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[00:00:00] **Speaker 1** We are rolling.

[00:00:01] **Speaker 2** All right. Well, Mr. Speaker, thanks for your time.

[00:00:03] **Speaker 1** Always happy to be here. Thanks.

[00:00:04] **Speaker 2** Give me your impressions of the 2022 elections and what are your takeaways from the results?

[00:00:10] **Speaker 1** I would say, first of all, it seemed to go along better than it did before. I think we had less concerns with the challenges that occurred in 2020. I think it still shows that there were issues that we had to deal with. I still would prefer that we had the Monday count bill. The Assembly passed, never got through the state senate. I think we had some changes to the way that we did different election laws that should have become law. I think those issues are still out there. But I think we've also realized that there is a lot of passion around elections on both sides of the House and everything is so close. So I wish we would focus more on trying to ensure that there was confidence from the very far right to the very far left, instead of just hoping that our side wins and that the other side is happy with it.

[00:00:54] **Speaker 2** Do you think? A little action with Ron Johnson and Tony Evers winning gives people confidence like there's. Rigged. That happened.

[00:01:03] **Speaker 1** I would certainly hope so. I mean, like I say, I still believe that there are concerns that we have to deal with. It'd be nice if we could kind of try to generate more of a consensus this time around and say, look, we're heading into what is probably going to be a contentious presidential election. I don't think we just throw caution to the wind and overhaul everything. But at the same time, there's a lot of concerns that people are legitimately bringing up. I hope we can have a serious conversation about it.

[00:01:26] **Speaker 2** Military ballots kind of came up at the very end. There's not very many of them. But is that something that does need to be looked at?

[00:01:32] **Speaker 1** I certainly think if there's a way where we don't have the same security around people who vote using a military situation as opposed to somebody who lives in Lodi or Burlington. Yeah, I think it's reasonable to have us do that. My goal has always been to have the maximum number of votes cast that are legal and proper, and I think that's the second part that we really need to focus on. Yeah, I want to have massive turnout in Wisconsin like we always have, but not do it in a way that allows for individuals to have concerns about the final results because somebody could, you know, work their way through the process illegally, whether it happens a lot or not, and nobody should ever have to worry that it does.

[00:02:06] **Speaker 2** Are there any known budget issues that you think that the Assembly will look to address right away in the session starts?

[00:02:12] **Speaker 1** Boy, there's there's a lot that's going to go on. I mean, a lot of it is the budget. I mean, that's that's primarily the thing. But as I thought about the topics that we can look at, I mean, I feel like one of the good things about the way that the legislature works is we have the ability to kind of hit the reset button with every swearing in ceremony that we have two years, you know, every two years. So part of me looks and says, okay, the past is the past. I'm going to look at the future. So, number one, I think we have a real problem with learning loss. We now see that two out of three kids since 2019 are doing worse on standardized tests, that they don't have the adequate level of math or reading for their grade level. That's wrong. We've got to figure out how we deal with that. We also know with the massive amount of federal money that came in, more money isn't the simple answer to helping deal with this learning loss. There's a lot of complex issues, so I think that's an area that we could focus on. I was disappointed that Governor Evers vetoed our legislation to increase literacy and learning. Hopefully we can go back and address some of the concerns he might have had and get that through. Second thing is, we know that we have a demographic challenge. We have real issues in Wisconsin with a graying population, and we need to do more to keep people here in Wisconsin. So when I look at our tax climate and I see that around us, we have a flat tax in Iowa and Michigan, in Illinois, a Republican state, a Democrat state, and a newly turned Democrat state. I think we could certainly have a discussion about our tax burden. And it's it's not about rewarding wealth, even though there's nothing wrong with that. It's about saying that if you have a retired couple and they decide where they're going to spend six months in a day, it certainly should be Wisconsin, not Florida, Texas, Arizona, Tennessee, all places that are significantly cheaper to retire. We've got to fix that. And the last thing that I really think we need to focus on is more innovation. Under the best case scenario right now, we see not net in-migration. We see that we have to keep more college graduates. And part of the innovation has to be all through state government and local governments. I think for the most part in Wisconsin, we do everything the way that we did 20 and 30 years ago. And rather than innovating, we just add more to the top of the pile. So I would love for us to use our budget and our opportunity to legislate, to focus on innovating and being a place where new ideas thrive. You know, we used to be the invention capital of the country. Everything from malted milk to garbage disposal were invented in Wisconsin. We've been less innovative in government, and I think we need to change that.

