



NATIONAL AGENDA 2019: DIRECTION DEMOCRACY

DAN PFEIFFER

“Speaking from The Left”

HOSTED BY

University of Delaware - Center for Political Communication with support from the Office of the Provost; Co-sponsored by the Department of Political Science and International Relations

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Dan Pfeiffer Dan, author of the New York Times #1 best-seller, *Yes We (Still) Can: Politics in the Age of Obama, Twitter and Trump*; and a co-host of Crooked Media's political podcast, [Pod Save America](#), is the former Obama campaign communications director who pioneered the use of digital and social media platforms in political campaigns.

Transcript of Event

Date: September 4, 2019

Place: Mitchell Hall, University of Delaware, Newark, DE



UNIDENTIFIED: Please welcome your host for this evening, Dr. Lindsay Hoffman.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Hi everyone. Welcome to the first event of our ninth, ninth annual National Agenda Speaker Series brought to you by the University of Delaware's Center for Political Communication with support from the Office of the Provost. This year's theme is Direction Democracy. We're going to be looking at where we've been, where we are, and where we're going in this uniquely American experiment that's lasted over 240 years. Tonight's event is co-sponsored by the Department of Political Science and International Relations. And we're going to have an audience Q and A at the end of this talk. We're actually going to be tossing around a Catchbox which is a tossable microphone so you can engage in the question and answer period then. You can also use the hashtag #udelagenda if you'd like to submit a question via Twitter. Tonight, one of President Barack Obama's longest serving advisors, Dan Pfeiffer, joined the Obama campaign at the outset; ended up becoming the traveling press secretary and the campaign's communication director. He's credited with breaking new ground utilizing social media like Twitter and Facebook, and he now helps co-host a podcast that averages 1.5 to 2 million listeners per episode. So please give me; help me in giving a big round of applause to Delaware native, Dan Pfeiffer.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Thank you.

DR. HOFFMAN: Thank you so much for joining us. What's it like being back in Delaware today?

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DAN PFEIFFER: It's great, always.

DR. HOFFMAN: Humid?

DAN PFEIFFER: I mean, yes, the –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Chuckle.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – humidity is a thing.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: It only took a few years in California for me to go very soft on East Coast summers.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, here we are on a college campus and I thought it might be interesting to start the conversation about we're in a place where many people in the nation, and according to polls and surveys –

DAN PFEIFFER: Hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – feel that college campuses aren't really a place where people can have open conversation, open dialogue about politics or really anything. In fact, as I walk around campus I see students glued to their phones, not really engaging in conversation with, with others. In a recent New York Times column, Mollie Worthen suggests that we need to start explaining our terms, identifying our assumptions, and admitting the possibility that we could change our minds. You're the first speaker in this year's series. What advice do you have for engaging in effective dialogue around politics on American campuses?

DAN PFEIFFER: I would start with listening. Right? Everyone always; you know, we get this question on Pod Save America shows all the time, which is, you know, it's Thanksgiving's coming up; my Trump supporting uncle is going to

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be there. What can I tell him to convince him to not be a Trump supporter? The answer is probably nothing. But, the question that we should be asking is not what should I say. Right? It's how should I listen? And I think that's the big thing that we need to do is listen to people to try to understand why they think the way they do. Right? Like what has led; what life experiences, what positions have led them to feel the way they feel about whatever the issue is, whether it's political, or something else because there's too much talking and not enough listening. This is not just a, a problem on college campuses. This is in America writ large in the age of Twitter and Facebook.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, too much talk and not much listening. You cohost a podcast which is a lot of talking.

DAN PFEIFFER: It is, yes.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: How does that help the, the civil dialogue that's occurring in this nation?

DAN PFEIFFER: I mean, to be honest, the civil – I don't think; well, let, let me put it this way. We are fortunate enough to have a platform. Right? And so, what is the way in which we can use that platform to be helpful? Right? And so, I am less con – like civility is good. People should be polite to each other. We should not yell at each other, not harass each other but, I'm more interested in activism than I am in civility. Civility for civility's sake is submission in my view. Right? Like, our podcast is not about how do we get people to be nice to each other. It is helping people who are concerned about the direction of this country find positive productive ways to channel their anger. So instead of, like, to go

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back to the, the hypothetical example of the Trump loving uncle, so, I will often tell people instead of listening, which you should listen, but if you can't convince your Trump loving uncle or father or whoever else, like, don't worry about trying to convince them to stop loving Trump. Go find two of your friends who are, who aren't registered to vote, register then to vote, and now you've cancelled their vote. Right? So, it is about sort of like planning out how you're going to yell at your uncle, find out how you can advance the thing you care about by actually doing the substantive work of political activism.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, and so the big part of this year's –

DAN PFEIFFER: Hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – theme is bringing voices from both the left and the right.

So, you're obviously coming from the left.

DAN PFEIFFER: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: You mentioned civility and activism. How do you balance; can you balance both of those things?

DAN PFEIFFER: Yes. I mean, I think whether you liked President Obama or not he was a civil human being. Right? He was a decent human being. He treated people with decency. Right? You can, like, you can be involved; like, activism doesn't involve yelling at anyone. That's actually counterproductive to activism. Activism is trying to get people to get involved in politics, right? To be a force multiplier for citizenship. And, like, the best way to do that is civil, right? I don't; you're never going to yell someone into doing what you want to do. And so, like, we've had a lot of civility debates in Washington since Trump took over. I think they're generally; they generally sort of miss the point. Right? I think the more important thing is how can you actually make a difference. And you're

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going to have a better chance of making a difference by having, by being a civil decent person with an open heart and open ears than you are just screaming at the person down the street. I think that's counterproductive. That is a waste of time in a world of limited time and resources and really urgent priorities.

DR. HOFFMAN: Do you think it's about authenticity? I mean, there's something about Trump that seems authentic to a lot of –

DAN PFEIFFER: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – voters. Um, there's something about Obama that seemed very authentic to a lot of Democratic voters. So, where does authenticity fit?

DAN PFEIFFER: I think authenticity is the most important, ah, quality for a politician. Like, voters have a very good BS detector. The voters who supported Trump did not have the wool pulled over their eyes. They knew exactly what they were doing and who they were voting for. They may not have agreed with everything he said or did, but they made a judgment that he was the, who the, they were who, he was who they wanted to support based on who he was. And, when I meet with candidates, ah – or we're sussing out, like, which presidential; who would be a good presidential candidate – one of the first questions that I ask myself is does this person seem comfortable in their own skin? Are they comfortable being who they are? And the candidates who are comfortable being who they are, are, are also the candidates who are comfortable losing. Right? Like, that is, like, are you willing to lose. Obama had this; a lot of politicians are basically in politics to fill some sort of insecure void in their life.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Right? That, that you want the approbation of an election or

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the applause at a rally. Trump; there, there are, like, there's certainly some of that with Trump for sure but he doesn't hide it. Right? That, like, that, he is wearing the insecurities on his sleeves for everyone to see. Obama was interesting in the sense that he, if you ever read his first book, *Dreams of My Father*, he went through a search for his own identity at a young age in his life. And it really changed his life because he was, because he would be the first to tell you a bit wayward, um, may have, you know, dabbled in some things he shouldn't have dabbled in, um, that are now completely legal in many states –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – um, in high school and college. But once he, sort of, went on to understand his relationship with his father and who he was he became very comfortable in his own skin. And that I think drove a lot of his political success. It made him authentic to people and that helped for sure.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, let's, let's jump into 2020. Ah, we have, what is it 20 candidates, or 19 –

DAN PFEIFFER: They're, they're dropping out like flies.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: I think we're down to like 18 –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – or something.

DR. HOFFMAN: On the Democratic side it's a historic number. We had a historic number of Republicans in the, the last go around. What do you think is the most important message for a candidate who wants to stand out from the crowd in this – we've got a debate coming up on Friday, ah, or next Friday.

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DAN PFEIFFER: Yep.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um, what's the most important message you think that a Democrat needs to send?

DAN PFEIFFER: I think the best message for a Democrat is someone who under; who can talk about – in a clear, concise, understandable way – about the, how we got to this moment that we're in right now and that the, that we are, our democracy is under a very true threat that goes beyond Trump. That Trump is actually the symptom of a larger disease that afflicts our American politics. And the people who can capture that moment – who can talk about the fact that we live in a country where 90 percent of people want background checks, but it can't get a vote in the Senate – understand how we got to that point to. Can talk about voter suppression; billionaires buying our elections, that sort of stuff, is the one who is going to have the most powerful message.

DR. HOFFMAN: All right. Well –

DAN PFEIFFER: I'm waiting for the person to do that.

DR. HOFFMAN: You're waiting for that person?

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Yes.

DR. HOFFMAN: Who do you think is most likely to do that among this crew?

DAN PFEIFFER: I think so far the candidates who have had the most success doing that are Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren.

DR. HOFFMAN: All right.

DAN PFEIFFER: Now, the caveat I would give for all of this is that at this point in 2007 Hillary Clinton was beating Barack Obama by 30 points, and at this point in 2003, ah, Joe Lieberman, stalwart Democrat that he is, was leading the

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Democratic primary and John Kerry, our eventual nominee, was in fourth. So, we've; there is a lot of road to go here.

DR. HOFFMAN: Right. Is, is, is it somehow, like, are, are we jumping ahead of the game trying to predict things now? There're so many polls out, so many things out about what we think about these candidates now but everything changes, as you just mentioned. Are we; is, is polling now kind of a distraction from the real issues?

