

DATA DELAWARE: Monday, July 1, 2019
SUBJECT: Unethical Delaware, says Copeland (Part 1 Podcast transcript)

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- Dace Blaskovitz: Welcome back to Money and Politics in Delaware. Welcome back, Charlie Copeland.
- C. Copeland: Dace it is a pleasure. Thank you for having me.
- Dace Blaskovitz: And if we do on the air what we did in our pre-interview, Charlie Copeland was on fire. Of particular note, State Senator McDowell. Woo! How about the paragraph that appears in Friday's News Journal? And then we'll be talking about the budget and defects. So with that said, Charlie Copeland, we always get first time listeners. It's your turn. 30 seconds about you. 30 seconds and/or about your business.
- C. Copeland: Yeah, so we've had this story before, but like you said, first time listeners, I'm pretty much a Delaware guy. Spent the vast majority of my 56 years living within three miles of the statue at Rodney Square at the center of Wilmington, Delaware. So I view Delaware as my place. And I like to make sure that where I live, and the community I love has the opportunity at least to attempt to thrive. And then, so I ran a family business there for many, many years, and I was in elected office for six years. The State Senate. I ran the state Republican party. Been involved in a number of nonprofit activities. The Challenge Program is probably the one I'm most proud of, and we work with young people in the city. Great people run that. And it's been a joy to help them do that.
- C. Copeland: And most recently run the Intercollegiate Studies Institute across the country. We're on colleges and university campuses, where we work with students and conservative faculty to educate students and others on those things that make a society free and prosperous. Like limited government, like free markets, property rights, subsidiary, which is that the government that governs best is the one that's closest to me. Some far off tyrannical regime in say Washington or Dover. So anyway, that's what I kind of do.
- Dace Blaskovitz: You ready to go?
- C. Copeland: I believe so.
- Dace Blaskovitz: Very good! State Senator McDowell proposed legislation with minutes to go in the session. Data Delaware, which I publish, ran a piece, we tape on Friday, air on Saturday. I've got to do that again. We tape on Friday, air on Saturday. So we ran a piece exposing it. You and I were chatting about it, and you had some rather strong comments. How much of that you willing to put on the air?
- C. Copeland: I've known Harris a long, long time. And he was first elected, I believe in 1976. I was 13 at the time, and for the listeners, you can hear my voice, it is not a 13

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year old voice, it's a 56 year old voice. So Harris has been down there a painfully long period of time. And I was fond of saying that if you can't get done what you want to get done in 20 years, maybe it's no longer about getting something done, maybe it's just about your ego. Harris comes from a very political family, his father was a U.S. Representative who was actually beaten by U.S. Senator Bill Roth back in 1966, when Harris's dad attempted to move from the U.S. House to the U.S. Senate. So this is all Harris has ever done is work in the legislature. That's all he knows. He has an energy consulting gig on the side, so he lists himself as an energy consultant. And while I have to assume that everything is above board, I believe in the Reagan advice to trust but verify.

C. Copeland: And Senator McDowell, who again, has been there since 1976, has fought long and hard to make sure that there are no broader transparency rules for elected officials in the state of Delaware. Rules that almost every other state in the nation has implemented. And according to the Center for Public Integrity, which is by the way, no member of the vast right wing conspiracy. I mean, they call balls and strikes, so I don't, but you know, this is not a conservative organization, it's the Center for Public Integrity, and Delaware, according to them, ranks 48th in the nation in legislative accountability. 48th!

C. Copeland: So you can look at Harris being there for all those years ensuring that there is no transparency. And you can even note that just recently, State Senator Darius Brown, who owes evidently somewhere around \$60,000 in back taxes. \$60,000! I mean, you just don't stumble upon that. You don't pay taxes. And he failed to disclose that on his ethics form, which is a felony. And yet, the Public Integrity Commission, when they were told about this, simply shrugged and said, "Well, now that we know, it's no longer breaking the law." So that shows the level of ethics within our legislature, and Harris has been a leader in that.

