



WOODS: All right, tell me about this office you're running for and also tell me your background.

WELTI: Yeah, so I'm running for Washington state insurance commissioner. And we're doing everything we can here to make the position a little more fun, a little more entertaining than maybe it's been in the past, because usually this position's hidden in the shadows. Nobody knows what it is. And let's be honest, insurance is kind of boring. But I've had a lot of fun talking about it, talking about free market solutions to make healthcare and insurance more affordable and more accessible. And it's been really cool, doing that from a libertarian perspective. And my background actually is in insurance, property and casualty initially, which is home and auto and all those kind of important things. But like a lot of people, Obamacare is actually what first turned me political. And then surprisingly, or maybe not surprising to some people, a few years later, my family lost insurance. So that's what's got me involved in politics and running for some free market reforms in insurance, is it's affected my family, like so many others, and I was tired of waiting for somebody else to do something about it.

WOODS: So how old are you? Do you mind if I ask that?

WELTI: Yeah, so I'm 35 years old, going on 36. And it's funny, I was looking in the mirror the other day, and definitely seeing some new gray hair starting to come in. I guess politics is going to age me a little quicker than maybe I wish, but it's interesting, actually, the gentleman I'm running against is a 40-year career politician. He's in his mid 70s, and simply put, he's going to see things through a different lens than I'm going to. And I think that is a distinct difference between him and I, because I'm going to be more able to have an eye towards the future and what the next generation needs when it comes to government reform and health insurance and health care reform.

WOODS: I would say right now, especially under the conditions we're living in right now, people are probably, to be perfectly blunt, less sympathetic to libertarianism than ever, because they look at this situation with the virus, and they think, obviously, we need to be told what to do by our leaders, so there's no way that libertarian solutions should really be taken seriously. And I think they may extrapolate from that into other areas and say, these people, these are just pie-in-the-sky people who are not reasonable. I mean, don't they understand that in some cases, we do need politics to help us out of certain problems? So I think my instinct is that for a while, we're going to have an even more uphill battle than usual.

WELTI: You know, Tom, I think that's a fair observation, and we could definitely be facing an uphill battle in that respect. But I actually think we have a great opportunity here to actually do the exact opposite. And why I think we do is because a lot of the issues that are popping up right now due to the virus have a lot of free market solutions, so much that we're actually seeing the FDA loosen regulations on some of these things right now. We're starting to see local municipalities loosen regulations to allow solutions to come into play.

So I've had a lot of fun just in the last couple of days really highlighting the solutions that I've been talking about for a couple of years and really showing how the free market, had we adopted these things earlier, we could have reduced the negative outcomes that we're seeing in the healthcare industry right now. What I mean by that is things like allowing us to import

medication from overseas, allowing us to open new hospitals by abolishing certificate-of-need laws, and even reducing and abolishing taxes on healthcare and medical providers. There's just so many things right now that are being stretched to the absolute tipping point, breaking point, rather, that had we just opened things up a little bit, even just a couple of years ago, this entire crisis would have looked differently. That doesn't mean that there still wouldn't have been issues or that there wouldn't have been sick people. But I believe truly in my heart that had we abolish certificate-of-need laws years ago and had we abolished taxes on healthcare and allowed us to import medication and supplies from other countries with greater ease, we would have seen an entirely different situation in America today.

WOODS: You talk about finding common ground stuff. So in other words, let me ask you this question. What would be in your mind a really low-hanging piece of fruit where you feel like, okay, maybe some recommendations we might have for healthcare, you've got to be deep into the libertarian weeds to see the benefits of it, but virtually everybody would see the benefits of blah, blah, blah, and the problems with having it. So what would be one of those?

WELTI: Yeah, I think building bridges is going to be a key component of really promoting our ideas and getting people to buy into them, because we have an issue right now where when we talk about some of the fringe issues, and I think there's a time and place for that, what we're doing is we're trying to swim upstream like salmon at spawning season. And instead, there's so many things we could be talking about that are going to be more easily digestible for people and would provide relief right away.

So one of the things I've been talking about recently is certificate-of-need laws, because in the media right now, everybody sees that we don't have enough beds and hospital space for all the patients that we're seeing from the coronavirus. So that's been a really easy topic for me to build a bridge on and just say, "Hey, did you know that there's actually rules or regulations that stop somebody from opening up more beds at a hospital or even opening up a new hospital?" And it's one of those things that most people don't know exists. So they don't have a preconceived notion, and it's an easy way to start a conversation and then take it from there.

WOODS: Yeah, I find people are shocked to find out that certificate-of-need laws exist. I mentioned it on the show the other day, but can you tell people what they are?

