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[00:00:10] **Speaker 1** Really? All right. When you look back at 2023 and the year that was in the legislature, what stands out to you as the most important things that have happened in this building?

[00:00:20] **Speaker 2** It's been a very full year. Of course, a top priority for our caucus is upholding Governor Beaver's veto. The state assembly holds that ability by just two seats. And so it's been really important that we have been able to prevent Republicans from moving forward right wing agenda that's really out of touch with the people of Wisconsin. We also have worked hard to find opportunities to pass bills where possible and of course had extensive conversations about shared revenue and the Milwaukee Brewers and so many other important issues. And then there has been some good bills that have gotten done on housing and a number of other bipartisan priorities. We remain focused on the long term and know that this body is not doing what the people of Wisconsin need for us to provide for working families, for us to make Wisconsin a place where everyone can thrive. So we continue that work into the coming year.

[00:01:14] **Speaker 1** In the Senate, Democrats have on occasion been asked to provide some votes to pass a few bills in the Assembly. How do Democrats in the minority have their voices heard and have an impact on legislation?

[00:01:27] **Speaker 2** Absolutely. Well, we do have the ability, right, to uphold those vetoes from the governor. And so that is important. We know that our colleagues, to get a signature from the governor will need Democratic support. And so we do try to, again, find those opportunities to work with our colleagues whenever possible. We had Representative Riemer recently doing another push on Medicaid expansion. Right. We've got a whole lot of priorities that we know are popular in the state of Wisconsin. Democrats have put out over 300 bills this year. Of course, we would like to see more of those actually moving forward. But the reality of this building is that things need to be bipartisan to progress. And we work closely with the governor's office and our Democratic colleagues in the Senate to find those opportunities to improve bills so that they can be signed and be supported.

[00:02:13] **Speaker 1** What do you think is likely to be able to pass in the few months of session that will exist in 2024?

[00:02:19] **Speaker 2** It's a great question. This was a busy year. A lot of things move forward. Of course, we hope to see movement on the issues that are really impacting working families. The governor, thankfully, was able to extend the child care accounts program with some dollars that he had to allocate from the federal government. But we need to take action on that issue before the session ends as those dollars will run out. That's an issue that we hear about repeatedly from parents, from providers, that they will not be able to keep their doors open and those kids will lose a place to go if we don't take action in the legislature. We also, of course, hear from people that they're having a hard time making ends meet. We hope that there is an ability to pass a tax cut that is for working families. We've seen our Republican colleagues attempt again and again this session to pass a tax cut that focuses on the wealthiest people in Wisconsin and gives them the greatest share of that of those dollars back. And so we will continue to try, of course, to find a way to spend that surplus wisely, to invest in the long term programs that Wisconsinites need to thrive in this state while also giving working families some breathing room.

[00:03:27] **Speaker 1** Does that tax bracket need to be split in order to find a way to actually target middle class families? That doesn't range all the way up into the wealthy.

[00:03:34] **Speaker 2** Yeah, you know, I'll just speak for myself, right? I do think that we need to be a little more precise in our tax brackets in Wisconsin. We've got some big ones here. You know, there was some work done to collapse some of those tax brackets during the Scott Walker years. And over the past, you know, over the past several years. So should I just start that piece again? I got a little caught up in the history there. Just ask me the question.

[00:04:01] **Speaker 1** Do you think that tax bracket needs to be split in half or it's changed around to, more precisely target who you would like to see get some relief?

[00:04:09] **Speaker 2** Yes. So we would really like to see the tax cut support working families. We saw Governor Evers proposal in the budget focus on those earners of 150,000 or less. I do support an effort to make those tax brackets a little more precise so that we are able to target those that relief to the people who are sitting around the kitchen table looking at their budget and having to cut during the holiday season or at any other time. So I think it will be important for us as we go forward to think about how we can make sure that we are providing the relief to the people who need it, while not undermining the long term stability of the state of Wisconsin and our ability to fund those essential services in 2024.