DAN PFEIFFER: Yes. I mean, we're, like, there is a poll out today about Wisconsin and it has, ah, Joe Biden beating Donald Trump by, like, eight points in Wisconsin and Bernie Sanders beating him by like six, and Elizabeth Warren is tied, and Kamala Harris is like winning or losing by like one point, something like that. We're like, oh my God, what does this mean? It, it means literally nothing. And it, and it's driven by –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – like, two things. One is, we're, like, Democrats progressives we're so nervous. Like, this is the most important election in our; that, we will probably face in our lifetimes, and, we want to know right now who the best person is, who can accomplish this, who can, who can take on the task to beat Trump. We want to know right this second and we don't have enough information to make that judgment. The other reason is, is just we're in, we, there's sort of a political media industrial complex now that is, like, the, the presidential campaign is keeping newspapers and cable networks afloat and so they're fueling this as well. And so, we're sort of living in a world of, um, national hysteria with little consequence just yet.

DR. HOFFMAN: That's a, a great segue into a question. What I look to do in

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these events is National Agenda is also a class with 20 plus students, um, and they are required to submit questions. So, I like to ask their questions at these events as well. And, Dana asked, ah, you had a, a podcast recently – in your August 8th podcast she cites it – ah, you mentioned that the press focuses on balance rather than accuracy. Do you think this is a, a recent media trend and can you elaborate more on this?

DAN PFEIFFER: I do not think it's a recent media trend. And the, the concept here is that the mainstream media, which is the traditional media – and that's everything from the New York Times, Washington Post, CNN, MSNBC, etcetera – are very; most of the people who work there are, if they voted they would probably vote for Democrats. They're progressive, they are socially progressive, relatively liberal. And they're very sensitive to that fact. And Republicans have spent decades screaming about liberal bias in the media. And so, therefore, they often swerve out of their way to, to, to do, to be balanced as opposed to accurate. And you can; and it's very evident. It's also; it was very subtle for a long time. It's very evident in, um, the Trump era because everything; like, there's no subtlety. Subtlety died the day Donald Trump was elected –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – and, so, in this is frustrating with a lot of people because you have a lot of, like, objectively Donald Trump lies and says racist things. That is an, like, just by the mere definition of those things, yet, the New York Times will not use the terms racist and liar. So, you have a president who lies; is, is a racist liar and the press won't call him a, a racist liar and that is very frustrating to people. And I think it's a huge error on behalf of the media who are – these are tough times for, this is a tough economy, it's a tough economy for media but what

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they are – you are trying to appease critics from the right but most of those critics are professional bad faith critics. It is their, in their, they are running media businesses – Fox News, Breitbart, Daily Caller. And so, it is their, in their, it is in their interest to devalue the concept of; to nullify the concept of an, of an objective media. And, so, you're never going to appease a bad faith critic. So, you should, you're, just be accurate, let the chips fall where they may, and I think they would be better off doing it and I think democracy would be better off if, if there were more, ah, newspapers who want to do it. And some are. You know, I think the Washington Post has been very willing to use terminology that other papers have not.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, okay, so let's move on to, ah, let's talk about Republicans for a minute.

DAN PFEIFFER: Sure.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um, Brian wants to know what do you think will be the media strategy of the Trump Administration going into the 2020 presidential election? Do you think it's going to be similar to what we saw in 2016 or is it going to be different?

DAN PFEIFFER: I think it is going to be very similar, and, Trump has, ah, two political imperatives if you look at it right now. One is he wants to insight his base as much as possible. He needs, he needs turnout to be as high as humanly possible from his most rabid supporters. But he also has never polled above 46 percent. And so, he needs to destroy the Democratic nominee to the point that enough voters will either stay home or vote for some sort of third-party candidate. Like, he, he was able to win in some of these states at 46 percent in 2016. And, he needs to do that again. He is the only president in the history of

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polling who has never been above, he's never been more, his favorability has never been higher than unfavorability. He never hit 50 percent. He can win that way. He absolutely can. But, and he, he can only do that by driving the favorability of the Democrat down which is what he did with Hillary Clinton and, I think, and it's clearly what he's going to try to do again – probably through some sort of fairly un clever nickname.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Speaking of that, um, he has, ah, shifted from a, ah, perspective of MAGA, is, MAGA – is that how you say that?

DAN PFEIFFER: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: MAGA, MAGA –

DAN PFEIFFER: It's KAG.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Yes. That's my question –

DAN PFEIFFER: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: – is he switching to this now it's "Keep America Great." He, he floated this at a rally, President Trump, and do you think the KAG is going to have the same effect as the MAGA?

DAN PFEIFFER: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: MAGA sort of rolls off the tongue. KAG does not.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Um. I think it would be really hard to be like KAG.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

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DAN PFEIFFER: It's like it's a bad mouthfeel I think.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Um. Like, like, there is, this is actually the most linguistically precise Trump has ever been that you're –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – you're; if you have been telling everyone you've made America great your slogan can't be Make America Great Again. So, you have to move from MAGA to KAG.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: I mean, the question is, for a lot of Americans; like this is the essential question for every president running for reelection. Do, are you better off than you were four years ago? And I think that's going to be a very, that's going to be a tough question for a lot of people and for Trump to answer. Which is the danger of the KAG.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, I've apparently lost all of my notes since we've been talking –

DAN PFEIFFER: All right. So, let's, let's ah –

DR. HOFFMAN: Let's just –

DAN PFEIFFER: – freestyle.

DR. HOFFMAN: So –

DAN PFEIFFER: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: – I will go to, ah, your book that you just –

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DAN PFEIFFER: Yes.

DR. HOFFMAN: – recently – if my thing will work here –

DAN PFEIFFER: This sounds like the Russians.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Whoops. So, you release a book last year called *Yes, We Still Can*. Um, why do you feel hopeful about where we're going in a post-Obama Trump era as a Democrat?

DAN PFEIFFER: The, the; Trump's election is obviously a very, very dark cloud from my perspective. But I do; I have, I have been able somehow – which is not really my, I'm usually more of a glass half empty sort of guy – but I have found a silver lining in this dark cloud which is Trump's election has awakened something in the American people. I remember the day after the inauguration walking out of the hotel in D.C. I was hiding in while I was there to do political commentary, hiding from all of the people in the soon to be KAG hats, and –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – I walked outside the day after and the streets were filled with the Women's March. People, like, grandmothers, daughters, granddaughters who've come across the country on buses over night to march. I remember after a few, a few weeks later, ah, at the last minute getting in a Lyft and going to the San Francisco Airport to participate in the protests against the Muslim band. I was the; my wife and I were the third people in a row that the Lyft driver had driven to the airport and there were almost 1,000 people there cheering. The; you know I've had; one of the wonderful things about Pod Save America is we travel the country and everywhere we go we get to meet some of

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these amazing activists. People like, you know, we spent a lot of time with the kids from Parkland who will make you feel so good about America. Ah, we got to spend time with a man named Ady Barkan who has a terminal disease and he's using every last ounce of his strength to fight for Medicare for All. And you get to meet these activists and you see that the country is better than what happened in 2016. And, it's; my book, I, I wanted to be hopeful. I am hopeful but I – it is conditional hope. I am not telling everyone – the point of this book is not to tell people it's going to be okay. Trump's going to lose and we're, we're going to get over this. It's not that because it may not go that direction. But I do believe that we control our own fate. The American; like, if we do what we did in 2018 which is people march, they register people to vote, they knock on doors, they make phone calls, and they vote, like, there are more people who disagree with Trump than support him; who agree with the Obama's vision of politics. And if those people turn out and become active fulltime citizens then the future of this country is very hopeful.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, so, your book also, um, talks about what Democrats need to do, what they need to change if they do want to win in the next presidential election? What are –

DAN PFEIFFER: Yes.

DR. HOFFMAN: – your best pieces of advice for a –

DAN PFEIFFER: Um –

DR. HOFFMAN: – Democrat who ultimately wins the primary?

DAN PFEIFFER: First is they have to be willing to; you have to be willing to run, to run to win not to lose. Too many politicians are afraid of losing. They, they are more afraid of losing than they want to win. And, so that leads to

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caution all the time. Trump is favored to win this election. Incumbents almost always win. Incumbents in good economies always win. And so, this is an uphill battle for us. It is a very winnable election, but we have to recognize that we're going to have to go all out to do it. There is no cautious, ah, approach to get it. Like, you're going to have to put all the chips in the middle of the table and go for it. So, no risk aversion. Second thing is experimentation. I've been in politics 20 years. The structure of the modern campaign is this, is mostly the same today as it was when I got into politics in the late 90's. It is still, still fundamentally centered around television ads, mail – pieces of paper –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – delivered by car to people's homes, and phone calls to landlines –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: So, I often go to, so I – and the problem with this is, the key for Democrats to win is turning out young people. So, whenever I go to see a group of young people I ask them when was the last time they watched a television commercial.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Right? Like never. When was the last time you checked your mail?

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: And when was the last time you answered a phone call from an unknown number? Right? Like that is just not – like, we have to update the model of campaigns to succeed. And the last piece of advice I would give to Democrats is traditionally elections against an incumbent are supposed to be

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referendums. Right? Like the goal; you, your goal the whole time is to say I want the people to decide whether they like Trump or not. If they don't like Trump they're going to elect me. I think that is a terrible mistake this time. Right? It is; usually the incumbent wants to make it a choice between two candidates. I think the Democrat wants to make it a choice. Trump's flaws are manifest and many. And everyone knows what they are. And you're not going to; so, you don't have to spend a lot of time convincing people why Trump is bad. You have to spend people [sic] convincing time why you are good. Like, so spend more time talking about yourself than Trump. I think the best candidate is someone who tells a broadly appealing inspiring story about this moment in American history and Trump is not a main character in that story.

