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Dace Blaskovitz: Welcome back to Money and Politics in Delaware. Bob Byrd always after a DEFAC meeting. Bobby, we were having fun in the first segment, but that last 45 seconds, the antenna went up. I'm asking you, first time in years you saw a decrease number projected. Tell us all about that again.

Bob Byrd: Well, it's just a slight decrease, and it's literally, when you look at the whole revenue package, it's not that much money. It is a forecast that is essentially flat. Now, I'm not sure I agree with that, but that's what the committee voted on and that's where we came down. We're listening to the projections that say there's a potential downturn, and maybe it's already started. That's what we came out with.

Dace Blaskovitz: On your side, Bobby taking history lessons here because you are a regular guest. At one time, there was concern, I won't say, I'll just keep concern is probably a good word. That Bob Byrd as the governor's asking, DEFAC to perhaps do some things that are not necessarily within our mission bandwidth. How about a recap on that one and an update too?

Bob Byrd: Well, the governor had projected what he called budget smoothing last year and the General Assembly did not agree with it. The governor to his credit, I think, I'm not sure, he's probably a little bit more conservative than I am, but he's the governor, so that's cool. He has set aside several million dollars to try and get us through the next downturn that a lot of people say is coming. A lot of dollars within this budget cycle or being set aside, probably about \$350 million. All told, with a rainy day fund and the new fund that he has set up, which is kind of a state savings account. If you're conservative, that's cool. On the other side there are a lot of people who think that we need, we have a lot of needs in this state. We ought to be spending more money. Dace as you and I have talked about, I think the budget needs to be reallocated a little bit and we need to change some of the things we're spending on and spend them on other things. That's a tall order.

Dace Blaskovitz: All right, but on your side, and again, trying to reach back and for our loyal listeners, make sure that we put some, a stamp to it, conclusion, at least don't forget it. Then the other one was in one of your visits, you had predicted a very contentious session and in our pre-interview yesterday or I believe yesterday or the day before, it was that as bad as you thought Bob Byrd tell that story.

Bob Byrd: Well, the three issues that you mentioned earlier, weeds, guns, and the minimum wage. The General Assembly has decided that those are very contentious issues and that the votes are very close on them. As a result of them being contentious and close votes one way or the other, the General Assembly has decided in their wisdom not to work on them. If we're not going to work on it, it eliminates a lot of contention. If the budget numbers come together and they can reach compromises on the bond bill and the Grant-in Aid bill and get through that. The governor's happy with the money that's being set

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aside and the legislators aren't disagreeing with that. It could be a pretty easy week this week.

Dace Blaskovitz: Well, wait a minute. Wait a minute. Could be, could be, could be. Oh boy. There was a hedge there, you good politician. My memory was a couple of years ago there was that, I think it was 1158 or something, a real estate tax enacted or the marijuana guns, \$15 minimum wage. Are they going to appear in the wee hours right before the session ends or are they dormant, Bob Byrd?

Bob Byrd: I don't think that those three issues will come up this week. Okay. Having said that, something, I'm pretty convinced that something will happen that will cause us to be there later than we would like to be on June 30th, July one. Last year, it was the minimum wage, at the last minute some things happened and all of a sudden was the minimum wage was on the floor and needed to be dealt with. Now you need to know that and people that are really following this. The bond bill is a three quarter vote, which means it takes three quarters of the General Assembly to vote for it. In the Senate, for example, that it's 12 to 9 Democrats to Republicans, you need a fair amount, you need some Republican votes to pass the bond bill.

Bob Byrd: If they get contentious and they're not happy with everything that's done, they can stop the bond bill. That stops the process. The Grant-in Aid bill is the same way. It takes a super majority vote. If everybody's not happy with what the finances are, and by that I mean every single member of the General Assembly, if somebody decides to withhold their vote, that's probably not a problem. If 8 or 10 people decide to withhold their vote, then you've got everything stopped. Then, you got to sit down and go in the back rooms and work out a compromise.

Dace Blaskovitz: Marijuana, \$15 an hour minimum wage, guns, this is my interpretation of what you just said are probably pushed to next year if ever. Money, money could erupt here shortly. Am I smelling what you said correctly?

Bob Byrd: Dace you and I are old friends and we know one thing is absolutely paramount. I don't care whether you're working in the legislature or whether you're negotiating a business deal or whether you're an individual buying a house or buying a new car. It's always about the money.

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Dace Blaskovitz: All right, with that said, I'm taking our friendship off the table just a minute, with about three minutes left. I'm going to punch you one verbally. According to the Federal Government Bureau of Economic Analysis, Delaware ranked 48th in the nation in GDP. Furthermore, over the last four years, 15 to 18 Delaware ranked 46th in the nation in GDP growth averaging 0.21% growth over that time span only four states, and they are all somewhat energy related, perform worse than Delaware's. That stat is courtesy of Charlie Copeland, by the way, who is next week's guest. Bob Byrd, gee Whiz, Delaware is dying, if it's not dead already in Dover is killing it. You swim in that swamp. What do you say?

Bob Byrd: Well, I don't think things are as necessarily as bad as those numbers would indicate, but the DEFAC forecast of flat revenue over the next couple of years would indicate that those numbers have some validity. I'm not going to stand here and try and say that Delaware's doing a hell of a lot better than those numbers would indicate because those are facts. I think Delaware does have some issues.

Dace Blaskovitz: Let me give you one more. All right, the one that sticks up for me. Three numbers to remember 80% are the minority kids in Delaware public school struggle, functionally illiterate, I believe is the terminology when you can't read or write grade level. Second stat, I believe it's 1.5 billion, all in a million people in Delaware pay for public schools. That stats, courtesy, icon education person, Ron Russo. And 80% of that 1.5 billion does not make it to the classroom. Instead, it's a union job shop. What's Bob Byrd say in 60 seconds?

Bob Byrd: I'm not going to get into the whole union DSEA thing, but I would totally agree with you that one of the bigger problems facing Delaware, if not the biggest, is the fact that we have underperforming schools and they are turning out students who are not as good as they should be. Having said that, we've got a lot of schools in Delaware who are doing very, very well and turning out a very good product. This is just my opinion and people fight with me about it. You can't continually give charter schools and choice and give everybody an advantage to go ahead and go to a school that they think is better and all of that. Because what you're left with then is low performing schools, and that's something that if you want to get into one day, we'll talk about it. I agree with that, that that's a big issue in Delaware.

Dace Blaskovitz: Bob Byrd, fascinating guy. Let's see what happens in the next two weeks. Back here next week for more money in politics in Delaware.