



★ FORTRESS ON A HILL

Ep 76 transcript

SPEAKERS

Danny Sjursen, Chris 'Henri' Henrikson, Mike Monetta

Chris 'Henri' Henrikson

Welcome everybody to Fortress On A Hill. We have a really exciting guest for you guys today Mike Monetta from Wolf-PAC is here to talk to us about all things Wolf-PAC and what all the great work that it does trying to get money out of politics. Mike, how are you doing?

Mike Monetta

I'm good. Thanks for having me on the show guys. Appreciate it.

Chris 'Henri' Henrikson

Oh, absolutely...happy happy to have you here. So I'm just gonna give a little intro here from the the Wolf-PAC website. Mike Monetta grew up in this sleepy little town of Clermont, New Hampshire. He didn't pay much attention to politics, while playing soccer, going to concerts following the Patriots and Red Sox or fishing on Lake Winnepesaukee. But once you begin learning how much the corruption in Washington DC affects all of our lives by listening to independent media sources, he knew he had to get involved. In 2014 he led the way to make Vermont the first state in American history to call for an article five convention for the purpose of restoring free and fair elections. Since then, he's been directly involved with four other states passing similar legislation. He is now the national director of Wolf-PAC and spends most of his time working with volunteers throughout the country. So Mike, will you give us give us a quick you know, kind of down and dirty on on what Wolf-PAC does? What are what are its main goals and what what you do there?

Mike Monetta

Sure. Well, that intro just reminded me of all the things I used to do before political activism completely consumed in my life. Wow, that'd be nice blue fishing, sports, all that stuff. Sounds to me nice hobbies can be. Um, yeah, so I guess I'll just give a background of how I came to Wolf-PAC and I think it's going to be similar to a lot of the same ways that people listening came to politics or got interested in that is, you know, I just started had very like, like you just said vert fairly normal life, you know, didn't care about politics too much. But then I just started paying attention a little bit, listening to independent media, essentially anything other than cable TV. Um, and I just started to realize like, wow, like if we don't fix this problem of corruption in DC, you know that the special interest takeover of our government, we're going to be in really serious trouble. So I had to get involved once I started realizing of what the reality was. And I decided to join Wolf-PAC because the plan just instantly made sense to me. To give you the really short version of what we're doing, we we believe that the only way to solve this problem of the corruption the big special interest takeover of our government is a constitutional amendment, a US constitutional amendment because an amendment is the only thing that can go above Congress and go above the Supreme Court to be the new law of the land. And there's only two ways to get an amendment according to the way Article five of the Constitution is written, two thirds of Congress can propose an amendment meaning that two thirds of each chamber, the Senate in the house, would have to approve of an amendment and then it would go out to the states to be ratified, it wouldn't become part of the Constitution until three quarters of the states approved that 75% extremely high threshold, the only other way to do it is you can get two thirds of the state governments to apply for a convention to build a proposed amendment that way at the state level, essentially going around Congress. So really important to remember though, that either way the amendment is proposed through Congress or through the states, it still has the exact same safeguard of ratification afterwards. So all we're really talking about is who's gonna who's gonna write and propose this amendment. So for us, we don't believe Congress is really capable right now of solving this problem. And this is the this corrupt system is what got them in power. Even good people go to Congress with very good intentions get trapped in the system or they end up having to raise you know, obscene them. amounts of money to be able to keep their power. So for us, it's a very easy decision out of those two. Right? The state legislators are far more responsive to the people, they'll still take meetings with us, they'll, they'll hear us out. I mean, you try. I mean, I encourage everybody, if you haven't talked to your state legislators, definitely give it a try. It may take you a little bit of effort, but you will get a meeting. And they will hear you out on Congress. Good luck. You know, if you write to them about a particular issue, you're most likely just going to get back a form letter. Right. So and on top of it just being the more logical path. The majority of us constitutional amendments have included the states calling for a convention on specific topics. And then when we get close Congress capitulates to that pressure from the States and proposes the amendment out themselves. So even if you think that Congress has a better way to get an amendment, having the state governments start demanding the amendment through the application process, for convention is still the most powerful way to do it. So that's what we're doing.

Chris 'Henri' Henrikson

The mentioning the the the gridlock of Congress the inability to, for things to be changed or debates to be had. This is that the point in the year when the defense budget starts getting talked about in sometimes in great detail, but usually it's in very, very little detail, and whether or not they've decided whatever astronomical number last year was 700 and \$50 billion. I believe it's supposed to be even

more this year. But it's not really discussed about where all that money goes into and and frankly, the giant share of it, that ends up getting eaten by the defense industry. I think it's 58 or 59 cents of every discretionary tax dollar that America has goes to the defense budget. So I'm I'm curious about how how Wolf-PAC is analyzing things like that in terms of you know, the bigger parts of our economic, our economic work that needs To change, but it's certainly still a part of what's happening.