[00:04:25] **Speaker 2** Or dismiss as one of the topics that I've heard other Republicans talk about specifically. Devin, let me ask you, is there a legislative fix that needs to happen? We just heard from one of Governor Evers listening sessions last night and some of the people there brought up. Why are the revenues being paid for the process, not going to the agency to help fund the agencies so it can work more efficiently?

[00:04:45] **Speaker 1** Well, that sounds like a bureaucrat who works in the agency as opposed to we know that people are not in the office, we know that they are not responsive and that you kind of have to have a connection to get something done inside. DISMISS Those are managerial problems. It's not about the resources. So I would say if people are in the office 8 to 5 and they are overwhelmed with work, I'm sympathetic to that. If they are in the office and we see some kind of a bureaucratic problem. Right. I'm sympathetic to that. The Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty did an analysis, and I know we've had a large council, bipartisan study committee looking at how we do licensing. If you have a license to be a doctor in Arizona, it seems to me that you would be pretty easily accepted as a doctor in Wisconsin or anywhere in this country. But that's not the way it is. It's a cumbersome, bureaucratic process that mostly is fostered by, I would say, less innovation inside state government. But if there are things that we need to look at to change the law to deal with that, I want to I do it all day long, but a lot of it to me really focuses on the fact that it seems like the agency isn't being led very well and people need to be in the office, they need to work. And I don't see a lot of that happening.

[00:05:52] **Speaker 2** And moving to the budget, which is obviously the biggest focus. Tax cuts are the biggest priority for Republicans. Are you going to pay? Has a budget with a flat tax, or is that still negotiations between the two chambers as to whether that happens?

[00:06:06] **Speaker 1** Well, I would start by saying I don't want to have any absolute bottom lines at this point. You know, there are things that I really want to accomplish. I talked about the learning loss that we're seeing in Wisconsin among almost every grade level. We need to educate and differentiate Wisconsin from other places. So I want more school choice. That doesn't mean only a private school. It could mean why do we have it difficult between two public schools? Right. Right. Are we get to have parents not be the primary deciders and bureaucrats instead? I think that should be something that I would I know Governor Evers cares about education. So you would think there'd be something we could find common ground on? I would say in my mind, yes, we need to have tax reform. I've tried to be to be generous in saying that, look, Governor Evers signed the last budget where we had nowhere near the surplus. We do now with 3.4 billion in tax cuts. I can't imagine under any scenario we'd have less of that. We should have more. But I haven't drawn a line in the sand that says it has to be at this level or it must be done this way. But I will tell you, the only bottom line that I have is we are not going to use the surplus or new revenues to grow the size of government. Right. Innovate. Make sure we have our priorities funded, but create new bureaucracies to create new monstrosities they'll have to pay for later on. Absolutely not.

[00:07:14] **Speaker 2** You mentioned expanding school choice and Tim Michaels was campaigning on the universal school choice. Is that strictly lifting the cap so that more wealthy people can get the vouchers for their students or who else benefits from universal school choice? As to the current model?

[00:07:32] **Speaker 1** Well, from my standpoint, when you go to a public school, nobody says, are you a millionaire or you are in Medicaid, right? You just get to have the education because it's about the future of our state. I think it's the same way when you go to a private school or a public school. It shouldn't be based on how much money that your parents earn. It should be what's the best fit for your children? What's the best fit for them to be successful? And that's why I think it's a misnomer to somehow make it seem like if you are wealthy, you shouldn't have an opportunity to go to any school in the state. If you're poor, you should you should have an opportunity no matter what your income is. And I would also say about the limits. I want to make sure that the tuition that's paid, if you go to a public or a private school is similar, does that be the exact same? But we've seen that there is this huge discrepancy between the scholarship to go to a private school and the amount of money that the taxpayers fund for a public school. They pretty much deliver a similar result, usually a better result in the private school, but not always a similar result. So I certainly don't think that they should be artificially held down. So I feel like there are areas that we should be able to negotiate high quality schools, making sure that parents make the best choice for their kids so that ultimately we have the best educated workforce in the state, and we do it in a way that allows us to have the best return for the taxpayer dollar.

