

“Preserving Rural School Districts from the Threat of Vouchers and Charters: A Conversation with the Authors”

Dec. 11, 2025 Zoom webinar

<https://www.wisconsinnetwork.org/events/preserving-rural-school-districts-from-the-threat-of-vouchers-and-charters-a-conversation-with-the-authors>

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00:00:00.000 --> 00:00:00.800

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Thank you.

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00:00:03.470 --> 00:00:25.310

Heather DuBois Bourenane: All right, welcome to the Preserving Rural School Districts from the Threat of Vouchers and Charters conversation with the authors of the remarkable new study by that title, Preston Green, Chris Saldana, Bruce Baker, and Julie Mead. My name is Heather Dubois-Bernan, and I'm Executive Director of Wisconsin Public Education Network. Welcome!

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00:00:25.310 --> 00:00:50.290

Heather DuBois Bourenane: And feel free to introduce yourself to us and to each other in the chat. We would love to know your name and pronouns, the city or district you live in, and your role in relationship to the work that brought you here tonight. Also, why are you here? What about this topic interests you? Feel free to share that if you're so moved, but introduce yourselves to each other in the chat, and we encourage you throughout the course of the meeting to find new people who share

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00:00:50.290 --> 00:00:54.650

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Your concerns, values, and goals, and connect with them, offline.

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00:00:55.500 --> 00:01:20.349

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Our agenda for tonight is ambitious, and we have a lot to get through. We're going to start out by going through, kind of who we are and what we do. Then we'll jump right into tonight's presentation, which will be an informal conversation with, the authors of this new study. Then we'll have a sort of moderated discussion of your questions that you either put in the chat as we're going through tonight's discussion, or that we've received in

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00:01:20.350 --> 00:01:40.829

Heather DuBois Bourenane: advance. We also have a couple of Wisconsin rural leaders on deck to provide a little bit of commentary and serve as discussants after tonight's presentation. We will conclude with some opportunities for action. What can you do about this? What are people already doing? What ideas do you have? And what can we do together and alone?

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00:01:40.830 --> 00:01:49.929

Heather DuBois Bourenane: And for those of you who are unfamiliar with Wisconsin Public Education Network, or are at one of our events for the first time, we just want you to know that we are

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00:01:49.930 --> 00:02:13.109

Heather DuBois Bourenane: a fiercely nonpartisan nonprofit that is committed to making sure that every single kid in every single public school in the state has the resources that they need to thrive. And in order for that to happen, we need to connect to each other and get the information, resources, and action opportunities that will change the dial to get the kids the supports that they deserve.

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00:02:13.560 --> 00:02:30.420

Heather DuBois Bourenane: We are powered by the donations of folks like you, and some, like, little grants that we get here and there, so we appreciate your support in, funding this work. That helps us make events like this free and open to everyone, and try to create a level playing forward for

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00:02:30.420 --> 00:02:36.219

Heather DuBois Bourenane: A level playing field for the people whose voices are often left out of these conversations to be heard.

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00:02:36.390 --> 00:02:37.510

Nancy Graham: Great speaker.

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00:02:38.480 --> 00:02:45.920

Heather DuBois Bourenane: All right? We do ask that you mute yourself as you enter the room, and if... and if you don't, we can... we can mute you for you.

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00:02:46.010 --> 00:03:09.889

Heather DuBois Bourenane: We do local action with statewide impact all around the state year-round, working with local grassroots teams that are doing nonpartisan work where they live, and coordinating statewide actions like our vote public campaigns that support referenda work and nonpartisan get-out-the-vote activity, as well as ways to hold ourselves, our lawmakers, and our public schools accountable, including

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00:03:09.890 --> 00:03:34.389

Heather DuBois Bourenane: By making sure that, we know what's happening at the State House. So check out our website, WisconsinNetwork.org. We've got a bill tracker there where you can see not just what education-related bills are coming up at the State House, but how folks are lobbying on those efforts. We also, have launched a GoPublic Transparency project to ensure that the state is, holding... is being held accountable

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00:03:34.560 --> 00:03:45.990

Heather DuBois Bourenane: By, disclosing tax costs on vouchers, we'll talk a little bit more about that as we go, but, getting those voucher costs on our tax bill is what that project is all about.

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00:03:48.260 --> 00:04:13.260

Heather DuBois Bourenane: We are here today because every kid in every public school deserves to thrive, and that isn't just our personal opinion, but it's our constitutional charge. We know that the state has an obligation to adequately provide for the needs of all of the kids in all of the public schools, and we believe strongly that the state is not currently meeting that charge, and it's time to do something about it. And so we're looking for all the ways we can, just as regular folks, to understand how

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00:04:13.260 --> 00:04:19.770

Heather DuBois Bourenane: How school funding works and how we can make sure that we're holding ourselves accountable for making sure that we aren't underselling our kids.

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00:04:19.769 --> 00:04:22.139

Heather DuBois Bourenane: In our budgets and in our policies.

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00:04:22.370 --> 00:04:46.299

Heather DuBois Bourenane: We do follow a couple of community agreements in meetings like this to make sure that they're as productive as possible. First of all, we like to keep in mind that we're not here just to learn, we're here to make change. We want to change the status quo so that we are improving outcomes for all of the kids and making sure that they have all of the things they need in all of our schools. And in order to do that work, we need to agree to disagree respectfully... respectfully and productively.

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00:04:46.300 --> 00:05:09.490

Heather DuBois Bourenane: connect to each other and form relationships, not just in this meeting, but across our communities. Learn and take action together, and let others know how they can tag in to help

us. So please feel free to use this space as productively as you can by messaging each other privately or publicly in the chat, by being as active a participant in these conversations as you can, and again, by contributing to this

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00:05:09.490 --> 00:05:14.380

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Networks work so that we can continue to do these kind of things year-round.

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00:05:16.730 --> 00:05:30.840

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Our goals for tonight are to understand better what the impacts of privatization are on rural communities, which is probably one of the questions that we get the most here at Wisconsin Public Education Network. How are vouchers impacting districts that might not even have

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00:05:30.840 --> 00:05:47.269

Heather DuBois Bourenane: voucher programs, right? Like, what does that mean? What's the difference between vouchers and charters, and how do they impact public school funding in general? What are some of the challenges specifically facing rural public schools in this way, and how can we connect to each other in ways that will make a difference?

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00:05:48.140 --> 00:06:13.089

Heather DuBois Bourenane: And so, I would like to stop talking now and introduce our speakers to you, because if you are not familiar with the work of these four folks, we are joined tonight by four of the leading scholars in this area in the U.S, and we are very happy and proud that they took time out of their very busy schedules to join us tonight. First, I'd like to introduce Dr. Preston Green. He's the John and Maria Nia

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00:06:13.090 --> 00:06:29.050

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Professor of urban education and professor of Educational Leadership and Law at the University of Connecticut. He is nationally recognized as an expert on legal issues surrounding charter schools, school vouchers, student rights, school desegregation, and school finance.

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00:06:29.170 --> 00:06:54.110

Heather DuBois Bourenane: We also have, new to Wisconsin and California native Chris Saldana, who is Assistant Professor of K-12 Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at UW-Madison. His research examines the relationship between K-12 school finance, educational opportunity, and focuses particularly on

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00:06:54.110 --> 00:07:10.070

Heather DuBois Bourenane: educational experiences of minoritized and marginalized students. Chris, welcome. We're always... also one of our, top-tier presenters, and we always get requests for his work on school adequacy, which some of you have seen his presentations on this before.

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00:07:10.310 --> 00:07:34.560

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Bruce Baker is professor and chair of the Department of Teacher and Learning at the University of Miami, and widely recognized as the nation's leading scholar on the financing of public elementary and secondary education systems. His research spans public education finance and policy, post-secondary education, finance, and policy, teacher administrator labor markets, and education law.

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00:07:34.560 --> 00:07:47.400

Heather DuBois Bourenane: He's the author of two recent books by Harvard Education Press, School of Finance and Education Equity, and Educational Inequity and School Finance, Why Money Matters. So check those out if you haven't already read them.

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00:07:48.090 --> 00:08:13.079

Heather DuBois Bourenane: And then finally, Dr. Julie Mead, our very own board member of the Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools and a dear and long friend of the network. She is a professor emerita in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. She researches and writes about topics related to all legal aspects of education, and her research centers on issues related to special

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00:08:13.080 --> 00:08:37.420

Heather DuBois Bourenane: led, and raised by various forms of school choice. She is also probably our most requested outreach speaker, and the presentations that she gives on education as the cornerstone of the democracy have become a cornerstone of our own offerings, so we're so grateful for her generous time and talents, and that all of you are here today to share with us the expertise that you've

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00:08:37.530 --> 00:08:45.349

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Gleaned from leaning into the question of what is the impact of privatization on rural communities.

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00:08:45.350 --> 00:09:00.549

Heather DuBois Bourenane: So, I am going to go ahead and stop talking now, and pass the mic over to you all. My understanding is that you will have a pretty conversational approach to your presentation, and you'll just tell me when it's time for me to turn the slides.

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00:09:01.640 --> 00:09:06.570

Preston Green: Well, thank you so much for having us here, and

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00:09:07.700 --> 00:09:14.490

Preston Green: I'm very grateful to have the opportunity to talk with you about this article that we've worked on.

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00:09:14.750 --> 00:09:18.139

Preston Green: And I... I think I can start by saying that

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00:09:18.630 --> 00:09:24.879

Preston Green: That we are very... we're in interesting times right now in educational law.

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00:09:25.230 --> 00:09:36.780

Preston Green: I mean, there's just... everything is just changing so very rapidly. And with the Supreme Court's recent case law and the major changes that we're seeing.

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00:09:37.130 --> 00:09:42.040

Preston Green: I mean, school districts are in danger, and especially rural school districts.

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00:09:42.150 --> 00:09:52.149

Preston Green: And I think that we have to find new ways of thinking about how to protect public education and how to find ways that we can

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00:09:52.720 --> 00:10:05.720

Preston Green: you know, that we can really, really make sure that schools can survive. And so this article on preserving, you know, preserving public education, you know, preserving rural school districts was the part of this.

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00:10:05.990 --> 00:10:22.010

Preston Green: And I, you know, asked Chris and all of my favorite friends to come in and go down this rabbit hole with me to figure out how we can use natural resources law to, you know, to protect public schooling. So I think that

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00:10:22.320 --> 00:10:25.659

Preston Green: And I think that one thing that we should think about

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00:10:26.210 --> 00:10:39.730

Preston Green: first of all, if you look in the news, and then others can chime in here, I mean, people will say, well, education is a public good, or education is a private good, but really, education is a mixture of both.

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00:10:40.290 --> 00:10:45.740

Preston Green: And I was wondering, Chris, if you could talk a little bit about, kind of like, how that works.

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00:10:46.940 --> 00:10:47.500

Christopher Saldaña: Yeah.

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00:10:47.500 --> 00:10:48.860

Preston Green: I need to put you on the spot, man.

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00:10:48.860 --> 00:10:55.990

Christopher Saldaña: No, no, that's okay. I think, it's really interesting for Preston to talk about the origins of the article, because

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00:10:57.150 --> 00:11:02.560

Christopher Saldaña: When he came to me and started talking to me about hunting law, and about, you know.

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00:11:02.970 --> 00:11:07.020

Christopher Saldaña: The different kinds of restrictions that exist I...

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00:11:07.990 --> 00:11:18.299

Christopher Saldaña: I immediately thought, yeah, this seems really cool, but it sort of took me some time, which he walked me through, to think through, you know, what is the reason that we're trying to think about

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00:11:19.560 --> 00:11:34.000

Christopher Saldaña: these natural resource laws in relation to education. And I think Preston said it at the very beginning, it's really this question about threat. And when we think about terms like public goods and private goods, there's a couple different ways to think about them.

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00:11:34.050 --> 00:11:48.300

Christopher Saldaña: One is to think about them in the economic sense. So, one distinction that's made in economics is that when you have a truly public good, it's something that's non-excludable and non-rivalrous. So that's something that you think about, like air.

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00:11:48.300 --> 00:11:54.080

Christopher Saldaña: Right? If I breathe the air, and you breathe the air, my breathing doesn't take away from you breathing.

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00:11:54.230 --> 00:12:02.179

Christopher Saldaña: But then we can think about truly private goods in the sense of economics, which is something like, dinner that I order at McDonald's.

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00:12:02.340 --> 00:12:05.239

Christopher Saldaña: Right? I've eaten it, you can't eat it anymore.

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00:12:05.340 --> 00:12:06.170

Christopher Saldaña: Right?

