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[00:00:28] **Speaker 1** Wisconsin has a new state budget, signed in the dead of night last week by Governor Tony Evers. It's the first budget to have bipartisan support since 2007. Joining us now is Governor Evers and thanks for your time, sir. Thanks, Zach. So this has additional funding for special education, childcare providers and the UW system in exchange for tax cuts. It sounds like it's an actual compromise budget.

[00:00:50] **Speaker 2** Yeah, I would say it was, and I'm glad it was that way myself. Over the last year or so, a couple of years, I get out and talk to people all the time. That's what I spend most of my time doing, and all across the state. I heard that a lot, the idea that it'd be great, that everybody knows we're a purple state, that we actually do work on compromise. And so we were able to do that. We- We had some wins and some things that didn't, but I guess that's kind of the way the politics work if you're a purple state like Wisconsin.

[00:01:29] **Speaker 1** Now, let's go back to the last budget where you used your veto pen to create an ongoing $325 per pupil increase in public education. But that increase isn't funded in this budget and property taxpayers will pay for it if the school districts decide to levy that amount that they can. Was that a priority for you to try and get Republicans to fund that or were there just too many other places for the money?

[00:01:51] **Speaker 2** Yes and yes, yes and no. We wanted both, obviously. But at the end of the day, we put together a package that was, I want to say it's $1.4 billion in spendable money. And also, as you likely remember, part of the problem in the past was the amount of money that school districts had to backfill into special education. And so now that is less of an issue for them. We put, we have the largest increase ever in that arena. And so I think it was a good start. Is it solving all the problems? No, and that's the nature of working with the legislature and you know, we're a purple state. And so we're not gonna get everything. But it was good start, good starts in several areas, but education, we made some huge increases. In the money for special education. That helps out in a couple of different areas. Is it solving every problem? No, but it was a step forward.

[00:03:01] **Speaker 1** Would you expect to see fewer operational referenda around the state?

[00:03:05] **Speaker 2** It's hard to say. I mean, every school district's different. They have different needs and, you know, some of them have increases in number of children, some less, and so I think that's harder to say, there should be some less but I'm not gonna bet the house on it.

[00:03:21] **Speaker 1** Now, negotiations with Republicans stopped and started a few times throughout this process. And at one point, it looked like they were going to go their own way as they've done the last few budgets. What were you doing? Were you reaching out to them? Were you waiting for them to figure out them and come back to the table?

[00:03:35] **Speaker 2** It was a ladder. Clearly, the two houses weren't on the same page. And after a while, that became less of an issue and so they came back and we ended up solving it. And we had some really significant wins also. I know the importance of having both sides having some wins, some things didn't work. But for example, our ability to get more money for our hospitals in the state of Wisconsin, that was huge. That was a win. That was complete win. And because as you likely remember, we had two hospitals in Eau Claire close in one year. And this keeps our hospitals all across the state in a much better place.

[00:04:23] **Speaker 1** Now, one reason Republicans did need to compromise, you talked about the difference in the House, is the Senate couldn't afford to lose any votes in the Republican Party, and that's because Democrats picked up seats in the last election. So how much does redistricting play into what happened in this budget?

[00:04:37] **Speaker 2** Absolutely. This budget would not have looked anywhere near as positive if it wasn't for that. Having good maps that are reflective of actually what happens on the ground, that was huge. And we'll continue to do a good job as far as taking, not taking advantage of it, but actually reflecting that. But, you know, from my side too, from the Democratic side, just because we are. We have better maps, doesn't mean that we can run roughshod over the other side either. This won't work, we're as purple as they come in our state as compared to other states, and we recognize that.

[00:05:21] **Speaker 1** So you signed the budget in the middle of the night, you referenced the hospital taxing assessment, and that is required to bring in more federal funds. So you were trying to race to beat the reconciliation bill in Washington, were you watching C-SPAN to see what was going out there? How did you time those?

[00:05:37] **Speaker 2** The answer is yes, we were watching what was happening there. We were watching was happening in both houses here. Yes, it was kind of amazing to watch it. We felt at some point in time that things were delayed enough that we would be able to do in Washington D.C., but yes it was exciting, but a little nerve-racking.

[00:06:01] **Speaker 1** Have you ever signed a bill in the middle of the night before?

[00:06:03] **Speaker 2** Not that I can recall, not at 1.30 in the morning, no.

[00:06:07] **Speaker 1** Let's talk about the Donald Trump's BBB, big beautiful bill. What will be the impact of that bill in Wisconsin?

