

Doing The Work That Matters Most

Lessons from Public Service on
Leadership, Community, and
Investing in People.





HUSBAND & FATHER

Color blind graphic designer.

Wife Jill, three kids.

Marketer by trade.



ENTREPRENEUR

Started company in 2008.

5X Consecutive INC. 5000 Fastest Growing Company.

Exited in 2018 to run for office.



MAYOR

Never had a desire to run for office.

Elected in 2018, termed out in 2026.

Public servant, not a politician.



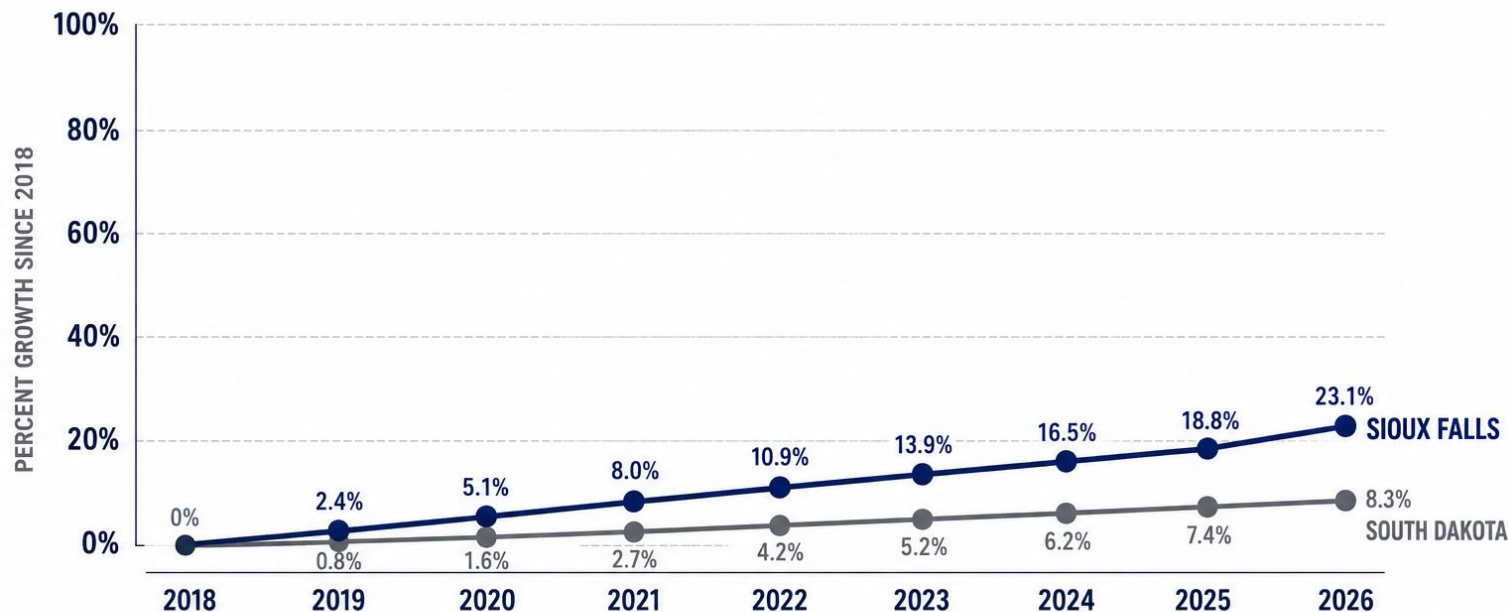
Great communities are built by
ordinary people willing to do
extraordinary things for others.

PUBLIC SERVICE



POPULATION GROWTH: SIOUX FALLS VS. SOUTH DAKOTA

Percentage growth in population since 2018
(2018 = 0% growth)



**From 2018–2026, Sioux Falls grew by 23%,
while South Dakota grew by 8%.**
Sioux Falls grew nearly three times faster than the state as a whole.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Annual Estimates of the Resident Population
& City of Sioux Falls Population Estimates

The sky's the limit
when we don't care
who gets the credit.

70% approve
15% unsure
15% disapprove

Source: May 2026 Independent Coefficient Survey



Lessons from the Mayor's Office

- Keep Politics out of Politics
- Dealing with Dissent
- Smell Like a Sheep
- Remembering the Purpose



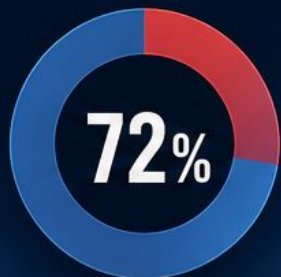
Keep Politics out of Politics

The most important government is the one
closest to the people.



