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[00:00:00] **Speaker 1** I'm rolling. All right. Let's go back a little bit. Tell me how you got involved in Brown County politics first before we went into to this fall.

[00:00:09] **Speaker 2** Sure. So looking back, I was partially activated when Trump was elected in 2016. I was pretty horrified at that that he actually got elected. You know, I think a lot of folks didn't really think that that would happen. And then when he was up for reelection, I was thinking, you know, if he wins again, I'm going to need to do something different with my life. So during that time, I was an executive with a manufacturing company. So living my life in my little life. You know, things were going well. But I was really concerned about the influence that he was having on the country. So it kind of just started percolating. And, of course, he did not win reelection, but he did not go away by any means. So and then when Roh v Wade was overturned, that was not just a tipping point, but a shoving point. And, you know, it wasn't just that Roh v Wade was overturned. It was the commentary by Clarence Thomas that basically invited cases on contraception and gay marriage. So all of that together. And, you know, I did not I feel naive now, but I did not think that they would be successful in trying to overturn Rowe. So, you know, they they made that happen. And then, you know, inviting these other cases, you know, that's was clearly the next step. So I decided to get involved in politics. I wasn't really sure how to do that. My my husband and my mom had been volunteering with the Brown County Dems a lot. So I kind of jumped in there and, you know, met a ton of great people and learned that there was going to be an election in December for a chair. And I, you know, was getting I was jumping in and a lot of different places. So was encouraged to run for chair. So I did and I won. And I'm actually still chair now. So I did that as kind of a first step to, you know, see what might come next and, you know, learn more about all the different organizations involved. And, you know, because I did know that I would want there to be a next step. So then, you know, things happen pretty quickly. You know, we got Janet Pro to say what's elected. The maps changed. And found myself living in a district that needed a candidate. And so pretty clear path before me, right? So decided to go ahead and run for office. And yeah, so it all my life has changed a lot in two years.

[00:03:08] **Speaker 1** So that would be December of 22.

[00:03:10] **Speaker 2** Yep. Okay.

[00:03:11] **Speaker 1** Just make sure I get my timelines right there. So as the maps, as it became apparent that there would be new maps, even as that process was unfolding of what it would look like, who would draw them, Who would decide? Were you thinking then like, wait, there's going to be an opportunity here for me? Or was that once again kind of having to wait and see what materialized?

[00:03:31] **Speaker 2** You know, I'll be honest, I wasn't necessarily thinking about myself in the beginning. I was excited, of course, that we were going to have the opportunity to to get a majority in the Assembly, but was happy to support, you know, other folks that had been around longer and, you know, maybe had a little more history. And then just the way things shook out. You know, I said, I'll be your emergency backup. And then, you know, ended up needing a candidate. And I mean, you know, I think I make a good candidate, but I just I'm so new to the scene that I didn't necessarily I didn't want to step on toes of folks that had been around longer.

[00:04:13] **Speaker 1** So if there had been more people interested in that seat than you would have jumped into a primary or crowded primary?

[00:04:19] **Speaker 2** No, no, I would have happily supported, you know, as long as it was someone that wanted to run and was, you know, really enthused about it and had, you know, was a good candidate, had everything they needed to be able to win me, I would have happily supported them.

[00:04:37] **Speaker 1** So as it became apparent that you were going to be the candidate, then, how quick did that switch flip from like organizing and helping others run their campaigns and saying, I'll support you to being the focal point?

[00:04:51] **Speaker 2** Well, so being chair Brown County Dems, I you know, I was involved in a couple of campaigns, city council and county board and school board, things like that. So I, I did get a taste of, you know, I never two years ago, I wouldn't have said I would run for office. But working with actual candidates, you know, you find out up close and personal that they're just regular people. You know, they're not some kind of different breed of person. And, you know, so learn firsthand what a campaign takes now that those are a little smaller scale, but, you know, had a better idea of what a, you know, an assembly campaign would be like. So when I threw my hat in the ring, as, you know, to be an option if needed, I did I did start thinking about it and was warming up to the idea of more and more I I secured Kristie for wisconsin.com just in case that would be needed. So yeah I was I was definitely and I was excited that you know to be able to step in.

[00:06:07] **Speaker 1** And set your future gubernatorial platform campaign work every step of the way.

[00:06:12] **Speaker 2** Right. Leave your options open.