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00:12:06.410 --> 00:12:18.249

Christopher Saldaña: And so there's this continuum of goods that exist in the economic sense. Schools live somewhere in the middle there, right? We don't have unlimited resources to be able to provide

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00:12:18.480 --> 00:12:38.090

Christopher Saldaña: schooling in every single way that we can. We should be thinking about the adequate resources that exist, but when we introduce competition into this mix of how resources are allocated or distributed within public education, it does create tensions in terms of what communities and school districts and school leaders can do.

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00:12:38.490 --> 00:12:40.229

Christopher Saldaña: That's the economic sense.

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00:12:40.360 --> 00:12:50.210

Christopher Saldaña: In the political, sort of philosophical sense, you can think about public goods in terms of what it does for society, right? So schools can play a democratic purpose.

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00:12:50.570 --> 00:12:59.599

Christopher Saldaña: Or we can think about them in terms of social efficiency, which is a term that David Labry uses in his work, which is, you know, helping students,

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00:12:59.720 --> 00:13:15.940

Christopher Saldaña: develop and be trained to serve our societal needs in terms of the economy. But then a private good, in that sense, is truly for the individual to receive a public education, or an education in general, for their social mobility, for them to be able to sort of move up

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00:13:16.010 --> 00:13:22.860

Christopher Saldaña: In the world. And so that's a little bit of how we're thinking about, you know, these terms, public goods and private goods.

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00:13:23.620 --> 00:13:28.179

Preston Green: And Julie and Bruce, I mean, in terms of public education, there's a...

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00:13:28.640 --> 00:13:33.690

Preston Green: in terms of American public education, there's a constitutional root, right, to the public good.

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00:13:34.210 --> 00:13:37.769

Preston Green: Could you two talk a little bit about, like, what that is?

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00:13:38.110 --> 00:13:42.230

Preston Green: And how that plays out in... in thinking about a public good in the... in the...

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00:13:43.400 --> 00:13:46.660

Preston Green: And, you know, in the educational sense in this country.

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00:13:48.830 --> 00:13:53.099

Julie Mead: I'll get us started, and then I'll let Bruce take over.

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00:13:53.460 --> 00:13:57.409

Julie Mead: One thing, just to... I think that's really important.

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00:13:57.770 --> 00:14:15.579

Julie Mead: to remember is that, what a constitutional is. We throw away... we throw around that term, right? It's in the Constitution, it's a constitutional right constitution. And I think you have to take a step back and remember that that document is literally the...

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00:14:15.880 --> 00:14:34.649

Julie Mead: framework for what a government can and cannot do. That's what it is. It's the way a people decide what a government's going to do. And so, in that way, it's really remarkable that all 50 states have decided that a primary purpose of the state legislature

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00:14:34.650 --> 00:14:38.789

Julie Mead: Of the state government is to provide for public education.

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00:14:39.290 --> 00:14:58.940

Julie Mead: So, they have defined it very, purposefully and centrally as part of what the state government exists to do. It exists to provide the public good that is public education. And I'll let Bruce go on from here.

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00:15:00.800 --> 00:15:04.599

Bruce Baker: Right, and yeah, just kind of jumping off what Julie's saying there,

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00:15:04.940 --> 00:15:08.450

Bruce Baker: You know, again, every state has some language.

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00:15:08.450 --> 00:15:28.360

Bruce Baker: that obligates a legislature to make provision for a system of public schools. And there are a lot of different kind of variations on that language. The state of Kansas, where I worked for a long time, and certainly has a substantial rural schools issue, has to... the legislature is obligated to make suitable provision for finance of the educational interests of the state.

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00:15:28.560 --> 00:15:47.839

Bruce Baker: And the state board, as an independently elected body with its own constitutional authority, establishes those interests. In the state of Florida, the legislature is supposed to make adequate... shall be made by law for a uniform, efficient, safe, secure, high-quality system of free public schools.

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00:15:47.840 --> 00:16:05.240

Bruce Baker: Now, you know, Wisconsin's language, as I understand it, it's a little more kind of simple, straightforward about the provision of district schools. Doesn't have some of the other common phrases in a number of states like New Jersey and Texas are for the provision of a thorough and efficient system, typically of public schools.

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00:16:05.310 --> 00:16:12.450

Bruce Baker: And that really speaks to these, on the one hand, These are...

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00:16:12.910 --> 00:16:21.510

Bruce Baker: systems that shall, and some legal authors have pointed... the Legal Scholars actually was a lengthy

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00:16:21.690 --> 00:16:38.540

Bruce Baker: concurring opinion by a judge in Kansas who talked about the importance of the obligatory nature of the word shall in some of these kinds. It's not... it's not you may, or you can, or, you know, if you want to, you can... that this is an obligation of state legislatures to follow through

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00:16:38.550 --> 00:16:43.369

Bruce Baker: With... with this particular promise to the citizens

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00:16:43.400 --> 00:16:52.490

Bruce Baker: of the state, and protections of the citizens of the state. And I know Chris, you know, so Chris and I kind of work in the space of

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00:16:52.690 --> 00:17:10.970

Bruce Baker: figuring out what the... what the heck does that mean in terms of developing a system for providing financing, combining tax revenue sources to make sure that all kids in Kansas have access to a suitably provided system of schools

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00:17:11.220 --> 00:17:29.109

Bruce Baker: per the educational interests of the state, or a safe, secure, efficient, and adequate high-quality system of free public schools. We work in that space of, well then, how the heck do you raise the tax revenue and distribute that out to

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00:17:29.120 --> 00:17:41.770

Bruce Baker: schools and districts to ensure that the constitutional obligation is met. Whether your court has pounded the gavel and said that you must or not, it's still a legislative obligation, and that

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00:17:41.840 --> 00:17:43.900

Bruce Baker: is really important

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00:17:44.100 --> 00:18:01.409

Bruce Baker: As we start to look at these other factors, which are also under the control of state legislatures, the adoption of a voucher system, the expansion of charter schools, those are controlled by, created by, established by state legislatures.

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00:18:01.420 --> 00:18:13.970

Bruce Baker: And we have to have methods for protecting against those policies, Eroding or undermining That primary protected

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00:18:14.510 --> 00:18:34.079

Bruce Baker: kind of responsibility, of the provision of the free, safe, adequate, efficient public education system. But it's getting trickier because of other legal issues that have come down the road, that once you crack the door open, and Preston and Julie, I guess, will talk more about, once you crack the door open to having

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00:18:34.290 --> 00:18:40.320

Bruce Baker: Non-government providers access public funding to enter the education space.

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00:18:41.110 --> 00:18:44.060

Bruce Baker: It's hard to...

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00:18:44.790 --> 00:18:53.460

Bruce Baker: jam in the doorstop. And this article, to me, is very much about, well, how do we do that in a way that's legally permissible

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00:18:53.630 --> 00:18:57.100

Bruce Baker: To protect against the erosion and undermining

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00:18:57.210 --> 00:19:08.179

Bruce Baker: of the constitutional obligation to adequately fund and provide for rural schools. So, back to the door thing and the problem that we're trying to

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00:19:09.480 --> 00:19:11.460

Bruce Baker: mitigate there.

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00:19:11.980 --> 00:19:30.549

Julie Mead: I will just add to that, because I think it's also important to note, and since we're in Wisconsin, our language is it needs to be as nearly uniform as practicable. Yeah. Not the clearest language, but at any rate, one thing that is important is that our Supreme Court, on two occasions now.

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00:19:30.570 --> 00:19:39.350

Julie Mead: in a case called Davis v. Grover, and then a second one called Jackson v. Benson, has said that, the voucher

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00:19:39.350 --> 00:20:03.340

Julie Mead: system, and actually in another... later on in charters, too, but has said that all of those things are okay because they're discretionary acts of the legislature, and they're okay as long as the legislature is meeting its constitutional obligation with regard to public education. So kind of, you know, legislators, you've got to do your homework before you can go outside and play in voucher land.

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00:20:03.780 --> 00:20:06.010

Julie Mead: So...

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00:20:06.140 --> 00:20:22.010

Julie Mead: That's the thinking behind what's there, and I think it also undergirds what we're talking about here. We're talking about protecting that which is constitutionally obligated for those rural parts of our state or any state.

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00:20:22.600 --> 00:20:28.790

Preston Green: And one thing that I'll add before moving on is that if you look at... if you can see from the graphic.

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00:20:29.080 --> 00:20:30.669

Preston Green: That, you know.

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00:20:31.270 --> 00:20:45.869

Preston Green: that in terms of waiting, you know, you have public and private, but public should be paramount, right? It's that we provide for public first, and if we provide for the public good first, then we can move on and then provide

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00:20:45.870 --> 00:20:53.240

Preston Green: for those other possible choices. And the danger that we have with vouchers and with charter schools

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00:20:53.400 --> 00:20:57.699

Preston Green: Like, you see the next two slides dealing with vouchers and charter schools.

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00:20:57.910 --> 00:21:02.200

Preston Green: That the danger that we have, is that

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00:21:02.350 --> 00:21:06.630

Preston Green: Over the last 30 years with these programs,

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00:21:07.230 --> 00:21:11.309

Preston Green: that balance may be out of whack, right? Because we have...

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00:21:11.920 --> 00:21:21.410

Preston Green: you know, you have various voucher programs, you have conventional vouchers, you have tax credit scholarships, you have education savings accounts. I know that

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00:21:21.570 --> 00:21:28.060

Preston Green: in, if I'm correct, in Wisconsin, it's really vouchers, right? To the conventional voucher programs.

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00:21:29.610 --> 00:21:37.539

Preston Green: You know, but what we're seeing is that in... in those 30... in that 30-year period, we've had this gradual increase

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00:21:38.050 --> 00:21:54.349

Preston Green: in, you know, going from targeted programs to much larger, more universal programs. And I think that there's... there's that danger in Wisconsin, right? I think we can talk... can anyone talk specifically about the Wisconsin situation?

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00:21:58.690 --> 00:22:03.980

Preston Green: Or am I putting people on the spot for, you know... I mean, with respect to vouchers, I know that there's.

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00:22:03.980 --> 00:22:05.190

Julie Mead: Right.

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00:22:05.190 --> 00:22:05.820

Preston Green: do that.

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00:22:06.030 --> 00:22:11.589

Julie Mead: I think that the big changes, of course, we were the... First, Dan.

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00:22:11.590 --> 00:22:12.450

Preston Green: business.

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00:22:12.450 --> 00:22:14.569

Julie Mead: new kind of voucher. Yay, yes!

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00:22:14.640 --> 00:22:19.810

Preston Green: And it started in Milwaukee, and we had the Milwaukee program.

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00:22:22.040 --> 00:22:30.389

Julie Mead: alone, for a long time. So that was adopted in 1990, expanded to include religious schools in 1996,

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00:22:30.590 --> 00:22:45.670

Julie Mead: But then, starting in 2011, we started adding other programs, so we now have four. The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, the Racine Parental Choice Program, both of which

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00:22:46.470 --> 00:23:03.969

Julie Mead: are tagged to those cities specifically, and then we have the statewide program, the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program, and then we have the latest one adopted in 2015 is the,

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00:23:04.360 --> 00:23:12.249

Julie Mead: Special Needs Scholarship Program, which is the only one of the four that is not income, based.

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00:23:12.840 --> 00:23:21.789

Julie Mead: That has no income requirements, and it serves, or permits children with disabilities to enroll in private schools.

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00:23:21.970 --> 00:23:37.429

Julie Mead: So, again, those schools that choose to participate in the program. And that's true for all of these programs. Remember, there's no obligation on the part of any private school in the state to participate in one or more of these programs. They get to decide that

129

00:23:37.480 --> 00:23:45.420

Julie Mead: whether they participate, and to what extent. So they can limit the number of seats available any way they want to.

130

00:23:45.620 --> 00:23:52.060

Julie Mead: And so we have some... most, frankly, most of the schools are,

131

00:23:52.420 --> 00:24:11.199

Julie Mead: substantially voucher enrolled. We have some schools in Milwaukee that are 100% voucher enrolled. In other words, no child attends by means of privately paid tuition. They all attend by means of the vouch... the voucher programs.

132

00:24:11.730 --> 00:24:31.700

Julie Mead: So, it's a burgeoning program, and it's been several years now that the number of kids enrolled in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program has, if it were a school district, would be the second largest in the state. So, it's big for the size of our state.

133

00:24:33.000 --> 00:24:47.559

Preston Green: And I would add that... and I would add that with respect to vouchers, that, I mean, the growth that you're seeing in Wisconsin is also... we're seeing in other states as well. I mean, and we point out in our paper that in early 2... maybe in 2000, there were

134

00:24:48.250 --> 00:24:54.419

Preston Green: maybe 1,000, or maybe 12,000 voucher students, but now we're close to a million.