[00:04:50] **Speaker 1** Do you think there will be an elections bill passed that will allow early counting of absentee ballots? Do you think there'll be any movement on Wxw and Megan Wolf's appointment?

[00:04:59] **Speaker 2** So we have seen some good election bills move forward this year. We had an election bill Day in the state Assembly and some of those bills were good and others not so much. Right. Efforts to. Further enshrine voter ID in our in our laws here in our Constitution, but also efforts to allow for early counting of ballots, which is something we know our clerks really want and hopefully would increase confidence in our elections, which we know to be secure and fair in Wisconsin. So, of course, I think there's more we can do to be supporting our clerks and making sure that our elections are able to run as efficiently as possible and people are able to see that and feel confident. However, we also have significant misinformation coming from our Republican colleagues about this, about our elections, about what has happened to what will happen in the future. And we need to make sure that we're holding the line and not allowing them to use these myths, this misinformation, in order to restrict people's access to the ballot box or to remove administrators such as Megan Wolf, who have done a great job, who have provided for Wisconsin's elections, again, to be secure. To be fair, they're well administered. And she has been a target of the far right. So I hope that we will not see further attempts to try to remove her from her position as we know that that is a Republican effort to try to consolidate their power at all costs. But we remain prepared in case they do decide to move forward with impeachment next year.

[00:06:27] **Speaker 1** One of the other big things from 2023 was the Supreme Court election and the changing of the balance of power there. Does that give you hope for the future of the Democratic Party in the assembly, especially considering the redistricting case?

[00:06:40] **Speaker 2** Yes, absolutely. So we are seeing the case move forward in the Supreme Court right now challenging Wisconsin's gerrymandered legislative maps. People around Wisconsin understand that when about 50% of the votes go to Democrats and that results in a third roughly, of the seats in the state assembly and state Senate. Something is wrong. Wisconsin is classified as a democracy desert. And that means that the people of Wisconsin's priorities are just not reflected in the bills that move through this body. So we are, of course, hopeful that there will be fair maps that allow for really competitive elections in a bunch of seats in the state assembly and the state Senate next year. And I think that that will mean that the people of Wisconsin are better represented in this building.

[00:07:22] **Speaker 1** Are you already starting to recruit candidates? Are you hearing from people who are maybe more interested with the idea of a different looking district than in years past?

[00:07:30] **Speaker 2** Yes, absolutely. It's a big part of my job, talking to potential candidates, calling folks and getting calls from people who are really excited to be part of the next election cycle. They know that it could be a year in which Democrats are fighting for the majority and they want to be part of that. So I've had fantastic conversations with folks from across the state who are ready to hit the ground running.

[00:07:52] **Speaker 1** What kind of a shift is that when you've gone from protect the veto to we may have a shot at the majority?

[00:07:59] **Speaker 2** Yeah, it's a great question. I feel like I'm shifting every day. So last cycle we were very focused on protecting our incumbents and making sure that the assembly held the governor's veto power. Unfortunately, the Senate, you know, is a Republican supermajority. And so, you know, we are focused on building the infrastructure that we need to be able to compete in a lot of seats. The reality of the gerrymandered maps is that there have only been a few seats that are truly competitive in the last decade. And so now we're could be looking at a situation in which we have a dozen, two dozen seats that are really on the margins and that both, of course, changes what election season looks like for us. But it also changes what happens in this building, because right now there are very few legislators sitting in this building who actually feel that they could lose their seats and who feel that they might need to adjust and listen to their constituents and do what the people of Wisconsin have asked them to do, supporting policies like Medicaid expansion, like gun safety, like making appropriate investments in our public schools. And so I hope that fair maps will change what governance looks like in this body. And then, of course, we hope to pick up a whole lot of seats next year and be in a position to fight for the majority if they're fair maps.

