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[00:00:01] **Speaker 1** Come and coming. All right. Well, Senator Edgar, thanks for your time today.

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

[00:00:13] **Speaker 1** So wrap up 2023 for me. How do you view the year as a whole from the Senate minority perspective?

[00:00:21] **Speaker 2** Well, certainly every legislative session that I have been in the building has a different feel and a different flavor. And this is no exception. I think with the undertones of the redistricting lawsuit that was going to be coming before the Supreme Court, it has created different relationships here in the Capitol building. But despite the fact that there is division, I am really proud of the ability that we have had as a legislator legislature to be able to get some real good things done for the people in Wisconsin. Whether it's the shared revenue bill or more recently, ensuring that the Brewers continue to call Wisconsin home. I think those are big wins. But at the same point, knowing what people across Wisconsin are really prioritizing the issues that they would like the legislature to be addressing, we're not getting that done. Whether it's expanding health care so everyone in Wisconsin has access to quality, affordable health care, ensuring that our kids have safe places to go by extending the child care counts program, legalizing cannabis, protecting reproductive health rights and protecting our environment. Addressing our fast contaminations, as well as Led laterals and water contaminants across the state. Those are just a few examples of the things that people are concerned about at their kitchen tables. I'm sure they were conversations that people were having over the recent Thanksgiving holidays. So while we've been able to get some real good things done, it's clear that the legislature still isn't addressing the needs of the ordinary people in Wisconsin.

[00:01:56] **Speaker 1** Let's go back to the budget for a minute, because that is the big bill of the year in any budget season. You were able to play a part in that because some elements got broken out and passed before the overall budget, of which most Democrats would be voting against. How do you feel that Senate Democrats were able to affect the legislation in that process?

[00:02:14] **Speaker 2** So I'm really proud of the work that we were able to do as Senate Democrats to address shared revenue across the state of Wisconsin. And it's clear that for far too long, our local communities in Wisconsin have been struggling. And we had a historic surplus here in Wisconsin, $7 billion projected. That money belongs to the people of Wisconsin. So being able to get that back in the hands of local government officials so that they can do the good work that needs to be done for our friends and neighbors across Wisconsin. It was invigorating to be able to sit at that table and help get that across the finish line where there are some poison pills in there. Absolutely. It wasn't the bill that I would have written. But I'm confident that we're going to be able to address those over the long run.

[00:03:00] **Speaker 1** One of the issues that came up throughout that was the tax cuts that were proposed and then vetoed and then passed again and vetoed again. Do you see any way in which realistic tax cuts that could get signed by the governor can get through the legislature in the coming session?

[00:03:15] **Speaker 2** Well, listen, again, we have nearly $4 billion of a $7 billion surplus. I am hopeful that we can figure out a way to get that back in the hands of the people of the state of Wisconsin. But if we want to think about how does it work to provide real comprehensive tax relief to our friends and families across the state, investing in the child care accounts program is one of the ways to do that. Making sure that we're investing in our university system, funding the engineering building here on the campus, preventing closures of university system schools across the state of Wisconsin, making sure that our public schools have the resources that they need. That does provide real benefits to the people of Wisconsin. It makes sure that workers are able to get out there and businesses are going to be able to have access to those workers and that we're delivering on a promise to our kids in our future. The governor has proposed that. And I've heard from folks that I represent that don't have a D next to their name that they would like to get those things done also. So we have time. I'm hopeful that we can get some of that done.

[00:04:22] **Speaker 1** You mentioned the Brewer stadium bill. There was also recently the alcohol bill that we did some of that system. So there have been some opportunities for Democrats to actually be necessary votes to passing legislation when those opportunities come up. At what point in the game do you actually get to be involved and have some input as to to get our votes? Here's what we need.

[00:04:45] **Speaker 2** Well, with the Brewers legislation starting in the spring of this of this year, we were at the table with the assembly and the Senate and the governor's office and the Brewers trying to figure out what it is that we could do to get that bill across the finish line. I know that there was some initial hopes that that would have been done around the same time as the budget, but there was so many other things that were going on in the building. We weren't able to get that done. So we took a pause. Got the budget done for the state of Wisconsin and rolled up our sleeves after folks came back this fall to figure out what it is that we could do to ensure that the Brewers continue to call Wisconsin home. I will. I am pleased with the amount of work that I was able to do on behalf of my caucus and the people in Wisconsin to bring down the state investment to make sure that the team had some adequate teeth in that legislation, to make sure that the local government officials, the city and the county of Milwaukee, were comfortable with their contribution, as well as having a voice at the table with with the Brewers stadium board. And we got it done. And it was because we actually were at a table having conversations with each other. And it wasn't just Republicans calling their heads. It was about figuring out what is our ultimate goal and how do we reach that.