135

00:24:54.580 --> 00:25:01.870

Preston Green: nationwide. And you also have, with President Trump

136

00:25:02.300 --> 00:25:05.170

Preston Green: With the big, beautiful bill and other policies.

137

00:25:05.310 --> 00:25:14.469

Preston Green: calling for the increase in vouchers, in vouchers. So, you know, this is what's happening in Wisconsin, we're seeing happening elsewhere, and with federal...

138

00:25:14.660 --> 00:25:27.289

Preston Green: federal encouragement. And if you move on to the next slide, then you have charter schools. And charter schools are, you know, this is certainly something that I've gone down a rabbit hole myself over the years.

139

00:25:27.410 --> 00:25:36.039

Preston Green: The charter schools are defined, really as, you know, they're always defined as public schools, but when you look a little more closely, what you see

140

00:25:36.140 --> 00:25:50.009

Preston Green: is this sort of contract or charter that is created between an authorizer and the creator of the school. And what happens then is that there's, like, this idea about accountability, that there are...

141

00:25:50.640 --> 00:25:58.620

Preston Green: Rules that have... That have to be reached within that charter, but in exchange for that,

142

00:25:58.760 --> 00:26:05.129

Preston Green: Accountability, there's a greater latitude, greater freedom from rules and regulations.

143

00:26:05.160 --> 00:26:25.050

Preston Green: that apply to traditional public schools. And in addition to that, and a big difference, I think, that we're certainly seeing this playing out in the law, you know, in cases right now, is that charters, in many cases, are run by, private entities, so by private

144

00:26:25.270 --> 00:26:34.369

Preston Green: private boards, right, or corporations instead of elected school districts. And this flexibility and this sort of

145

00:26:35.040 --> 00:26:46.229

Preston Green: Diversion from traditional public schools has major legal ramifications, ones that can eat into, and

146

00:26:46.450 --> 00:26:50.140

Preston Green: Raised concerns about the very existence of public schools.

147

00:26:50.310 --> 00:26:54.470

Preston Green: So, if you... so, if you go to the next slide.

148

00:26:54.990 --> 00:27:06.259

Preston Green: We then get into how the Supreme Court... in this article, we get into how the Supreme Court has encouraged both, charter school, I mean, voucher,

149

00:27:06.730 --> 00:27:16.730

Preston Green: Voucher growth, and may, in the end, encourage, public... charter school growth by greenlighting religious charter schools.

150

00:27:16.900 --> 00:27:24.019

Preston Green: So, we talk in our article about what we call the trilogy, the Free Exercise Trilogy.

151

00:27:24.330 --> 00:27:27.659

Preston Green: And you see that in the slide with the Trinity case.

152

00:27:28.540 --> 00:27:37.090

Preston Green: Espinoza... and also Carson B. Macon. And in those cases... I should back up and say that

153

00:27:37.610 --> 00:27:46.909

Preston Green: you know, voucher programs, I mean, the Supreme Court cases prior to these decisions were seen as real, sort of.

154

00:27:47.680 --> 00:27:56.410

Preston Green: it's not an obstacle... an obstacle or, like, a limitation to voucher... to voucher growth, because

155

00:27:56.630 --> 00:28:01.279

Preston Green: There was a major question as to whether or not vouchers could even be

156

00:28:01.580 --> 00:28:12.240

Preston Green: you know, be allowed under the Establishment Clause. But, but in 2002, with the Zellman decision, the Supreme Court ruled that, well, vouchers can be

157

00:28:12.650 --> 00:28:17.390

Preston Green: you know, vouchers don't necessarily violate the, the Establishment Clause.

158

00:28:17.540 --> 00:28:30.490

Preston Green: Then there was a question about the Free Exercise Clause, and I'm just going to jump very quickly to the Free Exercise Trilogy, where in those cases, the Supreme Court ruled

159

00:28:31.260 --> 00:28:34.520

Preston Green: that... You know, that...

160

00:28:35.340 --> 00:28:46.009

Preston Green: you could have programs that, you know, the voucher programs... oh, I'm getting tongue-tied for a second here, that, you'd...

161

00:28:46.840 --> 00:28:58.380

Preston Green: That there cannot be, you know, you cannot prevent religious institutions from participating if there's, like, a religious status, you know, merely that they are

162

00:28:58.640 --> 00:29:18.010

Preston Green: you know, religious organizations, or religious use in the Carson case. So, in the Carson case, the Supreme Court said, well, you know, even in cases where entities are actually acting as religious, or running religious schools, or being religious schools, they cannot be prohibited

163

00:29:18.380 --> 00:29:27.630

Preston Green: Without... without being a violation of the Free Exercise Clause. So that's kind of like that, but can others add in to, you know, to...

164

00:29:28.390 --> 00:29:29.210

Preston Green: Yeah.

165

00:29:29.210 --> 00:29:36.220

Bruce Baker: If I could jump in on this point, just to talk about Carson v. Macon in particular, and kind of the...

166

00:29:36.380 --> 00:29:44.519

Bruce Baker: how... what had been going on for years in some of the more rural New England states, like Vermont and Maine?

167

00:29:44.740 --> 00:29:48.150

Bruce Baker: You know, they... they're...

168

00:29:48.560 --> 00:30:01.300

Bruce Baker: the previous case, in that Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue case, the point was more generally that, you know, if in fact you have a voucher program that provides

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00:30:01.360 --> 00:30:23.490

Bruce Baker: access to funding, public financing for private institutions, you can't exclude religious institutions from gaining access to that funding. So if you had a tax credit or another voucher program that let private institutions provide educational services, you couldn't draw a line in the sand and say, but not religious ones.

170

00:30:24.820 --> 00:30:35.350

Bruce Baker: The... what... the reason why... *Carson v. Macon* more or less says the same thing, but there was a different structural issue at play in... in Maine.

171

00:30:35.500 --> 00:30:41.359

Bruce Baker: And in Vermont at the time, which goes deep into history, in that

172

00:30:41.450 --> 00:30:57.390

Bruce Baker: back in the late 17th, mostly first half of the 1800s. Parts of these... now, back in that time period, there really were only common schools that were up through about, you know, for kids who maybe were 11, 12, 13 years old.

173

00:30:57.390 --> 00:31:15.959

Bruce Baker: At the same time, we know that there were already major private universities, your Harvards and Dartmouth, they predate all of that, and some of the older private schools that were feeders to them, your Exeter's, Andovers, Choates, they existed all the way back to the 1600s, but these... these... in some of these

174

00:31:16.140 --> 00:31:28.379

Bruce Baker: town areas. It wasn't *Carson v. Macon*, there was a lot of talk about it being... this is out... outlying rural, sparse areas. Now, these were modest-sized New England towns in a period where there was no such thing as a high school.

175

00:31:28.670 --> 00:31:32.420

Bruce Baker: So, in some cases, a private benefactor would step in.

176

00:31:32.700 --> 00:31:39.429

Bruce Baker: And build a high school that was effectively a private high school to serve the public good of the town.

177

00:31:40.240 --> 00:31:51.629

Bruce Baker: Eventually, many of those were even converted to, sold to the towns as the public high schools, but some still remained, and remain to this day. Byrne Burton Academy in Manchester, Vermont.

178

00:31:51.630 --> 00:32:02.819

Bruce Baker: And, you know, a number of others, St. Johnsbury Academy. And the state boards of education in these states, for years, have struggled with figuring out

179

00:32:02.900 --> 00:32:05.499

Bruce Baker: You know, how do we let this still happen?

180

00:32:05.680 --> 00:32:12.320

Bruce Baker: Because we have these... Schools that are, by definition, private schools.

181

00:32:12.960 --> 00:32:32.639

Bruce Baker: Some of which were even founded, like Burr and Burton was originally Byrne Burton Seminary. It was started by a businessman, but it still had Protestant leanings, and it's still Byrne Burton Academy, serving Manchester and the surrounding areas of Vermont. Vermont State Board of Ed has long struggled with, how do we, you know, maintain a mechanism that folds them into the adequate funding model.

182

00:32:32.680 --> 00:32:33.940

Bruce Baker: and doesn't...

183

00:32:34.440 --> 00:32:40.270

Bruce Baker: Throw the doors wide open to anyone and everyone getting a chance to choose the private school of their choice.

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00:32:40.420 --> 00:32:42.240

Bruce Baker: Be it religious or not.

185

00:32:42.390 --> 00:32:44.169

Bruce Baker: Carson v. Macon...

186

00:32:44.240 --> 00:33:03.980

Bruce Baker: Has the Supreme Court kind of kicking that door wide open and saying to the folk... the state board in Vermont, if you have a mechanism that funds Byrne Burton and St. Johnsbury, which is named after the town, it's not a religious or Catholic school, it's St. Johnsbury, Vermont, or these schools in Maine, or Woodstock Academy in Eastern Connecticut.

187

00:33:03.980 --> 00:33:09.360

Bruce Baker: If you're funding these now, you also have to make the funding available for religious education.

188

00:33:09.850 --> 00:33:10.820

Bruce Baker: Oh.

189

00:33:10.820 --> 00:33:16.049

Preston Green: The Vermont State Board of Ed long struggled with this issue of, well, do we have to...

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00:33:16.260 --> 00:33:22.920

Bruce Baker: One of the parameters they always wanted to put on it, but they couldn't get past because there were wealthy families that liked to take their

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00:33:23.070 --> 00:33:34.840

Bruce Baker: in some towns that were non-operating towns, meaning they didn't even have their own schools, so they could take their money to wherever they wanted to go, kids would go to out-of-state boarding schools in Massachusetts or New Hampshire.

192

00:33:35.010 --> 00:33:41.609

Bruce Baker: State Board often talked about, Restricting it, the money to be only used within state.

193

00:33:42.320 --> 00:33:46.219

Bruce Baker: That would probably still be a permissible restriction.

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00:33:46.660 --> 00:33:51.050

Bruce Baker: Because Massachusetts and New Hampshire aren't an alternative religion.

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00:33:52.270 --> 00:34:02.149

Bruce Baker: their other states, right? So that, that's, like, that's a permissible restriction here that Vermont could adopt, perhaps, without it being shot down as

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00:34:02.360 --> 00:34:05.120

Bruce Baker: Restricting free exercise rights.

197

00:34:05.480 --> 00:34:20.929

Bruce Baker: And that's where I started seeing... going back to Chris's point, Preston kind of planted this seed in our heads, and I think, you know, I've worked with Preston a little longer than Chris has, and when he plants these seeds, I scratch my head a little bit, I think, I know there's something there.

198

00:34:23.010 --> 00:34:27.750

Bruce Baker: And this is where this really struck, is that this idea that

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00:34:28.110 --> 00:34:35.029

Bruce Baker: There are spaces where we can set parameters to protect the space.

200

00:34:35.830 --> 00:34:36.510

Preston Green: Right.

201

00:34:36.510 --> 00:34:42.750

Bruce Baker: can be neutral, that can be protected, that we're not... when we say a space.

202

00:34:43.520 --> 00:34:46.600

Bruce Baker: Already has barely enough kids to operate.

203

00:34:47.010 --> 00:34:47.860

Preston Green: And if...

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00:34:48.960 --> 00:34:51.699

Bruce Baker: Sufficiently uniform public school.

205

00:34:52.690 --> 00:35:00.069

Bruce Baker: with the kids that are there, and limiting... and restricting choice on that basis. We're not restricting it on the basis of

206

00:35:00.630 --> 00:35:02.499

Bruce Baker: Cutting out religious schools.

207

00:35:03.430 --> 00:35:09.719

Bruce Baker: And that's, you know, again, *Carson v. Macon* and *Espinosa v. Montana*, really...

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00:35:10.370 --> 00:35:19.249

Bruce Baker: They... they're the... they're what create the impetus for coming up with these creative methods for boxing out choice.

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00:35:19.620 --> 00:35:23.050

Bruce Baker: Where choice might undermine or damage the public good.

210

00:35:23.430 --> 00:35:25.959

Bruce Baker: And doing so in a way that's not...

211

00:35:26.800 --> 00:35:31.149

Bruce Baker: That's... that's not vulnerable to a religion claim.

212

00:35:33.180 --> 00:35:39.649

Julie Mead: I just wanted to add one quick thing, and that's just a, you know, at the risk of oversimplifying, but, you know, we...

213

00:35:40.500 --> 00:35:56.450

Julie Mead: Eat, breathe, and, you know, do this stuff all the time. But what was really telling about this trio of cases is prior to this trio, the question was simply, may a state do something

214

00:35:56.450 --> 00:36:16.090

Julie Mead: consistent with the Establishment Clause, without violating the Establishment Clause. So, may we? And the court said, sure, you may, you may, Wisconsin, create a voucher program. You may, Ohio, create a voucher program. Then there was a case in the middle called *Locke v. Davey*, which happened in the state of Washington.