[00:06:16] **Speaker 1** So talk to me a little about the race that you have in front of you. You have a candidate or an opponent. Now he's won his primary. What are the issues that you see is most important in this, this fall?

[00:06:28] **Speaker 2** So there's definitely recurring themes that I hear when I'm knocking doors. People are concerned about costs and there's lots of different buckets of costs. But, you know, costs at the grocery store, housing costs, childcare costs. So people are there's a lot of folks that are they're not in as they're struggling to make their wages, you know, extend as far as they used to. So costs for sure is a big piece. You know, here in Wisconsin, when Robby Wade was overturned, we reverted to an 1849 law. And there are, you know, a lot of women and men that are unhappy that that's what we're operating under now. You know, women didn't have the right to vote in 1849. We didn't know what germs were. You know, it's it's just you know, it doesn't make sense for us to be operating in 2024 under a law that is that old. So that one definitely comes up. And that's something that, you know, spans across party lines. And yeah, those those are the those are the main issues that come up at the doors.

[00:07:48] **Speaker 1** When it comes to the issue of abortion and access to that health care. Is there a concern that if the Supreme Court rules on the cases before them that could kind of neutralize that issue, that people would go back to that old road mentality of like, it's safe now. I don't have to vote based on this. I could vote based on other issues that matter to me.

[00:08:09] **Speaker 2** Well, yeah, that's a that's a good question. You know, it won't be as much of a political topic that people that people on both sides use. But I mean, it's necessary for our society. I mean, it's a women's rights issue as well. You know, I mean, the the folks that came up with these laws are primarily male. They have no idea what it's like to be pregnant and give birth and, you know, everything that goes along with that. So once it is enshrined in law, I mean, that'll that'll be good for everybody. So it's a that would be a perfectly fine development that it would be off the table politically.

[00:09:08] **Speaker 1** Talk to me a little bit about education, because obviously passing the budget, one of the most important things a legislature will do, public education funding has been a big topic. There's referendums everywhere for operating and maintenance and all these kind of things. So where where do you and your opponent differ on that and what would you like to see the legislature do when it comes to funding in the next budget?

[00:09:29] **Speaker 2** So yes, I do some educating at the doors about public education funding because that is an issue that, you know, most folks, Democrat or Republican, Independent agree that we need well-funded public education. And it's it's a pretty simple argument to to lay out that over the last 12 years, the amount the state allocates to each district per student has barely changed. Previous to that, it would, you know, not be exactly tied to inflation. But, you know, it would it would go up as appropriate so that the districts could keep up with giving raises and keeping up with maintenance. But for 12 years, again, that is basically stayed flat. And for 12 years, the legislature has been under Republican control. So if you saw those folks currently in power, don't think that. And at the same time, we have a record budget surplus. So. We have the money. We have people currently representing Wisconsin that don't think public education is a good investment. So I when folks are willing to talk, especially if they say that they usually lean Republican, I like to, you know, let them know about that issue. And that's pretty easy to connect those dots.

[00:10:59] **Speaker 1** Where do you stand on vouchers?

[00:11:03] **Speaker 2** So vouchers. You know, I it's interesting because Wisconsin is where vouchers first started. And the intent, I think, was a good one. But it's gotten out of control and it's part of what is eroding funding for public education. The the the way it works now, private schools get more money per child than public schools. They get more special education reimbursement than public schools. So and that all happened again while we had a Republican controlled legislature. So. You know, read between those lines what you will. You know why the folks that are currently representing us want more money to go to private schools per child. And essentially diverting funds from public education. So. I don't know that we need to completely do away with vouchers, but the way it's working today is. Unfair to put it nicely. And it just, you know, it's a complicated issue. So that's why it's it's it's happening. And not a lot of people are aware of it. There are some efforts that have been successful around the state. And I know that other people are working on it so that on your property tax bill, it will break out. Right now it just says, you know, there's one line. And so there's efforts to break out how much are going to private and how much are going to public. And I think that will help a lot for people to realize just how much money is getting diverted to private schools that don't have to meet the same, you know, testing requirements. They don't have to show that they are, you know, educating the kids to the same standards as public schools. So it's today it is not equitable, not not fair all around.

[00:13:17] **Speaker 1** When you talk to people at the doors, are you framing this, your election in a broader sense in terms of we have new maps, there's a chance for Democrats to retake the assembly, like this race is no longer I mean, I guess in the past few cycles it's been about protect Evers veto power. That's been the message line. Now it's it's it's a message of we might actually be able to get close to a majority if not take a majority do voter does that resonate with voters compared to other issues?

