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0:31: It's the Duke Politics Better Podcast. I'm Brian Lewis, and I'm Sky David.

0:43: We are back from Asheville. I had such a great time with you up in the mountains.

0:48: We had a lot of fun at the Asheville Chamber of Commerce event with Senator Mayfield and Senator Daniel, and we'll be featuring that conversation now.

0:57: We do want you to stick around after the conversation we have up in Asheville because we are going to have a tweet of the week.

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1:32: Hi Asheville, thanks for having us. We're going to start the podcast off like we usually do and ask each of our senators and we'll start with you, Senator Mayfield, to describe your district, where is your district, what makes your district special?

1:52: Yes, and I agree thanks to everyone who's here and thanks to you guys for making the trek out to the mountains.

1:59: So my district is Senate District 49. I have all of the city of Asheville and sort of the western half of Buncombe County that will change in the next election, but that's what it is right now.

2:12: There are so many things that make my district special.

2:14: I think one of the huge things is that all your other listeners on your podcast come here for vacation.

2:20: So that's one thing. But we have mountains, we have art, we have food, we have culture, we have beer, we have the wonderful downtown of Asheville.

2:34: This is a place that is growing, that is vibrant, that people love to come visit.

2:41: It is truly a privilege to represent this district.

2:44: I'm very excited and happy that I get to do that on a daily basis.

2:48: And Senator Daniel, specifically where do you represent and what part of

Bunkham do you represent?

2:54: So my represent all of two counties, my home county of Burke, next door neighbor, McDowell and then sort of the eastern third or eastern half of Bunkham County, which as Senator Mayfield said is going to change in 2025 slightly.

3:09: But so right now I represent Black Mountain Fairview, Barnard'sville, Swananoah, Weaverville.

3:15: And it's kind of the parts of Bunkham County that wrap around greater Asheville.

3:20: And what makes your district special? Well, so when you represent multiple counties you can't just pick like Julie can say Asheville because I have to be diplomatic.

3:30: So I would say mountains. And the great thing about every county in my district is that recreational opportunities abound, you can drive 30 minutes and be hiking, rock climbing, canoeing, biking, whatever interest you and it's just a beautiful place.

3:47: And just driving up by 40 this morning, you know, you can see the mountains and the clouds.

3:51: It was just an amazing view. And so I think that's what draws people to Western North Carolina.

3:56: I like being a mountain person representing mountain people and it's just a great district.

4:01: Well, all of the activities Senator Daniel just listed, he's done in the last week is wife Lydia Daniel is here and she gets you out.

4:08: It seems like every morning. Yeah. It seems like it.

4:12: And smiling, you're not so much. Opposites to check.

4:16: All right. Both Senator Daniel and Mayfield have been on our podcast before and be great if you went back and listen to some of those additions.

4:26: We get to talk to them more about who they are, where they came from and what makes them tick.

4:32: Today we're going to talk about a lot of issues as it pertains to Western North Carolina, particularly as it relates to the general assembly.

4:42: Before we get into some of those issues, let's start with you Senator Daniel.

4:46: How would you say this past legislative session was for Western North Carolina and this area of the state?

4:56: In terms of the budget, I think we did very well.

4:59: I haven't done the math, but I would say just in my district alone, we probably had over \$100 million in projects funded, maybe close to \$200 million.

5:09: So I think one of the things that's been a goal of, I've been in the legislature now almost 14 years.

5:15: So I think when I started, there was a feeling that all the resources went to Eastern North Carolina and we've tried to, I guess if you want to say, get a portion of that over the last decade and that we've really made strides.

5:28: So we've had great project announcements out here, whether it's universities, community colleges, water and sewer.

5:37: So just maybe some historic needs were met with some of the surpluses that we've had.

5:42: Senator Mayfield, how would you describe the session?

5:45: And it doesn't necessarily have to be budgetary.

5:47: I know it was an expansive session. Yeah, I mean, it was a session for the ages for so many reasons.

5:55: Senator Daniel and I occupy very different spaces in the general assembly.

6:00: He's been there 14 years. I'm in year three.

6:03: He chairs a number of committees. I don't.

6:07: So he is able to drive a lot of that additional investment for Western North Carolina.

6:15: We did and we'll talk about some of these later.

6:18: We were able to get some bills passed for Asheville and Buncombe County that I'm just going to say might not have happened a few years ago.

6:28: I'm proud of that. I hope I think our relationship has something to do with that and our ability to work together and we'll talk more about that.

6:37: We did also get four five counties, four or five Henderson, Transylvania Henderson, Buncombe, Madison, maybe it's just the four, about \$2 million specifically to help clean up the river to this is money that will go to farmers to help them fence cattle out of the streams and create alternative watering sources.

7:03: That is very important for our region because you all may know that two years ago 19 miles of the main stem of the French broad was deemed impaired by DEQ for bacteria.

7:15: What we know is that agriculture is a significant contributor to that and I don't say that to beat up on agriculture.

7:22: We love our farmers. Nathan, Robin, we love our farmers.

7:26: We all eat so therefore we love our farmers and we all, everybody needs to contribute to keeping our water clean.

7:34: That was something that I had been seeking for a number of years and we finally got it this year and hopefully in a couple of years we'll see the results of that as the river is cleaner.

