

DATA DELAWARE: Monday, February 10, 2020  
SUBJECT: Lavelle VS Dover (Podcast transcript-Part II)

DISCLAIMER: This transcript is produced from Data Delaware podcast electronically; the conversion is being offered on a best-efforts basis.

Dace Blaskovitz:

Welcome back to Money in Politics in Delaware. Greg Lavelle. Gosh, exposing Dover, talking about Dover, big picture stuff altruistically. He's talking about some fundamental policy changes going on in Dover that quite frankly aren't getting enough headline. All right. Wilmington School, anything you want to add?

Greg Lavelle:

Yeah, I do want to add one other thing there Dace, thank you. So again, big policy change and for those this is really deep in the weeds. There was a proposal a couple of years ago under WE ACT, it's a Wilmington Improvement Education Commission that would have taken these priority schools in the Christiana School District and redistricted to them, either the Red Clay or Brandywine. It was never really quite clear. That initiative sort of got defeated to what happened to it exactly. But interestingly, one of the rationales the governors using to 100 percent fund versus the local share as reported by the State news on January 30th, not a quote, but as part of the reporting that the governor says, "Well, we're still looking at redistricting and we're not sure where these schools will end up."

Greg Lavelle:

So to me that means, and the residents of the Red Clay and Brandywine and Colonial school districts should pay attention to this, because the effort to jettison Christiana School District from Wilmington is clearly alive. And it has policy implications. You can be for it, you can be for or against it. But if you're not aware of it, and let me tell you, it got defeated before because the legislators in Red Clay and particularly the taxpayers in Red Clay, I used to represent Red Clay. They were none too happy about it.

Dace Blaskovitz:

Gee whiz-

Greg Lavelle:

So it's alive and well.

Dace Blaskovitz:

How does every school district out there hold a referendum if the State is going to subsidize some and not others?

Greg Lavelle:

It's going to be a real challenge. I mean, you saw some comments. Indian River School District has another referendum coming up sometime in the next month or so.

Dace Blaskovitz:

Good luck.

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Greg Lavelle:

The last two have failed. Right. Good luck now, that's what the guy said, the superintendent. We knew nothing about this. This will hurt us passing this referendum because the residents and some of the down State reps are like, "Hey, what about my school?" And there's pockets of poverty. I'm not dismissing the poverty, I'm not dismissing those types of things. But there's those pockets of poverty across the State. And pockets, there's drawers of under performance across the State. So it's not an isolated thing. So it'll be an interesting policy change to watch.

Dace Blaskovitz:

Push on. Clean water.

Greg Lavelle:

So clean water, \$50 million seems to be the theme of this year's budget. So the governor has proposed a \$50 million fund that would be matched by \$50 million of federal money to take on clean water initiatives. This is the funding mechanism for an idea that came up a few years ago when the funding mechanism was a rain tax, the roof taxes is types of things that Maryland did and it didn't go anywhere. So this is a new fund and whenever new funds are created, there's the backing ending in through lobbyists. And I don't mean that in a negative way, that's what they do. And others to get into that to get fund, to get the money. So from a accountability and responsibility process oversight, it'll be interesting to watch. The decision makers out of the legislation are seven members, will decide where the money is spent. Largely driven by the executive branch are seven members, five are appointed by the governor from cabinet secretaries, et cetera.

Greg Lavelle:

And then two are legislators. Policy again, is this one time funding and if the economy keeps booming, they can keep putting money in there. Farmland preservation, open space and others have had these commitments that we're going to do \$10 million a year, \$20 million a year. And then when the economy slows down, that money gets cut and then there's requests to replace it, tax something else for it. So ongoing it'll be interesting to watch. So just something else to watch. New funding stream, serious issues, serious problem. But accountability matters.

Dace Blaskovitz:

Renewables.

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Greg Lavelle:

So also in the governor's State of the State speech, he pledged his support to almost double Delaware's Renewable Portfolio Standard, RPS. I think green energy to 40% from approximately 25% is the goal, we haven't hit the goal quite yet, by 2035. This is an annual event. It's like the swallows going back to Capistrano. Senator McDowell comes in with these bills very late in the session almost every year. And anytime something comes in with two days to go, with all due respect from Senator McDowell, the easier thing to do is not read it and just vote no. Now with the governor behind it, it'll be interesting to see what happens. But the practical point for this year Dace is Senator McDowell is retiring after decades in the general assembly. And members of the general assembly, the majority party when they retire, get a going away gift. And it's not a watch or a plaque, although they may get them, it is a significant piece of legislation. So I would think that this thing has a great, great chance of passing.

