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[00:00:00] **Speaker 1** Right. Stormtrooper Chewbacca or one of them or whatever. Yeah.

[00:00:03] **Speaker 2** That sounds like him.

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

[00:00:05] **Speaker 2** Definitely. So I guess let's start. We're talking about marijuana policy. Where are we in terms of what do you think you want to see introduced? What where should the debate be?

[00:00:16] **Speaker 1** So for the last three sessions, I've been working on a bill around medical marijuana, and it's slowly gaining. Caucuses are very much more open to it. We've seen a marijuana movement across the US as far as, you know, states legalizing either medical or recreational. So I have been working with the speaker in the Assembly and we've he has a bill that he would like to introduce. I have my bill. So in the next, I'll say two weeks, maybe longer, just because busy schedules, we're going to sit down and we're going to kind of compare the two bills and see what we have in common and see if we can merge it into one. If we can, that's going to be great. If not, we'll probably run two versions of the bill.

[00:00:57] **Speaker 2** So I know in past sessions your bill has been introduced towards the end and you've been criticized saying, well, she's slow playing this, deliberately introducing it, but then not like actually working. So what what takes? I mean, part of the process was a lot of people to understand that you have to build that consensus.

[00:01:12] **Speaker 1** So number one, you have to build the consensus. And last session I worked with the leadership in the Senate want the majority leader is open to me moving medical marijuana through the Senate. President not so much. He's not a fan of this legislation. So I held the bill. I had a compromise with him where we held the bill and then we heard it a little bit after session was over. But that was the compromise for me to actually even get a hearing on the bill so that we could get more information out there and have people weigh in. And that gave my colleagues a chance to watch it on Wisconsin or attend in person and actually see what what were people saying.

[00:01:51] **Speaker 2** So we were in Marinette earlier this week. We spoke with the district attorney to morrow, we spoke with someone from the sheriff's office, the drug interdiction officer. Obviously, that's a big port. The city is not part of your district, but that border is absolutely. What are you hearing from constituents, both good and bad.

[00:02:09] **Speaker 1** So I the hardest thing right now is Michigan is legal and we are not when it when I say that for law enforcement. So our law enforcement is dealing with illegal products in our state that are legal in Michigan and people crossing over the border and it is putting a lot of strain on law enforcement and our DEA. So there is a certain segment in that area. Knowing that and watching that happen, the additional costs to the counties that are 100%, they do not want any legalization, whether medical or recreational. And that comes from the burden with the two different rules or the two different laws and two different states overall, my district. Other than that, when they have pulled or there was a few years back where there was advisory referendums and things, they were very much in favor of medical marijuana. Actually, the state is in favor of medical.

[00:03:02] **Speaker 2** So is the where's the disconnect when it comes to the legislature is obviously you have to there's a lot of support on the Democratic side, but you have to have enough votes among Republicans only typically to advance these bills. So is it more working within your own party and convincing them, especially those that may not represent parts of the state that have done this?

[00:03:21] **Speaker 1** So there's a lot of hurdles. So you have the med society that is not in favor of this. They do not think it's necessary. They feel the science behind it is not true science. And to a certain extent I agree with them because it's a schedule one drug at the federal level. It is not researched as heavy as I would like to see it research to actually, you know, prove some of the theories. You can look at other countries research, but our it seems like Wisconsinites or Americans think only our research is good sometimes. So I do find that and I'm disappointed in the med society on their stance. I think it you know, because I think their members are very split also on it. And then you have I mean, we've had people that have testified that use medical marijuana in other states as a counselor to help with addiction issues, to help with PTSD issues. And they are like, it's not good for young people, it's not good for undeveloped brains. So you have a community that's, you know, the medical community as a whole can be very split on it. So that's kind of where our members are like, Well, I hear this, but I hear this, you know, and and they represent areas who probably aren't as in favor of this as some of the other areas.

[00:04:32] **Speaker 2** When it comes to the bills that Senator Aagaard is advancing, does that help or hurt your efforts to move medicinal marijuana? I mean, some people look at that. Is that the slippery slope? Like we go to medicinal and then a few years later, that'll be the push. So does the fact that she's got a parallel bill advancing that make yours look like a compromise or make yours look like the slippery slope?

[00:04:54] **Speaker 1** I think in a lot of ways it makes it harder for me to get this done. You know, when Senator Urban. Mark was in. I had gone to John and I'm like, you know, this here's the bill, John, because he was very much a proponent of it. John had a very nice way of saying it doesn't do enough, but yet saying we applaud him for trying, you know, because he knew the constraints and he recognized the political arena that I was working in. I and Melissa is very much in favor of this. And she can do, you know, whatever. But it make it does make it harder in our caucus. And I think a lot of a lot of our caucus members are looking at this going, you know, we don't want to be Illinois, we don't want to be Minnesota, we don't want to be in. I very much we have a very tight regulatory framework in here that I think works for all. And I would like to see the medical come into play. You know, I see so many people. I'm a cancer survivor. I know what it's like to use opioids and stuff like that. And if there was a natural alternative to help people without the side effects, I just don't understand. And it's not like you're still under a doctor's care. You still need to be diagnosed.