7:45: Since Senator Mayfield brought it up, let's talk about a couple of those bills that y'all did together.

7:50: We're calling them due politics better moments since both of y'all have worked on the Senator Daniel, will you talk about a bill that you think really helped the area that y'all worked on together?

8:04: I guess maybe the most significant one that's happened over the last couple years was the Travel and Tourism Bill that reallocates how occupancy taxes are apportioned and the creation of the lift fund so that capital projects can be applied for.

8:18: I guess that process is going on now with the grant process and I know that there's been a lot of money that's come in because I read last night I think that Asheville has three times the tourism revenue as Mecklenburg County maybe or at least in short term rentals and things like that.

8:35: So I think that was one of the biggest bills to try to redirect some money away from advertising and towards projects that we can all see on the ground.

8:42: I know that Senator Mayfield wants to talk about further tweaks to that.

8:45: Would you agree with that Senator Mayfield? Is that, would you say that's the most significant?

8:49: For sure in the last few years. And that was in 22.

8:53: I'm looking for Vic 22. Is that right?

8:55: Yeah, there we go. Let's dig into that a little more and talk about maybe some of some other plans that both of you have been talking about.

9:05: We've read some media reports about this and this would be a good time to give the disclaimer.

9:10: That sky and I represent the North Carolina Travel Industry Association.

9:15: They are a proud sponsor of this podcast as well.

9:20: So this is an issue that maybe Senator Mayfield that we don't see eye to eye with you on, but you have been very open about wanting to talk to us.

9:31: You and I have been speaking about this in bits of conversations over the last few years.

9:37: But let's talk about what you see as your long term goal for the occupancy tax here in Bunkham County.

9:44: So I do think the 2022 bill was huge.

9:47: The shift in the how the tax is allocated, the creation of the lift fund, which has a particular focus on projects that are beneficial to the community that lives here as well as the community that comes here.

10:03: Those are an expanding the uses of the dollars.

10:08: That was all huge. Those were all changes that we had wanted to see.

10:11: I continue to think as tourism continues to grow here and the amount of money continues to increase, there is a point at which we might be spending enough on marketing.

10:24: And that even more of those dollars should be going toward local projects, whether those are projects intended to, well, I will just say that I think all of the projects that are funded through the Tourism Product Development Fund to date, they serve both people who come here and people who live here.

10:43: So I'm a big supporter of that fund and the projects that it has funded in the past.

10:50: It would mean breaking the standards that the legislature has for occupancy taxes, but Asheville is a unicorn when it comes to occupancy taxes.

11:01: I just think we need to start treating it like a unicorn and not the concerns that, well, if you do this here in Asheville, then everybody else is going to want to do it.

11:09: Well, when everybody else can show that they've got \$40 million of tourism dollars coming in, then we can have that conversation.

11:16: Nobody else has that right now in the way that we do.

11:19: So we're different. We have a very different community.

11:23: We have the lowest average wages, the highest cost of living.

11:28: That creates dynamics that do not exist anywhere else in this state and the needs of our community are significant.

11:36: So that's ultimately where I would like to go.

11:39: I would say the more immediate change that, and we'll see if this is a change that needs to be made, but there's been a lot of conversation and question about whether the lift funds, which is the new fund that was created in 2022, can be used for things like affordable housing.

11:57: And both the county and mountain housing opportunities have put in requests for that.

12:03: I sincerely hope that the TDA Board is able to get to that place where they do interpret the language of the statute broadly enough to allow that to happen.

12:12: If that is not the case, and they and their lawyers determine that the statute doesn't allow them that discretion, I would be interested in making a change that makes it clearer that things like that can happen.

12:23: What we need to be doing is supporting our workforce that's in the hospitality industry.

12:29: Those are the folks who are getting pushed out right now.

12:31: And that should be a concern for everybody in the hospitality industry.

12:35: And my view is we should be using some of these dollars that these workers, you know, from the industry that these workers support to help these workers stay in our community.

12:43: Senator Daniel, before we get to you on this question, good opportunity to inform our listeners that there's a process here.

12:51: This would be presumably local legislation, a local bill.

12:55: And the culture of the General Assembly is that local bills usually need to have some sign off by everyone in the delegation, especially if you're moving a bill in the short session.

13:05: Now, I don't know if this is a short session agenda item for you, Senator Mayfield, or you're punting to 2025.

13:11: But, Senator Daniel, all eyes on you because in order for a local bill to move, we would need your support on what Senator Mayfield is proposing.

13:22: Have you given this much thought about what your position is on this?

13:26: First of all, I'd have to see the proposal.

13:28: You'd have to talk to, there's a lot of stakeholders in this space all across the state.

13:32: You have to think about what the precedent you're setting for other areas.

13:37: Get the consensus of the local hoteliers and tourism folks and see what they think.

13:44: You know, the large size of the amount of money that's coming in for occupancy tax is, you know, I think it's being viewed as obviously as a way to meet needs that are maybe the responsibility of government themselves.

13:59: And so I think when Republicans start hearing that we've got too much money, you know, whether it's at the state level, what we say as well, let's find a way to lower taxes.