DR. HOFFMAN: And which candidate do think is that?

DAN PFEIFFER: I don't know. I really; I, I honestly don't know. It's like some days I look at it and I'm like Elizabeth Warren is, like, is amazing and she would be the best nominee. Sometimes I look and say Kamala Harris would be an amazing nominee. And, and like everyone; and, you; I've done it like most of the people on the debate stage, ah, next Friday night, the ten candidates who have made it, I've looked at, at one point, and said I see how they can do this. It's really early. Obama was puttering around, ah, doing pretty poorly at this point in 2007. Right? And so, I, I don't, I honestly, if I had the answer, if I knew who could do it I would get off this stage, I'd pack my bags and I'd go to that campaign and try to help them win. But I don't know who that is yet.

DR. HOFFMAN: All right. That's fair. Let's talk a little bit about, ah, Twitter.

DAN PFEIFFER: Oh, yes.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um, [chuckle] you have a pretty strong presence on Twitter –

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DAN PFEIFFER: [Chuckle.]

DR. HOFFMAN: – and I'm still waiting for my, all my questions to come up so I'm kind of winging this at this point. But, I had a lot of questions about sort of what value you think Twitter has in the larger political, ah, conversation. Part of what we do here at National Agenda is trying to engage people to speak across differences. Is Twitter a positive way to communicate across political differences?

DAN PFEIFFER: No. Twitter is not a positive anything, frankly.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Chuckle.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Well, [chuckle.] I mean, I think Twitter is a funhouse mirror for American politics. It distorts things in terrible ways. And it creates a self-perpetuating insider conversation among the most, the most vehement activists on both sides and the reporters who cover it. The important; I think the statistic that really shows the danger of Twitter is that, that basically 10 percent of Americans are active on Twitter and 100 percent of reporters are. So, you have 100 percent, percent of reporters who are having the opinions of 10 percent of Americans pumped into their brain 24/7. And I do think that that, that is very bad. It distorts coverage. It distorts how people view things. It makes trivial seem important and that they are, and then they are very important stories that are not the kind of things that get people fired up on Twitter that don't get attention. And, so I think that's very bad. Here is the good part of Twitter. If there, and I think this is the good part of the advent of social media generally which is full of many democracy destroying dangers. Don't get me wrong. But, there, I think there is something important about the democratization of information distribution. So, it

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used to be back in the old days that the only way you would ever get information would be if someone at a handful of newspapers or three television networks and two cable networks told you it happened. And now we can know something just because someone somewhere has a smartphone. Right? We know a lot about what is happening in Syria, in Yemen, because someone has a smartphone and is willing to broadcast it. And because the reporter, the news outlets aren't there. They can't be there. And so, we are exposed, there is a; a lot of what happened in the Arab Spring we know about or the Iranian, ah, protests in 2009 and 10 are because people who had smartphones and Twitter. And so, that part is very good. But, for the general political conversation it is very, I think very problematic and it is not; and the biggest problem is that Twitter has done an absolutely, absolutely horrendous job of dealing with the abuse on the platform. It is a playground for abusive white supremacists and misogynists who spend a lot of their time just attacking people of color and women of color in particular. And I think that is a huge; that, that is very dangerous.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well –

DAN PFEIFFER: And, that can't be, that can't be the price of admission for the political conversation in America.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, let's dip into, ah, divides within the Democratic party.

DAN PFEIFFER: Oh, yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, this particular tweet, you said the biggest divide in the parties is between the people who understand the threat of Trumpism and those who think it's just, we're just experiencing an aberration that will pass on its own. This kind of reminded me of like there, that old adage of like there are two people in the, two people in this world – and for me I was like there's people who would

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like say gif and there's people who say jiff [phonetic spelling] –

DAN PFEIFFER: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: – and there's people who say, hear Yanni and people who hear Laurel. Do you remember –

DAN PFEIFFER: I do.

DR. HOFFMAN: – that whole thing?

DAN PFEIFFER: Some people pay; say water, some people say werter [phonetic spelling.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Werter [phonetic spelling.] [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: [Chuckle.]

DR. HOFFMAN: So, what, what do you have to say about this divide, um, within the Democratic Party? Does it need to be united around a particular candidate? Do; is it okay that we have this kind of two different factions which I, I think what you're saying is sort of more progressive versus a more centrist?

DAN PFEIFFER: It's actually different than that. So, I, I think that the biggest divide in the party is not between progressives and centrists. I really believe it's between people who understand the democracy, as we fundamentally understand it, is under threat. And, what I mean by that is long before Trump waddled down that escalator and upended our lives –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – the Republican Party has been part of a concerted strategy based in the knowledge that the country is getting younger and more diverse and therefore more likely democratic. So, they have been engaged in a strategy to ensure, by, from voter suppression, gerrymandering, changing campaign finance laws to, ah, increasing the influence of billionaires, ah, rigging,

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you know, stealing Supreme Court seats and rigging the courts. That is all part of a strategy to ensure that a conservative minority that is plutocratic in nature will govern a growing, diverse, progressive, more populist majority. And so, for a long; unless we take on the fundamental, the; unless we are willing to unrig the game that the Republicans have set up, it doesn't matter what's going to happen, we could elect a Democratic president, Democratic Senate, we're not going to get gun control. Democratic president and Democratic Senate, we're not going to get a Green New Deal and we're not going to get Medicare for All and all of that. And, I actually think this divide is more generational than ideological. So, Elizabeth Warren, Bernie Sanders, ah, both, the two most progressive candidates in the race at the, at least at the top of the tier. Elizabeth Warren wants to get rid of the filibuster, eliminate the Electoral College. Bernie Sanders very resistant to eliminating the filibuster. Corey, Corey Booker, progressive, keep the filibuster. Kamala Harris, progressive, keep the filibuster.

DR. HOFFMAN: Can you take a break and explain, just for people –

DAN PFEIFFER: Sure.

DR. HOFFMAN: – who don't know, what the filibuster –

DAN PFEIFFER: So, the filibuster is the rule that means that you need 60 votes to pass anything in the Senate. And the problem with that for Democrats is the Senate is an anti-democratic nature. And I mean that in lower case d and capital D. And so, in a system where Wyoming has as much power as California, Idaho has as much power as New York the smaller more Republican red states are advantaged. And so, and the demographic trends are getting much worse. More Democrats are moving to blue states. They're moving to urban areas and blue states. And so –

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DR. HOFFMAN: Like Delaware.

DAN PFEIFFER: Like Delaware, yes. And, ah, so what it means is that if you need 60 votes to pass a piece of progressive legislation there is zero chance that Democrats can have that 60-vote for the foreseeable future. And maybe ever until you change the Senate. And so, to my point in this divide is, so you have progressives who believe we have to get rid of the filibuster. They also are for – they're willing to challenge; they, they recognize that the norms in American politics, the system as it currently exists, is not majority rule. It is anti-democratic. And they're willing to take on aggressive reforms to that. And I include on those lists of reforms trying to get rid of the electoral college; ending the filibuster; um, making D.C. a state, that's two more Democratic senators; giving Puerto Rico the option, if they so choose, to become a state; if Trump buys Greenland we should get two senators –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – in exchange for that. And, court reform, thinking about the idea that, ah, changing the, there, there is no, nothing in the Constitution that says that we should have nine Justices on the Court. Congress changed the number of Justices like seven times in the first hundred years of America. In fact, want change, it wants just to prevent Andrew Johnson, an impeached President, from appointing Justices. So, there is a history of change in the Court. And we should, and the belief is we shouldn't live in a world where someone like Trump – who didn't win the popular vote; the majority of Americans voted against him – can pick a Supreme Court, he can change the direction of the Supreme Court for decades. Like, my daughter is one. When Brett Kavanaugh is Ruth Bader, Ruth Bader Ginsburg's age she will be in her

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mid-30's. So, like he has this access to the Supreme Court. And so, some moderate Democrat, more moderate Democrats like Peter, Pete Buttigieg and Beto O'Rourke aggressively push these reforms. Some progressives, like Elizabeth Warren, aggressively push these reforms. Some Democrats who are progressive like, like Bernie Sanders agree with these less. Some moderates like Joe Biden do not agree with these. And so, the, the divide is actually not ideological. I really believe it's the people who understand the threat and I think the, the less time you've spent in Washington or hanging around the Senate makes you more likely to see the forest for the trees here. You recognize that even if Lindsey Graham is an affable guy to be on the treadmill with, he is a danger to democracy, and you have to take him on directly.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, that brings up a, a good point. I mentioned you are a Delaware native; ah, you went to Wilmington Friends. Are there any Wilmington Friends folks out here? A couple. All right. Hi. Um, what about your upbringing in Delaware put you in a place where you could feel confident as, ah, working with an Obama, working with, ah, other Democratic politicians?