215

00:36:16.260 --> 00:36:23.060

Julie Mead: I won't go into everything about that, but there the question was, well, if you may, do you have to?

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00:36:23.250 --> 00:36:33.919

Julie Mead: If you create a voucher pro... some kind of funding, do you have to fund the religious part under the Free Exercise Clause? And in *Locke v. Davey*, the Supreme Court said no.

217

00:36:33.920 --> 00:36:44.270

Julie Mead: No, you don't have to. There's... they use this weird metaphor that I still don't understand, really, other than it's a play within the joints, so there's something between

218

00:36:44.560 --> 00:37:05.889

Julie Mead: having to do it under the Free Exercise Clause and being permitted to do it under the Establishment Clause. And then this tree of cases happened, which took that... even though they said that they were not overturning *Locke*, and that they were saying this is different than *Locke*, essentially what they said in each one of those cases is once you've made

219

00:37:05.990 --> 00:37:12.859

Julie Mead: Turned on that public spigot of public money flowing to these private schools, or these private entities.

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00:37:14.060 --> 00:37:27.019

Julie Mead: Now the Free Exercise Clause says you must send it to these... to the religious schools, too, that you cannot restrict it only to secular institutions. So, even though,

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00:37:27.280 --> 00:37:31.730

Julie Mead: We had previous law that seemed to suggest that you had some latitude.

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00:37:32.310 --> 00:37:37.550

Julie Mead: these... these cases took that latitude away. And so.

223

00:37:38.360 --> 00:37:48.130

Julie Mead: as Bruce said, now we have to think about, well, are there other ways that we could think this through? And of course, our fearless leader, Preston.

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00:37:48.510 --> 00:37:51.519

Julie Mead: Helped us all come up with something.

225

00:37:51.520 --> 00:38:06.980

Preston Green: And as part of this sort of, like, thinking... and in terms of thinking about this, it's not just vouchers, because, you know, charter schools are also an issue, and in the Carson B. Macon case, Justice Breyer, and then I think in Espinoza as well.

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00:38:06.980 --> 00:38:12.550

Preston Green: Justice Breyer raised the question about, and this is the next slide about charter schools.

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00:38:12.570 --> 00:38:28.260

Preston Green: He raised the question about charter schools, basically saying, hey, what about charter schools? And when Carson v. Macon was released, he sent out the bat signal saying, hey, look, charter schools may be next, right?

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00:38:28.340 --> 00:38:33.209

Preston Green: And because, you know, these organizations are...

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00:38:33.490 --> 00:38:40.599

Preston Green: You know, they're run by private entities, in many cases, and so there was this question that we...

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00:38:40.930 --> 00:38:46.530

Preston Green: Really get into the weeds about are trying to figure out, Our charter schools also...

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00:38:46.690 --> 00:38:53.239

Preston Green: you know, subject to this analysis and Carson be making. Now, I mean, now, however.

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00:38:53.690 --> 00:38:59.479

Preston Green: You... as I said earlier, though, we've... charter schools are supposedly public schools, right?

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00:38:59.680 --> 00:39:18.740

Preston Green: But remember, though, that if they're independently run, there is this question about whether or not they are what we would call, legal terms, state actors, right? Are these entities that are running these schools, are they state actors who must then comply with the Constitution?

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00:39:18.970 --> 00:39:29.799

Preston Green: And we just recently had a decision, in Oklahoma dealing with the Oklahoma online religious charter school.

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00:39:30.290 --> 00:39:41.650

Preston Green: St. Isidore, which was actually targeted at rural communities. It was a Catholic school with the whole idea of being attractive to rural communities.

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00:39:41.760 --> 00:39:47.690

Preston Green: And this was approved by a state agency, state,

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00:39:48.260 --> 00:40:07.439

Preston Green: And, it was a, it was an attorney... state attorney general, then Attorney General, who said, well, you know, who gave him advice, saying that under the re-exercise trilogy of cases, charter schools would apply to... this would apply to charter schools. And, oh, by the way, charter schools are not state actors.

238

00:40:07.440 --> 00:40:08.820

Preston Green: So therefore.

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00:40:09.730 --> 00:40:23.550

Preston Green: You know, so therefore, the state cannot be, you know, religious entities cannot be prevented from running charter schools on account of being religious. This case eventually went to the U.S. Supreme Court, I mean.

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00:40:23.800 --> 00:40:41.259

Preston Green: Oklahoma's Supreme Court found that, disagreed, saying that this is a violation of the state constitution, and also the federal constitution. Many of us... then this case went to the Supreme Court, and everyone got very... the U.S. Supreme Court, everybody got very, very alarmed about that.

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00:40:41.410 --> 00:40:44.040

Preston Green: But what happened, though, is that

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00:40:44.360 --> 00:40:50.079

Preston Green: the person who was lead... you may have heard that, Justice Amy Coney Barrett

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00:40:50.230 --> 00:40:58.790

Preston Green: recused herself, and the reason why she did so was because, her... one of her colleagues,

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00:40:59.170 --> 00:41:17.910

Preston Green: one of her colleagues, whose name's Nicole Garnett, was helping to lead that case for Oklahoma before the charter school. And so, what ended up happening was that many of us thought there was a good chance that the U.S. Supreme Court would find in favor of that religious charter school.

245

00:41:18.150 --> 00:41:25.929

Preston Green: But what happened was that, because Coney Barrett accused herself, it became a 4-4 decision.

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00:41:26.430 --> 00:41:28.880

Preston Green: Which meant that,

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00:41:29.570 --> 00:41:40.589

Preston Green: Religious charter schools did not exist for at least a few more... maybe a few more months, but there are four states right now that we've listed in California, Oklahoma.

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00:41:41.920 --> 00:41:56.919

Preston Green: Colorado, and I'm trying to remember, what's the other one? Tennessee. There are 4 states right now where this issue is coming up again, and it's because they feel that if they get a chance for the Supreme Court to rule on this.

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00:41:57.010 --> 00:42:04.589

Preston Green: The Supreme Court will rule in the favor of religious charter schools, which could open up all kinds of concerns

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00:42:05.470 --> 00:42:07.329

Preston Green: And I think a lot of this.

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00:42:07.620 --> 00:42:15.420

Preston Green: It's focused, of course, on the concern about Religion, you know, being taught with public money.

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00:42:15.940 --> 00:42:22.900

Preston Green: And which brings me to the next slide, and I think that while there is this focus on

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00:42:23.500 --> 00:42:26.020

Preston Green: And where this is focused on...

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00:42:26.940 --> 00:42:37.050

Preston Green: you know, on this... on this, on this religion being taught, there's a... I think that there's this real concern that I don't think is getting enough

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00:42:37.270 --> 00:42:45.609

Preston Green: focus right now on the school finance implications of this. Because right now, and as we point out in this paper, we're...

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00:42:46.000 --> 00:42:52.909

Preston Green: You know, there's a... we have declining enrollments, you know, we definitely have declining enrollments right now.

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00:42:53.040 --> 00:42:54.609

Preston Green: And,

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00:42:55.310 --> 00:43:09.380

Preston Green: And an increase in competition. An increase in competition. And this is a real concern for certain school districts, for, you know, for rural school districts especially, because they just...

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00:43:09.630 --> 00:43:25.749

Preston Green: I mean, because there's a real danger that in certain circumstances where you have very, very small school districts, you could end up with closure, school closures. We're already seeing this in more, in larger school districts.

260

00:43:25.970 --> 00:43:31.999

Preston Green: But the danger is especially there for rural school districts, you know.

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00:43:32.190 --> 00:43:36.950

Preston Green: And, if you go to the next slide, I think we can...

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00:43:37.480 --> 00:43:46.450

Preston Green: like, what are those, you know, what are the dangers? I mean, there's a concern about, you know, there's issues in transportation, there's issues in education, but...

263

00:43:46.950 --> 00:43:54.740

Preston Green: I think that... These schools are the hub of their communities, right?

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00:43:55.190 --> 00:43:58.879

Preston Green: You know, they're holding them together.

265

00:43:59.080 --> 00:44:16.799

Preston Green: And, Mara Casey Tekin, in her work, has talked about, like, she's done analyses of danger to school closures in rural school districts. And she talks about the danger of ghost towns.

266

00:44:17.540 --> 00:44:30.969

Preston Green: And ghost towns meaning that, you know, there's a synergistic relationship between... between these schools and their communities. Like, they're holding, you know, their work together to hold them together.

267

00:44:31.150 --> 00:44:38.299

Preston Green: And all you need is just a few kids to leave. All you need is a few kids to leave these schools.

268

00:44:38.580 --> 00:44:42.230

Preston Green: And if they leave these schools, there's a potential of them closing.

269

00:44:42.510 --> 00:44:48.920

Preston Green: Right? So what happens if they close? I will open this up to the others. What happens if these schools close?

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00:44:53.520 --> 00:44:58.149

Christopher Saldaña: One thing I think we can just touch on really quickly is also just thinking about,

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00:44:58.270 --> 00:45:07.380

Christopher Saldaña: the... sort of the economics of what's happening here. And... and one of the reasons why competition...

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00:45:07.640 --> 00:45:09.410

Christopher Saldaña: harms rural schools.

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00:45:09.520 --> 00:45:16.169

Christopher Saldaña: So you can think about, for example, a classroom of 30 students. You're paying a teacher to teach that classroom.

274

00:45:16.370 --> 00:45:19.769

Christopher Saldaña: Let's say one student leaves to go to a voucher school.

275

00:45:21.420 --> 00:45:33.530

Christopher Saldaña: there are some who would argue, and you know, I'm sure Bruce has a lot to say about this, because he's been in the trenches, arguing with folks back and forth around this issue of measuring the fiscal impact of school choice.

276

00:45:33.760 --> 00:45:42.929

Christopher Saldaña: But there were some who argue, well, you don't have to educate that student anymore, and so it's sort of a neutral cost between what you're losing and what you're gaining, or...

277

00:45:43.200 --> 00:45:56.549

Christopher Saldaña: But the problem is, is now, if you go back to the classroom, you only have 29 students left, you had 30, you now have one fewer, but you still have to pay the teacher. And so there are different costs that are structured around trying to operate and

278

00:45:56.590 --> 00:46:11.660

Christopher Saldaña: provide public education, and so this is what Preston is talking about, where you take one student out, all of a sudden now you still have the building, you still have the teacher, you still have transportation costs, right? And so it becomes... it strains rural schools.

279

00:46:11.660 --> 00:46:22.699

Christopher Saldaña: Especially their budgets. In urban school districts, you have things like school closure. In rural school districts, you also have the threat of things like district consolidation.

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00:46:22.700 --> 00:46:35.930

Christopher Saldaña: Right, at some point, you just get so close to the line around the number of students that you have that it becomes so hard to be able to even sustain a public education system.

281

00:46:35.930 --> 00:46:49.610

Christopher Saldaña: And you may think, well, why would a school go to a place with so few students? Isn't there not a market there? We have things like virtual private schools now, and virtual schools. And so there's an increased sort of level of competition that,

282

00:46:49.740 --> 00:46:54.590

Christopher Saldaña: Really changes the calculus for how we think about providing

283

00:46:54.900 --> 00:47:02.989

Christopher Saldaña: Public education in places that have sparse populations, or where the transportation costs are high.

284

00:47:03.410 --> 00:47:08.290

Christopher Saldaña: But I'll hand it off to Bruce. Maybe there's a little bit more you want to say about it.

285

00:47:08.520 --> 00:47:24.449

Bruce Baker: Well, it's interesting, too, because, I mean, the example you gave is of a kid from a class of 30, one kid from a class of 30 moving out, and the retained kind of overhead cost now divided by 29 instead of 30. Thing is, in rural school districts, they're talking about taking a kid out of a class of 12 or 11.

286

00:47:24.450 --> 00:47:25.760

Preston Green: Right. Maybe 6.

287

00:47:25.760 --> 00:47:39.400

Bruce Baker: Right? And the marginal effect of that, the carried costs of still, you know, running a classroom, having school, you know, having buses, albeit, you know, running smaller buses on longer rural routes.

288

00:47:39.400 --> 00:47:50.660

Bruce Baker: I mean, those... those marginal shifts from each loss of a student are that much greater in a small... in a small rural school district, so that's... that's one thing. The other thing that...

289

00:47:50.900 --> 00:47:55.330

Bruce Baker: That, you know, and of course, it's really important to note that

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00:47:55.430 --> 00:48:12.110

Bruce Baker: Yeah, it's not likely that some private school is going to try to set up shop in a remote rural town to compete for 8 or 9 kids, but the presence and expansion of virtual schools, be they virtual charter schools or online private schools.