[00:06:05] **Speaker 2** But so one of the things that we heard from the district attorney and the sheriff's office is that the levels of THC that exist in some of these prepackaged products are way beyond what people are used to experiencing. And so and they didn't have any numbers behind this, but they said that there was an increased number of people, middle aged people who may have used marijuana in the past that are having either psychotic episodes or other mental health problems connected to using these extremely concentrated products. Is that a concern that when you don't have a regulatory framework around it, that you it may seem safer, but there's still people that are haven't had that experience?

[00:06:46] **Speaker 1** So in all honesty, I think Michigan did this all wrong. And I think they're very much catching up on the regulatory side. So Michigan allows a ballot initiative. So that goes on the ballot. You know, it goes on the ballot box. And so on November 5th, marijuana is illegal in the state of Michigan, and on November six, it's legal. There's no regulatory framework. There's no setup, nothing. And as I have talked to my colleagues in states that where marijuana has become legal through the ballot initiative, they've all struggled with this. And to say it's been a nightmare is an accurate statement. We are going at it with a very strong regulatory framework and the packaging, the labeling, the testing, all of that is very stringent and very controlled. And I think that we will alleviate a lot of that by doing it in this direction. The other thing I always want to encourage, right now marijuana's coming into this state legally. People are crossing the border and illegally. My largest concern with the illegal is the not regulated no known amounts of THC. And then we can all you know, we all know what's happening in the fentanyl market. So to me, it makes more sense to put in a strong regulatory framework. We have a strong regulatory framework with alcohol. Some people like it, some people hate it. But if we can have that regulatory framework, have the processing, have the testing, know, you know, the levels of strength of the THC. I think we went all day long on that.

[00:08:23] **Speaker 2** What would you what is your advice to your constituents or people that live farther south that do travel to Michigan to buy legal marijuana and then bring it back across the state?

[00:08:33] **Speaker 1** Well, it's illegal. I don't think I need to say more than that. You know, I, I don't encourage illegal activity.

[00:08:42] **Speaker 2** But but we know it exists, Correct. I mean, the border set up with drive thrus. We were up there. It's Wisconsin license plate up to Wisconsin, license plate.

[00:08:51] **Speaker 1** I know.

[00:08:52] **Speaker 2** So there's there there's the the legal issue. But then there's also the reality and what it would what's your advice to law enforcement when I mean, what they told me is they could pull over every third car and they're going to find a marijuana product that prepackaged.

[00:09:07] **Speaker 1** And I don't really have advice for them. I feel bad that they're put in this position. I think they're in an untenable situation where what what is the win here? I mean, there there really is no win. And I think law enforcement, sadly, they're they're dealing with molestations. I mean, they just got their hands full across the board. So I feel very bad for the position that they're put in. And advice, I don't know.

[00:09:39] **Speaker 2** One of the other things that they told us is that there's a gray market that exists in Michigan where people are allowed to produce and grow their own marijuana. Correct. And they said that some of that not through the dispensaries, but some of that in the private kind of unknown market is being trafficked into Wisconsin. And then he said in the return trip, it's for fentanyl. Heroin and other harder drugs are going north.

[00:10:02] **Speaker 1** And so we do not allow the grow your own aspect and medical marijuana and we don't allow smoking. And that was you know, that was couple of things that were very important to our two caucuses. We can't control what's happening in Michigan. We can't control Michigan law. But I do understand their concerns. I do very much understand their concerns.

[00:10:27] **Speaker 2** One of the things we've heard from proponents of any form of legalized marijuana with medicinal recreational is that when you legalize it in some form, you can separate it from a criminal element. Correct. And then maybe break that gateway drug element and the criminal operations. Do you still believe that that's a valid argument?

[00:10:46] **Speaker 1** I think it has validity. I really do. I do believe, you know, you have a black market in alcohol. You're always going to have people that break the law. Right. But I think our consumers and our constituents by having a heavily regulated medical marijuana, it gives them some confidence to know what they're purchasing is is safe. They know what they're getting. And I think that's the only way to go on this.

[00:11:12] **Speaker 2** Would this be made a lot simpler if there was a federal solution, or is it this simply not realistic to think that Wisconsin should wait and see if there's a federal solution?

[00:11:20] **Speaker 1** I think I think the individual states, whether it's Wisconsin or anyone else, needs to stop waiting on Washington. This country is built on states rights and federalism. And I think we need to get back to that because we see how dysfunctional it is in Washington and whether it's health care, whether it's medical marijuana, whether it's a lot of issues, I think we need to just stop waiting on Washington.

