

FROM AMERICA'S MAYORS

Complete blurbs in interior layout order — for author's files

"Mayors occupy the rare nexus between democracy and accountability — fixing problems and managing crises alongside their neighbors. At their best, mayors lead as Steve Adler has — with intelligence, heart, and guts — taking us through our worst moments toward our best possibilities. A powerful memoir from one of America's greatest mayors, showing us where democracy still lives and thrives — in the local communities where our hopes and urgent work reside."

ERIC GARCETTI

Former mayor of Los Angeles

U.S. Ambassador to India

"This is the book I wish I'd had when I became mayor. Steve Adler has written something rare—a political memoir that's actually useful. Every chapter teaches something new about crisis management, coalition building, or the art of making impossible decisions under brutal pressure. I recommend it to every mayor. You should read it twice."

STEVE BENJAMIN

Former mayor of Columbia, South Carolina

President, U.S. Conference of Mayors (2018–2019)

"Steve and I both know what it's like when a crisis doesn't wait for a committee meeting. This book shows the real work of city leadership — fast decisions, imperfect information, and the weight of knowing your call will shape thousands of lives. Required reading for anyone who thinks governing is easy."

RAHM EMANUEL

Former mayor of Chicago

Chief of Staff to President Obama, U.S. Ambassador to Japan

"The crisis hits. No backup. No playbook. No time for consensus. Just you and impossible choices. Steve Adler takes you inside those moments with the kind of honesty you rarely get from politicians and delivers the leadership blueprint they don't teach anywhere else."

STEPHANIE RAWLINGS-BLAKE

Former mayor of Baltimore

President, U.S. Conference of Mayors (2015–2016)

"In America today there are three political parties - Republicans, Democrats and mayors. Adler's book reminds us that governing is both a science and an art. But most importantly, it shows how local government can prosper, even through the dysfunction of national politics."

BILL PEDUTO

Former mayor of Pittsburgh

"Every national failure lands on a mayor's desk. Steve Adler was a 'mayor's mayor' — collaborative, pragmatic, and insightful, and nobody is better equipped to show what it takes for mayors to solve the problems that Washington, DC won't touch."

SAM LICCARDO

Former mayor of San Jose

"Good man, humble heart. That is Mayor Steve Adler and it shows in this account of leading Austin through some of the most significant challenges in recent memory. This is not just a behind the scenes look, it's an inside the head of a mayor account, admitting mistakes and being raw and candid in ways few elected officials ever are. A must read for people who care about our democracy and recognize mayors are called upon to lead every day."

LORI LIGHTFOOT

Former mayor of Chicago

"Mayors are this country's last line of democratic governance. Mayor Adler lived that truth and governed through some of America's most difficult years. This book shows what it takes. Democracy doesn't die in Washington. It survives or fails in our cities. I watched him deliver where it mattered most."

BILL DE BLASIO

Former mayor of New York City

“I’ve written about the hard truths of leading a city through crisis—the Confederate monument decisions, the recovery from Katrina, the moments when there are no good options. Steve’s account captures that same unflinching honesty. This is what it actually feels like to carry a city through the impossible.”

MITCH LANDRIEU

Former mayor of New Orleans

President, U.S. Conference of Mayors (2017–2018)

“This book pulls back the curtain on what it really means to lead a city—where decisions are immediate, consequences are personal, and there’s nowhere to hide. It’s a clear-eyed, hard-earned account of leadership when everything is on the line.”

SLY JAMES

Former mayor of Kansas City, Missouri

“Being a mayor is walking a high wire without a net—and without knowing what’s ahead—understanding that, if you slip, people’s lives will be irrevocably altered. Adler gets it.”

ANNISE PARKER

Former mayor of Houston

“This book takes me back to when I was mayor during those same critical years. I kept thinking: I’ve been in that meeting. I’ve made that call. I’ve carried that same weight. Steve’s account of leading through those crises rings true for anyone who’s been in the mayor’s chair.”

TED WHEELER

Former mayor of Portland

“Corpus Christi is an energy-driven port city. Austin is a tech boom town. Different economies, different challenges—but the same truth: mayors solve problems or people suffer. No excuses, no delays. Steve’s book is honest about what that means when your city looks to you for answers.”

NELDA MARTINEZ

Former mayor of Corpus Christi

“The hardest work in city leadership isn’t policy—it’s trust. Especially when you’re trying to address systemic racism, displacement, and inequality in communities that have been promised change before and seen little. Steve’s account captures that challenge: how do you move fast enough to matter but slow enough to bring people along? There’s no formula. Just decisions, consequences, and showing up.”

LEVAR STONEY

Former mayor of Richmond, Virginia

*“Great mayors need the head of a CEO and the heart of a social worker. In *Hot Seat—Hot City*, Steve Adler takes readers inside the mayor’s office and onto the front lines of leading one of America’s most dynamic cities—a gripping, behind-the-scenes look at public service where democracy meets the street and the future of our country is forged.”*

GREG FISCHER

Former mayor of Louisville

President, U.S. Conference of Mayors (2020–2021)

“This book comes at a moment when government desperately needs examples of principled leadership. Steve Adler has long been admired by fellow mayors as a true servant leader—curious enough to learn from others and generous enough to share the lessons he gained while navigating complex challenges. This book should be on the desk of every mayor and elected official in America.”

