Mr. Rogers <laugh> and the thing about Mr. Rogers, he didn't change. He never changed. I talked to him almost, you know, couple times, you know, a week. And he still says the same exact thing that he told me 20 years ago that he probably told you 30 years ago. Right. Um, but that's, that's a very interesting concept. And I say that because of course, working with Courtland Cox, knowing, you know, Reggie Robinson, knowing the whole S snake crew, um, and them being a part of who I am, which made me, you know, a tough person when they came to being prepared. I tell you, one thing, you have to be prepared.

Speaker 2 (47:45):

Ms. Cole, you said it is preparation. It's none of this, you know, microwaveable you're there. You can figure it out later, you need to be prepared and you need to let people know you're prepared. Cause that's how people take you serious. Especially when it comes to the allocation of resources. It's nothing worse than the unprepared legislator or elected official. Who's trying to get things done that don't know what they're doing, right. That will cause people to not respect you. Right. At any point that you're elected. Um, Mr. Rogers, I'd like to give you some final, uh, comments.

Speaker 3 (48:16):

Very well said, Mr. Chairman. Um, this is the time of the life for young people. I think particularly the young people who are concerned about getting involved in local governments, state government, or federal government, uh, because the future's in front of you, it requires a lot of work, hard work teamwork. You're gonna upset some people, but if you stay focused on how to allocate these resources and do team building, to get people to support where you want to go, you can make a lasting difference. When I look back over my career, we, we had relationships. We built 42 years ago here in the district. I still get involved with the same people today, and you can make a tremendous difference, but it requires hard work. It requires sacrifice. It requires a commitment to change. When we took over 1979, Marion Barry says, I want to have a very diverse cabinet.

Speaker 3 (49:24):

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We had more professional women of color, highly educated, highly trained, placed in non-traditional positions. And so we, we had a whole plethora of talented people who wanted to make a change. So I would just say to young people today in the SNCC movement, get involved, do your homework, understand the financial aspects of the county, city, state, or federal level, wherever you work, or in your private organization. If you understand the financial aspect, people can't play games with you. That's right. And that's critical. So as you make these new changes going forward, get your hands dirty. As we used to say, get involved in the financial aspects of your government.

Speaker 2 (50:18):

No, thank you. Uh, uh, well said, I mean, it's, it's one thing that as we close, um, it's important that those that are listening to folks, uh, within the SNCC organization, listen to those, that may be a little bit older as someone who is, uh, still young, Mr. Rogers, I'm still young. <laugh> um, someone, someone who is still young it's, it's never, it's not fun, right? Because a lot of times, young folks, you know, we feel as though we, we, we have a vision, we have something we wanna accomplish. We've been to a couple places. We've had a couple of bruises pay attention to the de generation before you mm-hmm <affirmative> there are a number of things that you can learn. They are, as one of my mentors told me that I'm, I'm driving the car, looking out the rear view mirror mm-hmm <affirmative>. And I said, okay, that's, that's great.

Speaker 2 (51:11):

And he said, he said, I have a Hummer. And I'm driving the car, looking at the rear view mirror son. And I'm trying to tell you, you know what, I just passed. And for the first 20 minutes, I said, well, you know, I have a humer too. So if you ran over something, I'm gonna run over something and you know, it'll all be good. So he said, oh, you think so? I said, yes. He said the difference between your humer and my humer son is that I have the army humer and you have that new thing that they just came out with, that you can't run over a penny on without the front end being tore up. So the, the moral of the story is that a lot of times people are telling you things that might be painful, but they're right. And they're trying to save you from making the same mistakes.

Speaker 2 (51:58):

And I wanna make sure, as you know, someone, uh, that has been an elected official, someone has worked in the private sector, in the nonprofit sector. I've been all the different sectors you could possibly on the federal side. Goodness gracious. I mean, even a, a fellow with, uh, the panelist, miss Carol at the Kennedy school. So I've seen it all. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And one of the things that if I could go back to the younger me and do something a little bit differently, it would probably be, do things quicker than I did when people told me. Right. Cause when you don't there's consequences to that. So I just wanna say this has been a great panel. We've had some, two experts here that really laid out some real fundamental things that you can do to be successful as you look to navigate and create change taking from becoming an advocate outside, to being an advocate inside with the power, to use the resources, which is the budget to create the change that people actually, uh, needs to see in their neighborhoods and their community. So once again, this has been wonderful, happy 60th anniversary to the SN nonviolent Gordon K committee and all those that involved, uh, we're out.