

NEW GOSPEL OF WEALTH / THE FUTURE OF PHILANTHROPY

Why good government needs philanthropy featuring Deval Patrick, Wes Moore and Jonathan Capehart

Wes Moore, CEO of Robin Hood, and Deval Patrick, managing director and co-managing partner of Bain Capital, along with the Washington Post's Jonathan Capehart, discuss the need for government and philanthropy to work together.

This video is part of a collection of conversations with leaders, thinkers, and activists from philanthropy, business, the arts, tech, and beyond outlining bold visions for the future of philanthropy.

Transcript begins.

[Why good government needs philanthropy. Deval Patrick, co-managing director, Double Impact Fund, Bain Capital. A middle-aged Black man with a shaved head in a gray-blue jacket and light gray pants. Wes Moore, CEO, Robin Hood. A Black man wearing a dark gray suit and blue tie. Jonathan Capehart, journalist, Washington Post. A Black man wearing a navy blue blazer and glasses.]

ANNOUNCER: Please welcome Deval Patrick, Wes Moore, and Jonathan Capehart.

[applause]

JONATHAN CAPEHART: Thank you for being here, and—just jump right into this conversation, because we know that philanthropy alone can't fix problems, that government alone cannot fix problems, that the private sector alone cannot fix problems. And so, Wes, I want to start with you, to find out how do you see the role of government in your work with the Robin Hood Foundation?

WES MOORE: I see the role of government as pretty twofold. First, I think the role of government is—is the role of partner in the work, where, you know, we understand that as a foundation in the world of philanthropy that our capital should be patient, but it's not going to be permanent. And so there's a role of being able to be the risk capital. There's a role of being able to go back and de-risk things that you can then pass off to government partners. So, you know, you look at the history of Robin Hood, where, for example, we started funding needle exchanges before anyone else was funding them, and we funded it because the data continued to show us and tell us that if you could fund needle exchanges, you actually could potentially have a real impact on the rise in HIV/AIDS. Well, Robin Hood doesn't fund needle exchanges anymore. Nobody does. The reason is because the federal government does it, but the federal government was never going to be first money in. So, we see government as a partner, in the fact that we can put in initial capital and then have them work to scale. But government is also

complicit in the level of inequality that we have in our society. You know, the fact that we have 9.8 million children living in poverty is a direct result of government policies. And the truth is, when we say, well, poverty's a choice, it is. It's a choice of our society to allow poverty. It's a choice of our government to put in policies that allow that level of disconnection and that level of disillusionment.

JONATHAN CAPEHART: Is that the challenge that you face as a philanthropy working with government—that is, to get government to change the way it does things? So, to see that the ideas and the policies and principles that you are trying to put forth are actually things that government should be partnering in?

WES MOORE: You know, it's interesting. I actually see that as a bigger challenge amongst philanthropy, because I think that philanthropy oftentimes doesn't realize what a voice and what a role it has in actually changing policy. I think, oftentimes, philanthropy looks at policy as something that they do over there, or that policy is something that, well, we don't do that. We're grant makers. Got it. At the same time, how are we going in understanding the things that we are saying and not saying are fundamentally addressing what were happening? You know, we just put together a public statement around the proposed changes around SNAP, for example.

JONATHAN CAPEHART: Right.

WES MOORE: We in our history have funded upwards of around \$100 million in emergency food programs as a singular organization. We have a program right now called Single Stop that we put together. We disperse around \$13 million a year for Single Stop. Here's the reality. If those proposed regulations happen, about 3.1 million people will be pushed into poverty. Nothing has changed about their situation. They've done nothing wrong. But, out of nowhere, someone overnight could be pushed into poverty. If philanthropy doesn't understand its role in pushing back against that, then philanthropy is not using its full power wisely.

[applause]

DEVAL PATRICK: I think there is an appetite for innovation in public policy, not just in government but among all of us. But successful innovation, I think, requires we have an atmosphere for failure. Politics punishes failure. And so I think we get less innovation than we like in public policy. So, to your question about how philanthropy can help change government, I'd love to see ways in which philanthropy support opportunities for everyone to serve nationally, because I think there is something that comes to the person as well as the community from national or community service. And a large part of it is just being with people we only think we know through their cartoon image in the media. And as we get to know each other, then maybe some of these things that seem like deep and permanent divisions can be overcome.

JONATHAN CAPEHART: Deval Patrick, Wes Moore, thank you very much.

DEVAL PATRICK: Good to be with you. Thank you everyone.

[applause]

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End of transcript.