1960s

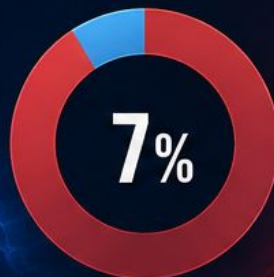
A MORE UNITED NATION



72% of Americans agreed with the opposing party on major issues

TODAY

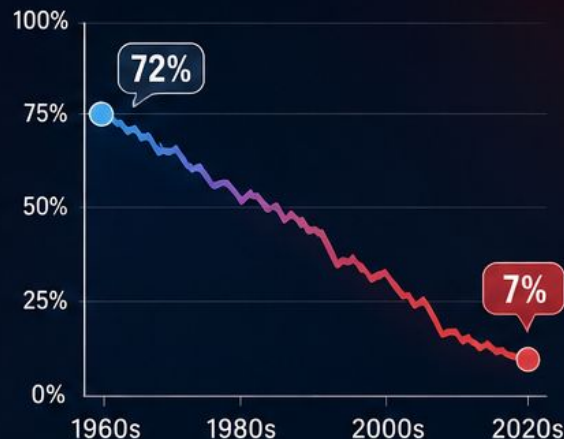
DEEPLY DIVIDED



Only 7% of Americans agree with the opposing party on major issues

THE CHANGE

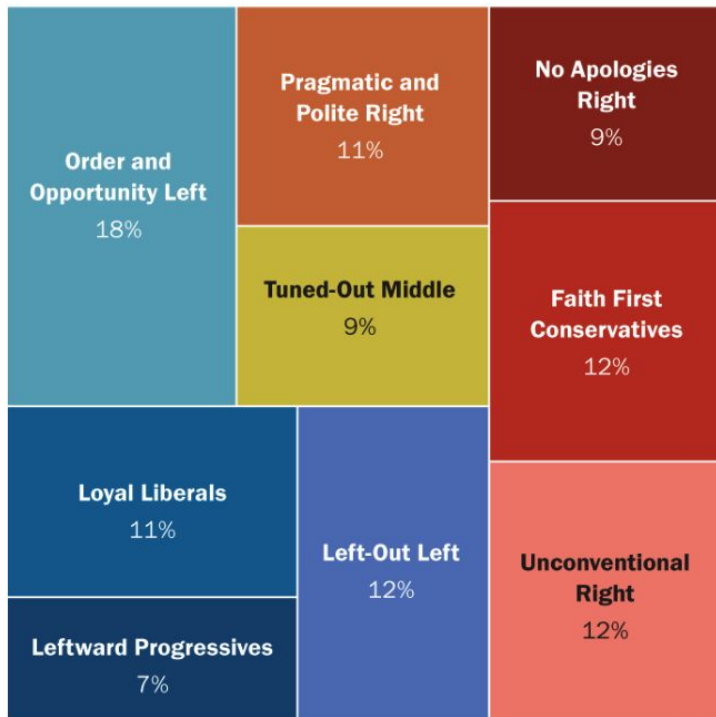
A DRAMATIC DECLINE



Americans who agree with the opposing party have fallen from **72%** in the 1960s to just **7%** today.