14:08: And so I think that should be part of the conversation is to, you know, if we're generating more money than we can spend on advertising or should spend on advertising, then, you know, should we think about lowering the tax rate or not?

14:21: And, you know, if Julie's got a proposal, we can look at what that is and talk to your folks and other stakeholders.

14:29: But I guess it's a nice problem to have when you have more money than you can spend.

14:34: It's a high quality problem for sure. But and I would, you know, if we're going to talk about allowing or saying, designating that some of these problems are the problems of local government to solve, then I would love to have a conversation about all the ways in which the legislature could enable local governments to generate more revenue to meet the needs of their communities, because that's a really difficult thing to do right now.

14:56: Senator Mayfield, do you want to show your hand a little bit on this podcast and tell us, do you have a timeline that you have thought out about this proposal?

15:06: I do. And just full disclosure, I talked to our TDA director about this just yesterday.

15:13: So this is not news to her. And it really, again, it has to do with the lift fund and how the board, how the lift committee and the board are going to be interpreting the statute.

15:22: And those decisions will get made ultimately in April.

15:27: We go back into session at the end of April.

15:30: And you know, my view is, as I said before, if there's an expansive interpretation of the legislation, there's no need for any changes.

15:40: But again, if the interpretation is so limited that affordable housing is not going to be funded, then I would like to make a change.

15:51: I would seek to make a change this year.

15:54: And again, realizing that that would be a pretty short, aggressive timeframe to have all the conversations that we need to have.

16:02: But I just, I go back to pre-COVID times when I was on the TDA board as the liaison from City Council.

16:11: And the board and people in this room will know this.

16:13: I'm looking at Kit. Kit was at these board retreats as well.

16:18: There was enormous concern on the part of the TDA board members and hoteliers about supporting their workforce and the need to do that to keep those folks in our community.

16:29: And I just, I don't think we're, I don't know that we're quite there yet with this fund.

16:36: And if I can't get the full agreement of the delegation this year, then, you know, it's something we can work on for 2025.

16:43: There's a lot to break down in what we've just talked about.

16:46: But let's talk about some Bunkum Asheville issues that were kind of brought up in context of occupancy tax.

16:54: What is an issue that's happening in Bunkum or an Asheville that you think needs to be addressed, Senator Daniel?

17:03: So, to go down to the next item on your agenda, Crime and Public Safety, are you leading me there?

17:08: Okay. Thank you for following my outline. So you're welcome.

17:18: So I guess I was doing some research last night on the internet about crime and public safety in both Asheville and Bunkum County.

17:25: And one of the top things that comes up was a website and I think they call themselves something like neighborhood scout or something.

17:32: And they were listing Asheville as one of the top most dangerous places in the U.S.

17:39: To move to, they said 97% of cities in North Carolina were safer than Asheville.

17:44: So those are some of the things that certainly we've got to turn the narrative around.

17:50: But you have to turn it around by actually fixing the problem.

17:54: You can't ignore low-level crimes because that just leads people to say, well, if I can get away with that, I'm going to do something worse.

18:01: And so you have to charge people with low-level crimes.

18:04: You have to prosecute people for low-level crimes.

18:06: And you have to dig into the data about how many people are charged for things and then how many, how are pleas being done by your district attorney?

18:17: What things are being brought for the courts or being ignored.

18:21: And so I think that to have a safer community, you have to actually enforce the laws that are already there.

18:27: So I think that's just something that needs to be looked at by the citizens here and what you're, how well you're elected officials or you're law enforcement and your DAs are doing with that process.

18:42: Senator Mayfield, what's your perspective on crime, public safety?

18:46: Yeah, it's an issue that has gotten a lot of attention certainly in terms of what's happening in downtown Asheville.

18:53: I hope everybody knows that the Sheriff's Department and the Asheville Police Department have just announced a new partnership to where the Sheriff's Department will be coming in a supportive role to patrol downtown.

19:08: That was what happened during the 60-day pilot.

19:12: Thank you. And that was very successful. The feedback I got from restaurant tours and other folks who worked downtown was that things improved and they felt a lot better.

19:23: So I'm hopeful that this ongoing partnership will continue to get to that outcome.

19:31: I just always have to remind people this is a very complex problem, right?

19:37: It is caught up in mental illness and addiction and it's not just that the city doesn't have enough police officers or the city isn't enforcing.

19:51: These are issues that every city is struggling with, homelessness and again we have some factors here in Asheville that exacerbate all of that in terms of our extraordinarily high cost of living low wages.

20:04: The other thing is and Senator Daniel alluded to this.

20:08: This is a system that is, you can't just look at who's being arrested and for what?

20:15: Because as soon as the police and the Sheriff's Department are just one, they're just the threshold piece of this system.

20:22: And then there's the jail and the magistrates who make decisions about whether somebody goes right back out or stays in jail for a while.

20:29: And then there are other judges who make further decisions about whether someone gets out or stays in.

20:35: There's the DA who makes decisions about what charges to crime, what charges to bring, whether to prosecute.

20:43: And then there's the trial schedule and it is just a complex system.

20:47: I've been saying now for probably three, I don't know, three years at least.

20:50: What I want to do is throw the Sheriff, the police chief, the DA and the chief judges for our two different levels of courts into a room with a facilitator and tell them we will bring you food and drink.

