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[00:00:01] **Speaker 1** Grow and grow. And we're ready. We're ready. All right. Well, Senate majority leader, let me hear you. Thanks for your time today. Give me your perspective on the last year, starting with the budget. That was the big bill of the year. How do you think that everything's unfolded for you?

[00:00:24] **Speaker 2** You know, I think we got a lot of good things done this last year in 2023. The shared revenue bill for local levels of government, school funding, school choice expansion, a budget that could have been better if the governor went to issued a couple of vetoes. But and then this fall, passing, you know, keeping the Brewers around for another 20 years. And a lot of good bills done.

[00:00:49] **Speaker 1** Do you think it would surprise some of your voters or constituents that you needed to go to the Democrats to pass some of those bills along the way? Or is that just the way the building works sometimes?

[00:00:59] **Speaker 2** You know, that's just the way it worked this time, I guess. When we did the Bucks Fiserv Forum, it was my first session and that was done with Democrat votes. And it was important. We've known an NBA championship since that arena was built. So, you know, it's it's I mean, if it's good for Wisconsin, whether it's done by just Republicans or both Republicans and Democrats, it's good. It's important to get it done.

[00:01:28] **Speaker 1** A year ago, there was a lot of talk about a reset with the governor. There have been some good moments with the governor we just talked about. There have been some other moments where the Senate's rejected some of his appointments. There have been some other controversies. How do you feel your relationship is with the administration right now?

[00:01:45] **Speaker 2** Well, since the budget, we haven't communicated a whole lot. And unfortunately, but I guess worked somewhat with the governor's office on the on the Brewer's bill to make sure that he was comfortable with it. And obviously, he really wanted to get it done as well. But it's it's just unfortunate that he keeps vetoing tax cuts when we have such a large surplus that we're sitting on taxpayer money when we could be giving it back to them.

[00:02:08] **Speaker 1** Speaking of the tax cuts, it's been passed and vetoed twice now. You have been able to work with the governor on other issues. Is there any room to sit down at the table and find compromise on what he might be willing to sign?

[00:02:21] **Speaker 2** Well, I don't know. I mean, if it's some wish list of his like things that don't make sense, it's not worth doing a tax cut. But, you know, he was for reducing that tax bracket in the period before he ran for reelection and use that as part of his reelection tactics. But now, apparently that's it's not it's silly. That's a wealthy tax cut which starts at 24,000 when you file individually that tax rate and 36,000 married filing jointly. So it's it's really unfortunate that he sort of flipped his idea of that being a good way to reduce taxes in the state of Wisconsin.

[00:03:02] **Speaker 1** When you look ahead to the next year, what bills are a priority for you?

[00:03:07] **Speaker 2** You know, I think there's two bills that hopefully we can get done yet. First is the right of first refusal to allow Wisconsin companies the right to build new transmission lines first and keep that work done here in Wisconsin. That's going to save rate payers money. And so hopefully we can get that. And there's a electric vehicle charging bill that was just introduced. I think that bill will be vital to expand charging stations around the state of Wisconsin as there are more and more electric vehicles.

[00:03:41] **Speaker 1** In terms of election bills. Are there any bills out there that you think the governor will sign, specifically some of the early counting bills that are have been proposed in the past?

[00:03:51] **Speaker 2** Well, there was a time when I actually authored that bill a couple of sessions ago, but I don't I'm not sure that Bill's out in the Senate right now. I don't know if it'll it'll move or not. But, you know, it's just it's important to make sure that some of the bigger cities actually get their votes counted on time.

[00:04:10] **Speaker 1** One of the other big things that happened this year, obviously, was the Supreme Court election and a shift in the balance in the power there. How much does that weigh on your caucus when it comes to either the bills that you're proposing or obviously looking ahead to possible new maps next year?

[00:04:26] **Speaker 2** Yeah, I think there's a lot of concern in our caucus and amongst myself that, you know, everything that we've done over for me for eight years and for other people who've been around even longer for the last decade, 12 years, all the reforms that we passed could be undone by depending on how activist this court actually becomes. And, you know, it's it's early on, but you can tell the first thing that they did was challenge our maps the day that she was sworn into office. So that's it's it's really unfortunate that it seems like, you know, with the governor's lawsuit trying to suing us, our joint committees, that there we have two branches of government trying to box out. The legislative branch right now. And we are a co-equal branch of government and we're going to keep operating like that and look forward to getting good bills done.

[00:05:17] **Speaker 1** Is most realistic to think you're going to have to run in all 33 districts next year, that the entire Senate will be up, or are you going to wait and see on that?

[00:05:26] **Speaker 2** That would be a pretty drastic move by the Supreme Court to actually do that. I think even Justice Protozoa, which mentioned that it'd be very rare to undo election results essentially is what they're doing, undoing the will of half the state and electing their Senate two years to a four year term and undoing that two years later or a year later to run two years later. So I think our I think we have the legal arguments behind our side. And, you know, if the if the court does weigh in against our maps and makes us all run again, we're going to take that to appeal to the US Supreme Court and hopefully get relief.

[00:06:04] **Speaker 1** You have a veto proof majority in the Senate, but you haven't been able to use that in terms of impeachment. There's been threats and talks of impeachment. Would you like to see the ability to bring an impeachment all the way to the floor, whether it's from Meghan Wolfe or Justice protege Woods or anyone else?

[00:06:20] **Speaker 2** Impeachment is a serious thing. I don't think it should be done lightly. Someone has to do something probably illegal in order to do that. Just doing it to Prosy, which is just simply overturning an election that was just held. So and she hasn't she did recuse herself even though she said our maps are rigged during the campaign, but she hasn't made any decisions yet.