The 2026 Pew Research Center Political Typology

% of U.S. adults in each typology group

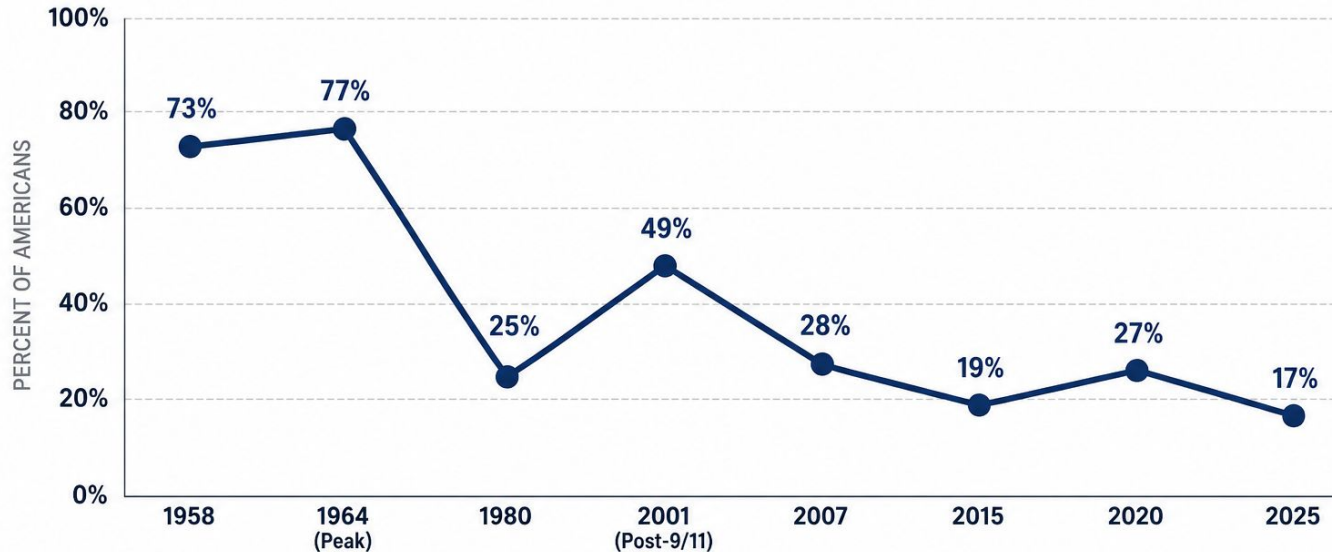


Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 17-30, 2025.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

PUBLIC TRUST IN THE U.S. FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

% of Americans who say they trust the federal government to do what is right
“just about always” or “most of the time”

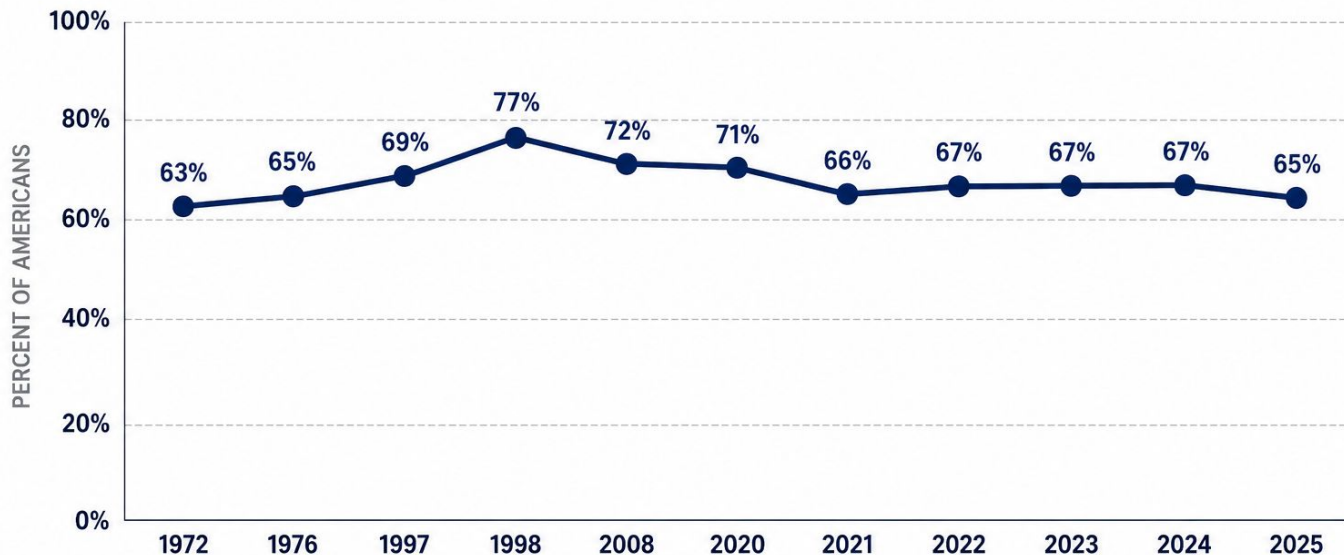


The greatest challenge facing government today
isn't a funding gap. It's a **trust gap**.

Source: Pew Research Center / National Election Study (selected historical points)

PUBLIC TRUST IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

% of Americans who say they trust their local government to handle local problems
“a great deal” or “a fair amount”



While confidence in Washington has eroded,
Americans still **trust the government closest to them.**

Source: Gallup Governance Surveys (selected historical data)



FOCUS ON ALL RESIDENTS



PRIORITIZE KIDS AND FAMILIES



OPEN YOUR WORLDVIEW



**FOCUS ON ALL
RESIDENTS.**

"Politics divides people. Good local government brings them together."