21:03: But do not come out. You are not allowed to come out until you get a comprehensive vision, not necessarily even a vision, but that you all figure out each of your roles in this system and make sure that they are working together instead of in competition with each other.

21:18: Because I think that's what we have seen and it is not helpful.

21:22: The problem is each of those people with the exception of the police chief and they answer only to voters.

21:27: So they don't have any bosses and the police chief has a significant independent role as well.

21:34: They need to be working together better and I'm hopeful that that will happen in the future.

21:41: This question is both a look back and a look forward.

21:45: So Senator Mayfield brought up the perception of Asheville or the perception of this area in the General Assembly.

21:53: What could these folks do in the future?

21:57: First, do you think that's accurate, Senator Daniel?

22:00: And what could these folks do in the future to, I would say, improve the perception of Asheville in the General Assembly?

22:09: Well, so first of all, remember that municipalities are, we consider them creations of the state and that so we have a lot of children across the state and just like a child, sometimes cities go through cycles where this week Asheville is the problem child next week.

22:24: It's, you know, Greenville, North Carolina or something.

22:27: Sometimes legislation gets passed because of two or three, we'll say bad actors that then make the rest of the 300 municipalities have to live with it.

22:39: Is Asheville the problem child of the week?

22:40: I don't know that they are. So good to hear.

22:43: I don't know, Julie, what do you think?

22:45: I do think the perception of Asheville has changed in the General Assembly.

22:49: So, you know, certainly in the early teens, there was a lot of activity from my perspective, you know, sort of negative attacks on Asheville, negative legislation that was designed to hurt Asheville that was coming out of the General Assembly.

23:06: We haven't seen that for a number of years and so that's good.

23:12: I do think that there's still an expectation that elected officials like myself who show up are going to be crazy, wacky, tree, hugging, insane, far leftist can't possibly work with them kind of people and I've had my Republican colleagues tell me that.

23:28: They're like, you know, you're okay. We didn't know what to expect from you.

23:31: But, you know, you've turned out okay. We like you.

23:36: So I think there is, you know, everybody's sort of like, oh God, who's Asheville going to send us this time?

23:41: You know, hopefully that's gone away a little bit and I think our, you know, our delegation is of course totally new from even just two years ago.

23:52: I think all of us are working very hard to build those relationships, to get things done for Asheville and for Buncombe County and to sort of set that history behind us.

24:04: And I think that's happening. I mean, I co-sponsored, I mean, you know, at least two bills with Tim Moffitt.

24:13: And you know, if you've been here for any length of time, that would have been inconceivable just a few years ago.

24:20: But Tim and I are working on several things together and you know, he's a good partner in those things.

24:27: Again, I do think it's changed. But of course the plastic bag band that came in was largely because Asheville and Buncombe County were about to pass plastic bag bands.

24:37: So now we have a band on bands.

24:39: That's due, you know, largely to the work that happened here in Asheville, but we're not finished.

24:45: So looking forward, we are going to start a short session in April.

24:49: What's something that you're looking toward the short session that you think these folks would be interested in?

24:56: Like what's something that's going to happen in the short session?

24:59: They should keep their eye on. Senator Mayfield?

25:01: You never know what's going to happen in the short session.

25:04: The short session is supposed to be short.

25:06: It's supposed to be non-controversial issues. Mainly there to fix the budget and maybe get some other things over the line.

25:15: There are some things that are still alive out there that I hope we do, even though they are really controversial.

25:22: Like medical marijuana. I keep hearing alternatively. It's dead.

25:29: It's not dead. It's not dead. So that could come back.

25:32: You all may remember that wrapped up in the initial budget was some discussion about legalizing casinos and certain, and I think it was four casinos in specific parts of the state.

25:46: That got defeated and it got taken out of the budget.

25:48: I'm not convinced that the forces that wanted that have gone away.

25:53: So I wouldn't be surprised if that comes back.

25:56: Again, I wouldn't think that's a typically a short session issue, but leadership was very much behind that.

26:02: So leadership can do what leadership wants to do.

26:06: My view is that those issues, a casino bill, a standalone casino bill probably would have passed last year, even though it didn't work as part of the budget, that it might pass as a standalone bill.

26:18: I still think that's true. So those are some of the big things that I'm going to be watching for.

26:26: So normally a short session is mostly designed for budget adjustments.

26:32: So we have maybe six or eight months to look back and see what didn't we fund that maybe we should try to fund.

26:41: So that'll be something to look at. I know one of the things that I think both of us were hoping would be funded that would have maybe helped here locally was the general assembly was considering creating a \$25 million grant fund for Major League Baseball that would have allowed some of the minor league parks to apply for up to a \$5 million grant to help with renovations.

27:04: That didn't get into the budget, unfortunately, but you know, we might be able to take another stab at it.

27:09: Can we take another swing at it? Yeah, another swing in it.

27:13: We swung and missed. I guess another issue that's relevant to Bunkham County is that the school board is in the process of drawing new residency districts for the school board members and they have until June to do that.

27:26: So that's something that we'll be looking at and just seeing what progress the school board makes on doing that.

27:32: I know they're I think they're going to have a public hearing pretty soon to to show what they've done so far.