Dace Blaskovitz:

Wow. Shenanigans.

Greg Lavelle:

It raises the cost of energy. It impacts small businesses, medium size businesses. We've had large energy users in the State talk about the high energy costs in Delaware and it also impacts low income people who's struggled to begin with. But then the subsidy gets kicked in and they'll take a little bit from you and me and other middle earners to make up that difference. So just something else to watch.

Dace Blaskovitz:

Shenanigans, very much to your credit, you've been on the air, gosh, six eight months just having a temper tantrum and there's at least dialogue about cleaning up the nonsense in Dover. How about it?

Greg Lavelle:

Yeah, so knock me down with a feather. Speaker Schwarzkopf...McBride have announced that no more late bills. The Delaware turf issue that we've beat to death now, as an example of that, a bill comes in on June 29th people vote for it. They really don't know what they're doing and then it turns out to embarrass the whole building. So McBride and Schwarzkopf have said, no bills will be introduced after June 10th which is a great idea. We'll see what happens to that. And that way they can actually go through committee hearings in both chambers. Legislators, and more importantly the public can get a chance to see them and then these guys can put themselves out as purveyors of good government. The challenge there, and again, great idea, I'm all before, we've been talking about this for years because it's abusive. The late bill, the fact that legislators are busy, it's hectic, can't keep up with the bills.

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Greg Lavelle:

And again, going back to Senator McDowell, that was his thing. He would come in, introduce it on a Tuesday, it's in committee on a Wednesday and it's voted out of the Senate on a Thursday. And these are significant energy policy bills and you have literally no time to review them quite frankly. So this will be a good change if they do it. This is not a rule. And both chambers have their rules and you can suspend the rules. You suspend the rules with the 51% vote of that chamber. That means you don't need a committee hearing. That means you don't need anything, you just suspend the rules.

Greg Lavelle:

So rules in Dover are more like suggestions and not really rules. So this will be an interesting change to see how it's implemented and if it's implemented quite frankly. And then who gets the rule suspension? Again, majority party senior legislators, they'll get the favors. But I hope they do it. I hope that Pete and Dave McBride get it done. And it may not be pretty the first year, but if you actually do it, then people will pay attention and they won't come in with the crap, excuse my French, at the end of the year, the following year. So interesting to watch.

Dace Blaskovitz:

Unionizing the staff. Uh-oh.

Greg Lavelle:

So they say in Dover, every January has a surprise that no one expected. And this year it was members of the staff, the Democrats staff who came in on the first day and said, we want to unionize. They put out a press release. They did this, that, and the other thing. They claimed that the Republican caucus was aware. They were not aware. They claimed some legislators were aware. They were not aware. So these are sort of young, 25 year old woke folks who, good for them, right? The Democrat legislators in Delaware are extremely pro union. They vote pro-union all the time. And now here's a proposal to unionize legislative staff. And they're not liking it. Publicly, they're like, oh, great idea. We can look at this, this, and the other thing. They're not liking it, let me tell you Dace. So I guess what's good for me is good for me.

Greg Lavelle:

What's good for you is your problem. So we'll see where this goes. It's really funny. Again, the Delaware State news is a good source of information for what goes on in Dover. And they had a great article on February 3rd which is just the irony and the hilarity is just good stuff. So again, you have these 25 year olds have been pushed to do this stuff and now they actually do it. And then the tumbleweeds are cruising down legislative hall because the Democrat leadership refuses to discuss it. I may not think it's a good idea, but if given the bills that passed the power, particularly of the unions in Dover, let them unionize. But live under the rules that you make everybody else live under.

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Dace Blaskovitz:

Yeah. Yeah. It reminds me of the Wall Street Journal ran an opinion piece for one of the prestigious colleges in the UK, had protesters. The students wanted the college to divest itself of fossil fuels, so the president of the college offered to turn off the heat.

Greg Lavelle:

I saw that.

Dace Blaskovitz:

His name is Greg Lavelle. Fascinating guy. We're going to see you back here next week for more Money and Politics in Delaware.