[00:06:05] **Speaker 1** When it comes to dealing with a GOP caucus that is large, that it is, it is. There's natural divisions within that caucus. Have you figured out which more perhaps moderate Republicans you can able to work with and have some influence to to make sure that your voice is, if not heard directly, at least are represented somewhere in there?

[00:06:24] **Speaker 2** I appreciate everyone that has an office in this building. It is clear that when people run to represent their communities, there is a sacrifice to them and their families to do good for the state of Wisconsin. So I really do look forward to the opportunity to sit down with my colleagues in both houses on both sides of the aisle and learn about what makes them tick and how it is that we can build that trust in cross finish lines on on big pieces of legislation like you're talking about. Certainly my closest relationships, especially with the shared revenue and the Brewers bill, has been with the Senate majority leader, Senator Lamar Hill. He has been elected by his caucus to be a voice in the room. And my staff and I work with his staff and him as the primary conduit to get those policies through.

[00:07:14] **Speaker 1** In building those relationships with the majority party. What what can that mean for perhaps the governor's appointments that are still yet to be coming, some of which have been voted down? He's made reappointment and making sure that some of those people actually get votes on the floor.

[00:07:29] **Speaker 2** We continue to ask and hold the majority party accountable when it comes to scheduling appointments. And we know that this is an important part of what the governors job is for the state of Wisconsin, as well as an important job for us as senators to interview these folks and bring them to the floor and have debate and in my hope, be able to to confirm them into their spots. Can we be doing better? Absolutely. Do I wish that we weren't having rhetorical conversations about Meghan Wolf and her position 100%.

[00:08:06] **Speaker 1** When it comes to legislative priorities for the remainder of this session? What do you think of the possibility of passing elections, bills that can actually be signed by the governor?

[00:08:15] **Speaker 2** Well, it is clear that there have been election bills introduced here in Wisconsin, and some of them continue to feed into the big lie and some of them are actually supported by clerks and voters across the state of Wisconsin. I am hopeful that we're going to be able to get some real pragmatic election policy passed because the 2024 election in Wisconsin, as well as across our nation, is going to be a big one.

[00:08:39] **Speaker 1** So one of the biggest things that happened this year outside of the Capitol was the election of Janet protest, which the Wisconsin Supreme Court. How much has that changed the dynamic in terms of people understanding the court is now a different majority and the possibility of opening up redistricting and changing the makeup of the legislature.

[00:08:59] **Speaker 2** So we know in Wisconsin that we are a gerrymandered state. On top of another gerrymander. Our state has been gerrymandered twice in a row and many scientists and mathematicians will point to Wisconsin as being the most gerrymandered state in the nation, both in the Assembly and the Senate. That isn't good for clean government. That is not what people in Wisconsin are asking for. I am hopeful that by having a more balanced court here in the state that we will have a more balanced legislature and that the will of the people will, in fact, become the law of the land.

[00:09:33] **Speaker 1** Are you anticipating the possibility that the entire Senate will be up next year?

[00:09:38] **Speaker 2** I think it's a real possibility that the whole Senate, all 33 seats will be up for election next year, as well As we already know, all 99 members of of the assembly. So having 132 legislative seats up for reelection in 2024 provides a real opportunity for a reset in the state of Wisconsin and empowers the voters who are ultimately our bosses to make real choices.

[00:10:05] **Speaker 1** The leader of parties is typically involved with recruitment of candidates. What have you started hearing so far about people looking interested at running, depending on what the lines look like? Yes.

[00:10:15] **Speaker 2** We have had a number of people reaching out to us who are interested in learning about running for office. We've been traveling around the state of Wisconsin, meeting with players, thought leaders in the communities about what it is that matters most to them. So we can think about who are the best folks to potentially run in in those seats. Certainly the outside of the building, the you know, we have the political work and we have the campaign work. And they are both robust at this point in time with the opportunity of having new districts across the state of Wisconsin, all 33 Senate districts. We don't know where those lines are going to be or if that is even going to happen. So ensuring that we are talking with people, that we have a sense of what matters most to the different regions across the state of Wisconsin is allowing us to be ready for the spring when the Supreme Court hopefully has a decision.

[00:11:12] **Speaker 1** You yourself came out of the assembly. Would you expect to try and poach some members from the Democratic minority in this in the assembly to run for those seats?

[00:11:20] **Speaker 2** You know, it's up to each of those individual elected officials. And it's a highly personal decision on whether or not they want to stay where they are or potentially run for the state Senate. If there is an open seat because of the gerrymander here in Wisconsin many times and districts, you'll have a Republican senator and three Republican Assembly members. So that makes it a little bit more challenging for us to look at at members of of the other body to move in here. But certainly we are listening and meeting with everyone and answering the best questions that they bring to the table.

