

# PROFILES IN CITIZENSHIP: HOW TO KEEP THE REPUBLIC



John Gress/Getty Images News/Getty Images

## Rahm Emanuel

Rahm Emanuel must be a master of federal relations. The mayor of Chicago since May 2011, he left a position as President Barack Obama's chief of staff in the White House to run for office. Emanuel had worked for the national government before, as a policy adviser for Bill Clinton, and he was a member of Congress, representing a district in Illinois, when we interviewed him on May 17, 2005, on a busy day between votes in the House. Here's his advice for students.

### ***On the difference between partisanship and honest political disagreement:***

Maybe it comes from growing up in a Jewish home where screaming was the decibel you used, but I don't believe every disagreement is partisan.... Now if I say, "Hey, you're a jerk," that's partisan. And that's getting into personal. But what happens is, and no disrespect, but the elite media make every disagreement a partisan disagreement. It isn't partisan, it's a real policy. And what you can't do, nor should you ever do, is drive politics out of politics.

That'd be just bureaucracy. Politics is a good thing. It's how we settle our differences. And through this homogenization of debate, we're saying that every debate is a partisan debate. It isn't. It's a political debate about political differences.

### ***On keeping the republic:***

First of all you want to do something with your life. You never know when the Good Lord is going to call your number up. And this is one place in the world, one society where you can leave your thumbprint on this and try to make the world a little better—in your own view better. Second, I see and believe that public service is community service. And when you see the kind of practice my father built and what my mother did, and where I came from and also my grandfather and grandmother on both sides, giving something back to your country and this community is central. . . . Get involved in public service. That could mean a community group, that could be a neighborhood group, that could mean an interest group on some issue, that could mean public office. A campaign. But get involved in your public life. We spend enough time with our iPods, TVs, computers—being individuals. Somewhere else in your life find a way to be part of your community . . . and I think you'll find something that's enriching and also something that allows you to contribute. That's different from anything else you're ever going to do in your life.