27:37: So those are two issues. A boring one that maybe I'm interested in is there's a regulatory bill that deals with homeowners associations to try to keep them from charging it, exorbitant fees like when property transfers go from party A to party B.

27:53: So this happened to me. I'm a real estate lawyer, most of the most of the time and I do closings and you know, I was going to do a closing for somebody that lived in an association and the association who has a company they've hired to manage their budget from Texas.

28:06: They say, well, if you pay \$454, we'll actually send you the invoice for how much the homeowner owes.

28:13: So the board of advice, you know, don't send one of those to the chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

28:20: So that's an issue I think that's hopefully we'll come forward.

28:24: There's another issue, of course, in Bunkham County that deals with short term rentals.

28:28: A bill that Senator Mayfield didn't join in on is one that Senator Moffitt filed that would significantly limit the ability of Asheville to regulate short term rentals in the way that they're currently doing.

28:40: So I know that I'm sure Senator Moffitt still wants to try to get that bill passed and I think Senator Mayfield probably has some issues with it.

28:48: Yeah, I mean, I didn't obviously support that bill, but I am in frequent conversations with Senator Moffitt about that and helping him understand, you know, the particular dynamics of short term rentals in a city like Asheville.

29:01: So here's just a dynamic of the General Assembly that I think it's helpful for folks to understand is that all of the cities in our state are essentially represented by Democrats.

29:13: We do have a couple like Senator Lazara who represents Jacksonville, but Democrats in the General Assembly come from cities.

29:22: And so the sad part about that is that our Republican colleagues often don't have a full appreciation for the challenges that we face in cities.

29:34: Senator Lazara, who I just mentioned, he's a former mayor of Jacksonville, he is a great voice for cities in the General Assembly, but he is really the only Republican who represents a city.

29:46: So that's just a, you know, when we talk about bills like short term rentals, I worry that there is a lack of understanding and appreciation for what cities are facing.

29:58: The dynamics and pressures in rural counties are very different.

30:01: So that's part of what my job is.

30:03: I view it in a bill like a short term rental bill is making sure that someone like Senator Maffet who doesn't represent a city, a significant city, where there are cities in his district, but that, you know, he understands what the implications of that bill would be for a city like Asheville.

30:21: Don't forget Senator Lee and Wilmington. And Senator Lee and Wilmington, oh my God, how can I forget him?

30:26: Wonderful partner who I've co-sponsored a number of bills with.

30:29: Yes, thank you. I want to talk about you two working together.

30:33: It was just over a year ago, Sky and I were up here producing this podcast, Downtown Asheville at the venue, and Senator Mayfield, Senator Daniel, you were just starting, you had just gotten drawn in, I believe, to Bunkham County at that moment.

30:50: I talked to you and you said, hey, I've never been in a delegation with Democrats.

30:56: And Senator Mayfield's like, we could work together.

30:58: Let's do some work together. I've got some ideas.

31:01: And by the way, I was talking to Vic Easley about this yesterday.

31:03: Senator Mayfield, I totally admire the way you just wrapped your arms around Senator Daniel and said, we are going to work together.

31:10: I need your help and we're going to get things done.

31:14: And you could have taken a different route.

31:16: You could have said, hey, you're, you know, this Bunkham County's mine.

31:20: And you could have taken a different route.

31:22: You don't agree on a lot, I know.

31:24: But you seem to have a mutual respect for each other.

31:28: Can we ask you to reflect on that a little bit?

31:30: Let's start with you, Senator Mayfield. Yeah, so again, from where I sit in the General Assembly, I get nothing done if I don't build relationships with my Republican colleagues.

31:42: That is clear from the get-go. So I am there to do a job.

31:47: I am there to represent this community and I am there to get things done for this community.

31:50: That means I have to build relationships. That is not a problem for me.

31:54: I have spent my life working with people and building relationships and finding ways to be cooperative with people that I don't agree with on lots of things.

32:03: And thankfully, Senator Daniel is a great person and was willing to be a partner in that in that relationship.

32:11: And most of the time, 90% of the time, it's just been very easy.

32:16: It's, you know, let's talk about this. Hey, can we, can we co-sponsor this bill together?

32:21: You know, the Buncombe County School Board bill was the exception to that.

32:26: And that was a very difficult bill, a bill that I opposed very strongly.

32:31: The week that it was going to come in for committee meetings and votes on the floor, you know, that Tuesday morning I walked into his office and said, okay, this is going to be a really hard week.

32:41: We're going to disagree publicly a lot. You're going to say things that I don't like.

32:45: I'm going to say things that you don't like, but can we just commit to each other right now that at the end of this week?

32:50: We are still going to be friends and we are going to still work together.

32:53: And the answer was yes. And that continues to be true.

32:58: So again, it, it, not everybody I think can do that, you know, can sort of have that separation.

33:06: And I think that's just a failing of our political system generally that, you know, people a lot think these days, if I don't like the way that you believe and if we disagree, then I can't like you and I can't work with you on anything.

33:19: And that is, maybe that's my magic wand.

33:23: But I think we do, I think we do really well.

33:25: Well, I agree with what Julie said. I'm not sure if I said, I would say yes.

33:29: I might, I might have said, I'll wait and see what you say about me.