PRIORITIZE KIDS AND FAMILIES.

“Every decision we make should answer a simple question: Will this make our community better for the generation coming behind us?”



MONDAY

CBS
MORNINGS

BEG-KNOWS AMERICA: A LESSON IN SECOND CHANCES



**OPEN YOUR
WORLDVIEW.**

"If everyone you learn from thinks like you, your leadership has a ceiling."

Dealing with Dissent

Leadership is staying composed when emotions around you are not.



KEYS TO DEALING WITH THOSE WITH WHOM WE DISAGREE

- Look for common ground.
- Don't swing at pitches in the dirt.
- Assume positive intent.
- Own reconciliation.



Look for common ground.



Don't swing at pitches in
the dirt.





Peren Knoepfle @PKnoep...

Hey Paul, go fuck yourself

WEATHER SPORTS CBS+ VIDEO INFO & MORE

CBS Minnesota
WATCH NOW ▶

WCCO News At 9

Christopher Bruce Convicted Of Stalking Sioux Falls Mayor

October 16, 2019 at 11:00 am Filed Under: [Sioux Falls, Stalking](#)

South Dakota "leaders" always sleepwalk into these quagmires. There are no leaders there. Ten Hakken is as much of a slut as Janklow. They get anally violated every damn time. But people just keep electing these whores, who just can't say no and make it stick. They get talked into spreading their legs. This is the sewage



Alex

@alexjloutsch

Hey dumbass [@paultenhaken](#) make mobile gambling statewide idiot

You are a disgusting vile human being. You are breathtakingly incompetent. You are a follower not a leader. You are in so far over your head I feel sorry for you. You are completely pissing yourself on this. You've have no clue how to handle this b/c your uneducated. You're a cowardly little bitch. You better be careful about taking away peoples rights, b/c they will soon exercise their constitutional

You are such a dumb shit. You close parks, basketball hoops, fountians. You call yourself a Christian. You're going straight You are Pure Evil.

Hey Asshole! Just thought I'd drop you a little note, wondering how much you have to cheat to keep getting elected mayor. Too bad you're over 2000 miles away, and can't put me in jail because you can't handle a little dissent. You're such a little victim, aren't you? Dickhead. But hey, you can always stick

You really are a worthless fu... face



You are nothing but a coward. People will die because of your selfish personal interest.

You need to wake up.

What a disappointment you are to our people.



Sep 24, 2020, 5:41 PM

Thought you'd enjoy seeing this video of your fu... buddy. Might come play it at the next Republican City Council meeting.



Sep 24, 2020, 5:48 PM

How does corey Lewandowskis d... taste? I actually want to know.

Have you driven on the "plowed roads? They did terrible. One car can barely drive through the "plowed" roads because it is so narrow. You are letting cars sit in the middle of the street and just plowing around them. You obviously don't care about your constituents safety. You are a joke.

Don't swing at pitches in
the dirt.



Assume positive intent.



Assume positive intent.



Own reconciliation.



Smell like a sheep.

Be a shepherd that smells like sheep.





The strongest cultures are built by leaders who see people as souls to shepherd, not resources to manage.

PEOPLE





Keep a low **power distance**.



You can't truly love people from afar.

Leadership = empathy + proximity



Remembering Your Purpose

Be brief. Be great. Be gone.



PUBLIC SERVICE LEGACY

Name every governor in the state of Iowa to have served since 1980.

LEGACY

PERSONAL LEGACY

Tell me the first and last name of your
great, great grandparents.