[00:11:42] **Speaker 2** Trying to come up with any good examples of other things where you can purchase them in one state. And it is illegal to bring back to another state. And the only other examples that Morrow was able to come up with create another drug. But are there really I mean, I guess way back when it was fireworks, but it doesn't it seems like marijuana is almost in its own separate category of like there really isn't anything else where you can legally purchase it. And then the minute you cross the border with that product, it's illegal.

[00:12:12] **Speaker 1** So we're at a crossroads right now. I mean, I shouldn't say crossroads, but we're at a very interesting time. You know, certain states have looked at legalizing this and then yet they're still kind of breaking federal law when they do it. And states are pushing back on the feds because, again, Washington isn't acting. So I think this is one I think you bring up a valid point. I don't know of many other things that, you know, in fact, I don't know of anything where it's legal in one state, you know, legal in the next state. And I think these are just things that we're going to continuously work through as states.

[00:12:46] **Speaker 2** In terms of the progress we've been talking about with your bills, you're hoping to introduce something in the next month or so.

[00:12:53] **Speaker 1** Absolutely.

[00:12:54] **Speaker 2** Do you so you're hoping to get hearings then.

[00:12:57] **Speaker 1** At least slowly.

[00:12:58] **Speaker 2** Do you think that either Bill could make it to a floor vote in either chamber?

[00:13:05] **Speaker 1** Yeah, I do. I do. I do. The hardest thing one of the hardest things about this legislation is, is the medical society does really not you know, doctors are very split on whether or not they want to be involved. So we have to come up as a legislature with all the conditions where, you know, medical marijuana can be utilized. So you would be diagnosed and then that would entitle. And there are so many very, very unique conditions out there to try to put everything in statute as our challenge. And I know we're going to miss somebody, and I feel bad about that. But that's for follow up legislation or whatever. It's very few times when we get something like the magnitude of this, like exactly right on the first time. And so this is this is going it's a heavy lift this session. Like I say, it's not. But I'm optimistic. I'm optimistic.

[00:14:00] **Speaker 2** Politically speaking. It appears that if it made it to the floor with Democratic votes, it would seem to be something of a slam dunk. And Governor Evers has always already indicated at least some level of support. So it seems like the final hurdle will be whether the speaker and the majority leader be willing to actually let it come to a vote. And is that a fair political assessment?

[00:14:21] **Speaker 1** And we have to convince our members that this is the right thing to do. So it would have to get out of committee? I mean, there's there's there's still some there's hurdles, but I'm hoping we can if we can't get it done this session, I'm hoping we're we're pounding everything out to get it done. Next.

[00:14:40] **Speaker 2** Is is this a better political environment in terms of sometimes the heat of a upcoming election will impact what can come forward? Is there a right time or, you know, if it doesn't pass this session, the next session may not be the best environment.

[00:14:56] **Speaker 1** I think that's the political environment is what it is. And I just want to stress this. My colleagues that oppose this do not oppose this because they hate people they have serious concerns about. I mean, look at what's happening with the border being open and the drugs flowing in. They're like, why would we add to that right now? You know, we can't get a handle on who's coming into our country. You know, the Biden administration, we know the illegal drugs and we know the fentanyl coming across that border and we don't shut it down, which just blows my mind. And we know Wisconsin 41 is a pipeline into the U.P. So they're like, Mary, why would we contribute to that and allow more people the potential to be injured when we have a federal government and a president that's just encouraging drugs coming into this country So it's not just cut and dried. There's a lot of back thought to go into that. I'm trying to help patients. You know, I know people who have had very debilitating medical conditions, our veterans, the PTSD, M.S. And I have firsthand knowledge of what opioids do to you as a side effect. So there's a lot to the marijuana debate, but this bill is about people and helping people. And that's where we're trying to get to. And I don't want to lose the focus of that. This is about medical marijuana and helping people. You're dying of cancer. You can't eat the pain. Why are we preventing it makes no sense to me.

[00:16:33] **Speaker 2** Or making them travel hours to correct and then become a potential.

[00:16:37] **Speaker 1** Correct.

[00:16:38] **Speaker 2** Felon.

[00:16:39] **Speaker 1** Correct.

[00:16:39] **Speaker 2** I in Escanaba Tuesday, ran into a middle aged woman and her somewhat elderly mother who had traveled up from Toronto and asked if they were going to do anything else other than go into the dispensary. And they said we might get lunch. But that was their trip.

[00:16:55] **Speaker 1** Yes.

[00:16:56] **Speaker 2** And that's not uncommon from everything we've observed and seen.

[00:17:00] **Speaker 1** And that's why I want to continue to work to make sure that if people need this medically, they can get it and it's not illegal.

[00:17:08] **Speaker 2** Anything else that you'd like to add?

[00:17:09] **Speaker 1** Nope. I think that's it.

[00:17:10] **Speaker 2** All right. Thank you so much for your time.

[00:17:12] **Speaker 1** You bet.

[00:17:13] **Speaker 2** Appreciate it. Know, Wolf, pack up.