DAN PFEIFFER: Seeing Joe Biden at the grocery store more often than not.
[Chuckle.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: [Laughter.] Look, I give to whatever extent, um, it's more than luck that I just happened to work for Barack Obama, I give all the credit for my professional decisions and development to my parents who are here tonight, um –

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

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DAN PFEIFFER: – and to my high school. Like, Wilmington Friends was an amaze; I was, my mom was a teacher there for many years, it was an amazing experience for me, and it was a school that taught; we spent a lot of time thinking about one's responsibility to the larger world. That like, we were very fortunate to have this very special education and what we ought to give back and that was talked about all the time and that helped push me into politics. And so, I was always very grateful for that. And there's probably something in the water in Delaware. We've got a lot of real –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Delaware has, like, a lot of per capita very famous people.

DR. HOFFMAN: That's true. Well, we, we kind of called ourselves the epicenter of politics –

DAN PFEIFFER: Yeah, Joe Biden.

DR. HOFFMAN: – for a reason.

DAN PFEIFFER: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um, all right. Well, on that note, ah, again I'm missing my notes at the moment but I remember one of our students asked you in your interactions with Joe Biden and with David Plouffe who's also, ah, went to the University of Delaware, what was the most Delaware moment you ever had –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: [Chuckle.]

DR. HOFFMAN: – with those two?

DAN PFEIFFER: So, it; here's the funny thing about it. So, you're from Delaware. Right? It is a small state. Like, you have a; like, this is a small pond to have a chance to be a fish in. So, I finally get a chance to be at the top level of

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politics and I'm not even the number one, not even the number two, I'm the number three person –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – from Delaware [chuckle.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: So, [chuckle] but, so a couple of things on that: one, I mean, obviously the most Delaware thing that happened to me in the White House was I got a chance to go to the Charcoal Pit with Barack Obama.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Like –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Yeah, so, like [chuckle.]. Like that is as Delaware as you can possibly get. And, Joe Biden, a man I have great affection for and deeply love, he loved having Plouffe and I in meetings with him because we were like touchstones for his Delaware stories.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Because, like, he would be, like, making a point about a policy that we should support or not support and he would be like, growing up in Claymont, you know what I'm talking about Pfeiffer.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: [Laughter.] Like, he was like, down at Capriotti's I saw this guy – you love that sandwich don't you?

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

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DAN PFEIFFER: And so, yeah, we, basically we were like, Plouffe and I were Joe Biden's Delaware hype men during White House meetings.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: It's the Delaware –

DAN PFEIFFER: I can promise –

DR. HOFFMAN: – way –

DAN PFEIFFER: – you the rest of the, the rest of the staff was just like what is happening. [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: It's the Delaware way.

DAN PFEIFFER: Yes.

DR. HOFFMAN: It's certainly a, a unique situation. Well, let's jump into your podcast. Um, this is wildly popular, this podcast, 1.5 to 2 million viewers or listeners per episode. Um, what is it, what; first of all, what got you and your colleagues interested in talking about politics on a weekly podcast and what has the experience been like for you going from an official White House role to a more partisan, let's say, you can throw a lot of curse words around [chuckle] a little bit easier –

DAN PFEIFFER: Yes.

DR. HOFFMAN: – in a podcast world.

DAN PFEIFFER: Well apparently you can do it in, from the White House to we just had no idea.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Um –

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DR. HOFFMAN: Fair.

DAN PFEIFFER: So, [chuckle], we stumbled into podcasting. So, here is sort of how my life went. Like, I had; I got into politics. I kind of thought I would go to law school one day. I just kept staying in politics. And to the extent I had like a goal. Right? It was like, you, the most amazing experience I could have in politics would be to find a candidate I believed in, go work for them really early, and like be there at the beginning. And, ride that train all the way to the White House and then to play, and then have a big White House job. And I did that. And then I was, I was done.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: I had no Plan B. There was nothing that came after that –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – and when I was leaving the White House, because I had been there for a very long time and I was quite tired, ah, I was talking to Obama and he was very generous about my departure. And, he, he knew that I was the only, by the time I left the only person who had been, who had stayed, you know, from the campaign to the White House the, the same amount of time as me was him. And so –

DR. HOFFMAN: Wow.

DAN PFEIFFER: – he, he also pointed out that he did not have the opportunity of taking a break –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – but he had a, he had a plane, I didn't.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

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AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Um, and, but he said to me, he was like, you know, he's like, Pfeiffer, you're, you're really too young to ride on the coattails of the stuff we did for the rest of your life but you're getting pretty too close to old to start something new. [Chuckle.] And so –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – I sort of thought, I like left the White House, I had moved out there to California with my now wife and I got a job in Silicon Valley and I was sort of like this is my next phase. I'm going to be like a normal, a, our legacy is great, Obama's poll numbers are good, Hillary is going to win, everything I worked on is safe. I'm going to try something new. I'm going to get sleep, make a little money. Like, life will be better. And, in the midst of that – but I'm like, I still love politics, I'm still interested in it – ah, a guy named Bill Simmons, who some of you may know who's a sports media personality, emailed Jon Favreau and I and said, hey would you guys have any interest in doing a podcast? And we were like, sure – a political podcast – we're like sure, why not. We don't really know how we're doing it and he's like – we sort of had some hesitancy because we'd never done this before – and he was like well why don't you just come on my podcast and see if it works. So, we did his podcast which turned out to go very well, or so he thought, and people listened to it and it got some attention. And so, he was like well why don't you guys do a test podcast. And so, John and I did it. We had no idea what we were doing, and we thought it was a test, like, inside the building.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: They thought it was a test outside of the building –

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DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – so they posted it. And, it turned out people liked it and so we did more and we sort of thought of it and then, ah, our colleagues Tommy Vietor, and Jon Lovett joined us a few weeks, a few months later and we sort of thought of it as this is a hobby; this is what we're going to do in 2016, Hillary's going to win, we're going to go back to our lives. That didn't happen as – sorry to spoil this for you but –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – um –

DR. HOFFMAN: Spoiler alert.

DAN PFEIFFER: Yes.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: So, we sort of started; we're like, Jon, Jon and Tommy wanted to start a media company. Something that they'd been very interested in in a long time. Something I did not have a lot of interest in, starting a media company, but, we wanted to continue the podcast and use it as a platform. We had built this platform and if we could use it to encourage people to get involved in politics we would do that. And, we kind of lucked into it. Like I didn't intend to; I thought it would be a hobby and then it took off more than we'd ever possibly thought and then we had the opportunity to start traveling to do live shows. And, so I quit my job and became a fulltime podcaster which I'm sure makes my mother very nervous.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

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AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: [Laughter.] She won't say that now but at the time it was alarming.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: So, so Crooked Media?

DAN PFEIFFER: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: Where does that name come from?

DAN PFEIFFER: Trump.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: It was just a joke about the stuff Trump said about the media.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: And it allows us to, whenever he says the crooked media, says the words crooked media, to use it to promote ourselves.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Dah. Like a lot of these things I wouldn't say, it was not a long-range plan because our, our actual original plan was; so, we were going to, these guys – Jon, Jon, and Tommy – were going to start this media company. We were going to, ah, separate from, amicably with, our friend Bill Simmons and start their own thing, and he was like, you guys can stay here for like six months while you get it all set up. But the thing we had was, I had made Obama promise me that he would do an interview on our podcast before he left. And so, you're, we're running out of time, right? So it's like, like we, they were going to launch Crooked Media like in the summer but it's like why would we do a, if we going to have an interview with Obama why would we do it on someone else's podcast,

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we'd do it on ours. So, we quickly formed the podcast, the company and the podcast and so we could do the Obama interview. So, it pulled everything forward and it just also happened to be a very good time to start a podcast because people, it was ripe. Our interview with Obama was the day before Trump's election, it was his last interview in the White House. Um, I'm sure he did; that's not what he expected when he got to the White House that his last interview would be with, with; that his last thing he did in the White House would be an interview with four of his knucklehead staffers but –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Let me, like, who knows. Um, and so, it, we just happened to take off and we've been very fortunate to have this platform ever since.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, one of the questions that my students keep asking is, so, if a Democrat wins in 2020 do you keep the podcast going? Is; has the podcast only served the purpose of kind of, for Democrats to kind of decompress over Trump or is this like an ongoing thing that, that you feel like people need to hear?

DAN PFEIFFER: I; my hope would be that people's interest in politics and their desire to figure out what role they can play as citizens does not go away if Trump loses. Like, we're going to have huge battles. Like, this is like, all of the things I talked about, about fixing our courts, fixing the Senate, fixing, you know, passing progressive legislation are going to be huge battles and we would, we would hope to be, if people would still grant us the opportunity to be listened to, to be a part of that. Right? Will it be the same or not, who knows? These are high class problems. Like, what role; where will we find ourselves in post-Trump America is something I'm willing to roll the dice on. Right?

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DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: All right, well, Crooked Media has also joined up with, um, Change is a polling organization –

DAN PFEIFFER: Yes.

DR. HOFFMAN: – to do some polling. Um, as a, ah, public opinion scholar and someone who devours polling information, I thought it was interesting that, um, you guys did some polling in Wisconsin, ah, or Crooked Media did some polling –

DAN PFEIFFER: Hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – in Wisconsin, and Elizabeth Warren is doing very well there, um, and Bernie Sanders is kind of in second place. It reminded me of a poll that I was looking at just not long ago on our – I also have a podcast –

DAN PFEIFFER: Yes. I know.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: We're on it right now.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.] We're on it right now.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: On our podcast previous to today, today's –

DAN PFEIFFER: Yes.

DR. HOFFMAN: – episode, um, we were talking about this poll that came out of Advantage Research and they asked these two questions which I thought were very interesting. One was the typical electability question: who would you

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vote for if the primary were held today among democratic voters? Then they asked another question that was: if you had a magic wand, magic wand, who would you vote for? So, it's basically an electability versus like who do you really like.

