

**DISCLAIMER: This transcript is produced from Data Delaware podcast electronically;
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- Dace Blaskovitz: Good morning. Welcome to *Money and Politics in Delaware*. I am your host. I am Dace Blaskovitz. Compliance asked me to read: I am Dace Blaskovitz, President and majority owner of Wealth Advisors in Wilmington, Delaware. As a financial advisor, I offer full brokerage services. I turn back to the audience and say, "Gee whiz, great program." First half new voice, new face, new idea, and just great story in the first half. Second half, Charlie Copeland, we've already taped it. Whammo, if you're in the teachers' union, whammo in the second. So with that said, welcome to the program, Chris Kenny.
- Chris Kenny: Good morning. Thank you for having me.
- Dace Blaskovitz: Absolutely. Chris Kenny is by title the founder and co-chair of what we'll call ABD, "*A Better Delaware*". The press release says, "ABD is a nonpartisan public policy and political advocacy organization that supports pro-growth, pro-jobs, policies and greater transparency and accountability in state government." Chris Kenny, you're a loyal listener to the program. You know how we play the game. It's your turn. We give first-time listeners 30 seconds about you and 30 seconds about your effort.
- Chris Kenny: Well, I appreciate it. I'd just like to say, my family, we've been in Delaware for 25 years. We really love this state and everything about it. We love the people, we love the neighborhoods. We just really enjoy living here and raising my family. I have two older children, adult children, and two younger children. And my beautiful wife Teresa, I love her so much. Every morning, I see her on my way out to work. So we really just love being here and enjoying the weather that we have today.
- Chris Kenny: And so, a little bit about what we're trying to do with "*A Better Delaware*". Very concerned about the direction that we've been going the last couple of legislative sessions have really pushed us into a situation of deep concern. We see some of the bills that were passed, the methods and ways that they were passed and the effects that they've had on the economy versus our peers in the neighboring states and also nationally. And you can see that there's definitely a slide and that's where we thought, "You know what? What is the best thing that we can do?" And we talked to a lot of different people, spent several months coming up with a very specific agenda and mission and methods and strategies, and we feel that "*A Better Delaware*" and what we're going to do with "*A Better Delaware*" is hopefully going to help with a course correction, and we're excited to do it.

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- Dace Blaskovitz: All right. With that said, let me clean up one thing and that is ... and I think we should disclose that you are very active in a family business in Delaware. Let's take it to the next step. And that is, okay, you speak of this turmoil in Delaware, problems in Delaware, issues in Delaware. Let's take a stake in the ground here. When you look at Delaware, what's so wrong? What has you so upset?
- Chris Kenny: Well, we've seen the studies that have come out and it's been very clear. We do have the highest tax rates on business in the country, one of the highest personal income tax rates in the nation, the seventh-worst state to start a business, and we're dead last in the nation for jobs and opportunity. And so with that as a framework and we look at what has been happening with some of the legislation recently, where it kind of doubles downs on negative regulations and increasing burdens on various industries in the state, and it just ...you put two and two together and it's pretty clear that we've got to moderate or have some moderating force and that's what we're attempting to do.
- Chris Kenny: The mission is to educate the public, mobilize the grassroots, and hold politicians accountable. We think with those three guiding principles, we can be effective to help move us in a slightly different direction than what we've been going, so that we can bend the curve back and get us into a much better situation... that we know the first state can be. We know Delaware can be first.
- Dace Blaskovitz: All right...on my end and again, my disclosure is that I created, launched, and publish *Data Delaware*, which is a stand-alone vertical under the Caesar Rodney Institute (CRI) umbrella. And when I get asked that question, I remind people that Governor Carney started his May... *WHYY*, PBS TV interview with, "The primary objective for the governor and the legislators is to create conditions where we can have a strong and growing economy, and we do."
- Dace Blaskovitz: Unfortunately, the stats for the governor don't jive. According to the *Bureau of Census*, inflation-adjusted median household income in Delaware went from 70,220 in 2000 to 58,046 in 2016. Translates to a 17% drop in purchasing power. It's a-raining, it's a-raining, it's a-raining, it's a-raining.

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Dace Blaskovitz: So let's go back to you just a minute, my friend and I want to talk and learn more about ABD. I'm sure those in the audience do too. The *Delaware Business Times* called it a "nonpartisan advocacy group." BDN, *Delaware Business Now* called it "a new group aims to improve Delaware's business climate." *Cape Gazette* said, "Hold the elected accountable." It's your turn. Give us a minute more on *A Better Delaware*.

Chris Kenny: Well we've seen the current leadership describe where the economy, in their mind, is not negatively being affected by looking at some of the top line unemployment rates. Delaware's participating in a national economic recovery, but we're poorly positioned to withstand the next downturn. We're not competitive with the rest of the country when it comes to key considerations for employers when it comes to job creation. And that we can see based on some of the things that have been recently proposed.

Chris Kenny: I mean, look at their proposed personal income tax, which is going to affect small businesses and S corps and LLCs, the real business engines of any states, especially our state. The proposed increase in property taxes that will decimate disposable income, which then is producing our ability to ... retailers and consumption numbers. You look at the lodging, hotel taxes that have been enabled, some of the highest city rates in the nation, which are going to affect travelers' choices on where they're going to go and disposable income after they've paid that tax rate in our local area. And as recently as very recent, the governor, when he signed a bill... said that he was proposing a beverage tax, which again is another anti-business tax... that hurts pricing and disposable income and has disparate effects on numerous groups.

Chris Kenny: So, that's the concern is that we have a misalignment of diversion of reality coupled with actions that are only exacerbating the situation. And we feel that *A Better Delaware* can help educate in real time the constituents of the legislators as they move into the direction that we know is causing this situation. And so we're excited to go down this new path. It's our understanding that this method of real time moving into addressing our constituents with what's happening in Delaware has not been done and so we're excited to do that.

Dace Blaskovitz: His name is Chris Kenny. He does two segments with us. We will be right back.