

Pima GOP Chair Dave Smith on KVOI

Aug 1, 2023, with Chris Desimone

Chris Desimone: Good morning and welcome.

Dave Smith: Good morning, man.

Chris Desimone: A lot of people have wanted us to get together for a chat, so I'm glad we made it happen.

Dave Smith: I'm too, I'm glad we sat down. We've talked before and got a chance to get our ideas together.

I've always been able to build teams.

Everything in my life I've done is do teamwork. If you talk to the people I work with, I'm not a totalitarian at all. One of my biggest bugaboos is when we have a false conflict. And that's where you, let's say, 10 of us are in a room, and I'm the boss, and I say, what do you guys think about this idea?

And you all agree with me? And then you, I do it. And then later, you're all sitting around having a cup of coffee saying, that's the stupidest idea we ever heard. I needed to hear that when we were in the meeting, not when you're having a cup of coffee. And I've failed. And that's the whole thing, managing agreement nowadays.

Chris Desimone: So you ran against Shelly [Kais], who was the previous

Dave Smith: Shelly didn't run for reelection.

Chris Desimone: Oh, she didn't run for re I apologize. No, I apologize. You're right. I spaced it. All right. So, you ran for the office, right? So I guess my question is, there seems to be an issue in the changeover between you and the previous regime.

Dave Smith: When I was running. Yeah, exactly right.

Chris Desimone: There's been a lot of accusations against Shelly [Kais] and some of those people in the ExCom.

But that's part of the split in the party is there's still these negative feelings between the people who were running the party and the new people coming in. Do you think Shelly Keis and these people did illegal stuff when they were running the party?

Dave Smith: Dirty laundry doesn't need to be aired in some ways. But again, if you want me to be honest, when I took over, we were minus \$499 in the bank the day I got control of it.

All right. My donor list was gone. And I'm told she, the lady in charge of the donors, it was her private property.

You can't be the second chair and say that's your private property and take our records with you. There were no files in the office, I'm told. I ran a paperless office. Then why did I have to go to another office to get the lease for my building? And all the computers were wiped. And now I'm

Chris Desimone: I'm not saying you all, but the loud group of our group, our Republicans, are crapping on those people constantly. So how do we bring that together?

Dave Smith: The crapping goes both ways. These people are all in conflict. What I noticed is when we were fighting [Proposition] 412, everybody was 110% behind the effort. And boy are people, we almost have a thousand PCs now.

Chris Desimone: Hold that thought for a sec, Dave. We're going to go to the bottom of the hour news break. We'll be back, right back, with Dave Smith from the Pima GOP, right?

All right, you're on. Wake up Tucson, 1030, the voice, local news and talk. We're talking to Dave Smith, Pima GOP. So, I just want to put a wrapper. You and I were just talking off-air a little bit here, right? As we hear it, it keeps getting that these people did quote "bad things."

What happens is that you're pushing the party even further away from each other.

Dave Smith: Yeah. It's like going back and fighting about last Thanksgiving, we got another Thanksgiving coming up. We're going to have the family together, or the family is going to be divided.

Chris Desimone: Because we're still the minority party in Pima County. So why are we making the minority party smaller is my issue? Because when we keep bringing up stuff.

Dave Smith: I'm not bringing up stuff. The problem we have is that people, we keep talking about, we've gone from 600 plus PCs to almost a thousand now in seven months.

But we're doing it without the help of some people. And that's the problem I have. And instead, we get their carping, or they're attacking too. It's not us. We're not busy attacking people. We're focused on the goal line. My problem is the people who want to fight about you didn't follow the bylaws here.

You didn't do that here. You didn't do that there. You didn't do this here. We do follow the bylaws.

You know what I mean? It's just that he's constantly bringing us back, focusing us on those issues. And the point, too, is that the Republican party doesn't exist to have meetings. It exists to win political campaigns, and that's what everybody's starting to focus on.

And the thing too, I got to tell you, Tucson is ripe for the kind of events, the kind of black swan events. So, you'd see that would change the attitude of the non-Republicans. And it's just like Michigan just now passed a law that an illegal alien can be a cop. That's exactly the kind of stuff Regina would like to do here.