33:36: I took it as a yes. But I think, you know, you have to look at every issue differently and Mitch Gillespie when I was a new legislator and I think he didn't pin this, this phrase, but he said always remember your enemy today can be your friend tomorrow.

33:52: So I think you just have to look at take issues as they come and see whether we agree or disagree.

33:56: Obviously, you know, I've worked with, I guess before Senator Mayfield, one of my favorite Democrat partners to work with was Senator McKissick, who was, he's a black Democrat lawyer from Durham, who's now on the Utilities Commission.

34:12: And so, you know, Senator McKissick used to always come into my office at the beginning of recession.

34:17: He'd have a bill stack about this tall and he'd say, just go through this stack and see which ones you like and don't like.

34:24: And so I picked the ones I liked.

34:26: And so anyway, that was probably my favorite Democrat to work with before he left.

34:31: You called him an honest liberal. Yeah. And I think Julie probably fucks that category too.

34:37: Thank you very much. So in, one of the things that we try to do in the podcast is dispel some of the myths out there that Democrats and Republicans are at each other's throat all the time.

34:48: Now there are times when you are at each other's throat, social issues.

34:51: And we don't need to get into the particular social issues.

34:54: But when they hit the floor, battle lines are drawn coming out of those debates.

35:00: What do you all do? Like kind of our audience and our listeners to hear.

35:04: How do you compartmentalize that? And just okay, I'm not going to talk to Senator Daniel about abortion.

35:10: Senator Daniel says I'm not going to talk to Senator Mayfield about equality issues.

35:14: We're just going to focus. Or do you kind of say, is there a conversation?

35:20: Or do you just leave those things alone to preserve the relationship?

35:24: Well, there were a couple tough issues like that this year, I think, from the Republican standpoint.

35:30: We felt like that sometimes the Democrats made the remarks more personal.

35:34: You know, kind of you're a bad people type arguments rather than, you know, we disagree with this policy.

35:39: So I do think sometimes those had some lingering negative effects on other issues that you might work together on.

35:47: I guess things mended over time. But maybe we don't completely forget.

35:52: I'm kind of regretting bringing this up. Well, you know, I would say it is very hard in that moment.

35:58: And my approach in those moments and even in the, you know, the days after those moments.

36:04: And certainly the day of those big controversial difficult for us, I think, very painful votes.

36:11: I can't have a conversation with even the Republican colleagues that I am, you know, feel like I have really good relations.

36:19: I just, like, I can't talk to you right now.

36:22: And we all, you know, it's like, and I'm sure they feel the same way.

36:24: So we just all sort of go away.

36:27: I think one of the best things that happened this year was we took a two

month break after, I think that was after SB 20, the abortion bill.

36:37: And, you know, there, there were absolutely relationships that were, I think, probably permanently broken because of that debate.

36:45: Thankfully, none, not on, not on my end, not, not with me and anyone.

36:52: But, you know, time, some, just time. Sometimes you just, you just need time.

36:57: And then, and for me, it depends on the issue.

37:00: Because I will go to a colleague that I have a good relationship with and say, I need, I help me understand.

37:07: I did that with the don't say gay bill early on, the official name of the bill, parents bill of rights.

37:13: And went to two of the sponsors and said, help me understand what you're doing and why.

37:18: And then, even on the abortion bill, there was a, there was an inconsistency that was going to make a huge difference for a lot of women.

37:27: And it needed to get fixed. And, you know, and again, I went to three of the Republican colleagues that I have and said, you need to understand that this is what just happened and it needs to get fixed.

37:39: And they all three said, yes, I get it.

37:41: And we, and, and it did get fixed.

37:43: It, not because I am, and said it because other people were saying it.

37:46: But it's, it's just, yeah, you do have to compartmentalize.

37:51: You just do. Otherwise, you'll never get anything done and you'll just be angry.

37:55: If you're a Democrat, you will just be angry all the time.

37:58: All right, as Brian said at the start, you both have been on the podcast before and you know about the magic wand question.

38:05: If this is your first time attending, we ask all of our guests.

38:08: If you had a magic wand and you could fix one thing in our politics today, what would it be?

38:14: So I'm going to pick a national issue that has local implications.

38:17: And so I would say that I would like to fix the Southern border problem so that we have a controlled immigration policy.

38:25: I'd like to fix the immigration policies of the United States so that people who are trying to do things right actually get to the head of the line before the people who are doing things wrong.

38:34: And why that's important locally is, you know, we have a fentanyl problem.

38:39: It's flooding into our state, into our country.

38:42: Our drug related deaths are skyrocketing. It's affecting families.

38:47: It's affecting our social programs, our welfare system, our schools.

38:53: So I think that if we could just kind of control that better than we could solve some of the problems that we're facing in our state.

39:01: So I'm going to say the same one I did when I was on the podcast before, which is I wish that we could come together more as Republicans and Democrats and honestly work together on issues to resolve them instead of having, you know, one party draft a bill and then say, here's the bill and then the other party is sort of left to try to amend, to try to make suggestions, you know, but the, it's like the cake is already, cakes are already 75, 80% baked by the time we see it.

39:38: And we could just, we could just get better policy if we could come together and work on things from the very beginning and try to, again, not kind of nationalize issues and and and figure out, you know, what makes the most sense for North Carolina on on a lot of these really difficult topics.