DAN PFEIFFER: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: And, what we find –

[Phone ringtone.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Thank you. What we find is that in an electability question, it's Joe Biden hands down. In a magic wand question, it's Elizabeth Warren.

DAN PFEIFFER: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, I'm wondering what your thoughts are on that? If this is a – and, and we found that, ah, the poll found that this is a very gendered response. People said, yeah, that's why I vote for him in the primary question; that's why I voted for her in the magic wand question. So, I'm curious what your thoughts are on, since we have now been through the first female presidential candidate to run against a, um, a man, what does this say about 2020 in terms of gender?

DAN PFEIFFER: Well, I think, so a couple of points: one, the concept of electability is – can we swear on your podcast –

DR. HOFFMAN: What's that?

DAN PFEIFFER: Can we swear on your podcast?

DR. HOFFMAN: Ah –

DAN PFEIFFER: It's BS. Its BS.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

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DAN PFEIFFER: Okay? It's BS. And it is really, it is a gendered and racial question where for too long the concept – this is pushed by the mainstream media, it's based on history – but it is this view that white men are more electable than other types of people. Barack Obama faced this. There was huge concern about Barack Obama's electability. And, it's, no one knows what it means, right? Like, as an archetype racist reality television star with a gold toilet and a private plane is not –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – you know, that is not a, that is not a model of electability. And, so that, like that just, I think that drives a lot of the, the answer that Biden is most electable. Although, I would say there is more to it than that with Biden. Right? Like, definitely Biden is a, he's a white man. Fact. He is, he's, he has pitched himself for a very long time, correctly I think, as someone who can appeal to blue collar, you know, parens, white voters in Scranton for instance. So, like his hometown of Scranton. Ah, but he also is associated with Barack Obama. Right? That also fuel; like he's been part of two winning campaigns so that all fuels that together. But, I don't think that means anything right now.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

DAN PFEIFFER: Right? I think electability is something that should, that is demonstrated not discussed. Right? So, you, you show you're electable by running a really good campaign, by drawing big crowds which is something Elizabeth Warren is now focusing on. Right? She's had these huge crowds in Minnesota and Seattle and she's now going to have an event in Battery Park I think in New York that I think she's going to blow the doors off of and that's going to make people think she's more electable. Right? Not making mistakes. Right?

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Building a good organization. And then you ultimately prove you're electable by winning elections. Right? And that's the advantage of our primary system which is, Barack Obama answered questions about his electability by winning the lily-white state of Iowa by a large margin. And what happened there is really interesting. People forget this. Hillary Clinton, much like Joe Biden right now, was crushing Obama with African American voters and we would see in our focus groups where we, where the pollsters would get together a group of, ah, randomly selected voters and have conversations that they loved Obama. They loved him but they didn't think white people would vote for him. And they really wanted to win. And so, once white people voted for Obama and, in Iowa, the numbers moved like massively by 30 points the next day into, um, Obama's category among African American voters. And so, like, there is a lot; Joe Biden definitely appears to be the most electable now. Polls show he's the most electable now – and I think that's a little self, self-perpetuating which is everyone says he's electable so that's what they tell pollsters so people see those polls so they may even tell more pollsters and you go around in a circle –

DR. HOFFMAN: Um-hum.

DAN PFEIFFER: – but, he's got to run through a lot of gauntlets to prove he's electable.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, so –

DAN PFEIFFER: Elizabeth Warren has an opportunity to prove that she's the most electable candidate as does all of the other people out there.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, so going back to Wisconsin. What are some other, of, obviously Iowa and New Hampshire, but what are some other states do you think are going to be key for Democrats to win if they want to win over Trump?

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DAN PFEIFFER: Well, it, like, the math is pretty simple. Right? So, if the, if Democrats flip Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin they win. If they flip Michigan, Pennsylvania, Arizona they win. If they win Florida they only need one of those other states to do it. Um, and so, you're going to have to; like the, like what is mathematically, analytically as of right now the easiest path for Democrats? Win Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, three states that Obama won really easily, and Democrats had not lost in a very long time before this time. That is the most likely way to do it. There are certainly other ways, um, but it, it really probably starts with regaining those three states.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, before I open it up to a Q and A from the audience, um, a lot of questions I get from students, particularly since 2016, is, um, you know, we live in liberal and conservative bubbles and a lot of students don't necessarily be, become exposed to views different from their own. And, when I walked into my classroom on the day after the election in 2016 I had a lot of students with their eyes wide open looking at me saying how do you explain what happened here? And, I think a lot of them are looking to people like you, people who are on the left, um, to explain why we should still be hopeful. Why we should still, why students who are on the left should still feel hopeful. So, I'm going to ask you in the light of this series, why should students, young people in particular on the left, feel hopeful about our future of this democracy and on the opposite side, why conservative young students should also be, feel hopeful.

DAN PFEIFFER: Like, what, like, I find hope with the specific examples I gave of activism, but, if you were looking for a path out of the divisive, broken, hateful politics we're currently in the answer to that is sitting in this room. Right? As millennials and Generation Z behind them become the single, become the largest

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most important voting bloc – the largest, largest in number and most reliable in turnout – I think that's going to change politics because this younger generation is less partisan, although quite progressive; they are, ah, very involved in community and in, in making a difference, if sometimes less political; and when both parties are forced to fight over this group of voters, whether those voters are conservative or progressive, then we will have a different kind of politics.

Because right now the math is very simple. Republicans have to turnout one set of voters and if they do that they win, and Democrats have to turnout their set of voters and if they do that they win. And so, there's, we are almost never trying to have, fight for the, the support of the same person. And that will change as older folks age out of the electorate –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Chuckle.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – and younger folks age in.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: It's a euphemism, if you will.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: And, so, I think that is the future. And it's a very different politics because Obama used to do these, President Obama used to go to, when he would go to college campuses as President we would meet with students and he would do like a roundtable with students, and it would be, um, like, conservatives and liberals. So, we would always have the head of the college Republicans and the head of the college Democrats, the head of the Federalist Society or whatever, you know, some conservative group. And the thing that was really interesting about those is the conservatives, conservative kids would

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be angry about the Affordable Care Act, spending, taxes, sort of traditional Republican issues. They would also be mad at Obama about not doing enough about climate change and not doing enough on marriage equality. Right? And so, there are; like when you get to younger voters – there was a story in the Times the other day about conservative Republican, otherwise Republican young, younger voters being very dis, feeling disenchanted with the party because they don't believe in climate change. Right? And so, we, I think we will find a hope for a better politics in this next generation. And so we're going to have to survive a few elections between now and then, and, I mean, that's could be a coin flip but it is, but we, but if we can get to a place where both parties fight over the same group of people who are currently young I think politics will look different than it did before.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, again –

DAN PFEIFFER: It's similar to what happened with the baby boom. It, like, in the immediate years after the baby, of the baby boom, ah, folks, there, there was like this moment where you could have a little more bipartisanship and I think there's a chance for that in the future.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, and I'll, I'll switch this to, from a researcher's perspective. We talk about both ideology and partisanship and there are a lot of people who aren't identifying with a party –

DAN PFEIFFER: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: – but feel very liberal or conservative –

DAN PFEIFFER: Yes.

DR. HOFFMAN: – and that's kind of what you're describing. Do we have in the immediate future of this democracy a three-party system? A multi-party

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system?

DAN PFEIFFER: We should but we won't. The, the electoral college; if we were to get rid of the electoral college we could have many parties. You could have the Democratic Party and Republican Party, you could have a conservative party, you could have the Democratic Socialists of America, you could have the Green Party but the problem is we have a two party presidential system which is why a third – you have to get to 270, if you don't get the 270 electoral votes then the House votes based by state delegation. And so, there's no constituency for that third party. And so, if we get rid of the electoral college and we were a popular vote election then I think you would see more parties. I think it would actually be –

DR. HOFFMAN: Do you think that's going to happen?

DAN PFEIFFER: It's very hard to do but I may; I believe everyone should advocate for it; I think we should push for it; I think we should talk about it all the time. I think it; you, there are, there are some end runs to it that I won't get, get into but it, it requires a Constitutional Amendment for the most part and that's a very challenging process but if we don't begin working on it now we're never going to get there.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well –

DAN PFEIFFER: It's a stupid system –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Absolutely stupid system –

DR. HOFFMAN: Be honest [laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Yeah, I mean –

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AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – if, if you have a system that picks, that decides that the person with the fewest votes become President, like, that's a flaw in your system.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, um, again before I toss it to the audience, um, you had some interesting things to say; a lot of the students in our class today were very interested in your personal interactions with the, with President Obama –

DAN PFEIFFER: Hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: Um, I thought it was very interesting that you talked about something that a student asked basically how do you know when you can tell your boss that he might be wrong and I thought you had a really interesting anecdote about Obama –

DAN PFEIFFER: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – that I thought you might be able to share with us –

DAN PFEIFFER: Sure.

DR. HOFFMAN: – before we toss it to questions.