I [00:04:00] can see this becoming a national trend and imagine they can't even own a handgun, and they're going to be a cop arresting American citizens.

Chris Desimone: Because we still carp more about each other than we do what goes on with the party, right? So how do you reconcile the Pima GOP of last year folks with the people of this year? How do you do that? You're in charge of this place now. What's the strategy to actually unify all these people? Because we keep bringing back the past to each other.

Dave Smith: My problem is look, if you're going to attack me because of this or that when I haven't said anything. I don't know how to defend a non-event at the same time. Look, I have the, like I said, I have a reality.

I have to deal the cards I was dealt, and this isn't a card game where I get to turn any cards back. The cards I'm dealt are the cards I have to deal with. I got a

crew elected that are very intelligent people. If you were to sit down in any of our board meetings, we have a very intelligent and incredibly hardworking, some from the last group as well.

And then secondly, I have my bylaws, and then people say it, Robert's rule says if my bylaws says "X." You can't say here's what Robert says, why? But no, it's the law. If the bylaws cover it, that's it. Period. There you don't go down to Robert's rules. And these are the kind of picayune combats that we have.

One of the points that you make. We need money, folks. And that's the thing. We need the people, Juan Ciscomani has the insight into where to go and get big-dollar funds. Also, I need those of you listening, sitting there. Pick up your phone. Go to our website, Pimagop.org and donate five, 10 bucks just to help us get those signs out that we were talking about. because that's how we win these things.

Chris Desimone: So, money we've talked about, right? The infighting of the party doesn't help the message at all.

Dave Smith: It hurts us dramatically.

Chris Desimone: So, I was telling you about a guy that I met at the gym. And when 2020 happened, he was pissed about the 2020 election, and became a PC. I told you this over beer, but I want everyone to hear the story. And what happened was he [00:06:00] got involved, became a PC, worked on Anna Orth, volunteered on election observing and all, did all that right?

And I see him at the gym after the '22 election. I go, how's it going? He goes, eh, I think I'm going to not be a PC anymore. I go, why? And he goes, LD meetings. LD17 meetings. I go, what happened? He goes, they're a train wreck. Everyone's yelling. Everyone.

Dave Smith: Yeah. I was in those, I was in. That's when I decided I was going to run.

Chris Desimone: It's bylaw stuff always. It's also personal attacks.

Dave Smith: Oh. It was constant. What happened, we all got fed up like that guy said in 2022, and we all said, look, let's get involved and let's really fight for unity. So we got our crew elected, and that's what we have now. When you sit there, and you look at these LDs and one of the things I ran on, and I think it's a very important point because you're making my point here.

We have an older group, but on the other hand, they have time to work. A young family person has a hard time. Mom, Dad, they can't get away. On Saturday soccer day, Saturday's, the little league day.

Chris Desimone: We've become the Pyrrhic Victory Party, right? How do we change that dynamic, Dave?

Dave Smith: Here's what I think you do is that number one, you need two things in politics: money and people, Democrats don't have people anymore.

They just have lots of money, and they're all special interests. We have lots of people. We don't have a lot of money. And that's at the national level too. So, I need all of you people out there to talk to your neighbors and convince them that we are the party of logic.

We are the party of getting things done in a positive way and protecting your streets, your family, your education system. But at the same time, there's a lot of things we don't have. And we don't have the media. They're giant propaganda, essentially. They're just one big giant giveaway to the Democrats.

Chris Desimone: So why don't people want to give anything in the general Republican party right now? because you're low on cash. Jeff DeWitt [Chairman of the Arizona Republican Party] DeWitt's got nothing at the state. No. He's got like nothing. And the National Party has their challenges.

Dave Smith: Yes, they do.

Chris Desimone: Why is it right now in August of [00:08:00] 2023? Why is it hard for people to get motivated to support Republicans right now?

Dave Smith: We can sit there. My degree isn't in psychology, so I bet I will say from a political science viewpoint, [that] people have been trained that they are moot, that essentially it's sort of Seligman's [Psychologist Martin E. P. Seligman] learned helplessness that no matter what they do won't matter anyway.

So they're sitting there not getting off the couch, and that's what I mean. We need this black swan event. We need something that breaks up their sense of helplessness and empowers them.

