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[00:00:00] **Speaker 1** We are good. All right. So tell me about your tour. We caught up with you over the summer, but they've continued. So what are you. What's the reception you're getting?

[00:00:08] **Speaker 2** So the reception is great, actually. And because of that, because people have seen us across the state of Wisconsin. Folks are reaching out and inviting us into their communities and into their businesses and asking us to please come and continue the grassroots tour. So we recently announced the second leg of the grassroots tour, and we've already started embarking on it. And no surprise, people are showing up. They've got thoughtful questions. But overwhelmingly, what I'm hearing from folks, whether they're business owners or local elected officials or just folks, ordinary folks who live in the communities and play in the communities and raising their families in those communities is that we are an island of prohibition. And prohibition did not work in Wisconsin when it came to alcohol or margarine. It's not working when it comes to cannabis. And instead of being this island of prohibition in Wisconsin, that we need to get our stuff together and figure out how it is that we're going to maintain and increase safety, prosperity and opportunity, as well as honoring people's personal liberties and freedoms in Wisconsin. Now that we have Minnesota added to the formula of Michigan and Illinois with responsible adult usage policies.

[00:01:25] **Speaker 1** So you recently introduced your bill. What what are you expecting and how far do you think that's going to go? What have you heard from leadership?

[00:01:33] **Speaker 2** Yeah, so we did just introduced the bill for responsible adult use here in Wisconsin. As we know, the governor did include these provisions in his most recent budget, and they were stripped out by the Republican led members of the Joint Finance Committee, had an opportunity to introduce the bill in a hempfield right here in Dane County, surrounded by a young family that is supporting themselves and a number of workers doing their very best to raise their kids and also invest in hemp and CBD here in the state of Wisconsin. And it's been well received by the people of Wisconsin. We have an awful lot of people calling our office and cheering us on. My colleagues in the building are excited about being able to sign on to the legislation. One thing missing from that formula, they're all Democrats. So despite the fact that we know that even Republicans, the majority of Republicans in Wisconsin support responsible adult usage and do not support cannabis prohibition, the legislators in this building that hold the majority of the seats are not yet ready to add their names to this policy, despite the fact that through personal conversations with many of them, I know that they're curious, they're interested, and a few of them have tipped their hat that if it would come to the floor, they would likely vote for it. So my hope this session, there's an awful lot going on in the building. There's a lot of divisiveness, but I'm hopeful that we can at least get a public hearing. I think that would be a big step for this legislation. And I think that just in a matter of years that we're going to be able to get this across the finish line.

[00:03:15] **Speaker 1** So Senator Fels, Koski is planning to reintroduce her medical marijuana bill. What do you think of that proposal? Do you think getting that pushed forward will will help eventually get all the way, or is that a half measure at this point?

[00:03:30] **Speaker 2** So the devil is in the details with all policymaking and Senator Fels, Koski has been outspoken about her support for medicinal cannabis in Wisconsin. The bill that she introduced last session, she did hold a public hearing. It was after the legislature had gaveled out, so there wasn't a possibility for it to cross the finish line, so to speak. But a lot of people showed up at that hearing with concerns about the way the bill was drafted. I am not sure if she changing her bill draft based on the feedback there, but I am excited to be able to see what it is that she introduces when she introduces it here for legislative consideration. And you know, like I guess I have to hold my powder dry until I actually see what what it is that she's proposing.

[00:04:15] **Speaker 1** So one of the the critiques we've heard from Republicans over the last decade plus that at least medicinal marijuana has been under discussion here is that some people view that as the slippery slope, that they don't want to see full legalization and they're afraid that medicinal is the measure that will make it inevitable. And so they're resistant to even going that far. So does the presence of your activism in your tour and your bill make it more difficult, do you think, to get to medicinal marijuana, or is it is it never going to please those people anyway? How does that work?