[00:13:45] **Speaker 2** Yes. So you know it's kind of funny. Sometimes I'll be knocking and I'll say, I'm Christie, I live in east of here. And and, you know, I'm running for assembly. And they'll say, I, I don't I don't think I'm in your district. And so then, you know, not everyone is aware that how the maps changed. So there is some educated education that happens there, too. And because of the way the maps were gerrymandered, you know, my my people who live in Jupiter, Alloway, Bellevue, they were there. They were represented by a Republican. And, you know, the the percentage was pretty high when the Republican won because of the way the maps were gerrymandered. So sometimes people are under the impression that they are in a red area, but they they're not. It's 5050. And there's a phenomenon where Republicans are much more likely to put a sign in their yard. And Democrats are shyer about, you know, put, you know, being out front with that. So all of that together gives people the impression that, you know, they're just maybe they're a blue dot surrounded by red. And so, you know, I don't, you know, point out specifics, but I'll say, you know, I'm not going down the street. And there's more Democrats than than you might think.

[00:15:17] **Speaker 1** And one of the impacts of gerrymandering over the course of the 14 years that we had uncompetitive maps was that people at local levels who may vote blue at the top of federal or U.S. Senate would actually start voting for Republicans because they did know them and they were their incumbent and they're the person that they knew for so long or they they were involved in business and they had to have a connection to Madison. And so that was the person they'd worked with enough like, well, Joe's not so bad. I've dealt with Joe a number of times. Will that be something that Democrats in these races have to get over, or is that a hurdle to overcome? There's not an incumbent in this particular race, but that's still that incumbent mindset of who I've been voting for Republicans at the local level for a long time.

[00:16:00] **Speaker 2** Well, I mean, so because of the way the maps were redrawn, the majority of the assembly and Senate races in Brown County are open seats. Which, you know, kind of levels the playing field on both sides. But I think most folks are going to vote and always did vote their conscience and not necessarily for hoping for political favors down the line. And. In Wisconsin for an assembly race. The maximum contribution that an assembly candidate can get is $1,000. So no one's going to be bought off for $1,000.

[00:16:50] **Speaker 1** When you look at Brown County as a whole, and obviously this is you in both of your capacities here. Have we ever seen a ballot top to bottom with so many significant and potentially close elections all at the same time?

[00:17:08] **Speaker 2** It's definitely been a long time. I mean, it's been at least it's been over a decade. You know, the previous two years ago, there was in Brown County, there was basically only one district that was winnable. We did have candidates that would run even in a red district and bless them because, you know, they they did it for the greater good. They did it to drive turnout, to help, you know, candidates up the ballot. But. This time around when there's more that are actually winnable. We had some really great candidates, you know, step forward and we all know each other. And, you know, we see each other at events and it feels like we're part of this community and part of this. It's an exciting time to be running, right? You know, we got Kamala. Everybody loves Tammy Baldwin. Kristen Line really is amazing. I mean, she is such a great candidate. I'm so pleased that she agreed, you know, to take that race on and then, you know, state Senate we've got Kelly Peterson running. Jamie Wall. It it is exciting to be, you know, with so many candidates running. I've heard, you know, in previous years people saying that it can be kind of isolating. And I have not experienced that because because of all this momentum and excitement. And so it's it's definitely very different.

[00:18:54] **Speaker 1** What are you noticing or what I guess bring me through the timeline of between the two debates, because obviously, we had the first debate when Joe Biden was still a potential nominee. Then we saw the with the RNC where the Republicans unified around Donald Trump. Joe Biden dropped out. Campbell was able to unify Democrats. You were at the DNC. What does that timeline felt like for you up here in that amount of time?

[00:19:20] **Speaker 2** It's been a lot, right? It's been like ten political years packed into just a few months. You know, there's definitely been a shift in enthusiasm which helps everybody. Right. You know, I would have campaigned for Joe Biden to the end because, I mean, he he is a great president. He's he's a good man. He's doing a great job. And Donald Trump, another Donald Trump presidency will be disastrous for this country. But it's the momentum with Kamala at the top of the ticket. Feels, you know, the young people, like younger people are getting into it, you know, with all these coconut memes and all this that we had to explain to some of our older volunteers that that was fun. We had a little presentation about that. But yeah, and then considering how, you know, how quickly it happened and Democrats all around the country just. It was pretty amazing how how quickly everyone came together and, you know, agreed. Yes, we need to get behind Kamala. That, you know, for so many reasons is the right choice. And it was it was cool to see us all, you know, align that quickly. And, you know, so I went to the DNC, as you mentioned, and just thinking about the folks that organized that, you know, I'm sure that they you know, they put all this time and effort into different programing and then they had to kind of pivot and change it up quite a bit. And they did. I mean, you never would have known it. It certainly didn't feel like it was, you know, slapdash thrown together at the last minute. It was great. It was really great.