[00:11:56] **Speaker 1** What is your overall look at what the 2024 campaign will look like in Wisconsin? Because there's the potential of a Biden Trump rematch at the top of the ticket. Tammy Baldwin still doesn't have a big name opponent and potential for the entire legislature to be up. There's a lot of different things in play as to what next fall could bring.

[00:12:16] **Speaker 2** Yeah, I think that people's TVs are going to have an awful lot of commercials out of them. The radios are going to be talking about the politics here in Wisconsin, folks, mailboxes are going to be pretty full of literature that's going to be hitting them. It's going to be a little overwhelming. I imagine that after the election in November, people are going to be ready to not be talking about politics for a while. But it's also an exciting time. It's an opportunity for us to really be thinking about the moral frame. What is it that we've Wisconsin, we want Wisconsin to be looking like not just today, but into the future.

[00:12:48] **Speaker 1** For the past few election cycles, the the theme for Democrats in the legislature has been preserve the majority, preserve the veto power of the governor. Do you see an opportunity to actually have a different message to voters about why to vote for Democrats?

[00:13:04] **Speaker 2** Yes, it's clear to me, after serving as a Democratic leader in the Senate, that Democrats in the legislature are really working for the people of Wisconsin, that the policies that we are being champions of are the things that folks are really concerned about at their tables and in their lives. So we do have an opportunity, I think, to really lift up the voices and the values of people all across the state of Wisconsin, as opposed to continuing this lopsidedness that currently exists in the Capitol. If you look at top of the ticket election results in the state of Wisconsin, as you pointed out, Justice Protozoa, what's winning with a stunning 11 points, but even the governor and the attorney general. Usually it's within a point or two. But in the legislature, it's two thirds Republicans and one third Democrats in both houses. That does not represent what it is the people of Wisconsin want. And I think that this election is going to provide a real reset.

[00:14:01] **Speaker 1** What do you think the impact of the GOP convention in Milwaukee will be in the fall?

[00:14:07] **Speaker 2** You know, I think it's great for our economy when we can bring big groups like that into the state, whether it's the dairy farms that come here in Madison or big entertainment or political caucuses. We were supposed to have the Democratic caucus here in Wisconsin, but we had, unfortunately, Covid. So it took a different look. I think it's great when we can be front and center with these debates and have a front seat to what it is that people are talking about.

[00:14:41] **Speaker 1** But do you think that will give Republicans a boost in the state?

[00:14:45] **Speaker 2** Well, it may give Republicans a boost, but what we've seen here in the Capitol building is a lot of extremism from the Republicans in the legislature to be more extreme, whether it's the threat of impeaching justice protege Edwards before she even ruled on anything, threats to impeach Megan Wolfe, who has ensured that our elections in Wisconsin are safe, secure and fair. Attacks on trans rights. Attacks on. Reproductive freedoms, the inability to stand up and protect our water quality and our environment. Folks not willing to have conversations about cannabis legalization, that's what matters most to folks. And ultimately, if having the Republican convention here in Wisconsin highlights how disconnected the Republican Party is from what ordinary folks in Wisconsin and the United States want. I let them talk.

[00:15:34] **Speaker 1** How will you define success one year from now?

[00:15:39] **Speaker 2** You know, I think that success a year from now is going to continue ensuring that everyone knows that their vote does matter and that it is safe and secure here in the state of Wisconsin. I think that having success here in Wisconsin is picking up more seats for Democrats in the Senate and in the assembly and being able to have the governors back. I think that success a year from now is ensuring that the people of Wisconsin know and believe and trust that their elected officials see them and understand who they are and what their families are struggling with and are rolling up their sleeves to address those real life issues.

[00:16:17] **Speaker 1** Four years ago or three years ago, we didn't have we had an official winner, but we still had a lot of lawsuits and confusion. Do you think that's inevitable, that there will be lawsuits after the election next fall, that there will be people sowing the seeds of confusion no matter the legitimacy of the outcome?

[00:16:34] **Speaker 2** Certainly. I think that's tragic. I think that one of the cornerstones of our nation has been the fact that everyone has a vote and that our votes are true equalizers. And anyone that is sowing distrust or deception in our electoral process when it is safe and secure and it is fair, is not good for our nation. It's not good for our state, and it's not good for democracy.

[00:16:59] **Speaker 1** All right. Anything else that you'd like to add about what you're looking forward to for next year?

[00:17:02] **Speaker 2** Now? I appreciate the conversation.

[00:17:04] **Speaker 1** All right, Senator Edgar, thanks.

[00:17:05] **Speaker 2** Thank you.

[00:17:07] **Speaker 1** Do you want a quick ringtone? Yes. Oh, So if we just want to hang here for a few seconds, she's going to capture some audio. That's good. All right. You.