[00:08:43] **Speaker 2** Do you expect that negotiation to happen during Joint Finance before it gets to Joint Finance, before it gets to the floor in either chamber?

[00:08:51] **Speaker 1** You know, like I say, that the good thing about every new legislative session is you get to hit the reset button, right? I mean, we have had four very contentious years with Governor Evers. Right. I mean, he kind of started off on a negative foot because he didn't like what we did before that. Then he secretly recorded Senator Fitzgerald. And I never apologized for it. I mean, it's kind of been this back and forth. I'll take our fair share of the criticism, too. But we can either choose to focus on the past and continue to have those arguments, or we can say, okay, it's a new four year cycle, so why don't we try to focus on the things we can actually find common ground. He says he wants tax cuts. So do I. He said he cares about everybody having a great education. So do I. He wants to make sure that we have state government functioning and that we pay people so that we can be competitive in the workplace. So do I. So I'm going to try to be optimistic and not draw a ton of lines in the sand to say, how do we find that common ground and move forward? But at the same time, we're not giving up any of our principles. We're not going to do things we don't believe in. But not every single thing has to be a big argument, and hopefully we'll be able to demonstrate that there is common ground on some topics. And of course, we're going to have our fair share disagreements. That's okay. But that everything has to be that way.

[00:09:56] **Speaker 2** The last two budgets the governor has introduced have included his priorities. Isn't his goals and mission statements that he knew everyone knew were dead on arrival in the Republican legislature. Should he feel free to do that again, or would it be better if he introduced something that was closer to what could actually pass with Republicans?

[00:10:13] **Speaker 1** Well, the governor's chosen to make himself irrelevant in the last two budget processes. That's his choice. I mean, he has every right to do that if he wants to. So you have to ask him that question. I would say I would never draft a bill and put it on the floor of the assembly, knowing that it has zero chance to have caucus support and it has zero opportunity to become law, that it can be a waste of my time. So I don't know why Governor Evers would take and spend hundreds of hours putting together a document that is dead on arrival because it's full of a liberal wish list that would never pass a Republican legislature anywhere in the country. So it's his choice, I would say. I think it's a lot more productive to try to do something that actually maybe could become law or to have a starting place for negotiation. But to say I'm going to put in things like legalizing recreational marijuana, never going to happen. Raising taxes, never going to happen, expanding welfare, never going to happen. He's free to put those all in. He can do whatever he wants to, but they're all the way.

[00:11:09] **Speaker 2** Now, you have introduced and passed bills that you likely knew were going to be vetoed, so that there have been times when legislatures passed vision bills, priorities to signal to your voters, this is what we stand for. So how is that different from what the.

[00:11:22] **Speaker 1** Well, because in the legislative process we go through, we have committee hearings, we listen to people. We actually have a vote on the floor where the people are held accountable for doing that or not. What would Governor Evers is doing is if he chooses to put together a document that's chock full of a wish list, he really can't be critical when none of it's included. Well, there might be good ideas in there. Right. And if he chooses to make it so full of things that are unappetizing to Republicans, you're not going to have a chance to have some of the better things taken taken a serious look at. So it seems to me that most people around the country that I have seen in divided legislatures, when you have a governor of one party and the legislature of the other, that they don't start off with some kind of a crazy idea. Governor Doyle did that. If you look at how he chose to put his budgets together, he didn't chock full of all kinds of liberal, crazy stuff. He put together what he thought was as reasonable as he could be, and he hoped that the Republicans would do the same thing. Well, he probably got a lot more of the things that he wanted than Tony Evers did with his method. So it's up to him to decide.

[00:12:17] **Speaker 2** Assuming that the Republicans win the special election for the eighth Senate, then the Senate will have a two thirds majority or a couple of votes away. How closely will you be watching? How many Democrats come to the floor when it comes to possible veto overrides?

[00:12:31] **Speaker 1** I mean, we're going to pass the bills that we know are important. I mean, some of them hopefully, as you know, over 90% of the bills that pass the legislature have support from, you know, Republicans and Democrats. So that's probably not going to change. You know, we will pass the bills that we think are important. If there's a chance to override a veto, of course, we'll try to do that. But I'm not going to be sitting around every day counting exactly how many Democrats are here. I mean, we'll have to see how it all works out.

[00:12:55] **Speaker 2** On that same date as the eighth special election is the Supreme Court election. How important is that election to the future of all the parties in the Capitol?