JOHN GILES

Former mayor of Mesa

“Mayors are America’s most effective leaders—optimistic, inclusive visionaries who are serious, pragmatic, and get things done. That is Mayor Adler, and his book is a deep dive into what good governance really looks like.”

DAVID HOLT

Mayor of Oklahoma City

President, U.S. Conference of Mayors (2025–2026)

“Mayor Adler provides a masterclass in the management of a modern American city. In particular, his chapters on homelessness, public safety, transportation and housing affordability reveal both the underlying stresses in modern cities and the corresponding opportunity for leadership. Great mayors deliver!”

JOHN COOPER

Former mayor of Nashville

“The challenges American cities faced during Adler’s tenure cannot be overstated. It’s not easy, but important, to revisit those years and learn their lessons. His book offers a candid account of how one mayor harnessed the power of his community during those times.”

LEIRION GAYLOR BAIRD

Mayor of Lincoln, Nebraska

Second Vice President, U.S. Conference of Mayors (2025–2026)

“Working-class cities like Boston taught me that often governing isn’t about grand visions—it’s about whether the potholes get fixed, whether people can afford rent, whether the bus shows up on time. Steve gets this. His book is grounded in the unglamorous, essential work that makes cities function.”

MARTY WALSH

Former mayor of Boston

U.S. Secretary of Labor

“Mayor Adler offers a riveting look at the high-stakes, often heartbreaking decisions America’s mayors must make. With rare vulnerability and humor, he renews our hope that faith in democracy can be rebuilt where it matters most—on the ground, in our cities.”

LIBBY SCHAAF

Former mayor of Oakland

“I led the U.S. Conference of Mayors during the transition from normalcy to pandemic—one month we were planning growth strategies, the next we were managing lockdowns and death counts. Steve’s account of that same period captures what every mayor experienced: impossible decisions with incomplete information and no time to wait for the perfect guidance that never came.”

BRYAN BARNETT

Former mayor of Rochester Hills, Michigan

President, U.S. Conference of Mayors (2019–2020)

“In a time of such divisiveness, Hot Seat – Hot City should be required reading for every public official from coast to coast. It’s about the power of building consensus, not walls. It’s about building a great American city by bringing people together, rather than pulling them apart.”

HILLARY SCHIEVE

Mayor of Reno

President, U.S. Conference of Mayors (2023–2024)

“Not every mayor has to lead from inside the crucible of police violence and racial reckoning. Steve shows what we experience in those moments—the community’s grief and terror and anger coming right at us as we grapple with the near-impossible task of transforming systems while keeping people safe. This is an honest account from someone who had to make those decisions in real time.”

BETSY HODGES

Former mayor of Minneapolis

“Steve and I don’t agree on everything politically, but we agree on this: mayors have to get things done regardless of party. His book shows what bipartisan leadership actually looks like—not splitting the difference, but delivering results that make cities work better for everyone.”

FRANCIS SUAREZ

Former mayor of Miami

President, U.S. Conference of Mayors (2022–2023)

“This is what governing actually looks like: real-world crises, impossible trade-offs, and expectations that ultimately fall on the mayor’s shoulders. Adler writes with an earned clarity, forged not in perfection, but in effort, ingenuity, and a deep compassion for the people he serves. This is leadership.”

ADRIAN PERKINS

Former mayor of Shreveport

“Mayoral leadership truly matters. As global and national crises rocked the nation, mayors across the U.S. stepped up to lead. Steve Adler offers an intimate look at how he and many of his mayoral colleagues faced the Great Recession, the global pandemic, unprecedented social unrest, and another economic recovery with humility, leadership, and courage—often while a disorganized federal government failed to step in.”

MICHAEL HANCOCK

Former mayor of Denver

“I first met Steve during my time at Gallup, where he brought a data-driven approach to helping cities work better for people. Later, as mayor, I saw that leadership up close—how he handled tough challenges, stayed steady, and kept people at the center. This is the kind of leadership our cities need right now.”

JUSTIN BIBB

Mayor of Cleveland

“During the Trump 1.0 years, mayors of major Southern cities were often left to bridge the gap between our residents’ needs and the support we received from state and federal governments. Steve captures that tension—and the creativity it takes to lead when others won’t.”

KEISHA LANCE BOTTOMS

Former mayor of Atlanta

“Phoenix and Austin are both dealing with explosive Sunbelt growth and the associated challenge to stay livable and affordable. Steve’s account honestly and accurately describes what it’s like to lead a major city through the moments that keep you up at night. Among mayors, Steve was a leader we turned to for wisdom and partnership. This book shows why.”

KATE GALLEG0

Mayor of Phoenix

“As someone who has served in this same weighty role of public trust, I recognize the leadership Steve Adler demonstrates here. He led Austin through extraordinary challenges, and this book captures that reality with openness and candor. It’s about governing in the moment—where decisions matter and cities shape people’s lives every day.”