[00:21:26] **Speaker 1** How does enthusiasm then translate into the action needed to get the votes?

[00:21:34] **Speaker 2** Well. So with Kamala at the top of the ticket, we definitely saw a major increase in people, you know, filling out our volunteer form on our website, calling into the office, stopping by. People really want signs, you know, are the organizers that work for the state party, you know, started to see a nice increase in people saying they wanted to knock doors and make phone calls and on the doors as well. People are more excited about voting for Democrats. So all around just feels really good.

[00:22:13] **Speaker 1** And that enthusiasm at the top of the ticket does translate all the way down through all of these different races we're talking as well. Right. Because, you know, whether if someone's only motivated to go through at the top of the ticket, that's what gets them excited. They can still go there and vote for everyone.

[00:22:30] **Speaker 2** So there is a risk that the farther down the ticket you get, if you know conscientious voters, if even if they consider themselves to be a strong Democrat, if they don't know about. That assembly candidate. They might hesitate to. To fill in the bubble. So there is you know, we can't just ride V.P. Harris's coattails, you know, And so we're knocking doors for ourselves. For her, it's just, you know, it all feeds each other. But, I mean, we know that for those. You know, races that are a little lower down that we do still need to get out there and make sure that people know our name and know that we're, you know, worthy of their vote.

[00:23:17] **Speaker 1** Have you met some of these infamous swing voters or split ticket people at the Doors? I mean, what what did they say to you when they talk about how they make those decisions line by line on the ballot?

[00:23:29] **Speaker 2** I have. They are out there. You know, I think it. I pay very close attention to politics every single day. Not everybody does that, right. So they're they're kind of hearing the headlines on both sides. They're you know, they're checking in with different media outlets. And they're imagining that, you know, the truth is probably somewhere in the middle there. I strongly feel that, you know, if you're looking at Fox News, for example, for for your information, they're not a real news network and they've said so themselves, actually. So that that can make the arguments a little bit harder because there's a lot of misinformation on on the on the other side out there. What I how I try to break it down for people who are undecided is that. Just strip away, you know, anything going on in their personal life, their ages. What are their values? And most people are fully aware that Donald Trump is a narcissist and he he's only interested in himself. Anything he does is to further his own wealth, his own his power. Enjoying being famous. And Democrats are the only ones that talk about wanting to reduce health care costs. And, you know, all these different things that we can do to help. Make the life of the average working person. Easier so that people can thrive because there are a lot of people that are, you know, struggling to make ends meet and everyone deserves to be able to live their best life. Right? So try to break it down into, you know, what what are the values of the two candidates? Who are they working for? And I think that helps.

[00:25:58] **Speaker 1** Do you can you envision a scenario, though, where, I mean, Tammy Baldwin's got a pretty good poll in the we know that the presidential race will be very close in Wisconsin. Is there a scenario where they win and down ballot Democrats aren't able to pull out these districts or do you think it's a matter of if if we know that you won your seat or Jimmy well, won his seat, then the odds just escalate going up to everyone. All the Democrats are winning.

[00:26:27] **Speaker 2** Well. That's for a race like mine in particular. My district is 5050. Like, I'm not even exaggerating when I say that. It's it's it's a toss up. So. It's going to be won by whoever knocks the most stores, raises the most money, makes the most phone calls, connects with voters. The most effectively. I'm doing everything I can to make sure that, you know, the IT tips my way. But it is possible that in some of those closer races that. That Kamala could win. And the some of the down ballot is, especially when you consider the issue of under voting, when people just skip a race that they're not familiar with.

[00:27:20] **Speaker 1** But that's the importance of you hitting the doors, right? All right. Anything else that you can think of along these lines that you want to add?

[00:27:37] **Speaker 2** I don't think so. That was pretty thorough.

[00:27:40] **Speaker 1** Good. So what we're going to do now, if you're okay with it and we'll take the microphone off, you come.