LEGACY

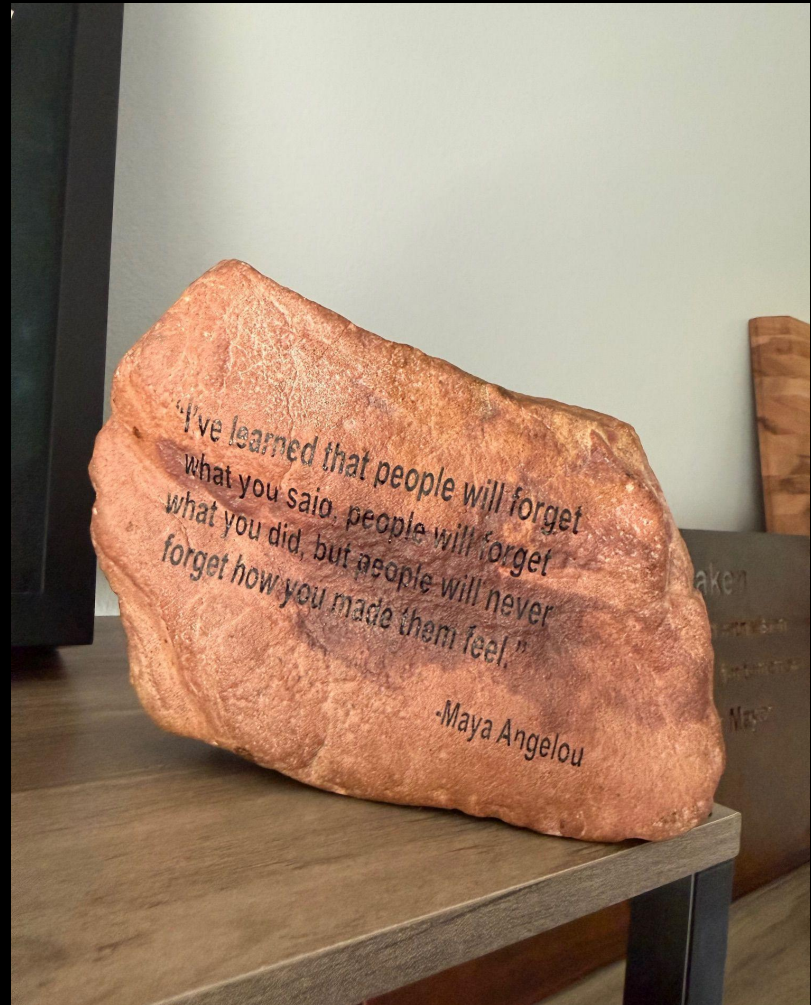
Safety

Teamwork

Innovation

Character

Respect



Paul TenHaken

November 13, 1977 - ??

Paul TenHaken was born to Lyle and Beth TenHaken on November 13, 1977 in Sioux Center, IA. Shortly thereafter, Paul and his family would relocate to Worthington, MN, where he would spend his entire childhood. Paul attended Worthington Christian School and Faith Christian High School and was active in almost every activity these schools offered. He and his two brothers could often be found playing pick up basketball, tennis, football, fishing, golf, and a variety of other activities with boys in the neighborhood. Paul was always a bit of a class clown growing up, but always managing to strike the balance between humor and driving his teachers crazy and being a good son and student that loved Jesus. He loved cars and always pampered his rides, even his first car – a rusty 1980 Pontiac LeMans.

In 1996, Paul enrolled at Dordt College in Sioux Center, IA and majored in Graphic Arts. He loved college and never hesitated to speak out on how Dordt College instilled a faith-based worldview on his career that would be a cornerstone of his life. It was a chance encounter at his sporting goods store job during college that would allow him to meet Jill Driesen. The two would be married in the summer of 1999 at the young age of 21 and would go on to graduate from Dordt in 2000.

Paul and Jill were drawn to the opportunities in Sioux Falls, SD and would make that city their home until his passing. Paul loved Sioux Falls. He and Jill were blessed with three incredible kids – Jade, Max, and Nora – who were Paul's everything. He loved being a father more than anything on earth and was so proud of his kids.

Paul's career would see him exploring various marketing and advertising roles after college until ultimately, starting his own marketing agency in 2008. He would go on to sell that business in 2018 to run for mayor of Sioux Falls, SD – a position he would hold for the next eight years before being term-limited.

Serving as mayor would be one of the hardest and most fulfilling things Paul would ever do. He loved the platform that the job provided him to speak with kids, to mentor a young person, to visit guys in prison, and to be a witness for Jesus. To him, it was not about buildings and businesses. The job was about loving people and serving others.

When his time as mayor ended...

What we will be remembered for.

- Our relationships
- Our impact on others
- The way we left a room
- How our kids were raised
- The calling we lived for

What will not matter.

- How many bills we helped pass
- Our approval rating
- The profits we generated
- The size of our lake home
- The title on our business card



We are all going to leave a legacy. We can do it by default or on purpose.

PURPOSE



THANK YOU

Paul TenHaken

paultenhaken.com | [@paultenhaken](https://twitter.com/paultenhaken)