[00:06:47] **Speaker 1** Just last week, the Senate minority leader announced that she was going to be giving up her seat and is no longer in her leadership position. What does that say about the Democrats prospects for gaining seats in the Senate that their leader doesn't want to stick around through next year and possibly see if they gain a majority or even more more seats?

[00:07:05] **Speaker 2** Well, I think she's running for Dane County executive, which if that might if that's where she wants her career to be. I worked well with Senator Craig, tried to work with her and did work with her. Worked well with Beauly when she was minority, Senator Bailey when she was minority leader, and look forward to working with Senator Hazeltine in her in her new role. I think it's it's just good for the Senate to have, you know, that collegiality, not that we're going to agree on things all the time, but, you know, just, you know, give them their their their voice and be able to just communicate with them for the to make sure the Senate runs well.

[00:07:48] **Speaker 1** The Senate rejected a number of appointments made by Governor Evers, and there's some of those re appointments are going to come back before the body. Do you anticipate holding votes on them next next year?

[00:07:59] **Speaker 2** Well, it depends what the new appointees, what their views are on certain things. We had members of the DNR board who flat out told the committee that they weren't going to follow state law. You can't have you can't have committee members of committees that and boards that are going to refuse to follow state law. It's that simple. So it seems like a lot of the appointments, some of the appointments have become more and more partizan from from this governor. So we'll do our job in the Senate and take a good look at that appointees and decide if if they can do the job that they've been appointed to do.

[00:08:37] **Speaker 1** One of the big things for Republicans next year is the convention coming to Milwaukee. What do you think that impact will be for the rest of the state all the way in the fall?

[00:08:47] **Speaker 2** You know, I think it will be good. It'll be great. It would have been great if we had the DNC convention here in 2020 just to highlight Milwaukee and the great state that we are. So it'll be exciting to have, you know, all the cameras on on the city of Milwaukee and highlight the good state of Wisconsin.

[00:09:04] **Speaker 1** But as far as an electoral boost, do you think that can change minds in Milwaukee or the suburbs or anywhere else in the state?

[00:09:11] **Speaker 2** I'm not sure if that will happen. You know, it's going to be up to whoever the nominee is to to do that. You know, we'll be we'll be working hard at the grass roots level in the Senate. I think we've been very successful. I'm finding in this last session, we had a lot of open seats that were close and we found good candidates and who who who connected with their districts. And that's how we picked up a seat and got to a two thirds majority. So that'll be my job to help find good qualified candidates. If so, if we have new maps or if some of our members decide not to run again. But, you know, I think I think a lot if if things you know, just the even Senate districts are up, I think a lot of those senators will probably run again. But we'll see.

[00:10:03] **Speaker 1** Do you hope that Donald Trump is the Republican nominee?

[00:10:08] **Speaker 2** I'll let the voters decide on that. I'm a big fan of Nikki Haley. I think she'd be a nice contrast to President Biden. But it's that's for the voters to decide.

[00:10:19] **Speaker 1** In terms of your candidates for next fall. Do you hope to have a top flight, U.S. Senate candidate take on Tammy Baldwin?

[00:10:27] **Speaker 2** That'd be great.

[00:10:28] **Speaker 1** Do you have any insight as to who that might be?

[00:10:30] **Speaker 2** I have no idea who it's going to be.

[00:10:33] **Speaker 1** Have you heard any rumblings from anyone, any members of your caucus about possibly looking, since there haven't been any other big names come?

[00:10:39] **Speaker 2** I have not heard of anybody from our caucus considering that.

[00:10:43] **Speaker 1** As for another election topic is the WAC and Meghan Wolf, do you think that there will be controversy if she is still running the WAC through next fall, no matter the results of the election?

[00:10:56] **Speaker 2** You know, if Wisconsin is always seems to always be a pretty close statewide race, and when Trump won the first time, the Democrats were screaming that the elections were not held properly, and in 2020, the opposite happened. And, you know, I think there's not a lot of confidence in Megan Wolfe right now. And the most important thing about elections is having it, making sure it's easy to vote but hard to cheat to making sure that your vote counts. But the second most thing is building up the public's confidence in elections because people don't believe that the election is honest and accurate and no, nothing going on wrong. Then they might lose faith in the electoral process. And that's that's not good for a republic.

[00:11:47] **Speaker 1** What is the end game with Meghan Wolfe? Do you expect her to be reappointed officially to actually have a nomination come before the Senate? Or how does this end?

[00:11:57] **Speaker 2** Well, that's what the law says that they have to reappoint. But workers and doing their their duty and appointing whether it doesn't have to be her. But her term is done every four years. They have to reappoint. So we feel good about our lawsuit in that case as well. But we'll see what happens. But it's it's their duty. They're ignoring the legislative authority right now.

[00:12:23] **Speaker 1** How will you define success for 2024, a year from now? What will success look like?

[00:12:30] **Speaker 2** I'm hopefully we come back with as many of our 22 seats as possible. And, you know, I we have a lot of good senators who are up for reelection. So hopefully we can get them get them across the finish line.

[00:12:45] **Speaker 1** All right. Anything else you'd like to add? All right. Senate majority leader, thanks for your time today.

[00:12:50] **Speaker 2** Thank you.

[00:12:52] **Speaker 1** All right. We are. Good. Thanks for being patient.

[00:12:54] **Speaker 2** No problem.

[00:12:55] **Speaker 1** You shared it. Enjoy.