WELTI: Yeah, so certificate-of-need laws are something that absolutely need to be removed right away, because they don't benefit society in any way, shape, or form. And really, what it does is it prevents a hospital or any medical facility from potentially expanding their set of services that they're offering to the community. It also prevents or can prevent new hospital medical facilities from even opening in the first place. So think zoning laws, but even worse, because the people that are making these rules and decisions are often related to some existing medical facility that might have a benefit in those new beds not being opened.

So certificate-of-need laws are something that we absolutely need to remove, because in a time like now, when we're seeing hospital beds on the shortage side of things and space being a premium, we could have easily addressed this issue had we just let hospitals open whatever facilities that they thought that they needed at the time that they thought they needed it. And instead, we've had bureaucracy placed over our lives that has reduced access to medical care and crony capitalism, aiding and abetting it the entire way, with many board members from hospitals sitting on these committees and helping make these decisions.

WOODS: Okay, so there's that one. That I think is the easiest one, because as you say, nobody has a preexisting idea about it because nobody knows they exist, which by the way, is probably not a coincidence. It's like the Federal Reserve; they'd rather that you'd not know they're there. They'd rather just go about their business. They'd rather have business as usual occur without public knowledge. All right, so there's that. But what are some other things that you've been talking about in your campaign that that are libertarian that you think would help, that maybe might be, let's say, a little more controversial?

WELTI: Yeah, you know, Tom, I think the most controversial thing right now that I'm talking about is the: do I support Medicare for all or don't I? And the reason why it's become controversial is really because the Republicans haven't been able to offer any type of solution, and the Democrats have only offered one solution to the rising cost of health care. So we have kind of a, well, this is the only solution we've been given and we've been given it for so long, that now it becomes the default solution for folks. So anytime I talk about anything other than Medicare for All inherently is going to get some pushback.

But the great thing that I've been able to do is to show people how it can help immediately by offering things like a la carte insurance, because unlike everything else in our life, we get almost no choice in what our health insurance covers. And making an easy example so people can understand what that is, when you go to the grocery store and you walk down the cereal aisle and you see that there's 60 kinds of cereal to choose from, and everybody can pick what works best for them. Or your car insurance, where you get to decide, do you want a little bit of liability coverage, or do you want a lot? Do you want full coverage, or do you want just towing? And really showing people how choice is good, because it celebrates our diversity, and instead of forcing a one-size-fits-all solution on us, it allows us to be the individuals that we want to be, and the thought that maybe a five-year-old boy doesn't necessarily need the same coverage as a 65-year-old grandmother.

And when we can make those real basic comparisons, I find that that opens the door to new ideas instead of the standard, *Well, we need to abolish Obamacare, or Medicare for All is great*. Because I think there's a lot of ideas out there in the middle that would reduce costs immediately if we just allowed it to happen for the people that wanted to take advantage of it. Not everybody wants a la carte coverage. Some people want that Cadillac coverage, and that's okay. But we need to allow choice and flexibility in the market so that everybody can ultimately have more of what they want without forcing their neighbors to have a one-size-fits-all solution.

WOODS: What is it that you're talking about with regard to taxes on health care? Because I don't know what that means, or if that's just a federal thing, or is that something that you can actually do at the state level?

WELTI: Yeah, so taxes on healthcare I think are one of the most disgusting uses of government that we have today. And from a very principled, free market, libertarian standpoint, I've been really happy to shine the light on some of these hidden taxes that people don't even realize that we're paying.

So things like aspirin, when you go to the local convenience store and you buy an aspirin, the government takes a cut of that. The medicine that you take so you don't have a headache from a long day at work, the government thinks that they need their 10% of that medication fee that you have to pay to be healthy. They go as far as taxing the bedsheets at the hospitals that we use, so that in a bed that you might actually die in, they're going to get a cut of the pie and they're going to tax it you to all high hell.

The income tax that doctors pay: 25% of the income that the average doctor pays goes to the federal government. That's money that comes directly out of your pocket that's going to the federal government just because you wanted to go see the chiropractor or the naturopath or the pharmacist or the eye doctor. And that's got to stop.

We also need to remove things like B&O taxes at the local level. We need to remove property taxes on medical facilities. The nonprofit hospital, the St. Mary's local hospital that is doing so many pro bono surgeries in a nonprofit way, they still have to pay property tax. Why is that? Why does your local doctor have to pay property tax so they've got a place to work and to heal people?