C. Copeland: So when I was there back in the early 2000s, it was common knowledge that somewhere at the end of the session Harris would try to pull out some energy bill out of his back pocket. And nobody ever knew why he would wait till the last minute, or what those bills really were supposed to do. And matter of fact, we used to joke about it in early June, we'd say, I wonder when Harris is going to pop out his bills.

C. Copeland: But he knows exactly what he's doing. He's hoping that nobody's paying attention, that they're worried about the budget, they're worried about the bond bill, and that late at night on the 30th, when there's a must to do list that's passed around, he slides his bill in that must do list, and all of a sudden it gets flushed through. And it's wrong. It's not transparent.

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Dace Blaskovitz: Well, wait a minute, wait a minute. Go back just a minute. How does, and I think you've answered it, it's not a violation of deluded if nonexistent ethics committee rules. But don't you have to disclose that you own an energy company if indeed you're proposing a piece of energy legislation?

C. Copeland: Well, I think people know that he's energy consultant. What I think would be more important to know is who does this bill truly benefits, and what contracts? You know, it's one thing to say I'm an energy consultant, and I work for corporation X. Because then you know if corporation X is signing a contract with the state of Delaware. But if you're a consultant, and corporation X signs a contract with the state of Delaware, and then subcontracts that to you as a consultant, that money is hidden. Nobody knows how much money Harris is making off of all this energy legislation. There's no way to know. Because Delaware's legislative ethics laws are 48th in the nation.

Dace Blaskovitz: All right.

C. Copeland: So it's hidden numbers, right? Nobody has any idea how much money Harris has made or not made off of all of his energy activities over the years, from renewable portfolio standards, which forced the state to invest in renewable technologies in things like Bloom Energy, to the sustainable energy utility which accumulates tens of millions of dollars from regional greenhouse gas initiative dollars that flows through that. Nobody knows how that money is truly spent. And Harris has his hands on all those faucets.

Dace Blaskovitz: Allegedly.

C. Copeland: It may all be about board.

Dace Blaskovitz: Allegedly.

C. Copeland: But it's questionable.

Dace Blaskovitz: Let me give you one more. Tick tock on that clock, compliment to the News Journal today, today meaning Friday. Published proposal would give private colleges access to capital funds. It's a two part question to Charlie Copeland. What's going on, because I believe you have a unique perspective. So unique, our insider, you got to be careful. And then the second one, the more painful one, compliments to the News Journal, it's Sarah G-A-M-A-R-D, however you pronounce that. When asked to elaborate exactly where the money will go, lawmakers could not give specifics. Taxpayer money, Charlie Copeland! They don't even know where it's go, allegedly. What you'd say?

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- C. Copeland: Well, and it's taxpayer that, as a friend of mine frequently says, thank God we don't get all the government we pay for. But, so, you know, Wesley College is a private college. Private liberal arts institution. And they've had a tough time of it over the last number of years. As have a lot of very small, sort of non-unique liberal arts universities and colleges across the country. Because enrollment nationwide is going down. And so a lot of these smaller schools are having real problems. And so two years ago they brought in a new president, and I think he's probably trying to do the right things, but you know, if you don't have the cash flow, you don't have the cash flow.
- C. Copeland: And so, you know, they're trying to work their way out of a business crisis. And you can imagine that John Carney, whose already presiding over an economy that is the worst of the nation, and whose economic policy seems to be hoping that 14 year old people hanging out at Post Malone concerts in Dover will join the fintech revolution that's allegedly occurring in Delaware. You know, I think that he doesn't want to have Wesley College shut down, closed, on his watch. That would be pretty embarrassing. Although it is what it is. So you know, they bailed them out. They simply bailed them out.
- C. Copeland: And I don't know that I think that that's a problem of Wesley College you can always ask for the money. Why did these legislators not get better answers? Right? I mean, you know, they can stipulate where that money goes. If you're spending money on your business Dace, you can do it any way you want. You go to the bank, they're going to ask for the business plan.
- Dace Blaskovitz: Yeah, you would think that the taxpayers have some right to know where you're tinkling it away. I got to turn to the audience. Charlie Copeland does another segment. Stay with us. We will be right back.