291

00:48:12.110 --> 00:48:24.049

Bruce Baker: That might... that might operate in that space, K12.com operating as a private, or even some of the other private entities, being... establishing themselves in the state to provide virtual education. That can really

292

00:48:24.050 --> 00:48:37.279

Bruce Baker: kind of drain off students from a rural school in a way that has substantial impact for each student lost. And a really important, kind of wrapping it back around here on the fiscal impact piece, too.

293

00:48:37.300 --> 00:48:38.730

Bruce Baker: That, again.

294

00:48:38.780 --> 00:48:51.689

Bruce Baker: The existence and design of voucher programs, the existence and who qualifies to participate on the student end and on the school end, the existence and design of charter programs.

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00:48:51.690 --> 00:49:03.600

Bruce Baker: and how schools are chartered to serve students and which students they can serve are also under the control of state legislatures. This is all designed by state legislation.

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00:49:03.600 --> 00:49:19.589

Bruce Baker: And at the same time, the existence of the K-12 public district system and the design of its funding is under the control of that same state legislature, and that is the one system within there that actually

297

00:49:19.600 --> 00:49:24.070

Bruce Baker: Exists as a constitutional, kind of, obligatory system.

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00:49:24.100 --> 00:49:27.880

Bruce Baker: And when we talk about... we get into these, kind of.

299

00:49:28.560 --> 00:49:35.499

Bruce Baker: games, that are distractions about this fiscal impact piece that... that Chris raised.

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00:49:35.500 --> 00:49:57.279

Bruce Baker: about, well, when a student leaves, you still got the money. Let's say, you know, we took 60 or 80% of the money, but not all of it, to go with the student. You've got to keep the rest, and you don't have to educate the student. You got more than you had before. The problem is that the real fiscal impact is occurring at the legislative budget decision level.

301

00:49:58.240 --> 00:50:05.520

Bruce Baker: For example, Florida provides a wonderful example of that, that the voucher funding, once they

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00:50:05.520 --> 00:50:24.769

Bruce Baker: took all the reins off of it to let anyone and everyone qualify for this approximately \$8,000 voucher, but also to let any private school continue to charge above and beyond that. The voucher budget blew up to this year being almost \$4 billion, which is about 25% of the... what would be the state

303

00:50:24.770 --> 00:50:28.810

Bruce Baker: State aid to public district schools around the state.

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00:50:29.420 --> 00:50:36.650

Bruce Baker: That money alone would add as much as \$5,000 to the highest poverty quintile of public districts per pupil.

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00:50:37.770 --> 00:50:46.539

Bruce Baker: and \$2,000 to \$3,000 per pupil to the next quintile, it would close a lot of the funding gaps that the public districts in Florida face.

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00:50:47.220 --> 00:51:04.779

Bruce Baker: Yeah, they can make the same argument that, well, the public district has \$10,000 per pupil, we're only taking 8 with the pupil, but you took 25% of the public district funding out of public districts to fund kids, 70% of whom were already in private schools.

307

00:51:05.050 --> 00:51:09.039

Bruce Baker: That's where the fiscal impact occurred, and has sucked

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00:51:09.240 --> 00:51:25.560

Bruce Baker: \$5,000 per pupil out of the highest poverty quintile of districts, \$3,000 out of the next, and so on. So, you know, this micro-level fiscal impact thing is... it's actually more significant in rural schools.

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00:51:25.850 --> 00:51:42.339

Bruce Baker: But because state legislatures control the design of the voucher system and its budgeting, they control the design of the charter system, and they control and are primarily responsible for a constitutionally adequate public system.

310

00:51:42.410 --> 00:51:49.780

Bruce Baker: It's also their job to figure out how to draw parameters that protect

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00:51:50.230 --> 00:51:58.279

Bruce Baker: the adequate and efficient provision of public schooling in rural communities, and they can do that by

312

00:51:58.450 --> 00:52:01.630

Bruce Baker: Setting parameters around... well, not even letting the...

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00:52:03.010 --> 00:52:13.030

Bruce Baker: Online, virtual schools encroach in districts where population sparsity is too great and school sizes are already below efficient scale.

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00:52:13.350 --> 00:52:17.469

Bruce Baker: We know that elementary schools below 300 pupils

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00:52:17.610 --> 00:52:27.199

Bruce Baker: high schools below 600... 600 to 900 pupils, operate at higher per pupil cost to achieve the same outcomes. That's inefficient scale.

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00:52:27.540 --> 00:52:33.330

Bruce Baker: Why would a state lege... just going with a more economic conservative argument, why would a state legislature

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00:52:34.300 --> 00:52:40.060

Bruce Baker: Actually create a competing policy That's also under its own control.

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00:52:40.550 --> 00:52:44.929

Bruce Baker: That makes the provision of public schooling in rural areas less efficient.

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00:52:46.650 --> 00:52:47.050

Preston Green: I will...

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00:52:47.050 --> 00:52:52.090

Bruce Baker: It doesn't make sense, and these are parameters that have nothing to do with

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00:52:52.340 --> 00:53:04.599

Bruce Baker: restrictions around religious schools, or any... these are parameters that the legislature should have full authority to apply in policy to protect the efficient and adequate operation

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00:53:04.600 --> 00:53:12.670

Bruce Baker: of rural schools. So, that's my big stump speech here. The legislature's controlling all three of these, why would they take one?

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00:53:13.190 --> 00:53:21.939

Bruce Baker: And it's more important, it just meant... so... so this is really... I mean, the... the end goal on advocacy here is lobbying

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00:53:22.100 --> 00:53:31.259

Bruce Baker: state legislators to push for... Setting up these parameters around, well, you... kids...

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00:53:31.700 --> 00:53:36.010

Bruce Baker: The choice programs are off-limits in spaces where

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00:53:36.190 --> 00:53:51.070

Bruce Baker: efficient scale and sparsity cannot... and can't be achieved to begin with, which is the entire state of Vermont, all of Wyoming. You know, Wyoming, they don't have one anyway, right? Because they adequately fund... but...

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00:53:51.210 --> 00:53:54.529

Bruce Baker: So, yeah, it's, you know, hey.

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00:53:55.080 --> 00:53:56.229

Preston Green: It ended.

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00:53:56.410 --> 00:53:59.419

Bruce Baker: And which brings us then to sort of, like.

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00:54:00.110 --> 00:54:00.970

Preston Green: like...

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00:54:01.440 --> 00:54:14.409

Preston Green: the reason why we started talking about natural resources law as a way of doing this, and talking... touching upon what Bruce is explaining, and about, like, finding these neutral approaches.

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00:54:14.560 --> 00:54:18.440

Preston Green: And I think that... Like, if you...

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00:54:18.840 --> 00:54:22.379

Preston Green: If you look at, what has happened is that

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00:54:23.200 --> 00:54:37.669

Preston Green: in public school... like, in schooling generally, and with respect to rural school districts in particular, we've got the balance off, you know? Instead of weighing the public... instead of favoring the public good.

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00:54:38.050 --> 00:54:46.350

Preston Green: we are now putting the thumb on the scales in weighing... in favoring the private good. And so what we need to do

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00:54:47.120 --> 00:54:51.829

Preston Green: is to correct that balance. Come up with a new balance.

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00:54:51.960 --> 00:54:59.499

Preston Green: And... But the problem is, is that... Because it's... the... You know, the...

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00:54:59.910 --> 00:55:11.130

Preston Green: The Establishing Clause cases that we touched upon earlier really had a school finance aspect as well, in that they actually

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00:55:12.520 --> 00:55:20.610

Preston Green: Prevented too much money from going into, you know, into private schooling, into vouchers, but now that that is gone, we need a new system.

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00:55:20.870 --> 00:55:24.450

Preston Green: And, and...

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00:55:25.370 --> 00:55:32.469

Preston Green: You know, and I think that, and I will just tell a quick, quick story about how this had happened. I live in upstate New York now.

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00:55:32.670 --> 00:55:34.100

Preston Green: And,

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00:55:34.420 --> 00:55:43.449

Preston Green: you know, I was really looking into natural resources law, which tries to balance the two, you know, it tries to

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00:55:43.450 --> 00:55:56.900

Preston Green: Deal with this competition, competing issues between public goods, like air quality, soil, and so on, versus these, you know, and wildlife, versus these private impositions.

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00:55:57.280 --> 00:56:04.350

Preston Green: And, and actually, when, you know, I started talking to some friends who were hunters.

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00:56:04.610 --> 00:56:09.840

Preston Green: And they started saying to me, you know, we have these rules that... of impact hunting.

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00:56:10.080 --> 00:56:16.519

Preston Green: And I went down that rabbit hole and said, wait a second, here is something that can really work.

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00:56:16.750 --> 00:56:23.390

Preston Green: Because in state hunting, you know, because you have in state hunting laws, and also in,

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00:56:23.720 --> 00:56:32.520

Preston Green: you know, and also in state education, you have similar systems, right? You have state agencies that provide these rules.

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00:56:33.130 --> 00:56:44.270

Preston Green: And then, you know, they're supposed to create these rules to manage education and hunting, respectively, but there's a big difference in terms of hunting, it turns out, in that

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00:56:44.660 --> 00:56:50.829

Preston Green: You know, they take into account these law... you know, they take into account these,

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00:56:51.700 --> 00:56:54.460

Preston Green: Local differences, right?

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00:56:54.610 --> 00:57:10.590

Preston Green: And these local differences then can be... I think we can then concoct in a way to protect, areas. And then also in hunting, what we also find is that in areas where there's real scarcity, or areas where there's real...

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00:57:11.130 --> 00:57:17.989

Preston Green: Where the ecosystem is really, really in danger, there are, like, these creation of preserves.

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00:57:18.170 --> 00:57:25.080

Preston Green: Preserves that are designed to protect these areas. And it is these preserves that we use

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00:57:25.670 --> 00:57:34.070

Preston Green: as a means to protecting rural school districts. And also, it's important to point out that this is not that far-fetched.

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00:57:34.120 --> 00:57:47.089

Preston Green: that there are laws in, you know, there are laws in education that protect rurality, that protect urban districts. And so, using this sort of idea about protecting rural districts is a way

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00:57:47.290 --> 00:57:50.700

Preston Green: That we can do this, but done so

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00:57:51.090 --> 00:57:55.270

Preston Green: you know, but... but... but it's done in a... I think that...

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00:57:55.630 --> 00:58:15.479

Preston Green: It has to be done in a generally applicable and neutral way, and Bruce has touched upon this, you know, in his comments, but what has to happen is that it has to be generally applicable and neutral, and that in these areas, these rural areas, like in Wisconsin, for instance, we know that there are

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00:58:16.440 --> 00:58:28.859

Preston Green: Let me point out that, there, like, there are 36 states right now that actually provide additional funding for rural school districts. Wisconsin is among them, right? I think that there's...

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00:58:29.110 --> 00:58:30.110

Preston Green: that there's...

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00:58:30.510 --> 00:58:39.329

Preston Green: I think that for districts that are, like, 1,000 students or fewer... 1,000 students or fewer, with 10... what is it? 10...

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00:58:39.330 --> 00:58:40.899

Christopher Saldaña: 10 students or less per square mile.

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00:58:40.900 --> 00:58:44.709

Preston Green: 10 students per square mile, there is, you know, there is

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00:58:45.090 --> 00:58:56.050

Preston Green: support for those districts. Those are districts that could become these education preserves, where you have this restriction, you know, this...

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00:58:56.140 --> 00:59:14.859

Preston Green: these general... generally applicable and neutral restrictions designed to make sure that those school districts are protected. And I keep harping upon generally applicable and neutral because there are Supreme Court case law that states that

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00:59:15.190 --> 00:59:23.929

Preston Green: you're going to have a free exercise challenge, right? So under the free exercise clause, you'll have organization... you know, folks, or...

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00:59:24.630 --> 00:59:27.139

Preston Green: School... schools that are, like.

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00:59:27.610 --> 00:59:32.499

Preston Green: People who want to attend, religious schools will say, well.

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00:59:32.850 --> 00:59:41.119

Preston Green: you are infringing upon our right to attend those schools under the Free Exercise Clause.

If you create generally applicable and neutral

372

00:59:41.230 --> 00:59:42.010

Preston Green: walls.

373

00:59:43.610 --> 00:59:47.959

Preston Green: Such that it's not, you know, such that it's not religion-based.

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00:59:48.130 --> 01:00:04.450

Preston Green: then you can withstand, we would argue, a free exercise clause, you know, challenge. I won't... I know that we are up against it right now. You can read the article, and the article goes into some detail as to how that is.