So I absolutely believe that taxation is theft, and if we're going to start reducing taxes on anything, I think going for something like healthcare is an easy way to immediately help

people today. I've had a lot of luck talking to people about that, and I've yet to find anybody that thinks that we should be taxed to stay alive, so it's been a real fruitful and fun conversation. And so far I haven't found any takers in the legislature to really back me up on that, but with this coronavirus and we're seeing people get furloughed or seeing their hours reduced to work in hospitals, I think now is a perfect time for us to talk about the cut of the pie the government's taking off the backs of these heroes that are working as doctors and nurses. And we should be reducing that taxation down to zero and letting people keep their medical care dollars.

WOODS: I want to talk about the FDA for a minute, because you have mentioned the FDA also. Now, for a while, we saw states passing right-to-try laws, where they were going to say that in their state, a terminally ill person would have the option to try a non-FDA-approved drug. Now, maybe there's some caveat in there that I'm leaving out, but it was something like that. And then my understanding is that Trump signed into law a national right-to-try act, so maybe that renders these unnecessary. But what are other things at the state level where the FDA would be relevant to your conversation, given that it's a federal agency?

WELTI: Yeah, in all frankness, a lot of the stuff that I'll end up talking about is federal, and because I'm not in any type of federal position or even a state legislative position, really what my attempt is or what my goal is is to be using my bully pulpit to talk about any idea that I think the legislature needs to take up, and to really be an advocate for people that have been complaining about these rules and how they've been hurting their lives for so many years, but they've never had a politician that's been willing to say the things that aren't politically expedient. It's not popular to talk about dismantling the FDA and really highlighting its failures.

And right now, we live in a government where basically people don't feel like they're being listened to. And it took a long time to get something as simple as the right to try here in Washington, and yes, I think Trump passed it as well. And it shouldn't be like that, and we just don't have enough politicians that are talking about everybody's freedoms all of the time. They often get stuck on picking and choosing what battle they feel like is going to make them most electable or doing whatever their party says. And that's just not who I am.

So I'm very much looking forward to using the microphone that I'll be given to talk about the things in the FDA that are harming Washingtonians and to really try to work with our attorney general to go after the federal government for overreach. Whether we get a new attorney general here in Washington or even reelect the current Bob Ferguson that we have – you know, Bob Ferguson, for example, loves suing Trump and the federal government. I would love to work with him to sue the Trump administration over the use of the FDA and how it's eroding states' rights and the right for us to have access to the medication that we want without government, especially the federal government, interfering with what the local states do. So I would love to take that on. I think we can make some headway there. And ultimately, if we don't, the cost of healthcare is only going to get more expensive.

WOODS: One of the things that I hear libertarian policy people talking about is being able to buy insurance across state lines. And now, is that not something that Trump said he wanted? And did he not get that? Because again, things that are too deep in the weeds, I generally don't know about, because I'm not really a policy guy.

WELTI: Yeah, back in 2015 and 2016 when Trump was campaigning, he did talk about allowing people to buy insurance across state lines, and unfortunately, we just haven't seen any action on that at all up to this point. And I think it's odd that we can buy our car parts from anywhere we want in the world. We can buy our TVs from anywhere we want in the world. We can buy our food from anywhere we want in the world. But for some reason, health insurance is something that, nope, you can only buy it in your state.

And to me, that just needs to change immediately, because what it does is it just removes choice and flexibility and, most importantly, competition. And competition is what breeds

excellence, and if we bring more competition into the market, we can in one sense force these insurance companies to create better business practices, where right now here in Washington, we have 12 counties that only have one choice in insurance providers. If they could buy insurance from, let's say, Oregon or Idaho or Texas or New York, there'd be a lot of people in those counties that would feel a lot happier, that they're getting a better value or better coverage for their needs.

But not only from opening it up across state lines, we should open up across national borders as well. If there's a company in Europe that wants to sell me a really top-notch insurance plan for half the cost of an American company, if I want that, I should be able to buy it. And if you want it, you should be able to buy it. I don't believe government should be limiting these choices, and I think it's ridiculous that we even have to have this conversation. And I would highly encourage Trump to use that executive order that he loves using to just abolish the laws that steal our freedom to buy whatever health insurance that we want.

WOODS: Now, you're running as a Libertarian, and you don't need me to tell you that the media will sometimes want to pretend that the party doesn't exist and that you don't exist. So you have to be a little bit more creative when it comes to getting your message out, whereas if you're Joe Biden running for president, well, until there's a pandemic, everybody's very interested in what you have to say. It's interesting, by the way, isn't it interesting that Bernie and Biden seem to have vanished completely because of the pandemic? You barely even know they exist. It's completely shut them up. But in normal conditions, everybody would be salivating over their remarks. So how do you at least partially overcome that?

