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[00:00:00] **Speaker 1** You kind of take it away. All right. Well, I guess let's start kind of broadly. Tell me what it's like to be in Green Bay during an election season with the number of ads and being in the television business. Do you do you hear from people like do they say something like, can you stop the ads? Or what's.

[00:00:15] **Speaker 2** That? Yeah, of course they want us to stop the ads. But we actually have an obligation to run the ads. Right? You know, it's probably no different than any other major metropolitan in the state of Wisconsin because Wisconsin is so tight. Northeastern Wisconsin in particular. You know, it's really purple up here. There's not one side or the other has a huge advantage. So. So, yeah, it's pretty crazy.

[00:00:41] **Speaker 1** And how does your station handle some of the conflicts that come up over ads? I mean, actually, we saw just recently Wisconsinite put out a statement saying Tammy Baldwin inappropriately is using some of our old video taking out of context. Every cycle it seems there's someone saying, we call on this station to take this ad down. How do you hear?

[00:01:00] **Speaker 2** It's pretty easy the way we handle it. And really what happens is, is I'll get a letter, right? It's the general manager. I'll get a letter and they'll demand that we take the spot down. I take that letter. I send it to our gentleman who handles the political for our entire company in Washington, D.C. He'll turn around and send that letter to the other side, demand documentation on how they came up with whatever they said. They send the documentation to him. We send it to the Other side campaign. Usually what happens if it's a problem? They've already taken the spot down and changed it out or or the documentation is sufficient for them to understand why they put that in there. What I will never do is I'll never pull an ad myself because, number one, I would rather the other side, if there's falsehoods in an ad, the other side has ever been a right to actually answer those by buying more ads. Right. And the other thing, too, is that I'm not going to be the arbiter of what's the truth, because I might enter my own bias into that. And I think it's just fair that somebody else decides that.

[00:02:09] **Speaker 1** Especially in a modern campaign environment, these ads are always right on the border, if not well over the border.

[00:02:15] **Speaker 2** Yeah. I mean, you act surprised when there's a potential untruth in a political ad. You know, they are they are pushing the lines, different interpretations of of, you know, slicing words in half and things like that. Yeah, it is. But I think the public is aware of that, too. Right. I mean, that the public is out there if they're doing their research. Right. Well, let's be honest. The majority of the public has already decided the way that they're going to vote. And these ads are just over that little fringe, 5 to 7% of undecideds, really undecideds in the middle. And maybe there are less informed voters who haven't made up their minds yet. So that one little nugget of information in an ad could flip them to one way or the other. And I think there will be people that will flip back and forth, you know, in the presidential campaign. But truth be told, some of the other important campaigns in the state as the Senate. State Assembly. State Senate. The U.S. Senate. State Senate. Which, you know, we've seen a whole lot more activity in the state Senate because of redistricting.

[00:03:27] **Speaker 1** Yeah, let's talk about that for a second, because we spent a good decade where most of those seats were locked up and impossible to switch. No point in spending money.

[00:03:35] **Speaker 2** Right.

[00:03:35] **Speaker 1** Not only is a new maps, fresh maps, but a lot of new and cut. There's no incumbents.

[00:03:39] **Speaker 2** Yes, I think many of the people who are incumbents decided that, you know, it's time to get out. New people in new markets, the lines of I have to be truthful. I don't even I have to do a little research to figure out who I'm voting for, where I live. Right. I mean, that's that that's reality. Because, like, my district could have flipped and some people won't do that. They'll show up at the polling place and they won't even know who they're voting for. So that's me personally.

[00:04:07] **Speaker 1** So does that add to the pressure of all this stuff, all the ads you're dealing with, or is it does that not factor into whether it's all presidential all the way down?

[00:04:16] **Speaker 2** It adds to the pressure. I mean, we we're in the time business, right? We can't create any more time. We don't have any more newscasts. They tend to advertise the newscasts. Right. You don't have any more newscast. They, you know, political will occupy a large percentage of our available inventory between now and the election and have for many months. Right. To answer your question, yeah, I think every time you add another competitive race, it adds 1 or 2 more candidates who want to buy time. And you know, not only our television station, but every television station in the market is having that same issue.

[00:04:54] **Speaker 1** There's only a finite number of spots available.