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01:00:04.450 --> 01:00:09.430

Preston Green: But I think that what I'm going to say is that rural school districts... I mean, that...

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01:00:09.930 --> 01:00:17.970

Preston Green: I think that we have to be very concerned right now, going forward, in our new, you know, this new reality.

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01:00:18.080 --> 01:00:26.240

Preston Green: that... I mean, all school districts are, I think there's a real danger for all school districts, for rural school districts especially.

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01:00:26.500 --> 01:00:28.739

Preston Green: Are the canary in the coal mine.

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01:00:29.020 --> 01:00:36.009

Preston Green: And we really do need to be providing approaches that will be able to protect them, you know?

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01:00:36.190 --> 01:00:47.579

Preston Green: And I think that if we can develop those approaches for them, we can also use them elsewhere. But I think that if we could provide... education preserves, I think, provide that approach.

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01:00:47.870 --> 01:00:54.509

Preston Green: that can... preserve public education for these districts, thus

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01:00:54.750 --> 01:00:58.309

Preston Green: You know, preserving communities and also education as well.

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01:00:58.520 --> 01:01:05.550

Preston Green: So I think with that, I thank you so much on behalf of all of us, and I look forward to your questions.

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01:01:11.010 --> 01:01:16.679

Bruce Baker: I see a cool one here, I don't know if someone's monitoring... I see a cool one here in the, in the chat.

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01:01:19.150 --> 01:01:21.259

Bruce Baker: So, we do have a discussion. Great.

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01:01:21.260 --> 01:01:32.309

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Okay, I am... Hey, it's Heather, I'm... I am moderating, but Bruce, why don't you go ahead and pick your favorite question, and then I'm gonna... I'm gonna introduce Jeff and give him a chance to respond after that.

387

01:01:33.030 --> 01:01:40.519

Bruce Baker: Just a quick note, so there's a... there's a note here, I think, from Myra that... that asks about, well, you know, what about...

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01:01:40.940 --> 01:01:42.609

Bruce Baker: What about, you know, like.

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01:01:42.750 --> 01:01:56.249

Bruce Baker: rural schools kind of trying to take advantage of chartering to kind of maybe gain more scale. I will say that in some other states, there are kind of, like, predatory online charter providers who look for rural hosts.

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01:01:56.560 --> 01:02:01.830

Bruce Baker: To then try to poach Students from the other rural schools around them.

391

01:02:02.160 --> 01:02:25.559

Bruce Baker: to kind of take advantage of this. There's one that came from Arizona into New Mexico that I got a call from a reporter about the other day. It was a... and basically, you know, this online provider is saying, you know, we'll give... you host us as the accredited school district, and we'll give you a cut of every student we can poach from the surrounding rural school districts. I would argue that that is...

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01:02:25.740 --> 01:02:30.069

Bruce Baker: Yet, you know, one other thing that needs to be regulated against

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01:02:30.410 --> 01:02:41.639

Bruce Baker: by state legislators. For a variety of reasons, one of which is that the only organizations that are doing that right now are kind of, like.

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01:02:41.810 --> 01:02:45.660

Bruce Baker: Predatory charter operators that float from state to state.

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01:02:54.650 --> 01:03:03.980

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Alright, you all have given us so much to process and think through, and I've got, like, a gabillion questions boiling under, under,

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01:03:04.150 --> 01:03:22.830

Heather DuBois Bourenane: the surface of my own brain, but I want to pass the mic first to our friend, and one of our board members, Jeff Eidey. He is the Executive Director of the Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance, and I asked him to just be the first person to chime in from our audience tonight and share his thoughts about,

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01:03:22.960 --> 01:03:40.930

Heather DuBois Bourenane: what does all this mean to Wisconsin public schools, who have been so beleaguered for... and so under-resourced for so many years? And, just respond to what you've said in... and... and lift up what he thinks is the most important takeaways for us tonight.

398

01:03:42.780 --> 01:03:44.520

Jeff Eide: Take it away, Heather, you're saying?

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01:03:44.660 --> 01:03:46.839

Jeff Eide: Yeah, I'm saying taken away. Hey, Jeff, thank you.

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01:03:46.840 --> 01:03:47.819

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Thank you for joining us.

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01:03:47.820 --> 01:04:08.099

Jeff Eide: Yeah, my name is Jeff Beidey, I'm the Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance Executive Director. We have 180-some members with, if you look at rural and town, you could have, just over 300 total there. But I think you hit it in the head, because the resources that are leaving the districts, it's like a two-fold.

402

01:04:08.100 --> 01:04:31.850

Jeff Eide: when one student is gone, all of a sudden, it's not that, okay, just one student's gone. I still need the electrical, I need the gas, I need to have the building serviced, everything else, it's compounded over and over again so many times. And so that's one of the huge, huge challenges with any type of resources leaving. I know when I was a superintendent, I began the zero-base budgeting.

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01:04:31.850 --> 01:04:56.829

Jeff Eide: Well, zero-based budgeting is tough when you actually budget and zero-based, and all of a sudden, next thing you know, you even have less than zero-based. Something has to give. You're pulling resources from anywhere you can find it, and you're telling people, what do you do? One of my examples, a little off the topic on this one, was that I used a lot of the Title II monies, which is so focused on professional development. I put all of that into professional development, I put it

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01:04:56.830 --> 01:05:06.110

Jeff Eide: the \$20,000 in professional development, and all of a sudden somebody says, well, your Title I resources are gone. Well, something has to give. Either I do not do the professional development anymore.

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01:05:06.170 --> 01:05:24.709

Jeff Eide: Or I have to find resources that are going to take resources away from students, you know, in the end. So that's a problem. My challenge is... and so you really hit it on the head there, you know, and one of the focuses I frustrate with is just there are... there's not accountability.

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01:05:24.710 --> 01:05:42.220

Jeff Eide: You do not have to take somebody. You do not have to have special education students if you don't want. You do not have to do that. However, we're still going to help support and fund you because you're educating students. And you've probably heard this analogy before, or people have heard this analogy before.

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01:05:42.220 --> 01:05:58.640

Jeff Eide: But it's like having a fire department, I'm thinking of our old fire department, still, still, tax-based, and they are, a volunteer fire department, but there's still funding that has to go through it. But all of a sudden you say, well, we're going to create a second fire department.

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01:05:58.640 --> 01:06:06.350

Jeff Eide: And that's not the fire department's gonna have a choice. You can pay into the fire department, that fire department will service you. The other fire department's gonna serve everybody.

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01:06:06.910 --> 01:06:09.450

Jeff Eide: But this one can serve you if you want to pay into it.

410

01:06:09.930 --> 01:06:21.149

Jeff Eide: But you still, you know, you create your own systems, your equipment, and everything else, because it's private, but then the state says, well, wait a minute, we're gonna start funding that other fire department, and support that fire department.

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01:06:21.410 --> 01:06:25.190

Jeff Eide: Although that fire department still doesn't have to service all students.

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01:06:25.860 --> 01:06:42.070

Jeff Eide: Where the other one always has to service all students. So, the resources are being sort of pulled away and pulled away and pulled away, but the expectation is you, as a public school entity, are going to service all students in every capacity.

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01:06:42.070 --> 01:06:58.079

Jeff Eide: whether it's EL, whether it's special ed, whatever it may be, and then you're going to create the systems approach that we're going to have this awesome, you know, academic, where you're going to be receiving dual credits, and you're going to be able to get credits towards college.

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01:06:58.560 --> 01:07:13.670

Jeff Eide: it just... it just becomes difficult to cross the line. I think I've rambled all over the place, and I don't even know if I... Heather, I didn't even prepare for this as much as I should have, but there you go. It just dwindles the resources that we need, not in all schools.

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01:07:14.190 --> 01:07:22.079

Jeff Eide: But it's like a two-fold challenge when you're removing them from a rural school that needs every bit of resource you have at that time.

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01:07:22.630 --> 01:07:23.830

Jeff Eide: I'll stop there.

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01:07:25.330 --> 01:07:31.060

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Thanks for that, Jeff. Those are all, excellent questions to ask, and I think...

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01:07:32.440 --> 01:07:47.389

Heather DuBois Bourenane: One of the challenges that we're seeing is, you know, kind of the shrinking of the general pot of aid that's available to all schools. The more we expand our privatization program, so rural schools get less and less of the bigger pot.

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01:07:47.430 --> 01:07:56.390

Heather DuBois Bourenane: And one of the things that we've seen a proliferation of in our current legislative session is these calls for more consolidation.

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01:07:56.470 --> 01:08:07.529

Heather DuBois Bourenane: So, public schools are being asked to close down, to close up shop, to scrunch belts, to come together, but privatization is off the rails, and I don't know if y'all knew this, but

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01:08:07.590 --> 01:08:23.229

Heather DuBois Bourenane: In 2026, our voucher caps come off. A lesser-known provision of one of the Walker midnight budget maneuvers was that every year we got to increase the enrollment by 1% of the district's home enrollment until the year 2026.

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01:08:23.229 --> 01:08:29.909

Heather DuBois Bourenane: At which point, the enrollment cap comes off entirely, which means we're gonna go from 10% to...

423

01:08:30.540 --> 01:08:42.229

Heather DuBois Bourenane: however many people apply and qualify based on the economic conditions are eligible for a voucher. There's no plan

424

01:08:42.359 --> 01:08:59.420

Heather DuBois Bourenane: in this biennial budget for funding that increase in the second year of the biennium. And so we've got a lot of questions about how that's going to impact rural schools. And, I want to come back to that in a second, because I just realized that one of the other people we thought might be a good discussant on tonight's,

425

01:09:00.270 --> 01:09:05.479

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Topic of conversation is also in our audience. We... Tom, are you still here?

426

01:09:07.380 --> 01:09:16.470

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Sorry, I'm... when I'm screen sharing, I can't see everybody, but Tom Wormuth is the superintendent in Adams Friendship, which is a small rural district that has

427

01:09:16.470 --> 01:09:30.759

Heather DuBois Bourenane: had major challenges going to referenda, and has been particularly blighted by an unfair school funding system, and I asked him to maybe chime in and share his thoughts on how privatization is impacting kids in his region.

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01:09:32.359 --> 01:09:43.769

Tom Wermuth: Well, it's interesting, because we don't have any voucher schools within our boundaries, but about \$300,000 of our precious dollars,

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01:09:43.769 --> 01:09:55.949

Tom Wermuth: we don't receive on an annual basis because we have students that are living in our district, but attending virtual voucher schools through the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program. And...

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01:09:56.079 --> 01:10:00.189

Tom Wermuth: Again, as those guardrails fall off,

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01:10:00.359 --> 01:10:14.379

Tom Wermuth: next year, it's going to be particularly problematic. And I was responding to a lot of questions and comments online, but the way the school funding formula in the state of Wisconsin

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01:10:14.379 --> 01:10:22.009

Tom Wermuth: is set up. We are a rapidly declining enrollment school district. 25 years ago, we served

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01:10:22.009 --> 01:10:40.779

Tom Wermuth: 2,100 students, 2150. This year, our enrollment is 1,220. And if you consider that you get... we get approximately \$11,600 for each of those students, you can see what that's done to our district. We've had to close

434

01:10:40.839 --> 01:10:46.519

Tom Wermuth: Four elementary schools over the last 20 years, which is, is,

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01:10:47.369 --> 01:10:56.469

Tom Wermuth: Doesn't play well in the public, and oftentimes makes referendums difficult to pass, and we are surviving,

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01:10:56.589 --> 01:11:15.599

Tom Wermuth: from referendum to referendum. And if our next referendum, we'll go to referendum for an operational referendum next fall, if that doesn't pass, either in the fall or the spring, we're going to be in financial trouble, to the point where we'll be looking at dissolution and insolvency within a couple of years.

437

01:11:15.789 --> 01:11:33.139

Tom Wermuth: And we're not alone. There are many school districts like ours in the state. We're not attracting young families to our area. There aren't economic engines and amenities that are drawing young families to our area. So we're aging in place, and we're also a retirement destination.

438

01:11:33.199 --> 01:11:38.839

Tom Wermuth: Some of the best golf courses in the country are in our school district.

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01:11:39.029 --> 01:11:50.469

Tom Wermuth: Most of our families couldn't dream of affording to play those golf courses, but they're here, and they're attracting a very different population to our community that has

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01:11:51.079 --> 01:11:57.889

Tom Wermuth: zero understanding or affinity with our school district. And again, it makes referendums more difficult to sell.

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01:11:59.719 --> 01:12:11.829

Tom Wermuth: So we, again, voucher programs, we take... it's not like we have to give the DPI a check, they just take a little over \$300,000 this year off of what they give us. And again, our...

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01:12:12.239 --> 01:12:14.609

Tom Wermuth: Financial resources are precious.

