Coalition Construction and Electoral Politics  
Andrew Tuttle (500 words or less – Audience: S.F. Chronicle)

*“Thank you for blessing me and the rest of the city with Mayor Ed Lee – got us all runnin’ say ‘Run Lee Run’ only 5 foot 5 but he gets s\*\*t done.”[[1]](#footnote-0)  
 –* Excerpt from *2 Legit to Quit*

Uploaded on October 24, 2011, nineteen days before the November 11 mayoral election, Mayor Ed Lee’s promotional campaign video *2 Legit to Quit* hit YouTube.[[2]](#footnote-1) Tagged as ‘quite possibly the most amazing campaign video ever’ by Chris Cillizza of the Washington Post and ‘unquestionably the best campaign ad of the year’ by the New York Times’ Michael Shear, the video bypasses a discussion of Lee’s political platform to introduce Bay Area sports, music, and tech-industry icons as political and commercial endorsements.[[3]](#footnote-2) Although 2 *Legit to Quit* is a gimmicky, popularized video designed for broad appeal, the core components of Lee’s campaign focused on citywide economic development and healthy interdepartmental relationships within City Hall. [[4]](#footnote-3) While Lee’s pro-business platform engages diverse economic and social sectors his election as the city’s first Chinese-American mayor serves as a springboard toward understanding the politics of bi-racial coalition construction in San Francisco.[[5]](#footnote-4) Generally, as Asian communities grow in urban areas they organize to gain political office.[[6]](#footnote-5) The Immigration Act of 1965 led to large-scale and rapid growth in Asian populations and by 1996 the National Asian Pacific Voter Registration Campaign emerged as an organization dedicated to boosting Asian political mobilization nationwide; NAPVRC provided 75,000 new registrations in its first year.[[7]](#footnote-6) Twelve Asian Americans had served or were serving in the U.S. Congress by 2000 and in 2013 there are a dozen Asian Americans in Congress—forming the largest caucus of Asian American and Pacific Islander members in any congressional session.[[8]](#footnote-7) In San Francisco’s most recent election, five of eleven mayoral candidates were Asian American.[[9]](#footnote-8) Although Asian Americans are less intensely racialized than Africans Americans, in spite of their belated entry into electoral politics Asians have joined forces with other political groups in a range of electoral and governing coalitions.[[10]](#footnote-9) As the influx of immigrant newcomers reached unprecedented highs in the 1990s—with 9.1 million people immigrating legally to the United States—the changing racial demographics of the U.S. political landscape means that two-way competition for power between blacks and whites will characterize fewer urban cities than in the past.[[11]](#footnote-10) The programs of minority-governed cities depend on the nature of the coalitions that control city government.[[12]](#footnote-11) Similar to Tom Bradley’s successful bi-racial and business-oriented coalition in Los Angeles, San Francisco’s Ed Lee forged a strong alliance with white, tech industry executives from Twitter, Zynga, Yelp!, and SV Angel founder Ron Conway while simultaneously carrying the overwhelming support of San Francisco’s Asian constituency.[[13]](#footnote-12) Labeled by former mayor Willie Brown as the ‘peoples choice’ Lee’s strong support from the Asian community and his ability to work with business interests and promise reformed tax policies pushed him to the forefront of the mayoral race and win the November election—Ed Lee gets s\*\*t done.[[14]](#footnote-13)

1. "Ed Lee Is 2 LEGIT 2 QUIT [MC Hammer, SF Giants Brian Wilson, Ashkon]." *YouTube*. YouTube, 24 Oct. 2011. Web. 07 May 2013; "Ashkon – 2 Legit 2 Quit (Ed Lee Remix) Lyrics." *Rap Genius*. Fall 2011. Web. 07 May 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. "Ed Lee Is 2 LEGIT 2 QUIT [MC Hammer, SF Giants Brian Wilson, Ashkon]." *YouTube*. YouTube, 24 Oct. 2011. Web. 07 May 2013; "November 8, 2011 Municipal Election." *City and County of San Francisco :*. Web. 07 May 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. "San Francisco Portal." *San Francisco Portal*. Web. 07 May 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. "Lee Gets It Done." *SCN Strategies*. Web. 07 May 2013; "San Francisco Mayoral Race | San Francisco Examiner | Sfexaminer.com." *San Francisco Examiner*. Web. 07 May 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. Vekshin, Alison. "SF Mayor Rises From 'Bureaucrat' to Twitter's Savior." *Bloomberg*. 25 Mar. 2013. Web. 07 May 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. Browning, Rufus P., Dale Rogers. Marshall, and David H. Tabb. *Racial Politics in American Cities*. New York: Longman, 1990. Print. Pg: 366 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. Browning, Rufus P., Dale Rogers. Marshall, and David H. Tabb. *Racial Politics in American Cities*. New York: Longman, 1990. Print. Pg: 366 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. Browning, Rufus P., Dale Rogers. Marshall, and David H. Tabb. *Racial Politics in American Cities*. New York: Longman, 1990. Print. Pg: 366; Do, Anh. "Asian Americans Enjoy Greater Representation in Congress." *Los Angeles Times*. 19 Nov. 2012. Web. 07 May 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. "San Francisco Mayoral Race | San Francisco Examiner | Sfexaminer.com." *San Francisco Examiner*. Web. 07 May 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. Browning, Rufus P., Dale Rogers. Marshall, and David H. Tabb. *Racial Politics in American Cities*. New York: Longman, 1990. Print. Pg: 367, 368 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. Browning, Rufus P., Dale Rogers. Marshall, and David H. Tabb. *Racial Politics in American Cities*. New York: Longman, 1990. Print. Pg: 366 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
12. Browning, Rufus P., Dale Rogers. Marshall, and David H. Tabb. *Racial Politics in American Cities*. New York: Longman, 1990. Print. Pg: 368 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
13. Vekshin, Alison. "SF Mayor Rises From 'Bureaucrat' to Twitter's Savior." *Bloomberg*. 25 Mar. 2013. Web. 07 May 2013; Sankin, Aaron. "San Francisco Election Results: Ed Lee Named Mayor, Ross Mirkarimi Sheriff, And More." *The Huffington Post*. 09 Nov. 2011. Web. 07 May 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
14. Coté, Jose, and Stephanie Lee. "Ed Lee Takes Large Early Lead in Mayor's Race." *SfGate* 9 Nov. 2011. Web. 07 May 2013; Sankin, Aaron. "San Francisco Election Results: Ed Lee Named Mayor, Ross Mirkarimi Sheriff, And More." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 09 Nov. 2011. Web. 07 May 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)