People are so dissatisfied. I think if you were to sit down in the barbershop on Speedway and talk to the average person getting a haircut. They'll tell you

they're really dissatisfied. We're looking like a third-world city, and if we can tie Regina [Mayor Regina Romero] and her group directly to that lack of status as a city, we can change our status as a party and get and hopefully get them involved.

Chris Desimone: Any movement on registered voters within the city of Tucson Limits?

Dave Smith: We're trying to do [00:09:00] analysis on this now, and that's one of the things we're seeing an uptick in Republican

Chris Desimone: Because PCs are great, but if you don't have growth on that registered voter thing, that makes it a little more difficult.

Dave Smith: What we're seeing though is that our PCs that we're getting are these new PCs that are very active, and again, these are people that are scared in terms of what their grandchildren are going to see? Are they going to be subjects or are they going to be citizens?

This is the kind of thing I think if we can keep that common message that looks like the party, we may not agree, but we all agree on freedom. We all agree on policy and that's what's so important is that we can keep people focused on that goal post and keep driving down the field that way.

Yeah, we got 98 yards to go, but I got a pretty good offensive line. If money's your running back, we may just have to plow up the middle three yards at a time. But you know what? We can do strategies. One of our LD leaders, he's an expert at marketing, and he came up with an idea that everywhere there was a [Proposition] 412 "Yes" sign, we put "No" signs on both sides.

We keep hammering, and we also empower. And it may not work right away, but [00:10:00] hopefully, at the end of two years, we can all look back and say we did a really good job.

Chris Desimone: Hold that thought. 8: 47 in the morning. One more segment with Dave Smith, Pima GOP Chair. You're on the Wake Up Tucson show, 10 30, the Voice, local news and talk. We're doing one last segment with Dave Smith, Pima, GOP Chair. Let's go to Rick Grinnell on line one. Rick, you're on with Dave Smith. What's up, Rick?

Caller Rick Grinnel: Good morning gentlemen. Good morning. I have been, for professional reasons, registered independent for the last eight years. But

when I go to a Republican function for governor, and the candidate [Kari Lake] says, if you supported John McCain, just get out.

And unfortunately, that leaves a bad taste in a lot of people's minds because I knew John McCain 35 years ago. Did I agree with everything? No. But I still feel like a Republican. I still vote Republican, but I tell you, we, we do a terrible job when it comes to splitting the party. And the Democrats are very good about putting all their things aside.

And the Republicans, unfortunately, and this is not about you or the current. Leadership at the party. But this is about a fact that many of us are feeling. The other thing I wanted to suggest, maybe the party gets more involved in some of these more community efforts to let people know. The party is still part of the city and not separate from it. I appreciate all your efforts and everything, but please let's cut the cake without. Destroying the total message of the Republican Party. So I'll leave it with you, David and Chris.

Chris Desimone: Thanks Rick. Yeah. Good job, Rick.

Dave Smith: Yeah. That's the thing. What's happened in essentially about the last eight years, you've seen this constant conflict, and Rick says it wears people out.

And the point is, John McCain was a war hero, whatever you thought of him. Even within my family, I had big McCain-ites and non-McCain-ites, and that's within your family. You don't hate your family for that. That's why I said earlier, look, we are a family, and we got another Thanksgiving, and we can just look at every single election.

Chris Desimone: So I guess my question is, as the elected Big Papa of the family right now, what is your responsibility, as the Big Papa of the family, on the sniping side of it? Because if you just let it go on and we let the kids keep fighting, and there's no corrective behavior or at least corrective words, they're going to keep doing it.

Dave Smith: Look. Let's just say we're coaching a team. You've got the kids that are still mad about what happened yesterday in seventh-hour class, and you got a football game going up, and they're fighting about something.

You have to focus them on the immediate goal. We're never going to not fight. We're Republicans, and that's the whole thing. We're not going to agree on all

the finer details, and a lot of times, we're not going to agree on some of the major details. But the point is we got a city campaign coming up.

Let's put aside the sniping, and it's not unilateral. The sniping comes from both mountains on either side. And we've got to focus on the goal. And the thing is, sometimes there just comes a time where we're going to have to just shut up for a while, do our job, and then go back and meet later and argue and debate.