DAN PFEIFFER: So, like, one of the real tests, the dividing lines between a good political staffer and a bad one is whether that person is willing to tell the boss, and sometimes that boss is the President of the United States, what they don't want to hear, to tell them they're wrong, to argue with them, gently, but argue with them. And, what was interesting about President Obama was he also thought that. Most bosses don't think that, they don't, they don't want it even if they know they need it. And so Obama would often when he was meeting with staff, in an interview process or meeting with staff, you know, like when they first came in – and I could see this happening – is that he would give them an opportunity to tell him he's wrong or to push back on something he said and I

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would always see the look in his eye if they didn't. If they were too intimated by the Oval Office or the Presidency or kissing up to the new boss did they let it go but it always seemed like in a little back of his mind you could see him put a little demerit by their permanent record. Um –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: And, he, he took this so seriously that in big White House debates he would often argue the opposite of his position to test it. Right? He would; if he was for this tax cut he would argue against it and to test it, and also sort of test, ah, the staff in the room a little bit. Like, who's going to now tell him he is wrong. And you would be, you would be shocked to see the people who would be like, who had been for the tax cut until the President –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – started raising the concerns and they're like, you know I've been saying since the beginning this tax cut's a bad idea.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: And he's like, sort of like making notes. And I, like, he, sometimes he'd be mad at you when you did it. He's like a human being. He's got a very stressful job without a lot of sleep. He'd get kind of grumpy –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – but he'd appreciate it in the long run, and he encouraged that. And I think if you're work; whatever your profession is but particularly in politics is if you, if you are not rewarded or applauded for telling them the tough thing then you're probably working for the wrong boss. That person is not somebody who should be in that job and you shouldn't spend your time serving that person.

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DR. HOFFMAN: All right. Thank you. Well, I'm going to ask to ask Charlotte, who I see over there, and Justin to go back and pick up the Catchbox. So, this is a tossable microphone. It's in the shape of a little box, um, and these are my two interns for the Center for Political Communication who are going to moderate, ah, this conversation. So, if you guys can just come to the front and we'll take questions from the audience. Who has the first question for Mr. Dan Pfeiffer? Charlotte, there's someone over there. Throw it. There you go.

Q: Thank you so much. So, ah, love the pod.

DAN PFEIFFER: Thank you.

Q: Got to get the Super PAC funded –

DAN PFEIFFER: [Chuckle.]

Q: – by the way.

DAN PFEIFFER: We're working on it. We're working on it, yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

Q: Ah, so, you know we hear a lot –

DAN PFEIFFER: Do you know, do you know any billionaires?

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

Q: [Indiscernible]. Ah, so, you know, we hear a lot about the, you know, 90 percent of Americans are for stricter gun laws. Um, the gun, the guns are just out of control in our country. You know, you, I think you guys talked about recently on the podcast about how, you know, some of the, you know, the, the anti-gun lobby now is, is as well funded – the, the Gifford Fund –

DAN PFEIFFER: Yeah.

Q: – and others are as well funded and it's, and it's really no

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secret that, you know, the, the NRA lobby is really not for gun owners, it's for gun manufacturers.

DAN PFEIFFER: Yeah.

Q: So, why can't we get anything done about – like, what; is, is the system just that broken that we can't do something legislatively about this? Or, I just –

DAN PFEIFFER: Yes.

Q: – it, [indiscernible].

DAN PFEIFFER: The, the system is that broken.

DR. HOFFMAN: Thank you.

DAN PFEIFFER: It is that it requires 60 votes and Wyoming has the same amount of power as California. It is, it is that simple. There is a majority of support in the Senate for background checks, an assault weapons ban and a set of other laws but there is a minority that is blocking it. And, that was true in 2013 when Obama tried to pass these laws after Sandy Hook. It is true right now. And, I think, like, I encourage people when a presidential candidate says to you we're going to make gun control a priority, you have to ask them their position on the filibuster because they are selling you a bill of goods. There is no 60 votes, there is no 60 votes for – there; you may get 60 votes for universal background checks at some point in time, you are not getting 60 votes for an assault weapons ban. You are not getting 60 votes for gun licenses. We will continue to; as long as we have a system that puts, that; like I think gun control is the best example of our broken democracy. You have people dying in the streets and people afraid to go to school. Like, there was a story on NBC News last night about schools that are being built spec; there are architects designing them to

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make it easier for kids to hide from mass shooters. Like, what a broken system that is that we would build new schools instead of getting rid of guns. And, when you have something that is that urgent that that many people [indiscernible] 90 percent of the people can't agree what day it is. And they agree on background checks so that can't happen, that's a flaw in the system. And so, that is where I think you need candidates who will challenge the system because just doing what we've done for the last 20 years is going to get us the same result we've had for the last 20 years.

DR. HOFFMAN: All right, a question from this side. Charlotte, if you want to pass it over to Justin. There's one in the back there. You don't have to toss it all the way. You can walk back. [Laughter.]

Q: Thank you. Um, being as that you're involved in the Obama Administration's communications and messaging, I was wondering if you could speak to their successes and potentially failures to kind of avoid the moment that brought us Trump in this country and the way that people were feeling?

DAN PFEIFFER: I spend a lot of time thinking about what it is we could've done differently that, that would avoid the situation we're in. And it's very, it's hard to figure out because, like, if you were to say years out from a presidential election, like, what do you want the outgoing President to do to pave the way for your successor? They should have high approval ratings. They should remain scandal free. And the economy should be going well. No one hits that. Right? George W. Bush was so unpopular that when a hurricane cancelled his speech at the convention no one rescheduled it.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Like, that's how unpopular he was. Bill Clinton was very

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popular, and a strong economy so scarred by the Monica Lewinsky, ah, investigation that he, Al Gore would not campaign with him. Ronald Regan ambled out after Iran-Contra. Barack Obama hit every checkmark that you're supposed do and Hillary Clinton still lost. So, what does that say? I wish I really knew the answer. I think, the one thing that I think is; I do think we, we globally Democrats of which we, Obama and his team were at the top of is complacency. And I think we thought, and we allowed people to believe that, victory was inevitable. That the changing demographics of the country would, meant that Hillary was going to win no matter what. And that complacency both kept four million Obama 2012 voters from turning out in 2016; Trump won by 70,000 votes. Um, that's less than four million and it also, um, gave people who thought, who didn't want Trump to be President, they thought they could vote for a third-party candidate instead of Hillary because Hillary was going to win anyway. So, I think Democratic Party complacency, and that starts in our White House, is what; is the, the thing that we could have done differently that would have affected, potentially affected the result.

DR. HOFFMAN: Before we toss it to the next, ah, questioner, how, what do you think the 2018, um, midterm results portend for 2020?

DAN PFEIFFER: Nothing.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: I mean, did, like, 20, 2010 Republicans won 60 seats in the House and Barack Obama won pretty easily with a pretty big Electoral College margin. Now, I don't think it portends anything. It does, I do think it show, gives us a vision of how we can win which is what happened is after the election

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everyone started working their tails off. I said tails because we're on a –

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – a PG rated podcast here.

DR. HOFFMAN: It's my podcast.

DAN PFEIFFER: Yes.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: This is not your podcast.

DAN PFEIFFER: I know.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: I'm trying to do it like you would have, you would appreciate.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: And worked their tails off.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Like they worked like heck.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: And –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – and they, and like people were knocking doors 18 months out from the election. They were registering voters 18 – like that never happens.

And, it is the lesson that if you organize, organize, organize you can win. And so, that's what I hope that is happening now and we have to encourage it should be happening now is that we control our fate in this election. We have to be working now. Because we won in 2018 doesn't mean we're going to win in 2020 but if we

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do what we did in 2018 we will win in 2020.

DR. HOFFMAN: Okay. And I should specify, by saying we you're talking about Democrats?

DAN PFEIFFER: Yes.

DR. HOFFMAN: All right.

DAN PFEIFFER: Yes.

DR. HOFFMAN: Let's take a question from the middle, Justin.

Q: Um, so, as someone who's involved a lot in local politics that will translate into presidential politics as the race gets, you know, the election gets closer, I see a lot of, um, dissent – not dissent – but disagreement among Democrats where people are looking for a purity test. Um, in a group that I'm involved in there was discussion of priming a sitting Democratic senator from Delaware because he took money from the wrong people. Um, so my question to you is what's the best way if you're someone who's involved in action and advocacy to handle that kind of disagreement and to deal with people who think that changing the system means kind of breaking it into little shards and –

DAN PFEIFFER: Um-hum.

Q: – not really putting it back together again?

DAN PFEIFFER: I don't know the specifics of this instance obviously. I generally think primaries are good. Right? If someone is a, if someone doesn't stand up for what they've told voters they were going to do they should feel some pressure and particularly in a world where people live in safe districts. Right? Where once you're in you can do whatever you want. Now, it may not be that this is one of those cases. The question isn't are you going to run against someone in the primary. Like I think primary debates are good and if you want to

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have a purity test in the primary say I will, I want to support this primary candidate who is more pure on this issue that I care about, God bless you. The; when it becomes damaging is if they, everyone is not willing to get onboard for whoever the nominee is. Right? That's where we have a problem because we can afford to fight; like that, that's an intrafamily fight in a primary. But once we are, once, once the general election gets here we, everyone's got to unify. And I think the best way to do that is to encourage the dissent to be substance based. When it becomes an impugning of character and motives then it's harder to build the bridges back. If it's like you're for Medicare for All, you're for a public option, we're going to debate this, the voters are going to decide. That's fine. But if it's like you're for a public option because you're in the pocket of insurance companies then that, then it gets harder. Right? It's; when you were saying that someone is corrupt – I mean, if they are corrupt that's different, but if it's just like we're going to, if the assumption is because you don't agree with me you're corrupt it's harder to repair the damage and get together to find the ultimate goal which is to win the general election.

DR. HOFFMAN: All right. Other questions? Justin, there is one – actually one of National Agenda students.