HARDIE DAVIS

Former mayor of Augusta

“I’ve been mayor for over two decades, and I recognize every crisis Steve describes—the calls at all hours, the moments that test a city’s resilience, the challenges that demand tough decisions in real time. This book shows what it truly means to lead over the long haul: centering the city, staying steady under pressure, and choosing the right path over the easy one.”

BUDDY DYER

Mayor of Orlando

“A mayor’s heart pulses with every triumph and trauma of the people they serve. Steve brings the reader into the middle of Austin City Hall with clarity, humor, and a hard-earned perspective. As a fellow former Texas mayor, I know his account captures what that unique pressure feels like from the inside.”

RON NIRENBERG

Former mayor of San Antonio

“I served alongside Steve during times of crisis, and this book captures the essence of what fueled his service—a fiercely honest and deeply human story about leadership, responsibility, and the communities where we live.”

HARRY LAROSILIERE

Former mayor of Plano

“The Midwest doesn’t do hype. We show up, do the work, take the heat or the praise, and show up again. Steve governed the same way in Austin—direct, grounded, unvarnished. This book won’t make you love politics. It might make you respect what cities demand from the people who lead them.”

NAN WHALEY

Former mayor of Dayton

President, U.S. Conference of Mayors (2021–2022)

“As a Republican mayor for fourteen years, I learned that governing isn’t about ideology—it’s about whether the streets are safe, the water runs clean, and people can afford housing. Steve and I wouldn’t agree on every solution, but we recognize the same problems. This book is honest about what it takes to deliver.”

MICK CORNETT

Former mayor of Oklahoma City

President, U.S. Conference of Mayors (2016–2017)

“Serving as mayor teaches you that leadership at the local level is often about listening, weighing difficult choices, and moving forward without perfect answers. In this book, Steve Adler brings a candid and personal perspective to that experience, offering a clear and engaging look at the realities of the role and the demands placed on today’s mayors.”

TOM TAIT

Former mayor of Anaheim

“Texas mayors know what it means to govern big, fast-growing cities while fighting a state government that’s often hostile to urban interests. Steve’s account is both a window into Austin’s transformation and a mirror for anyone who’s led a Texas city through explosive change.”

MIKE RAWLINGS

Former mayor of Dallas

“While Washington deadlocks, mayors solve problems. Steve Adler shows how cities become America’s real laboratories of democracy—tackling homelessness, police reform, and housing crisis that Congress won’t touch.”

SHIRLEY FRANKLIN

Former mayor of Atlanta

“I was a mayor for twenty-five years. Now I’m in the state legislature. The view from here confirms what I always knew: mayors govern in the real world while legislatures debate. Steve’s book captures the gap between policy-making and problem-solving—and why cities can’t wait for state capitols to catch up.”

CHRISTOPHER CABALDON

Former mayor of West Sacramento

“Steve and I served as mayors at the same time and stayed in constant contact. Providence and Austin dealt with similar challenges, and we learned from each other in the trenches. His book shares those lessons with the candor I remember. This is the experience of being mayor.”

JORGE ELORZA

Former mayor of Providence

“As Washington and state houses drop into deeper dysfunction, cities become America’s proving ground and mayors are on the front lines fighting for our future. Mayor Adler shows what it takes to govern when results and accountability are immediate—and why mayors are America’s best hope for a functional democracy.”

JENNY DURKAN

Former mayor of Seattle

“In a border city, immigration isn’t a talking point. It’s part of daily life. It’s our neighbors, our economy, our schools, our hospitals. Steve’s book cuts through the noise and takes on the real challenges mayors face when national dysfunction shows up locally, and we’re left to protect our communities with limited tools.”

TODD GLORIA

Mayor of San Diego

First Vice President, U.S. Conference of Mayors (2025–2026)

“Steve Adler has captured his life, and the life of a mayor, with unparalleled revelation and depth. He offers a keen insight into what happens behind the scenes, and most importantly the leadership traits that mayors can bring to our nation to help deliver the future Americans want.”

RALPH BECKER

Former mayor of Salt Lake City

President, National League of Cities (2014–2015)

“Every mayor knows the job is in part crisis manager, problem solver, and referee. Steve is a friend who taught me much when we served as mayor during the same years, the most important of which is to lead with compassion.”

JOHN CRANLEY

Former mayor of Cincinnati

“Mayors of great American cities face a particular challenge: we’re growing and changing, but we can’t forget the people who built these communities. Steve’s book shows how to honor that tension—moving a city forward without leaving anyone behind.”

ANDREW GINTHER

Mayor of Columbus, Ohio

President, U.S. Conference of Mayors (2024–2025)

“Steve Adler helped a vibrant Austin confront Covid, homelessness, ICE, policing, and outdated infrastructure. A hostile right-wing state government constantly fought his administration. This is a frank and compelling insight into the challenges he faced and the paths he chose.”

RAY CABALLERO

Former mayor of El Paso

“Terrorist attack. Water outage. Innocents killed. That was Austin — and my Chattanooga, and cities across America. As Mayor Adler shows, local government is where ordinary neighbors step up to lead and democracy actually lives, closest to the people it serves. Buy this book. Then run for office.”

ANDY BERKE

Former mayor of Chattanooga