[00:06:14] **Speaker 2** Yeah, I don't think it's gonna be good. You know, clearly issues that they feel strongly about. Is not necessarily good for Wisconsin. When we think about what's happening right now and what's happened right now with the administration, passing this bill kind of makes them all legal. I think in the past there was some concern that on my part and others, that what was happening in the new administration was very difficult and frankly not. Shouldn't have been able to do that because the Congress has not weighed in. Well, they've weighed in now. And so all those things that we were against that were happening happened. And so, yes, I think it's going to be a really difficult time for us. And whether it's schools, whether it just about anything, I'm sure we'll have Thousands of people in Wisconsin that no longer have the health care they they had before

[00:07:23] **Speaker 1** We mentioned the last truly bipartisan budget was 2007 when Democrats held the Senate, Republicans the assembly, but that deal didn't get done in October. So is it fair to say that racing that reconciliation deadline forced everyone to come together now instead of letting this stretch out?

[00:07:38] **Speaker 2** Yeah, but it wouldn't have been October. I mean, the real question, would it have maybe taken a couple of weeks off the ability to finalize? Yes, but no, we wouldn't gone to October. And I know there's some people say, well, you didn't get all you wanted. And I understand that, but the alternative is not to have a budget at all. You have what we've gone through for the last two years. Things have changed over those two years. Having that was not an option. So we needed to compromise, both sides did. We had some big wins. We have some campuses now that are gonna have new buildings that they've been trying to do for years. And we wouldn't have got that if we hadn't compromised.

[00:08:27] **Speaker 1** One area that's still up is your corrections plan as far as the prisons, you vetoed the deadline to close the Green Bay facility. Can you use the experience negotiating the bill and the budget to figure out how to negotiate that plan?

[00:08:39] **Speaker 2** Yeah, absolutely we should, and we have to. I mean, Green Bay is going to close. I get that, whether it's in 2029 or whatever, is closing. But in order to allow that to happen, there's all sorts of steps. We put together a plan several months ago. I think it was a rational plan. And there are some people that want to do different things. But the bottom line is we have to start, it's like a dance. That's where you have to go. Do this first, and then this first and this first. I'm willing to talk to any Republican, any Democrat on this issue. We just have to get it done. Do I think we will? Yes, we have to.

[00:09:19] **Speaker 1** So earlier this week, the Wisconsin Supreme Court released a 4-3 decision that ruled the statutes that empowered the Joint Committee for the Review of Administrative Rules, or JCRAR, are unconstitutional. Now, this is the committee that's halted all sorts of administrative rules, from DNR rules to building codes. What do you view as the overall impact of this decision?

[00:09:37] **Speaker 2** Sanity will reign. That's what I think. We've been dealing with this for all the time I've been in office and that is this committee, mainly the leadership, were able to stop everything dead in their tracks and then things just don't happen. That just can't happen, we can't have a one-person rule here in the state of Wisconsin in any part of it, including things like administrative rules. So yes, we will be able to accomplish some things that we haven't done before. That the rule-making process went to JCRER and just went into a hole and it just disappeared. We can't have that. That's one person rule that we can't allow.

[00:10:22] **Speaker 1** You mentioned the one-person rule, but Republicans are saying now this decision by the Supreme Court gives you one- person rule. They're saying that this gives you too much authority or the executive branch.

[00:10:31] **Speaker 2** We would just be following what we've been doing forever before this happened. So no, there's no dictatorship here in the state of Wisconsin. There's a small one in this arena, we're going to be able to get things done.

[00:10:46] **Speaker 1** This isn't the only decision by the court in this last term to rebalance the scales of a legislature versus the executive. We saw joint finance oversight over some Knowles-Nelson stewardship projects be eliminated, but that meant that that didn't get funded. Again, do you expect to see changes in what the legislation will actually pass in order to get around or what they're concerned about in terms of executive oversight?

[00:11:09] **Speaker 2** Yeah, and that's a good example. We will get something done with Nelson. We have to. Whether you're Republican or Democrat, you want to make sure that our state continues with the conservation that those two governors put forth. And so I'm not concerned about that. We will we will get some done. Maybe it won't be as large amount of money available as it was in the past. Doesn't make any difference. We just have to get it done.

[00:11:39] **Speaker 1** It's tradition for the Governor to wait until after the budget is signed to announce whether they'll run for another term. What is the timeline for your decision and do you have any announcements you'd like to make today?

[00:11:48] **Speaker 2** I'm not going to make any today, but I'll tell you, it'll happen shortly, I would say a week or so.

[00:11:55] **Speaker 1** Governor Tony Heavers, thanks for your time today.

[00:11:56] **Speaker 2** Thanks, Zach. Appreciate it.