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[00:00:21] **Speaker 1** Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Mandela. Barnes, thank you for joining us.

[00:00:24] **Speaker 2** Thanks so much for having me.

[00:00:26] **Speaker 1** Currently, Wisconsin's lieutenant governor. Previously, you were a state lawmaker. What do you want to be a U.S. senator?

[00:00:31] **Speaker 2** Well, I'm running for the U.S. Senate to rebuild the middle class, the same middle class that gave me so much opportunity. My mother was a public school teacher. My dad worked there on the assembly line. Those jobs were their ticket to the middle class. And unfortunately, those tickets are harder and harder for people to come by. Whether you're in urban communities or rural communities and we're in desperate need of leadership right now, people who have a firsthand understanding of what is actually going on. People like Ron Johnson have left people in every corner of this state behind. That is a problem, especially as people see rising costs at the grocery store, at the gas pump. We see our industries in crisis. Manufacturing is suffering. Our small family farmers are being squeezed out by large corporate monopolies. Yet at the same time, we have an out-of-touch U.S. Senate that is completely broken. And that's one thing you also hear from people, too, that it is a millionaire's club that they want to see broken up because the overwhelming majority of people in this state and across this country are not millionaires. And that's why the issues continue to get swept under the rug. So I decided to run for the U.S. Senate to make sure that the opportunity that I had growing up is available to every person in every county and every zip code all across the state.

[00:01:40] **Speaker 1** If elected, what would your legislative priorities be?

[00:01:42] **Speaker 2** We have a unique opportunity to address climate change and create good paying jobs in the process. But we have to be aggressive to take advantage of it. We also have to save our democracy. I mean, nothing else matters if we don't protect the right to vote, if we don't make sure that people have access to the ballot as they should. And, you know, it was top of mind for so many other people is protecting the right to choose. And that's all people all the time. If this isn't your number one issue, the right to choose, I guarantee you there is a fundamental right that will be under attack in the coming months, in the coming years, if we don't act now. That's why we have to expand the Democratic majority in the filibuster, codify the right to choose Roe versus Wade in the law.

[00:02:25] **Speaker 1** On the economy, inflation has reached a 40 year high. What action should federal lawmakers take on inflation.

[00:02:31] **Speaker 2** When it comes to inflation? I tell you, there are a couple of things that we have to do in the short term. We need to give relief to working class families, to middle class households. That means expanding the earned income tax credit. That means making the child tax credit permanent. And we can do that by making sure that the wealthiest in this country pay their fair share. And in the long term, we have to do more of what we've done before. And that's building things right here in America. When we build things in America, specifically in Wisconsin, we're less vulnerable to supply chain issues that drive up costs for consumers. We also need to address the pressing issues of price gouging and corporate greed that has made it more difficult for families to even weather this economic storm that they've been dealing with.

[00:03:17] **Speaker 1** There have been a number of major mass shootings and an uptick in other gun deaths. How should the US Senate address gun violence?

[00:03:24] **Speaker 2** I tell you, gun violence is an issue that is incredibly, deeply personal for me. Lost my first friend in high school and lost a handful of others while I was still in high school. The gun violence and to know that pain is something I don't wish on anyone. But there is the responsibility to act. States can't take this piecemeal approach and expect the whole country to be safe. With that said, what I support is what an overwhelming majority of people in this state, in this country support what a majority of gun owners support. That's universal background checks, this banning of assault weapons. And it's also red flag laws that help keep dangerous weapons out of the hands of people who shouldn't have them getting these weapons of war off the streets. There's no reason people should have such easy access to killing machines as they do. This isn't you know, these assault weapons aren't to assault gamers, not to assault a deer. These are to weapons are made to assault human bodies. And we see the carnage that has been left in countless incident after incident, whether it's equality, whether it's Highland Park. It is long past time for, you know, the Senate for Congress to take substantive action. Now, what they just passed. I look at it as the first step, but recognizing there's still so much more work to do to make our streets safer.

[00:04:35] **Speaker 1** The Supreme Court has overruled Roe versus Wade. What should the U.S. Senate do on the matter of abortion?

[00:04:42] **Speaker 2** The US Senate has to in the filibuster so we can clarify the right to choose into law. 70% of people in the state of Wisconsin agree. But unfortunately, this is how out of touch our leaders are. This is how out of touch the United States Senate is. This is how out of touch people specifically like Ron Johnson have become on such a deeply personal matter. Look, I'm some people know I'm an only child, but not everybody knows that my mother had a complicated pregnancy before I was born. She had to make the difficult, painful decision that was best for herself, that was best for her health. But the decision she made was hers. It was hers alone. And that is a right that should be available to anyone in this country who. Is in need of abortion. And that's why we have to fight so hard this November to expand that majority, to take into account the realities that people are experiencing, those realities that are consistently ignored by an out-of-touch US Senate. And we need to make the right to choose the law of the land once and for all.

[00:05:40] **Speaker 1** How would you reassure Wisconsin voters to have confidence in the election system?

[00:05:44] **Speaker 2** Most people do have confidence in the election system. It was reported widely that the 2020 election was one of the most safe elections on record. One thing we could do to make our elections more secure is to get people who have no regard for our democracy out of office, for a person to have the audacity to try to step in and overturn the will of the people. The will of the people in the state that that person was elected to represent is a total abdication of responsibility.

[00:06:11] **Speaker 1** Ron Johnson has won election to the Senate twice. Why are you the candidate, the Democrat, who can beat him in the general election in November?

[00:06:18] **Speaker 2** The coalition we built includes the entirety of the state of Wisconsin. We have small business owners, farmers, people from my hometown of Milwaukee here in Madison and all across the state of Wisconsin, who stepped up to support this campaign. Small business owners, again, from all parts of the state of Wisconsin and the coalition of family farmers that understand that our need to unite is greater now than it has ever been. There is an imminent threat with Senator Johnson in the US and a threat to our democracy, a threat to our way of life. And we need leaders who are going to step in and say enough is enough. People are going to step in and put an end to these practices that have made it harder and harder for everyday people to get ahead. We have to change Washington, and the only way we change Washington is when we change the people we send to Washington and Obama.

[00:07:06] **Speaker 1** Thank you again for joining us.

[00:07:07] **Speaker 2** Thanks so much for having me.