What bothers me is when there's a carryover hangover from the debate that interferes with the performance on the field. And that's what we need to get focused on. That's why I'm sitting here today. I'm trying to build a unified, focused party, and we're not. You and I aren't even going to agree on a lot of things, but that doesn't mean we can't work together.

Chris Desimone: When it comes to issues, you and I agree, probably on 99% [of things], that's the thing that's so stupid about the fighting, right? If I sat everyone down and said, “we gave them a checklist. What do you believe in?”

And 99% of them will say, we're pro-life. Exactly. We're pro-Second Amendment, right? We believe that a bigger government makes the individual smaller.

Dave Smith: Exactly right. The nation's critical. That border is critical.

Chris Desimone: There's people because I don't like the LD17ers or because I never really got to know you until what, two weeks ago. Quote, “Chris [Desimone] is a RINO. But if I sat there and we went through the checklist together, I would scare the hell out of the Regina Romeros, who said I'm a right-wing nutball.

Every day on this show, I fought against every lockdown thing humanly possible. Caught crap vaccines, all that. I stood up for the individual, but because I don't dig the LD17 crew, I'm some sort of Commie bastard. Everyone slow your roll. Slow your freaking roll for God's sake.

Dave Smith: I think you hit a key point. Let's debate ideas, not personalities. Let's don't condemn. And that's the whole thing.

Chris Desimone: Because no one's talking to each other anymore.

Dave Smith: No, we're talking past. Exactly.

Chris Desimone: That's one of our sins is talking around each other. It's killing us. It's killing us. We can't have a beer without people yelling at each other.

Exactly.

Dave Smith: And the thing is, yeah, it's so funny because we have got to be able to, at that point, debate and, at the same time, like I said, if you don't agree with me and you don't discuss the idea with me, I may make decisions on faulty data, faulty information, and that's that whole thing.

Chris Desimone: Quick question for you. We got two minutes. What is the math [in the Tucson mayor's race]? Because we know we have really two people plus a Libertarian running against Romero. What are you guys seeing as the math for someone to win this race? That's not Regina Romero. I'm friends with Ackerley [Tucson mayoral candidate Edward Ackerley] and I don't think he can win with him and Janet [GOP Mayoral candidate Janet Wittenbraker] in the race.

Dave Smith: No, but here's my thing I'm going to say this, I like Ed and I sat down with him before. It's all good. I really like Janet. I like a lot of people

Chris Desimone: So, Janet refuses to come on the [Chris Desimone] show, to have an interview. She got butt hurt because I said I don't see the math. Ed [Ackerley] has more name ID. I thought she should have stepped aside. And she got so butt hurt about me saying that she said I was intimidating her, and she doesn't want to come on the show. What are we doing? What are we doing here?

Dave Smith: Remember, you got a big stick as a DJ.

Chris Desimone: If you're going to be the mayor, you want to be the mayor? Let's be the mayor.

Dave Smith: She's got better qualifications than anybody else running. She's got a broad range of perspectives in terms of business and in city government.

Chris Desimone: No one would know that because she has no money to tell anybody that.

Dave Smith: She's got money.

Chris Desimone: Not that much.

Dave Smith: She'll go into any group and talk.

Chris Desimone: Except here. She can come on. I've told her, "just ask." She doesn't want to come on. So you see her more than me. Ask her.

Dave Smith: I'll tell you what, I predict that she's going to give them a run for her money if she doesn't win.

Chris Desimone: But what's the math equation? This is a math equation.

Dave Smith: I feel like Han Solo [of Star Wars] on that. Don't tell me the math. Give me the goal. And that's what my problem is that you can't. Anticipate those events that are going to swing all those independents.

And a lot of the Democrats are deeply discouraged in their party.

Chris Desimone: I don't know if the discouraged Democrats are going to actually vote. That's my part. That's the part.

Dave Smith: That'd be great. Yep. If they vote for me or don't vote, it still helps us.

Chris Desimone: All right. Good to talk to you. We'll do it again.

Dave Smith: Yep. Thank you.

Chris Desimone: First of several. All right. Dave Smith, GOP.