40:03: So and I actually did mean to, I have a wand.

40:07: Maybe I shouldn't say that on a podcast.

40:09: I was going to bring my wand. I got a wand at Harry Potter World, like two years ago.

40:14: I was going to bring it and I forgot.

40:16: Oh well. It's okay. This is audio only.

40:19: That's true, but we do have an audience.

40:20: Well, Senator Warren Daniel and Senator Julie Mayfield, we appreciate everything you're doing in North Carolina politics, your representation of Western North Carolina, Bunkham County, Asheville.

40:33: You certainly know how to do politics better.

40:36: Thank you for being on the podcast today.

40:39: Thank you, Brian and Scott. Happy to do it again.

40:42: The Duke Politics Better Podcast is sponsored by the North Carolina Beer and Wine Wholesalers Association.

40:52: Beer and Wine distributors in North Carolina are family owned companies that directly employ more than 5,600 men and women across the state.

41:00: The North Carolina Beer and Wine Wholesalers Association works with the General Assembly to develop alcohol policies that ensure fairness and a competitive marketplace and promote responsible behavior.

41:11: Is it the North Carolina Beer and Wine Wholesalers Association at NC Beer Wine dot com for more information?

41:18: Thanks again to Zach Wallace, Policy Director up at the Asheville Chamber

of Commerce.

41:23: This is the second time he's had us up to Asheville to host the Duke Politics Better Podcast there.

41:31: Last year we were with Dr. Chris Cooper, Political Science Professor at Western Carolina University.

41:36: Of course this year we had Senator Daniel and Senator Mayfield.

41:41: He was great being up at UNC Asheville.

41:44: Beautiful university. Thank you to the Chancellor for allowing us to be on campus and to record all the sponsors that made this podcast possible.

41:56: We look forward to returning to Asheville. By the way, if you would like for us to come to your community and host the Duke Politics Better Podcast, give us a call.

42:06: We're always willing to take this show on the road.

42:08: Meet new people. See old friends. Tweet of the Week.

42:12: The Tweet of the Week is sponsored by the North Carolina Port Council, representing hog farmers around the state working hard to do agriculture better.

42:23: Today hog farms are reducing their carbon footprint by covering lagoons, reducing the missions and generating renewable natural gas.

42:33: To learn more, visit NCPork.org. This week's Tweet of the Week is from Big Content Guy.

42:40: He's at Big Content Guy on X. It's a Tweet about Chuck Schumer saying that there needed to be some federal action to crack down on Zen.

42:51: Now, if you're a listener and you don't know what Zen is, it's like a little nicotine pouch.

42:56: We'll get into that. But the Big Content Guy Tweeted, I will make January 6th look like a tea party.

43:02: And some of the replies were just amazing.

43:05: Someone said, can't wait to launch my new speak easy, seven deadly Zins.

43:10: Someone said, Chuck, if you take away Zins, the kids are going to start using heroin.

43:13: Do you want that? We know lots of people that use Zen.

43:19: Senator Tom Tillis uses Zen. Yeah. He tweeted a picture of his Zen on his desk and said, come get it or something like that.

43:28: Yeah. I was a Zen user for a while.

43:31: You know, nicotine is... I've never seen it.

43:34: Thank you. Okay. My cover. I'm willing to come out of the shadows and talk about my Zid.

43:41: Thank you for helping me cover up for years.

43:43: No problem. Julie did say to me once.

43:45: He thinks he's so smooth. I can see those packets all over the house.

43:49: They're everywhere. It was a problem. It was a problem.

43:53: And I finally gave it up last year.

43:57: And even through the end of the year, the holidays I would find a Zen in my Soc drawer wherever I would hide them.

44:06: Because you hid them. I would hide them.

44:08: But as of this year, I haven't touched it.

44:11: If I'm resolute that if I do find Zins in the house or wherever I'm going to flush them, I do feel relieved that I'm not tied to them because I used to think about gosh, do I have enough Zen to get through the day?

44:26: It's a habit. They're so good. The nicotine is so strong.

44:30: It gives you a little buzz, especially in the morning.

44:33: But I'm completely off. Like I said, nicotine is my drug of choice.

44:38: I have started using chewing tobacco when I was 13.

44:44: Played baseball and it was kind of a dug out right of passage, especially if you were struggling.

44:49: Someone always had some dip. Hell, you could get it from the coach back in the day.

44:54: You could also bum a cigarette from them too, I think, if little league memories serve correctly.

45:00: Yeah, it's always been a struggle for me, nicotine.

45:03: Yeah, I saw someone said that Copenhagen called in a hit.

45:10: Just go back to smoking sigs like a real man.

45:13: Yeah. Or dipping tobacco might, my dip of choice was Bobo brand hawk and you could get it at food line and love it, love dip.

45:25: Oh, there's nothing like waking up in the morning, taking a dip and drinking a cup of coffee.

45:31: That sounds disgusting. And I didn't even spit the, you know, I swallowed it.

45:38: I swallowed it. I did. I was hardcore.

45:41: You're an animal. But I do like a good cigar now.

45:43: And again, I'm abstaining from cigars right now because I'm going through,

you know, still think about the zins.