[00:04:52] **Speaker 2** You know, as a senator here in the state of Wisconsin, I know it is my job to lift up the morals and the values and the dreams and the hopes of the good people. The state of Wisconsin. And it is clear. Nearly seven out of ten people in Wisconsin support responsible adult use policy for cannabis with a medicinal component. If any one of my colleagues in this building won their election by a 70% margin, they would say it is a landslide. The people of Wisconsin are ready. States across our nation, 23 states now have legalized for responsible adult usage, and we are surrounded by three of them with Michigan, Illinois and Minnesota. I think it is time for us to take this step to be bold, to listen to the people of our communities and make sure that the will of the people is, in fact, the law of the land. We can support our agricultural heritage. We can support our main streets. We can make sure that we're matching up with young people's priorities so that we're not exporting them to the other states. But they are staying here. We can address egregious racial disparities and we can be bringing in revenue to the state of Wisconsin that our local governments are clamoring for. I'm going to continue beating the drum. Listening to the people of the state of Wisconsin and lifting their voices up through this through this policy initiative, I know it's not a matter of if this is going to happen in Wisconsin. It's a matter of when. And I want to make sure that we have the best policy that addresses the concerns that folks in Wisconsin have, but also provides real opportunity.

[00:06:25] **Speaker 1** We were in Marinette, checking out the border with Menominee. We talked with law enforcement, the district attorney. We talked to some of the people working at the dispensaries in Michigan. Does the current policy create more problems in those communities than if we I mean, obviously, I'm sure obviously want full legalization, but would that resolve some of the issues they're seeing with the volume of traffic, the people going in and out, the potential for people to be, you know, starting to sample the products even before they've made it back home.

[00:06:54] **Speaker 2** So we know thanks to a research that was done earlier this year, even before Minnesota legalized cannabis, that 50% of adults over the age of 21 live within 75 minutes of a legal dispensary. Now, we all know geography and our border with Minnesota is pretty long. So the amount of people in Wisconsin that are 21 and older is going to increase and the amount of time it's going to take people to access a legal dispensary is going to decrease in 2025 as soon as Minnesota starts opening up those dispensaries. Certainly having a patchwork quilt of policy can provide a lot of uncertainty for local communities, including law enforcement, but also for businesses that may have businesses located in Wisconsin as well as in our bordering states. And I think it is vitally important that we remember when we had different laws, when it came to alcohol access and there were states that had access at 21 and other states that were 18 and 19. And that did not work. It did not create a safer society. It did not protect our children. It did not make our roads more safe. I do think that it is vitally important that we consider how it is to make sure that Wisconsin is the safest place that it can be. That we're not causing confusion for people. That there is one set of rules when you're photos on one side of the border and a different set of rules, one of what is on the other side of the border. Absolutely. We have taken that into consideration in our most recent draft of the bill. And when I was in Superior recently meeting with folks up there about cannabis policy, it was something that they brought up because they are right on that border and with Minnesota very recently legalizing cannabis and moving forward, they are seeing people coming in and asking more questions at their shops. They themselves, the local elected officials, are having questions about what they can do in their communities to protect their friends and neighbors and their constituents. And I also had the opportunity to drive to Saint Paul and meet with a number of legislators and policymakers and advocates in Minnesota who were involved in passing their law. And it is clear that many of the things that they grappled with are similar items to what it is that I am hearing about on the grassroots tour and that we've taken into consideration with our most recent bill draft.

[00:09:28] **Speaker 1** When it comes to law enforcement and the District attorney, some of their main concerns have to do with access for children and the number of kids that are getting access to gummies and edibles and other things that are traditional marijuana packaging, that it's not just their smoking there. There's other things that and we've seen this with vape pens and things in the past where some of these items are not directly maybe directly marketed toward kids, but they become more easily accessible to kids. So what what assurances are there in your bill or in any bill that. To make sure that 21 and older is 21 and older.

[00:10:02] **Speaker 2** Listen, I'm a mom. I've got four kids. I define myself as a mom more than as a legislator or a policymaker. I want my kids and all kids to be safe. That is why we landed on the age of 21 for access to legal cannabis in the state of Wisconsin. There is a wildly successful illicit industry in the state of Wisconsin that allows our kids access to cannabis without any sort of protections or regulations. In states that have legalized, it is harder for kids to get access to the to the plant because they are working hard to dampen out that illicit market. In the bill that I am drafted, we have provisions in regards to packaging of cannabis so that it is not easy in the same way that when you purchase medication, it isn't easy for for kids to be able to to open that up. We have provisions in the bill in regards to education within our communities so that we're actually talking to the kids about the the concerns of cannabis consumption in the same way that we can talk to them about tobacco and alcohol and other illicit substances in in Wisconsin. So certainly I want to make sure that our kids are safe. That is a big part of why it is that I'm moving this policy forward. You know, I think it is important to realize that there are many law enforcement officers in Wisconsin and across our nation that actually believe and know from firsthand experience that if we did legalize cannabis, we would be providing more safety and protections for our kids.