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01:12:15.550 --> 01:12:20.600

Jeff Eide: And those students, Tom, have never, in some cases, have never stepped in your door.

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01:12:20.800 --> 01:12:21.500

Tom Wermuth: Correct.

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01:12:22.810 --> 01:12:28.400

Tom Wermuth: Correct. Hi, Jeff, how are you? Yeah, they've been, they've been attending,

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01:12:28.710 --> 01:12:34.339

Tom Wermuth: Virtual options without the voucher, for years, in many cases.

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01:12:38.940 --> 01:12:39.600

Heather DuBois Bourenane: I just want to thank...

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01:12:39.600 --> 01:12:46.189

Julie Mead: Point out one quick thing about the disconnect between

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01:12:46.820 --> 01:12:52.210

Julie Mead: Our ever-expanding charters and voucher options

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01:12:52.320 --> 01:13:07.150

Julie Mead: at the same time, there is consolidation. Consolidation, by definition, shrinks choices while we're doing the other, right? And so what the legislature has really done, to Bruce's earlier point, is made a conscious decision

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01:13:07.440 --> 01:13:18.730

Julie Mead: To subsidize all of these other choices while not subsidizing the school system that they have an obligation to subsidize.

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01:13:19.340 --> 01:13:25.770

Tom Wermuth: And consolidation for a district like ours is really impractical, because we're so geographically large.

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01:13:25.940 --> 01:13:40.149

Tom Wermuth: almost 500 square miles, and there isn't a district within 30... another school building within 30 miles of... of where our school buildings are in Adams Friendship, the Village of Friendship and City of Adams.

454

01:13:41.290 --> 01:13:51.010

Bruce Baker: The other point I'd make is when you take... when you take the guardrails off these voucher programs, and I think the two really good examples of that are Arizona and Florida.

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01:13:51.160 --> 01:13:54.369

Bruce Baker: They end up drawing so much funding.

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01:13:54.810 --> 01:14:19.169

Bruce Baker: to spend, again, largely, 65 to 70% largely on kids who were already previously in the private schools. They draw so much funding that they don't just affect the districts from which some kids are drawn, they affect the state aid pot as a whole, and substantially, which is why, you know, again, it's, you know, Florida funding, it's, you know.

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01:14:19.340 --> 01:14:20.090

Bruce Baker: this...

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01:14:20.310 --> 01:14:29.100

Bruce Baker: The voucher funding is, again, about... is equal to about a quarter of the state aid for public districts.

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01:14:29.220 --> 01:14:37.930

Bruce Baker: Even though it serves a much smaller number of students. Because the legislature has preferred that.

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01:14:38.610 --> 01:14:42.149

Bruce Baker: And has made that accessible without limitation.

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01:14:43.010 --> 01:14:47.430

Bruce Baker: While necessarily drawing it from

462

01:14:48.330 --> 01:14:54.570

Bruce Baker: Whatever might be left over to be available for the system that's supposed to come first in that hierarchy.

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01:14:54.570 --> 01:15:07.689

Tom Wermuth: And I'd just like to make one more point. In Wisconsin right now, for high school students, the voucher students get about \$1,000 more per year than the students that are attending our district.

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01:15:08.020 --> 01:15:09.279

Tom Wermuth: Just to begin with.

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01:15:09.280 --> 01:15:09.800

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Nope.

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01:15:10.000 --> 01:15:10.780

Bruce Baker: Right.

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01:15:10.910 --> 01:15:16.640

Julie Mead: We also have this weird thing in Wisconsin called some certain versus some sufficient.

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01:15:16.850 --> 01:15:19.790

Jeff Eide: Tom, I think it's more than 1,000, isn't it?

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01:15:19.790 --> 01:15:26.269

Tom Wermuth: Dr. Mead, do you want to explain the difference between some certain and some sufficient funding? Because I'm about to...

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01:15:26.270 --> 01:15:28.449

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Tell people to take action on that.

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01:15:28.450 --> 01:15:36.630

Julie Mead: Yeah. So, some certain funding is when the legislature, as it does for public schools, says, here's a pot of money. Bonk.

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01:15:37.140 --> 01:15:47.619

Julie Mead: It's that amount of money. We're not going to give you a penny more, doesn't matter whether, you know, you have a sudden influx of students or needs or whatever, that's the pot of money, and we're going to divvy it up

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01:15:48.010 --> 01:15:54.730

Julie Mead: with all of the kids who attend public schools. That's some certain amount.

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01:15:54.940 --> 01:15:58.479

Julie Mead: Some sufficient says, we're gonna...

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01:15:58.480 --> 01:16:20.820

Julie Mead: make sure that this gets funded sufficient with whatever we've said the program is. So we're not going to put any limitations. You don't have to come back and say, pretty pleased, can we have some more? We don't... you don't have to do anything, because we've said this is some sufficient, and that's what they've done with the voucher programs. So, the voucher programs are guaranteed their slice of the pie, so are the independent charters.

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01:16:21.260 --> 01:16:34.920

Julie Mead: For those who are out of state, I'm sorry, it's really complicated. We have independent charters and district-run charters. District-run charters are funded entirely differently, but independent charters are guaranteed a slice of the pie.

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01:16:35.550 --> 01:16:39.360

Julie Mead: Voucher schools are guaranteed a slice of the pie, and quite literally.

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01:16:39.980 --> 01:16:42.670

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Public schools divvy up whatever's left.

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01:16:42.950 --> 01:16:43.500

Bruce Baker: Right.

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01:16:43.900 --> 01:16:57.330

Bruce Baker: And in many other states, the way that works, and I think you're saying that the public schools are under this uncertain, that they get a target amount of money, but the other thing is that when there are cost overruns in those other two areas that have been kind of preferenced.

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01:16:57.330 --> 01:17:04.790

Bruce Baker: by legislators. In many states, the local public districts will actually end up getting a prorated

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01:17:05.760 --> 01:17:12.249

Bruce Baker: amount, a reduction. If the state comes up short, they'll get a reduction to what should have been the certain.

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01:17:13.870 --> 01:17:27.200

Bruce Baker: amount, and I'm not sure if that also plays out in, Wisconsin. Like, what happens, given that they preference the other two programs over the state aid for schools, and they're trying to budget it at the outset of the year, what happens if, in January.

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01:17:27.330 --> 01:17:36.500

Bruce Baker: they only have enough money to fund 95, 96% of what they promised to the public districts. Does it get cut to that in Missouri, other places that we.

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01:17:38.170 --> 01:17:53.810

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Yeah, that's the situation that we're in right now, Bruce, as relates to the promise that was made to fund special education, which, I mean, we currently had, you know, one of the lowest, if not the lowest reimbursement rate in the nation. They increased it in the last

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01:17:53.810 --> 01:18:07.729

Heather DuBois Bourenane: budget to 42% this year on the dollar, and 45% on the dollar next year. But, after the numbers came out this fall, it turns out that it's at... we're actually... we'll be lucky if we hit 35%.

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01:18:08.420 --> 01:18:16.850

Heather DuBois Bourenane: And so... and that's precisely because they didn't provide a sum... sufficient allocation.

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01:18:17.690 --> 01:18:33.090

Heather DuBois Bourenane: And so this is one of many things that we just need to fight against. Bruce, I'm really grateful for your little stump speech there, because it points our attention to the culprits in this... in this... this, story, who are the state lawmakers

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01:18:33.100 --> 01:18:39.499

Heather DuBois Bourenane: who are really the only things standing in the way of doing right by our kids. We know what we need.

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01:18:39.580 --> 01:19:04.569

Heather DuBois Bourenane: in our districts and our schools, we know what equitable funding formulas look like. You all have done the hard work for us of explaining how those look, where they work, and what we could do to improve. And it isn't because of lack of knowledge of what it really takes to have an equitable school finance system that we don't have one. It's because of a lack of political will. And so the question that we're always asking is, like, what is it actually going

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01:19:04.570 --> 01:19:11.760

Heather DuBois Bourenane: going to take. To close the distance between what kids need and what they're getting from their elected leaders.

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01:19:11.760 --> 01:19:12.990

Heather DuBois Bourenane: And,

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01:19:12.990 --> 01:19:35.299

Heather DuBois Bourenane: I want to close out today's meeting by pointing you towards a couple of opportunities to do that on our end, but I first want to give our esteemed panelists one more opportunity to just share, you know, what do you think is the secret to winning this fight going forward? And in your view, like, what is it really going to take to move the needle here in Wisconsin and elsewhere?

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01:19:40.000 --> 01:19:41.170

Bruce Baker: I'll go.

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01:19:41.170 --> 01:19:42.760

Heather DuBois Bourenane: We need, we need your wisdom.

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01:19:43.080 --> 01:19:47.520

Bruce Baker: If you can't change the minds of the legislators who are there, then change the legislators.

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01:19:49.180 --> 01:20:08.349

Bruce Baker: a group of moderate Republicans in suburbs in Kansas City created a campaign decades ago, elect legislators who will fund our public schools. Tied in with litigation and everything else, that really has had a positive effect, and that's a big theme in the book that I wrote on Kansas.

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01:20:08.700 --> 01:20:09.490

Preston Green: I guess...

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01:20:09.490 --> 01:20:12.670

Bruce Baker: We just gotta elect people who actually understand the stuff and care about it.

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01:20:13.500 --> 01:20:23.839

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Thank you. Mississippi's another good example of a state where Republicans have held strong in their commitment to pro-public policies and resisted vouchers.

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01:20:25.420 --> 01:20:29.380

Preston Green: I think I can add in, like, in some of the circles I've... that I...

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01:20:29.570 --> 01:20:37.000

Preston Green: taught too, and I, when I mention the concerns about rural school districts.

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01:20:38.530 --> 01:20:41.500

Preston Green: I think a lot of the times, their response is, what?

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01:20:42.440 --> 01:20:46.539

Preston Green: Because a lot of the conversation, I think, has been...

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01:20:46.800 --> 01:20:52.800

Preston Green: Really focusing on urban areas, and rural school districts have not really...

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01:20:53.040 --> 01:21:01.100

Preston Green: until very recently, I think it's not been centered. I mean, I think there's had to be some paying attention because of some of the elections and seeing who's voting.

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01:21:01.520 --> 01:21:07.179

Preston Green: I think that people have to, as a mentor of mine, as always, used to say, tell their story.

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01:21:07.850 --> 01:21:11.790

Preston Green: They have to tell their story, they have to explain

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01:21:12.080 --> 01:21:19.119

Preston Green: really how important these schools are to communities. I think, you know, really.

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01:21:19.850 --> 01:21:29.230

Preston Green: make it clear what is at stake. I think a lot of people are just not aware of that. They just do not know. So I think a lot of it is just education.

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01:21:29.820 --> 01:21:33.919

Preston Green: Getting people to understand what can happen, what will happen.

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01:21:34.110 --> 01:21:38.070

Preston Green: if nothing is done, and I also think that

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01:21:38.490 --> 01:21:45.940

Preston Green: you know, rural schools are the canaries in the coal mine. What is happening there? What will happen there, will happen elsewhere soon?

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01:21:46.480 --> 01:21:56.420

Preston Green: And so I think... I think that there's... understanding what is at stake and telling their story, I think, can help people understand what... what may happen, what needs to be done.

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01:22:01.330 --> 01:22:04.300

Julie Mead: I think, you know, I wish I knew.

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01:22:04.360 --> 01:22:15.640

Julie Mead: the magic wand, but I think, again, all of the efforts that you do, Heather, to try and make sure, and that Jeff does, Tom does.

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01:22:15.640 --> 01:22:34.819

Julie Mead: that people in the state do to try to get this story out and make it clear. I mean, it's convoluted for a reason, and then, you know, Bruce can talk about that another time. But, you know, when it's this complicated that nobody understands how the system works, including the people voting on it in the state legislature.

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01:22:34.820 --> 01:22:35.880

Julie Mead: That...

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01:22:36.280 --> 01:22:49.050

Julie Mead: diminishes all of us, and diminishes the democratic nature that's supposed to happen. But I would say, in terms of, in addition to voting on your legislators here in Wisconsin,

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01:22:49.240 --> 01:22:57.639

Julie Mead: I hate to say this, but pay really good attention to this when you start vetting those candidates who are running for our state Supreme Court.

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01:22:58.190 --> 01:23:14.409

Julie Mead: Because these questions are likely to come before our elected Supreme Court, and we want to make sure that, we have people who are elected to that body who are at least open to understanding all of the complexities that we're talking about.

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01:23:15.410 --> 01:23:17.910

Christopher Saldaña: Just a quick response to,

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01:23:17.910 --> 01:23:21.580

Bruce Baker: a comment that I saw fly by in terms of rural legislators.