[00:13:03] **Speaker 1** Well, it's crucial. I mean, the most important thing for us to remember is that the Supreme Court is not supposed to be the Supreme Legislature. And it sounds like from the two liberals that are running, they want the Supreme Court to take the place of the legislature because they don't like the results that we have. Well, that's not how the founders of our state or our country intended for the Supreme Court to act. It's supposed to be the referee. It's not supposed to be on one side or the other. I think that we've seen over the course of the past 20, 30 years, for the most part, the court has been a referee and they've done a good job because they have tried to follow the rule of law in what's written in the text of the legislature and the governor for other parts of the constitutional process. So I think the voters in Wisconsin are smart. I think they're going to see through that, that you have some candidates who are running to be judges and you have other candidates who are running to be super legislators. So at the end of the day, we'll see how it goes. But it's certainly it's important.

[00:13:51] **Speaker 2** Do you anticipate getting involved in the primary?

[00:13:54] **Speaker 1** I don't know. It's too early to tell. I think we have, you know, on my side, I see we have two conservatives. We have two liberals. I think both of the conservatives running have an excellent record. I don't know if every elected official has to pick between two great people, but I will certainly hope I hope they both get through the primary so that we'd have a choice between two great people instead of perhaps only one or two.

[00:14:14] **Speaker 2** And then that's interesting because there is technically nonpartisan. Yeah, that could happen. Do you anticipate a reality in which that there is higher Republican turnout and both conservatives can slip through? I mean.

[00:14:25] **Speaker 1** I think it's unlikely. I mean, who knows? I mean, it's a it's a short sprint, right? I think it's only, what, six weeks, seven weeks from when they file nomination papers, basically from our inaugural till February 21st. So I know they're already vigorously campaigning. They're out there showing what they believe in. The liberals aren't a bastard about being liberal. They are. They are abashed. They're out there. They are pushing their agenda. So I guess I imagine that's what Wisconsin who we just the one things act that I have realized is that the word that is the most synonymous with the last year in Wisconsin politics is tired. I think people are tired of just arguing. They're tired of negative ads. They're tired of yelling and screaming. And I think they are going to get, unfortunately, a whole lot more of that in the Supreme Court race. So I don't want to add to that fury. I mean, like I say, we're going to fight for what we believe in. We're going to stand up for what we know is right. But we don't have to be argumentative and negative the entire time. So hopefully we can have a little bit of a change in tone.

[00:15:20] **Speaker 2** The dates for the 2024 Republican convention were just announced. Saw that? Yeah. Do you anticipate the legislature having a role in leading up to that? Is there a place to pass additional funds for the city of Milwaukee or it will be mostly through the parties that that'll happen.

[00:15:36] **Speaker 1** Oh, it's possible. I think that we still need to probably change. If you remember when the DNC was coming to town, we had to adjust the hours that that, you know, restaurants and taverns were allowed to be open. So I'm sure there'll be things like that. I'm certainly open that if it's necessary to have additional security because it's going to be in Milwaukee, I don't want that to fall just on the taxpayers of one city when the entire state and region benefit. So I'm open to looking at that, but I haven't had any kind of a specific request.

[00:15:58] **Speaker 2** All right. Anything else that you'd like to try?

[00:15:59] **Speaker 1** That's it. I hope you have a great. Merry Christmas.

[00:16:01] **Speaker 2** All right, Speaker Ross, thank you. Thanks. Appreciate it.

[00:16:04] **Speaker 1** So are you just doing the whole interview? Yeah, that's what I wanted on up front or whatever. I mean, here now.

[00:16:09] **Speaker 2** Yeah. We're going to be posting everything on the web next week. We weren't sure whether you were doing embargoes or anything like that, but.

[00:16:15] **Speaker 1** Yeah, I think we're not, are we? Right? We are.

[00:16:17] **Speaker 2** Oh, yeah. There we go. Okay. I headed down over, you know. Sorry.

[00:16:21] **Speaker 1** I should know better. I don't know. Whatever she says.

[00:16:23] **Speaker 2** Yeah, but can you give me a clip? Oh, sure. You want to do that?

[00:16:27] **Speaker 1** You go right ahead.

[00:16:27] **Speaker 2** That was I like to say, that was Governor Walker's favorite part. Really? Oh, he loves.