[00:11:34] **Speaker 1** One of the other things that was brought up to me is the concentration of THC in some of these dispensary products is extraordinarily high compared to marijuana. The people used to be able to access through the black market and that some people are coming to realize that their first experience with an edible or something like that that, well, they can't handle that level. Is there anything in your bill or anything that you should be drafting to look at concentration to make sure people are aware of? Like because alcohol is marketed, people know what beer is versus hard liquor. Everclear Does there need to be similar education or policy for marijuana.

[00:12:11] **Speaker 2** 100% and we have taken that into concert consideration as well with our Bill draft. I mean, quite frankly, this bill is over 100 pages and it is full of all sorts of protections for our state that don't exist because of prohibition, because we do not have protections and regulations on the books currently. So making sure that the folks that are selling the product are licensed and educated. Because you hear over and over again from folks that go on to dispensaries that they are leaning on the people that are there for their expertise. They're guiding many of the consumers on what it is that they purchase. Folks come in, they ask questions, and you want to have an educated person behind the counter. Additionally, it is vitally important that the product itself is labeled with dosages. And right now THC is one of the things that most people are focusing on. When you talk about back in the day, the ditch, we didn't have the same potency is what it is that we're seeing in the shops. I think in most cases people are talking about THC, but there are many other terpenes associated with this plant. I anticipate with the federal government changing where it is that this is schedule and potentially that we're going to be seeing more researchers and scientists looking at this plant. There's potentially more turbines that we don't even know about. So we do want to make sure that people are educated, that there is truth in labeling and that there is safety for the consumer when they're walking into the into the shops. You know, it sounds like you've visited legal dispensary recently. I'm not sure how many times you had to show your ID before you even got to the counter of those dispensaries. But in most legal dispensaries that I have been in, in legal states, you have to show your ID about three times. They scan it, they make sure you're of age. They do have thoughtful conversations and questions. You're not picking the products off the shelves like at the grocery store yourself. You're going to a counter, you're having a conversation with someone about what it is that you're purchasing. They bring it back to you. It's more like the experience you would have in an Apple store. So certainly it is vitally important that we provide those safeties and the protections for consumers in the state of Wisconsin as well.

[00:14:25] **Speaker 1** If Senator Phelps, Costco's medicinal marijuana bill somehow makes it out of committee through a public hearing, gets to the floor, would you anticipate Democrats supporting that?

[00:14:36] **Speaker 2** Again, the devil's in the details, Zach. I don't know what the bill is going to say. If it's the same bill that was introduced a couple of years ago, people in Wisconsin were not thrilled with that. I am hopeful that she's made some changes and I'm excited to be able to see if and when she introduces it what it says.

[00:14:52] **Speaker 1** All right. Anything else that you want to add along these lines?

[00:14:56] **Speaker 2** You know, I think that we all know. That. One of the things I like to say about cannabis is it's clear that the most dangerous thing about cannabis in Wisconsin is that it is illegal. And I know that with thoughtful regulation that we will be a more safe, more prosperous and more forward thinking state than what we are right now. And clearly, the people of Wisconsin are excited for this to happen. It is past time, and I'm going to continue making myself available, engaging with the people in our state, and lifting up their voices and values.

[00:15:32] **Speaker 1** Thanks for your time. Appreciate it. So you've got the next leg of the tour. Is this going to keep going until you you touch them all?

[00:15:41] **Speaker 2** Well, I mean, we will. I think.

[00:15:45] **Speaker 1** Certainly.

[00:15:45] **Speaker 2** 13 cities at the end of the tour we're going to find a like in Sheboygan is one day. So there's multiple stops there. We've done multiple stops on other other parts of it. But, you know, at this point, people, they still want us to come out. And I think it's important that we spend time in small towns and large towns and northern Wisconsin and, you know, and we're not allowed to have a public hearing in this building. I, I may be the minority leader, but I do not have the power to push a button and say we're going to have a public hearing on this policy. And when you have 70% of the people wanting this to move forward, the best answer seemed to be that I would go to meet them where they are at. So we will see how long it continues.

[00:16:30] **Speaker 1** All right. Great. Well, thank you. Can you help take her mike off to. I don't know if I think sometimes it gets tricky when you can't.