WELTI: Yeah, you're absolutely right, and I knew that that was going to be an issue going into this campaign. So when I started analyzing the race and trying to figure out what was going to be necessary to win, that was one of the first things that I wanted to address. I'm not going to have that free media that a Republican or Democrat would have, which means I'm going to have to do a lot more work to reach the people that I need to reach. So this has actually been one of the coolest, most exciting parts about this campaign, and why I think we have a real, legitimate shot not only to win, but to win by quite a lot. And what we've been doing is just campaigning longer and harder.

So I actually started this campaign about two and a half years ago and spent a lot of time traveling the state, networking, building infrastructure, making friends, networking, starting to solicit for donations, and really building a campaign team from the ground up well in advance. And why that's been good is it allowed us time to learn as we go, to make mistakes and to have plenty of time to correct them, and to get bodies in the right places to really make us really efficient.

And the coolest part about this whole thing, this whole campaign is how we're actually reaching voters on the ground. And what we're doing is we're traveling full time now. Back in September, I quit my job and I moved into a 28-foot travel trailer that I'm hauling with my truck, and we're going around the state, one campsite at a time. And when we get to town, when we get to a campsite just outside of a major metropolitan area, we drop hitch and set up camp for a couple of weeks. That allows me to do outreach in the surrounding areas every single day. I wake up every single day, and I get to go into whatever the closest town is that I'm in and go talk to business owners, to go to their farmers' markets, to go to their street fairs, to go to their Chamber of Commerce meetings, and to spend all of my time focused on this single issue of making healthcare and government more accessible, accountable, and affordable.

The trailer has been cool, because we actually remodeled it from the ground up. We bought a really old, nasty trailer to keep costs down, and we used volunteers and rebuilt it from the ground up so it actually be livable and usable for myself and my family and my campaign team. So when we're driving down the highway, and I've got a whole bunch of five-foot

banners on the trailer, just you know, yelling "Libertarian," yelling "Anthony Welty," and really being good, cheap advertising.

And what's really neat about it is I think it's kind of the old-fashioned way of doing things, and going out, meeting as many people as possible, shaking their hands, and looking them in the eye, so that they know that you're not some dirtbag politician. And I think we've gotten away from that. And I think that's one of the reasons why people are apathetic and maybe don't vote as much.

But in doing so, in doing it this way, it's led to a lot of great things for the campaign already. My kickoff party was about two months ago, and we had 160 people show up to a Libertarian kickoff party. That's huge. We've already raised just about \$50,000. That's triple what the incumbent has raised. Over the last three cycles for this position, there's been seven other candidates. I've out-fundraised all of them combined. And even today as we're having to pivot the campaign away from the boots-on-the-ground outreach due to the coronavirus, because we started so early, because we have such a great infrastructure, being locked down at home hasn't caused our campaign to skip a beat. And frankly, I've been able to pivot a lot quicker than I think some of the other candidates that are running for office as well maybe haven't been able to do. So this has been a lot of fun doing it the old-fashioned, way really trying to meet people where they're at, and to just show how we can serve the community.

And a lot of times when I get into town, we'll host charity events. We'll host food drives or homeless feeds to really give back to the communities, because I know that I'm only there for a week or two, and I'm going to have to move on, and win, lose, or draw, I want to make an impact on the lives around me. So it's been fun to get to do some outreach in those small towns, do some charity, give back to the local businesses and the local community. And it's resonating with people. So media or no media, I think we're going to win this thing, and they can ignore you until they don't, and then eventually they'll join us. So I think we're on that upward trend of getting him to join us here real soon.

WOODS: What's your website?

WELTI: Yeah, so people should definitely check out my website. It's AnthonyWelty.com. You can also find me on the social media. My hashtags are #BeFree, and then #Welty4WA. I'd love to hear from other libertarians. This race is important for a lot of reasons, but my goal here is a couple things. I want to help bring our ideas into state government. And if I win this race, I'll be the highest elected Libertarian in the entire country. I believe this is a completely winnable race, because we've got a 40-year career politician that isn't out campaigning. He's not out fundraising. I am. And we're doing things that have never been done before at a state level as a Libertarian. So I'd really love your support. Feel free to come with your ideas too. I can't win this by myself. If you guys have any ideas on how we can make insurance or healthcare and government better, reach out to me. Again, that's AnthonyWelty.com and #BeFree.

WOODS: Okay, all right, I'll check it out. Well, I'll put some of that stuff up at TomWoods.com/1626, our show notes page for today. And good luck. We all hope it comes out well for you. Thanks a lot.

WELTI: Thank you so much, Tom. I appreciate it.