45:50: The thing about zins is that there's little packets.

45:53: It's just pure nicotine and very addictive. Highly addictive, more addictive, really than chewing tobacco.

46:05: Really? Yeah. Do you have a vice that you struggle because you don't drink caffeine in the morning?

46:12: You, I've never seen you smoking a cigarette.

46:16: I've never smoked a cigarette. You have no vices, do you?

46:19: I don't know. Do you like? I would say the closest I've ever seen is you seem to be a sucker for chips.

46:27: Yeah, like snacks. Snacky things. But you even that you eat in such moderation.

46:34: Like you'll eat two or three and a month full.

46:37: No, I don't. So what is Chuck Schumer proposing?

46:42: I don't really actually know, but just know that the content made from it is hilarious.

46:46: It is. Like everything on X or something.

46:49: Did you see that Donald Trump said, Nikki Haley is going to side with Chuck E. Schumer and take away your zins, but I won't.

47:00: Well, there is the debate of whether Zen is safer than cigarettes.

47:06: I think it is. Obviously, you know, I will say this, Zen by the end of the day.

47:13: And you know, and I'd had maybe a can of Zen.

47:16: You would have a whole can on your own day.

47:18: During session, general assembly session, yeah, I'd go through a can.

47:22: Sometimes you hide it even for me. I'll see you trying to sneak it.

47:26: Yeah. It's embarrassed. Why? Because I'm addiction. You love an addiction.

47:32: I have a very addictive personality. Now you have to have a mid-morning coffee you've never had before.

47:38: Well, here's my thing. I need to tell you about this.

47:42: I'm a two caffeine shot today. So I wake up in the morning and I have my cup of coffee.

47:49: And then I usually have either a tea, a Coca-Cola or a coffee, mid-morning.

47:54: I read this year as I was thinking about dropping some addictions.

48:00: New years resolutions. One of the, I don't know what you would call it, but you should reward yourself once a day with a treat.

48:08: Think about all the money you're saving, they said.

48:12: Think about how healthier you are. So treat yourself to something.

48:17: So what I have made is going over to Sir Walter Raleigh and- The treat is the people abuse you there.

48:24: They're like, what? You know, I just want a cup of coffee, please.

48:29: A cafe, a lay with a little- No, like, hard cold.

48:31: But I- But here to go. And you're like, I thought yours was supposed to serve me.

48:34: Yeah. And then they turned that iPad around and went a 30% tip.

48:36: My hot tea is, you know, \$7. But I've been treating myself to a cup of coffee with the specially little, like, a coffee with a specially little, frothy milk on top.

48:56: Did you buy that cup from Sir Walter?

48:58: No, this was a gift from UNC Greensboro.

49:00: Oh. And I just put the- Sir Walter's sticker.

49:03: And you put one on your other. So they know your loyal.

49:06: Yeah. So maybe there'll be a little nicer to me.

49:09: Yeah, I don't- I don't get that style, but I guess it's supposed to be like, we're rock.

49:15: We're cool and you're not sort of thing.

49:17: Yeah, I guess so. Yeah. Well. So I'm treating myself.

49:21: I'm not eating- I'm not consuming extra caffeine.

49:24: I'm just getting caffeine from a fancy little source over there.

49:27: I'm paying triple what I should and getting abused by the employees.

49:30: Yeah. Do you feel that that's a nice treat?

49:33: I do. It is a nice treat. It's a nice way to break up.

49:36: I'm warning a comeback. I get my work done.

49:39: I'm sippling this coffee. Yeah, it's good. Three weeks into the new year.

49:45: I have not touched in. And I've been working on some other stuff.

49:51: So far I'm holding tight. But you know, in two weeks this could all change.

49:54: I could be back to, you know, three or four Zins in my mouth.

49:59: Yeah. I did have a Snapchat memory today of- I put it three or four years ago.

50:04: We were- and by we, I mean, you were bound to the planner.

50:11: And my title was like, Planner Gate 2021.

50:15: Yeah. I am trying to incorporate the gift I got you for your birthday into my daily life.

50:23: Yeah. I walked over. It's all you're using at the other day.

50:26: I'm like, that was a nice gift for you, wasn't it?

50:28: But you got me this nice sticker. So thank you.

50:31: So I bought Sky the remarkable notebook pad, the kind of digital pad.

50:40: I guess we want one. Now Susan Vic uses it at the General Assembly.

50:44: And she gave us a mixed review on it.

50:46: And she did. She did. So I got it you wanted.

50:49: And then you took to it for about a day.

50:51: I really tried. I tried. It's confusing. It's not intuitive like you would think it would be.

50:57: And I just, it doesn't feel like writing on paper.

51:02: That's always a lie. Things, some people that say it's like writing on paper.

51:07: Big lie. Big lie. That's like exercise clothing that wicks away sweat.

51:12: Also big lie. Nothing is wicking away sweat.

51:16: You love saying that, but. That's because you're wearing bobo pants.

51:22: Okay. All right. This podcast is digressing. It's time to decide.

51:29: All right. Next week we will be back to our regular interview with news on the front.

51:38: Whatever new years have it. You're trying to kick or trying to maintain good luck with that.

51:45: We will talk to you next week until then.

51:48: Please remember to do politics better.