Q: So, ah, has switching from being in the Obama Administration to, ah, being a critic of the Trump Administration, ah, changed your perspective on when it was you and your colleagues receiving criticism?

DAN PFEIFFER: No.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: It's funny [chuckle], I –

DR. HOFFMAN: That's a great question.

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DAN PFEIFFER: It; I had this, um, pledge to myself when I was leaving the White House which is there are a certain set of things where if, whenever there was another President of a different party or even the same party there are a couple of things that I would not criticize them for. One is that I would try to be more understanding of the staff and the hard decisions that they make.

[Indiscernible] just like when you're sitting in the White House you're balancing a thousand equities that no one outside the building knows about and so it's just always more complicated than it seems. The second thing is I would not criticize Presidents for vacationing. Like it's a really hard job. You need vacation. And you're never really on vacation. You; like, you're getting briefed every day. You're getting your daily intelligence briefing. Your vacation ends because a hurricane is coming. Like all of that. So, I said I would do that. And I have adhered to at least the second part of that. I don't care that Trump golfs. Like, it does not bother me in the least. It bothers me that he and the Republican Party thought Barack Obama golfing one-eighth the amount that Trump did was some sort of federal crime and now they're okay with it. Like that bothers me. But, I do, I think this is a different situation. I think Trump is a different President and he is; he, ah, he is being enabled by a group of people who know he's a liar, know he's corrupt, and have helped cover up crimes. And, so I think those people who make that, who willing make that decision are open for criticism. We, I think if we get back to a more normal world even with a Republican President my approach would be different, um, but I have little – there's people I have never, ah, when I was doing my book first someone asked me if I had sympathy for Sarah Huckabee Sanders.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

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DAN PFEIFFER: And they were like, you know, as someone who worked in a White House and had to take these tough questions did you feel, have sympathy? And I was like, no.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Next question. [Chuckle.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Why? Why?

DAN PFEIFFER: Because she, like, she knew Trump was a liar. Like, it was, like, she knew it. She took the job and Sean Spicer, who deserves every bit of public humiliation that he has received and will receive –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – ah, he, they, they made a decision to, they, to serve a liar and to lie for a liar. And I, like, and it's because I had those jobs that I actually am more mad about it because those are jobs of real public responsibility. You deal with real things and you should take it seriously. And I think the people who came before us, even if I disagreed with them and they did some things that I found to be morally, morally and substantively terrible, they took the jobs seriously. Like, the Bush people. I cannot; George Bush is a very nice man who shares his mints with Michelle Obama. I think he is, was a terrible president, an absolutely terrible president. But I will tell you this, when Obama became the President-elect his staff did everything possible to help prepare us for those jobs. They met with us; they gave us binders of information about how you do things –

DR. HOFFMAN: Of women, no.

DAN PFEIFFER: No, no binders of women, no. [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

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AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: And, ah, and so we; President Obama said no matter who wins I want to do the exact same thing for the people who come in. Now, we obviously thought that was going to be Hillary but, like, we, like the people – I had left the White House by then – the people who were there had binders, they had prepared for it. The Trump people wouldn't even meet with them. They didn't take the job seriously enough to learn what the job was before they showed up. And like that bothers me because I think these are very important jobs that people should take seriously and consider it a privilege to do and not sort of some, some sort of steppingstone to a Fox News Contributorship.

DR. HOFFMAN: All right. Good point. We've got lots more questions. Who has the Catchbox right now? All right.

DAN PFEIFFER: I have to say, I've been to several events where they've used the Catchbox before. This is the first time it's ever worked.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Oh.

DAN PFEIFFER: Yeah, so you guys are crushing it.

DR. HOFFMAN: It works great.

DAN PFEIFFER: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: We, we really enjoy it a lot.

DAN PFEIFFER: I've seen people hit in the face with it.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, over on the right side of the theater. Oh, does someone

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have it? Oh, great.

DAN PFEIFFER: Yeah.

Q: Ah, taking it as a given that Trump has engaged in a great deal of wrongdoing, and that the Senate will refuse to remove him from office, do you think the House should nonetheless go ahead and impeach him in order to create a record of the wrongdoing?

DAN PFEIFFER: I do. I believe very strongly that they should open –

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – impeachment inquiry. And I believe that for constitutional reasons I believe we can't allow a president to engage in crime and not face any accountability. That is the House's job and even if it feels politically inconvenient in some number of moderate districts to do so you have to do it. I also believe it is the right political thing to do. I think that if we; one of the hardest things to do is to wrest the, the microphone from Trump's hand and tell a story about Trump instead of him telling a story about himself. And an impeachment inquiry would give us the opportunity to do that. I think it should be broad-based; it should be about more than obstruction; it should be about the paying of hush, hush money payments and campaign finance laws which is, its an actual crime that Trump is an unindicted co-conspirator in and were he not President he would be in jail.

Right? We should be talking about that. We should be talking about the fact that he is using the office to enrich himself. I don't know if you guys saw this, but Mike Pence is in Ireland. He has meetings in Dublin. He is staying 120 miles away at Trump's hotel which means that all the Secret Service, all of the staff, all of the military aides are all going to have rooms in that hotel. The Federal

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Government is required to pay the Trump hotel for that. That is money, like, that is corruption. That is having a meeting in, at the University of Delaware and staying in New York. It is an insane proposition. And, that level of corruption should be investigated, should be talked about. And so, I believe an impeachment inquiry is the right thing to do and I think it's the politically smart thing to do and I hope the House which comes back to work on Monday gets to it.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, and I think a lot of liberals would agree with you that it should be done but is it likely to be done?

DAN PFEIFFER: I don't know. I really don't know. It's very confusing. They are sort of ambling into it. Ah, like a majority of the House Democratic Caucus believes we should start one. Gerry Nadler, who's the Chair of the Judiciary Committee and has been doing a very good job in, in that role, is, um, has said that what they're doing is a de facto impeachment inquiry and that they're going to do this investigation and decide whether they're going to write up Articles of Impeachment at the end of it. I think that's sort of, I think you either are, you're in for a penny or you're in for a pound. You should say you're doing it. You should use it to draw attention to it. You should build the case in front of the public about what has happened. And, it also would, just as a side note, an active impeachment inquiry would strengthen the Democrats hands in court cases to get witnesses to testify on documents. Like, if the, if Donald Trump is being investigated as part of an impeachment investigation for this Mike Pence weird corruption scandal that I just mentioned the, right now the House has no chance to get the emails within the White House that discuss that decision. Under impeachment their legal argument would theoretically be much stronger, and

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they could actually see that. Because otherwise we're just going to send them letters; they're not going to respond and we're going to send them another letter, they're not going to respond. We're going to send a subpoena; they're not going to respond. We're going to sue. It's going to go to court and in 2025 we'll figure it out. And that's not, I don't think that's a good approach.

DR. HOFFMAN: All right.

DAN PFEIFFER: Just me, I guess.

DR. HOFFMAN: We've got time for a couple of more questions. Let's take one from the middle, Charlotte?

Q: You haven't mentioned anything about Russian influence in the past election and I wondered if you could touch on that subject?

DR. HOFFMAN: Thank you.

DAN PFEIFFER: I; the other part that I would say when you ask like what could have been done differently? I just was not there in the White House during, when the Russian, when, like, when the, the Russian influence operation was discovered and how that was happening. So, I don't have a great window into that process. Obviously it was decisive in this election and in an election of 70,000 votes across three states. Many things were decisive and it would be crazy not to think that the things that Russia did, both the divisive, using the BOTS and Facebook ads to divide Democrats but also just the fact people forgot that the Access Hollywood tape came out in the morning and by the afternoon WikiLeaks had all of John Podesta's emails as a way to distract from that story which was something we now know the Russians did. Um, I am very worried about it happening again. There is a story, a very disturbing story last night about, um, how a, a bunch of BOTS, that people don't know are Russian but

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seem very potentially, ah, Russian, spread a rumor all across the internet that the shooter in Midland, Texas had a Beto O'Rourke sticker on his – was a Democratic Socialist who had a Beto O'Rourke sticker on his car. And that got thousand, tens of thousands, hundred of thousands of retweets, was pushed by, ah, members of the, members of the Conservative Party and so of conservative allies to the President. And so, I'm very worried about this happening. I am very concerned that the social media companies are not up to the task. I'm very concerned that the Federal Government is welcoming this, like they have, like they're a, they're bills, election security bills passed in the Senate, that passed in House that Mitch McConnell will not bring up. And I do believe that one of the reasons that he will not bring them up is because if there is going to be interference in this election it is most likely going to help Republicans. It's like Denmark is not hacking things to help the Democrats, right? [Chuckle.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: And so, um, this is, so I'm very, I'm very concerned about it. I think, hopefully the media will be better about how they deal with the information that comes from hacking than they were last time. But, yes, on the many, list of many things that keep me up at night, ah, Russian and other entities, ah, Gulf States, others who may get involved, get involved in these disinformation campaigns is very, very concerning.

DR. HOFFMAN: All right, let's take one more question from over on this far side, Justin? There you go.

Q: Got it.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

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Q: Welcome back, Dan. Good to see you.

DAN PFEIFFER: Of course. Thank you.

Q: What is it about your mindset as a – I'm not sure if you want to call yourself a political consultant, and operative – that makes you be able to see how arcane mailers are and that the whole structure needs to be changed and we, and you're advocating questioning in the system yet that's not what most other people who are making some bank –

DAN PFEIFFER: Um-hum.