[00:09:17] **Speaker 1** One of the big things coming to Wisconsin next year is the RNC convention in Milwaukee. Do you think that will have an electoral impact in the fall or is it strictly a tourism thing in the summer?

[00:09:29] **Speaker 2** It's a good question. Of course, parties choose where they have their conventions intentionally. Thankfully, we'll have a convention not too far away in Illinois. And I know many of us will be going over to to visit and feel the energy going into the next election cycle. We are going to do everything we can to communicate the wins that Wisconsinites have because of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris being in office. And I'll just speak for my own district. We have expanded broadband access to the Affordable Connectivity Program. There's a community health clinic moving forward because of policies passed by this administration. Of course, the Inflation Reduction Act having significant impact. Our infrastructure here in Wisconsin. So are conventions all good and well? It's fun for the for the base, right, for the activists. But what's really important is that we communicate what the candidates stand for. Right. And the impact of having them in office, what it means for people's real lives, their day to day. And we have a lot to talk about from the Biden-Harris administration.

[00:10:32] **Speaker 1** Do you want to see Donald Trump as the GOP nominee?

[00:10:36] **Speaker 2** Oh, that's playing with fire. You know, I think that I feel really confident in in President Biden again, I think there's just been so much good work that we have to talk about going into next year. And we know, of course, that Donald Trump is wildly out of touch with the realities facing Wisconsinites. I think the same is true for the other primary candidates. So it'll be interesting to see whoever comes through will be ready. And I think we're excited about 2024.

[00:11:07] **Speaker 1** But is there a possibility that if Donald Trump is not the nominee in the fall, that anyone else will look less extreme, more mainstream than him just by comparison?

[00:11:17] **Speaker 2** I think that's possible. Yeah. You know, we've seen interesting smaller versions of this here in primaries, right, for elections in Wisconsin, state wise and assembly. I don't think there's a clear answer as to the, let's say, benefit to the other side of a candidate who's a little more moderate versus farther on the right. Sometimes those folks on the right turn out some new voters who wouldn't have come otherwise. The opposite can also be true. So I think it's sort of a very open question. I'm not a betting person, so I won't get involved in that in the Republican primary. But I do think that, you know, President Biden and Kamala stack up really well next to any of those candidates.

[00:12:00] **Speaker 1** A year from now, how will you determine success? What will be the criteria that you use to judge whether you had a successful year and campaign going into next winter?

[00:12:11] **Speaker 2** Yeah. So in terms of our work inside of the Capitol, I would say we as Assembly Democrats really have three priorities. We protect the governor's veto and we prevent far right legislation from moving forward in Wisconsin. Just this morning I was that veto the governor held in his conference room on a gender affirming care ban. It's really important that the governor is here and that we're able to protect vetoes on those attacks, on our rights and freedoms and the well-being of Wisconsinites. We also work to put forward that long term vision. I mentioned we've put out over 300 bills this year. We know that there are things Wisconsinites need that are just not happening in this building. And even if they don't happen right now, we are going to be ready to put those policies in place. And then third, we're going to try as much as possible to get things done. You know, we haven't touched on the University of Wisconsin. There have been significant attacks on the UW system by Republicans this year, particularly focusing on diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. We are going to continue to push to get done those raises, that engineering building. Of course, all of those priorities that we know are important for a true gem of our state, which is the University of Wisconsin system. So we'll continue trying as much as possible to get things done that improve people's lives and build our capacity for long term success in Wisconsin. And then outside the building, we are again recruiting candidates and building our infrastructure so that we are in a great position regardless of what happens in the court, but particularly if there are fair maps to be able to compete for the majority.

[00:13:46] **Speaker 1** All right. Thanks for your time.

[00:13:47] **Speaker 2** Thank you.

[00:13:49] **Speaker 1** So is anyone getting to the cart too far ahead of the horse in terms of already preparing for a majority of what you guys might try and pass?

[00:13:58] **Speaker 2** You know, we have to be ready for that, right? So we are starting to think through. Of course, looking at all of our best.