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01:23:21.740 --> 01:23:25.719

Bruce Baker: It was... it was rural Kansas legislators who

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01:23:26.140 --> 01:23:29.200

Bruce Baker: Reverse the brownback tax cuts.

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01:23:29.900 --> 01:23:38.969

Bruce Baker: Because they understood the importance of rural schools to rural communities. And one pathway is to find... find your future rural...

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01:23:39.120 --> 01:23:43.630

Bruce Baker: legislators On current rural school boards.

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01:23:46.980 --> 01:24:02.360

Christopher Saldaña: I'll do to what everyone already said. I think the... I really appreciated Bruce's comments earlier when he took us in the Carson B. Macon case around history, and I think one of the things we didn't have a chance to talk about today is the history of vouchers and the history of choice, right? If you think back.

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01:24:02.820 --> 01:24:10.240

Christopher Saldaña: why these kinds of programs and policies were created was after Brown v. the Board of Education to escape desegregation.

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01:24:10.620 --> 01:24:16.699

Christopher Saldaña: And if we draw that line through to today, Jeff mentioned this a little bit in his comments, too,

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01:24:17.220 --> 01:24:35.780

Christopher Saldaña: we can think about, you know, the pot of money that we're taking out of public education. What kind of educational system are we funding? It's a separate system. It's a separate system that doesn't serve kids who have disabilities. It's a separate system that doesn't serve kids who are learning English or, you know, are new to the United States. It's a separate system

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01:24:35.780 --> 01:24:52.079

Christopher Saldaña: that doesn't serve kids in poverty. And so, you know, one thing that I think we can all really benefit from is that, you know, history lesson around the kinds of policies that are being sold today. You know, they're repackaged, they're remarketed, they come with promises and fancy whistles and bells, but

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01:24:52.090 --> 01:24:55.039

Christopher Saldaña: they're not much different. They aren't different from...

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01:24:55.070 --> 01:25:04.589

Christopher Saldaña: you know, what they were originally designed to be all those years ago. And so I think that's an important thing to remember, in addition to, you know, voting people out and voting some good people in, so...

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01:25:04.840 --> 01:25:06.190

Christopher Saldaña: I agree with all of that.

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01:25:14.070 --> 01:25:29.270

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Thank you so much to all of you for sharing, your research, your ideas, and your enthusiasm for doing better. We will take all of this to heart and put it into action in whatever way we can. Here at Wisconsin Public Education Network, we're just the

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01:25:29.270 --> 01:25:54.189

Heather DuBois Bourenane: like, the visible tip of an iceberg of people all over the state who are as concerned as we are about the threats to our public schools and our communities that come in the form of school vouchers, but also in the form of just systemic under-resourcing of the greatest needs of our kids.

So we're grateful for new ways to think about how accountability can and should look, and I strongly encourage everyone

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01:25:54.190 --> 01:26:17.590

Heather DuBois Bourenane: who hasn't already read the full article to read it. We will be sharing it in the resources in the follow-up to this meeting, so thank you for hanging in there. I do invite you to stay for a couple more minutes, though, so we can power through some action opportunities that we have on our actual horizon that really make a difference for you. I mean, first of all, if you aren't already familiar with our resources.

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01:26:17.590 --> 01:26:38.070

Heather DuBois Bourenane: It is not easy to find out what voucher costs are in your district. You have to go into the dark abysses of the Department of Public Instruction's website and, like, collate the numbers yourself from 3 different spreadsheets, so we have made that easier for you. Go to Wisconsinnetwork.org and find our, privatization button. It looks like this.

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01:26:38.070 --> 01:26:48.430

Heather DuBois Bourenane: And you can see for yourself what those impacts are. You put in your district name, and you'll get a chart like this that shows how much voucher and charter deductions cost for your district.

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01:26:48.430 --> 01:27:06.339

Bruce Baker: If you'd rather see this by, Senate or Assembly District, you can use the Department of Public Instruction's tools. They've got some pretty cool interactive maps there, and we've linked to those as well. Again, don't worry about tracking this down. This is going to be in the follow-up materials, so we'll send you the links to this.

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01:27:06.360 --> 01:27:23.629

Heather DuBois Bourenane: But you can use that information to start conversations with your lawmakers and others in your community to say, like, I'm paying attention to this. How come we have to keep voting to raise taxes on ourselves when we're giving this big giveaway to private schools? Speaking of which, how come those costs aren't disclosed on our tax bills?

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01:27:23.630 --> 01:27:33.659

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Why is a portion of my taxes that looks like it's going to the public school district actually funding private schools that students in these public schools do not attend, and

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01:27:33.760 --> 01:27:36.960

Heather DuBois Bourenane: That students in the private schools never did attend.

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01:27:36.990 --> 01:28:01.969

Heather DuBois Bourenane: So, we have launched a Go Public Transparency project to encourage people, like the good people of Green Bay did, to get these costs on their tax bills. And if you want to do that where you live, let us know, because we've got folks in all 72 counties, and we want... our goal is to see this happen in all 421 school districts. There is a bill floating before the legislature, but it's been up, like, what, like, 8 or 9 times, and it's never gotten

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01:28:01.970 --> 01:28:14.710

Heather DuBois Bourenane: a hearing, and so if they're not going to hear it, we're going to do it ourselves and just, like, force this question at the local level. Those costs should be fully transparent to local taxpayers on our tax bills, and we totally can do that.

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01:28:16.130 --> 01:28:22.340

Heather DuBois Bourenane: So this is what, kind of what it looks like. Some districts have inserts, like Milwaukee and,

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01:28:22.890 --> 01:28:38.149

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Racine, Madison had an insert last year, too, but the Green Bay... the Green Bay tax bill will now have a line right on it that says what the... what portion of the deduction is going to private and non-district, charter schools.

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01:28:38.960 --> 01:28:41.400

Heather DuBois Bourenane: We want to encourage you in your conversations about

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01:28:41.400 --> 01:29:06.260

Heather DuBois Bourenane: this to remember that while we're talking about the money and boring education policy, what we're actually talking about is educational opportunities for all the kids. And so, be sure to center your own stories and what this really means to you, your family, your experience, the kids that you work with, the schools that you serve, when you have these conversations, so that we don't, like, get too deep in the weeds in our lay language, but we keep in mind that our moral mission here

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01:29:06.260 --> 01:29:28.479

Heather DuBois Bourenane: It's not just to have more money in the pockets of public schools, but rather to have more resources on the horizon for our children and our communities, so that we all are positioned

to truly thrive, and that the investments that we're making are being made with full transparency and accountability to those who we have elected and hired to make sure that happens for us.

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01:29:28.480 --> 01:29:53.430

Heather DuBois Bourenane: So please let us know how we can help with that. And then also, if you're looking to take some legislative action, there are some great bills that really deserve public hearings before our legislature right now, and you all should be reaching out to your lawmakers and encouraging them to either sign on as co-sponsors of these if they haven't already, or to pull them up for a hearing. Contact all the members of the education committees in both the Assembly and the Senate, and say.

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01:29:53.430 --> 01:30:18.429

Heather DuBois Bourenane: hearings for these bills. We can't be heard unless they hear them, and instead of taking up consolidation bills that no one really asks for, we should be taking up these things, like keeping the promise to fund students with disabilities. Our good friend Representative Angelina Cruz, who is also the president of the Racine Education Association, has put forward a bill that would provide for some sufficient allocation of the promised funds for

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01:30:18.430 --> 01:30:43.419

Heather DuBois Bourenane: special ed in this biennium, and would fix this budget shortfall today. If lawmakers who voted in favor of this budget were serious about giving us 42% and 45% special education funding, the very least they can do is sign on to this fix, and this should be... this is a bill that should have strong bipartisan support and should move through quickly. There was a bill that just came

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01:30:43.420 --> 01:31:08.399

Heather DuBois Bourenane: out today from Representative Vining that is called the Save Our Schools Bill. It revives a number of the forgotten recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding, including increasing the special ed reimbursement rate to 90%, indexing per-pupil funding to inflation, and providing grants to future educators. These are kind of like no-brainers that we haven't been doing for a long time that would close so many

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01:31:08.400 --> 01:31:26.840

Heather DuBois Bourenane: gaps for our schools, so let's do it. Finally, there are two voucher-related bills that I really want to highlight for you, if you all aren't following along, and if you aren't following along, go to Wisconsinnetwork.org slash tracker. We've got a bill tracker that shows all of the bills that are up right now, and who... and how folks have lobbied for and against them.

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01:31:27.090 --> 01:31:52.030

Heather DuBois Bourenane: We need to freeze voucher participation at current rates. We cannot afford to open those floodgates next year, and no one is taking this conversation seriously. We need to let lawmakers know that we are paying attention, and we are not going to do this on our dime. If you want to play games with expansion of this program, at least make sure we are adequately funding public schools first. That is a bare minimum requirement here, regardless of your position on

558

01:31:52.030 --> 01:32:12.350

Heather DuBois Bourenane: on the voucher question. And then finally, there is a bill that calls for that voucher taxpayer transparency that's being floated right now. It has a number of co-sponsors, but has yet to receive scheduling for a hearing. We would love to see that happen. So those are, like, four bills. There are many, many others worthy of your attention. Check them out, and...

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01:32:12.440 --> 01:32:28.700

Heather DuBois Bourenane: make sure that your lawmakers are hearing from you during this, like, weird time of year, where they're about to, you know, give themselves another long vacation, and go out of session probably in mid-January. But there is still time to fix these things, and now is a good time for us to put some pressure on.

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01:32:28.830 --> 01:32:30.090

Heather DuBois Bourenane: So,

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01:32:30.090 --> 01:32:55.089

Heather DuBois Bourenane: If you aren't already, in tune with all of this, I also want to make sure that you're aware of the resources that we have available to help you on the electoral side. You want to do school board candidate forums, you got a referendum coming up, you need a mini-grant to get your gang together. We got you covered, but you need to let us know what you need. So follow this QR code, or go to the, vote public section of our website to tap into

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01:32:55.090 --> 01:33:13.730

Heather DuBois Bourenane: all of the tools and resources we have for you there, and we'll set up a one-on-one with you with one of our organizers so that we can help make this easy for you, make sure that you realize you do not have to reinvent any wheels, you don't have to commit to a lifetime of soul-sucking work to make change where you live. There are folks who are ready to help you.

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01:33:14.790 --> 01:33:39.760

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Finally, we do all of this because we have to, but we can't do it without your support. So if you're not already a contributing partner, I'm, like, actually begging you. We are running on a bare-bones budget right now. We are 3 people short on our staff. We cannot keep up in real time with the

number of inquiries and requests for help that we get. We need to hire more people to keep up with all of the curveballs and elections that

564

01:33:39.760 --> 01:34:04.749

Heather DuBois Bourenane: 2026 is going to throw at us, and so if you can give us \$5 or \$10 a month, we will be forever in your debt, and the kids of Wisconsin will thank you forever. All of the money that we take in goes to basically two things, funding our staff, who do direct support to local teams, and providing grants to local folks who are doing nonpartisan pro-education advocacy where they live. So thank you to all of you who already support us financially.

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01:34:04.750 --> 01:34:10.729

Heather DuBois Bourenane: And, like, please, please, please, to those of you who don't, take mercy on us and give us just a tiny bit of your holiday cheer.

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01:34:11.350 --> 01:34:12.870

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Finally.

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01:34:12.940 --> 01:34:37.900

Heather DuBois Bourenane: We welcome your feedback on tonight's event. What did you learn? What do you wish you learned? How can we follow up? What would you like to see us do next time? What could we have done better? Your feedback governs how we run events in the future, so please do keep us posted. This link will also be in the follow-up materials if you don't have time to point your camera at that now. And then finally, feel free to reach out to me or

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01:34:37.900 --> 01:34:48.539

Heather DuBois Bourenane: any of our staff members if you have any questions, needs, or local concerns, and if you want to get your voucher Taxpayer Transparency project going where you live, we are here to help with that.

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01:34:49.050 --> 01:35:13.870

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Thank you for staying a couple minutes late tonight. Special thanks to our amazing panelists for the great work that they do, and for their help in helping us understand it tonight. Thanks to Jeff and Tom for weighing in, and thanks to all of you for the robust conversations in the chat, and for staying on top of this important issue. We're gonna win this fight together, and we can't do it alone. So thanks for being here tonight, and thanks for staying together

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01:35:13.870 --> 01:35:15.219

Heather DuBois Bourenane: For the long haul.

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01:35:15.220 --> 01:35:18.160

Heather DuBois Bourenane: Alright, appreciate you all. Have a great night, everybody.

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01:35:19.190 --> 01:35:19.710

Julie Mead: Bye.