[00:04:56] **Speaker 2** Exactly. There's only so much time between now and the Election Day. Right. And the other interesting thing that's happened is it's really been a compressed race, Right? With everything that happened on the Democratic side, you know, with determining who their candidate was, really kind of pushed that candidate to have to inform the public in a shorter amount of time, rather than if Biden had continued as the candidate on the Democrat side. And truth be told, you know, President Trump or, you know, the Trump as a candidate, he didn't spent all glass until after the after the RNC. So it's really a compressed race on the presidential side. And then the Senate side, you know, with the incumbent, Tammy Baldwin had a pretty good war chest and ended up with a competitor that was a self-fund her right. And contributed a lot of his own money or is contributing a lot of his own money into that race, which will be a competitive race. And Wisconsin will be close for Senate for president. I can guarantee you that.

[00:06:03] **Speaker 1** So one of the things that's happened in the last year is there's been a concern over air advertising. Wisconsin passed a law. How does that impact you as a television station and the ads that you have?

[00:06:15] **Speaker 2** Well, I guess as I understand the law, any time they're using any type of air, they're supposed to disclose it. So since that law passed in March, which, by the way, had an amendment in it that basically said that television stations shouldn't be the arbiter of whether I was used, I believe that the federal or state Elections Commission that determines that. But since that law went into place, I have not seen or heard an ad that has used that disclaimer yet. So either it's if it's being used, nobody's disclosing it or they've determined that that the penalties are so high that they're just not going to use air to determine it.

[00:06:56] **Speaker 1** What is your sense of how the public feels about air? I mean, you go out, you you live here, you talk to people. Is air is still a scary term because obviously that's part of why it was put in there. Yeah.

[00:07:10] **Speaker 2** I think I guess I'm only speaking for myself. I can't say from, you know, from our perspective, from our station's perspective. But I think people are getting more and more used to air. They're using it in their daily life. Wouldn't you agree? Maybe they've been using air for a long time. I think if you ask series something, isn't that air giving you the answer? Right. So I think that becoming less and less scared of it. I think where it becomes an issue is when there's the deepfakes that are out there, particularly in digital advertising and things like that. So I think that was the intent of the law is to avoid that. And again, I trust that it's worked.

[00:07:49] **Speaker 1** Okay. And I guess one of the things that kind of jumps out at me about that law is it deals specifically with television stations and these kind of advertising, but it doesn't talk about digital like the dark side of the Web, YouTube and those kind of algorithms.

[00:08:03] **Speaker 2** I think it does.

[00:08:04] **Speaker 1** Yeah.

[00:08:05] **Speaker 2** I think it does. Okay. I could stop the tape. I can check. Yeah.

[00:08:12] **Speaker 1** But, I mean, that's almost a completely wild West. It is.

[00:08:15] **Speaker 2** Really? The Wild West and the digital side. Yeah, I don't know the answer to that.

[00:08:22] **Speaker 1** In terms of the difference between air you mentioned like deep fakes was one of the fears of the higher elections and versus just general misinformation. How much of this is just going to come down to the individual voter and having to kind of sift through?

[00:08:36] **Speaker 2** I think that is the reality. I mean, there is so much disinformation out there, whether it's in social media, it could be in these campaigns, could be spread, spreading disinformation. I think it's up to the individual voter to determine what's actually the truth.

[00:08:53] **Speaker 1** And do you see a difference in the ads between third party groups versus the actual campaigns and the candidates themselves in terms of how they approach it? Sir.

[00:09:05] **Speaker 2** I do. I think from my perspective, the third party issue ads tend to be a lot more digging deep and punching a little harder, maybe pushing the envelope out to the sides. As far as, you know, what's actually the truth, Candidates, candidates will do spots that just talk about them positively. Right. I mean, I think you're seeing Harris ads right on right now. That's just her introducing herself to the prospective undecideds out there by sharing what she believes in. Right. I mean, because people don't know. They've never had the opportunity in a presidential. She never went through the primary process. There was no primary process. That stuff wasn't vetted. She's got an opportunity to actually get that information out there for people to make that decision. Or on the Republican side, you know, I guess, you know, we've had President Trump already. We kind of know what's there, right.

[00:10:07] **Speaker 1** In in sense of the amount of enthusiasm that's out there. Do you pick up on that night? Can your crews pick up on that or do you.

[00:10:17] **Speaker 2** You know, I think, you know, any of that would be my own perspective. Right. And my own perspective as just a voter or just an observer would be is that I don't think there was too much enthusiasm for the presidential because of the two candidates between Trump and Biden. I think once Harris entered the race, there's somebody new, you know, whether it was age or ability or whatever, that maybe people on the on the Democratic side weren't enthused. I think they're they're truly enthused about somebody besides the president, President Biden.