Q: – working with some panicked candidates and consulting with them and people are just going to go, go with the guy that knows how to use a hashtag. Right? So, what is it about you that helps you to see something that's the forest for the trees that maybe some of these students some day could use that same plan? The world's going to be different when they're planning that but what's the big picture thing that makes you see something and not just hang on and go let's just keep doing it like that?

DAN PFEIFFER: Well, I think the reason – you may be, the important part when you said, ah, making bank which is what is, that is what is perpetuating the old system which is the financial incentives of the old guard is to keep doing it. They get paid by the mailer; they get paid by the TV ad. And so, why would they advocate for something different? I think a lot of younger people in politics see it. I think the advice I would give people is try, like, if and when you were ever in a position when you're in politics is don't be afraid to experiment. Right? Don't be afraid to fail. Try lots of things. Right? I, I tell some stories in this book about, like, I, like this was what, this was my favorite thing to do was like try new cool communications things. And some of them were embarrassingly bad.

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DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: I made, I helped make President Obama appear on a NASCAR show.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: He does not know anything about NASCAR, and he cannot fake it. So –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: – like, but we were trying, we were like well what is a way we can do something different? And so, it's just like, it's, the, like just don't be afraid to fail.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Just take risks. Try new things. Like some of them are going to be a disaster but you're going to find good ones. And, risk aversion is death in politics, and it is the thing that Washington, D.C. jams in your head when you are there because they, it is, they would much rather write about your failures than your successes. Right? And so, people are afraid to fail. Politicians are afraid to fail. Now you need a, you need to work for someone who incentivizes that sort of risk taking and Obama was like that. I worked for people before Obama who did not incentivize that. They did not want to take any risks and I thought that was a bad fit for me. And so, I think it is just be willing to. The other thing I would say is, find people under the age of 25 and talk to them all the time.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Like, they are the ones who know what's coming next.

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Right? Like –

DR. HOFFMAN: Like Instagram takeovers is a thing I never –

DAN PFEIFFER: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: – knew about.

DAN PFEIFFER: Yeah. Well, yeah, there's Instagram – like, some, someone is, one of these candidates is –

DR. HOFFMAN: Did I sound even old just saying that?

UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

DR. HOFFMAN: Like is that –

DAN PFEIFFER: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Is that already –

DAN PFEIFFER: Yeah, I wasn't going to say that.

DR. HOFFMAN: – already, is that already old? [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: It's very fast these days.

DR. HOFFMAN: Yes.

DAN PFEIFFER: But it's like, ah, like one of these presidential candidates that's going to discover TikTok pretty soon.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: TikTok.

DAN PFEIFFER: Yes, and it's going to be, it's probably not going to go well the first time but eventually someone's going to figure it out.

DR. HOFFMAN: All right. Well, um, on that note I think we're going to end, end our Q and A. But, if you didn't notice already, um, Dan's books are on sale outside in the foyer. Um, he has signed all of them. Thank, thank you for doing

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that earlier today. Um, we're doing something a little different this, this time on – well actually, before I get into my, into the next section, I wanted to find out just because I'm curious because this is our podcast –

DAN PFEIFFER: Yes.

DR. HOFFMAN: – not yours.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Is there anyone here – apparently Pod Save America has quite a lot of fans, super fans I might say. I can see a couple.

UNIDENTIFIED: [Indiscernible]

DAN PFEIFFER: [Chuckle.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Who here has already wearing merchandise from Pod Save America? [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Thank you.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.] All right. You've got a few. [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Yeah.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, thank you for being here. Um, and please do note that, ah, this is a, a across the partisan scale speaker series. We're bringing in, ah, the likes of Chris Christie later this semester, um, a UD alum. So, um, it's really fantastic to be able to work from a nonpartisan, ah, place to be able to talk to people from all different parts of the political spectrum. I think that Dan's right, we just need to do more talking. We need to do more listening. Um, so, on that note, we're doing a little something different this year. Um, [chuckle.] Ah, my colleague Nancy asked me to do what we've been doing on the podcast, our

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podcast –

DAN PFEIFFER: Yes. Yes, yes, yes.

DR. HOFFMAN: Ah –

DAN PFEIFFER: Do you have merch?

DR. HOFFMAN: We do not. Well –

DAN PFEIFFER: You should get merch.

DR. HOFFMAN: Ah, man.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Friend of the CPC?

DAN PFEIFFER: Yeah, whatever. It could work.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.] Anyhow, ah, we've been doing this sort of quick take. So, I like to call myself Doc Hoff. My students don't call me that. I'm trying to get it to catch on for like ten years –

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Um, so hopefully my students will try and take – now that it's officially Doc Hoff's Quick Take I wanted to talk –

DAN PFEIFFER: Why the beer?

DR. HOFFMAN: I'm going to tell you –

DAN PFEIFFER: Oh, okay. Sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Chuckle.]

DAN PFEIFFER: I thought it was a logo. I didn't know.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.] It –

DAN PFEIFFER: I didn't know it was specific to this Quick Take.

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DR. HOFFMAN: It was the best clipart I could find, okay?

DAN PFEIFFER: Okay.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: So –

DAN PFEIFFER: It's not a new thing. Clipart.

DR. HOFFMAN: No.

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.] We are children of the 90's.

DAN PFEIFFER: Yes, I [indiscernible].

DR. HOFFMAN: We know clipart.

DAN PFEIFFER: Yes.

DR. HOFFMAN: So, one thing that I mentioned that survey, ah, earlier in the, the conversation about, ah, if you could wave a magic wand who would you want to win the election and it reminded me of – you might remember this now – in the early 2000's, particularly 2000 and 2004, the question that surveys were asking Americans were who would you want to have a beer with? George W. Bush or at that time Al Gore and then it came, became popular again in 2004 with John Kerry. I did a little research on this. Ah, um, Sam Adams, the beer company, actually had something to do with this campaign.

DAN PFEIFFER: Oh.

DR. HOFFMAN: They were working with a, an organization, um, that was doing some polling around, ah, you know, what makes people like presidents. And so, I thought it was kind of interesting because I was thinking about this, this,

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you know, how have we changed from an electability issue to sort of who do you like, who do you want to hang out with? Like all of a sudden it's about us, right? We feel like we're the special ones. Who are we going to hang out with? And so, it sort of reminded me of the magic wand question, that's a similar question, if you had a magic wand who could you choose? And then it reminded me of this question which – I meant for that chart to show up later –

DAN PFEIFFER: Um-hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: – from –

DAN PFEIFFER: I can't see it –

DR. HOFFMAN: – Crooked Media –

DAN PFEIFFER: – so.

DR. HOFFMAN: Well, it's right over here. From Crooked Media – do you see the baby carriage?

DAN PFEIFFER: I do see a baby carriage.

DR. HOFFMAN: Crooked Media, ah, along with Change, asked the question who would you rather babysit your kids or your loved one's kids? And, I was going to leave you hanging here but I, I didn't because it's, it's already up there, but I'm curious what you guys think about this? Did you anticipate that Elizabeth Warren would be the top pick for someone to babysit your kids?

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Um.

DR. HOFFMAN: [Laughter.] What would your guess have been if I hadn't have pulled that one up?

AUDIENCE: Mayor Pete. Pete Buttigieg.

DR. HOFFMAN: Pete.

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AUDIENCE: Pete, Pete.

DAN PFEIFFER: Hum.

AUDIENCE: Beto.

DR. HOFFMAN: Uncle –

DAN PFEIFFER: Most, most recently a kid.

DR. HOFFMAN: Uncle – right.

DAN PFEIFFER: [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DAN PFEIFFER: They can relate.

DR. HOFFMAN: Uncle Joe? Come on, we're Delaware here.

AUDIENCE: [Indiscernible.]

DAN PFEIFFER: Tough. [Laughter.]

AUDIENCE: [Indiscernible.]

DR. HOFFMAN: So, I think my Doc Hoff's Quick Take tonight – stay tuned for next week, I'll have another one – Doc Hoff's Quick Take tonight is are we entering an era where we no longer care about a politicians policies or politics – I think that's been clear for some time – but these polling questions are indicating that it's really about how connected we feel to them and in this kind of like social media reality that we live in it's like, you know, what is the next thing, like, you know, who would you want to binge the next Netflix show with? You know?

AUDIENCE: [Laughter.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Or, like, who, who would the Sorting Hat put you in their house with, you know?

DAN PFEIFFER: Hum.

DR. HOFFMAN: It's like, it's, I feel like we're kind of getting to this place

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where we are losing an understanding of kind of the distance between ourselves and these candidates. Um, so, that's my Quick Take. Ah, tell me what you think about it. You know me, contact me, um, and come again next week. Ah, we have a political cartoonist who was fired from the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* for his anti-Trump cartoons. Um, really was the first person to ever be a part of this, the editorial board went, ah, to the, to the far right for Trump. Um, he's still cartooning. He's going to have a great presentation of cartoon, political cartoons for you to look at. These are always fun to watch political cartoons. They are at the heart of American democracy. We've, of any art form they have been certainly present throughout our entire history. I want to quickly mention, ah, our audio essay contest which is our third year. Um, students are welcome to submit two to four-minute audio essays and there's cash prizes. So, ah, no harm in, in submitting them. Um, it's open to University of Delaware students. Just visit cpc.udel.edu. And on that note, I'd like to say thank you so much and like a big round of applause for our guest.

AUDIENCE: [Applause.]

DR. HOFFMAN: Thank you.

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