[00:10:50] **Speaker 1** And how how much do you do you dip into any news meetings ever to talk about what you guys are covering or how your views with the whole gamut of the ballot? I mean, you have all races and this is such a key area for that.

[00:11:02] **Speaker 2** I think I do. I do participate in the news meetings and in reality, as a local broadcaster, we basically just have to cover the facts. I mean, the example would be if there's a a rally or a political campaign event, we're there to cover the facts. We might talk to people and we'll talk to people on both sides. There might share their opinions, but we're not sharing our opinions risk out there getting the facts. You know, that's our job as a local broadcaster is is to inform the public. People then can decide on their own based on the information that they get. And what they get from television will probably be a large portion of the information that they get.

[00:11:42] **Speaker 1** You that's I mean, that's the reality of where most people are still today is local news is still one of the most important places yet.

[00:11:48] **Speaker 2** What's happening? It really is. And if you think of it 15, 20 years ago, you know, local newspapers could dig a lot deeper. Well, that their business model got broken, you know. Yeah, there was a day and age where I think the Press-gazette maybe had 60 or 70 reporters in Green Bay, which meant Appleton had that many and Oshkosh had some and another aren't that many people in that business. And it's really to me, as somebody who's, you know, it's up to the media to keep the public informed. It's disheartening that there are fewer and fewer people in the local news business, which really puts the burden on local broadcasters. You know, TV and radio, radio not so much, but television, because there's fewer of us chasing more information that's out there. And the public still depends on us to to actually get the facts. Yeah.

[00:12:40] **Speaker 1** Yeah. And campaign ads are part of the way that you can actually fund that and make sure that that actually happens.

[00:12:46] **Speaker 2** There's no doubt. There's no doubt. I mean, listen, campaign, you know, political advertising is is good revenue for local broadcasters, both radio and television. There's no doubt. And frankly, it keeps us a viable medium, even though it's every other year. It is it is a significant amount of of advertising revenue that comes in and helps feed families.

[00:13:09] **Speaker 1** And you guys are part of the. Is it is there communication that goes out around this time of year from the from members to members? Or is this mostly the relationships you built?

[00:13:20] **Speaker 2** I think it's the relationships. Now, the Wisconsin broadcasters will be involved, particularly when it comes to any legislation where we may may be involved in lobbying on behalf of the broadcasters. And you had mentioned the eye bill. Well, when that bill came out, we wanted to make sure as local broadcasters, we weren't we weren't going to be the arbiters of what was air. We just didn't want to do that. So they wrote the bill in such a way that basically I don't know if the rebel held harmless, but broadcasters really can't be fined. It's really up to the campaigns and the Ethics Commission that determines whether it's an issue or not.

[00:13:59] **Speaker 1** Okay. Anything else you want to add on this? I'm going to give you $0.02 Billion and your total use will be good.

[00:14:05] **Speaker 2** My name is Steve Lavin. Steve, The regular eight way is Lavin. Lavin and the vice president, general manager of Wbay TV in Green Bay.

[00:14:16] **Speaker 1** Thank you so much.

[00:14:17] **Speaker 2** Appreciate it. Anything you missed?

[00:14:19] **Speaker 1** I don't think so. Those good accountants. Good do. This could part of the you know, I'm doing multiple I'm doing one on the legislature. I'm doing what I'm you know, hey, I moderate this information age and I'll be doing a story later on in the enthusiasm and I mean focus on Green Bay and the importance there. Right.

[00:14:38] **Speaker 2** Yeah. I can't really speak to the enthusiasm.

[00:14:40] **Speaker 1** No. And that's cool, you know, and it's I mean, that's.

[00:14:44] **Speaker 2** Going to have to. I have to. Separate myself, whether I'm enthused or not versus what I think the public is. Right?

[00:14:54] **Speaker 1** Yeah, it's it's one of those gauges where it's either you like, I'm not I don't have fair way to measure it or you say it's but this feels different than the last time.

[00:15:05] **Speaker 2** Yeah.

[00:15:06] **Speaker 1** I know. Having covered 2016, this is obviously different. 2020 was during a Covid year. It was hard to measure and.

[00:15:15] **Speaker 2** It really wasn't because they weren't out. Yeah, This is tape.

[00:15:18] **Speaker 1** No.