Mike Monetta

Yeah, for sure. Well, that I mean, it's motivation. I would say more than anything. I mean, how that relates to Wolf-PAC and the people that come and volunteer for us. These are things that motivate us to take action, right? Because when you look at the root of the problem, this dysfunction, we have a Congress right now that's incapable of standing up for the American people. They just can't do it. And that's proven out through data, right? There's a Princeton study is the one that gets pointed to the most, which is they did data over the last four or five decades. And there was literally zero correlation to what the American people wanted for legislation and what Congress actually passed. Zero. So that's not a representative government. We just don't have it. Right. So when you're talking about the budget, and you know, the numbers that you threw out, as far as, you know, military defense spending, it comes down to our government, our government's priorities, right? Because when you spend 50% or More of all of our disk discretionary spend thing to defense, your job, we're just not able to do some of the other things that we need done in this country. And we don't believe that we're going to be able to fix that. And actually have a congress that starts passing budgets that, you know, represents more of what the American people need, until we fix the way that they get elected. We just don't think it's possible. So we think this is a first step to be able to get to some of those other changes. And I mean, yeah, when you're, when you're talking about the defense budget, there's one example from DOD just recently, where there was a proposal to cut it by 10%. I'm sure you guys have talked about this. Right. And Congress was incapable of even doing that. Right? There was 93 total people in the House of Representatives that voted for that decrease 10 just 10%, not 20 or 30, or 40. And they couldn't do it. So that's why we also always try to go remind people that this is a very bipartisan problem. It's a bipartisan solution. But it's a bipartisan problem that 93 people supported the decrease. But that means over 100 democrats said, No, we don't even want to decrease it by 10%. We don't have other priorities. So the reason that they did that is directly related to how much campaign cash they got from the defense industry. And actually, you can look that up yourselves to anybody who's interested. There was one study. I forget who did the study, but it was the people who voted against doing the decrease. got three times I think he's just in the Democratic Party three times the amount of campaign contributions from the defense industry, then those who said that we should have a decrease. So that's corruption, right? That I mean, these are people who are they're not having honest debates about what's Right for the country, they're having debates about, hey, if I vote this way is, you know, what, how much money am I leaving on the table? For my next campaign? Right? So that's, that's the corruption that we have that we have to address. They're beholden to these special interests. And it's again, it's not that they're bad people. A lot of a lot of, you know, good people go into Congress, and they just get absolutely trapped in the system. That's just, it's just become dangerous, honestly, to American citizens and our future.

Chris 'Henri' Henrikson

A lot of people really easily fall into the stereotype of, if we think of the military is good, their missions must be good, too. And that's not at all at all the case. And so those those questions really need to be asked.

Mike Monetta

Yeah, for sure. I yeah, it's about priorities. Right. And what what are we doing with our taxpayer dollars? Where is it going? Is it going to where it's going to benefit, you know, our country the most the citizens the most, or is it going to you know, the largest and employer on planet Earth, right, which is the kind of guy?

Danny Sjursen

You know, I think it's interesting what you said about these, like recipients in Congress not all being bad people. I think that's important in the sense that, you know, folks tend to fall in one of three categories on this issue. And you tell me if I'm, you know, diagnosing this somewhat correctly, most Americans either don't know the degree of what I like President Eisenhower republican type called the unwarranted influence right of the military industrial complex as he coined it. So there's the people that don't know, which is a lot. And then there's the people who don't care, either because they are recipients or they're in kind of the establishment machine, or they just support their party. So it's not a problem as long as their party's in charge. Or they, you know, kind of throw their hands up to a certain extent. Say it's like a nihilism. It's it's look, we can't do anything about this. They're all monsters, right? All politicians are evil. And yet what you're saying is, and I think it's correct, a lot of these folks do go to Washington with some pretty good intentions, or at least plenty of them do. And yet, from my limited experience on the hill, these congressmen you know, they have to raise so much money, minimum threshold wise to even run a congressional campaign, even in a poor district. And then they spend, I mean, it sounds like the worst job in the world. They spend, you know, days of their week in like a smelly phone Center, which isn't even all that nice, you know, dialing for dollars, and it sounds pretty soul crushing. So maybe you could dig in just a little bit more on, you know, what does the What does this money in politics look like to a freshman Congressman, what does he face He or she, when she she or she shows up. And, you know, how does the money in politics particularly, we'll just focus on the military industrial complex here for the sake of this, how does it chip away at the idealism in practice? Right, because I think people are they appreciate humanized narratives.

Mike Monetta

Yeah, for sure. Well, the first thing I would say is if you really want to get a first hand, look at what that looks like, for a first year, Congressman, or in any year Congress person, check out the new documentary that was just released last week on HBO called the swamp. And it really gives you a very good account, firsthand account. falls, falls a couple congresspeople around. Lawrence Lessig is in it, and he explains it really well. He's a big ally of ours at Wolf Pack. He's, you know, he will testify committee hearings for us and stuff. He's very, very involved in the fight. He's a main part of that documentary. And with what's explained, is it's so corrupt. It's almost unimaginable. I'll say that first, like, you know, we have committees, right? That's how our government functions, because all of them can discuss every issue. So when a piece of legislation is introduced, it goes to a committee. So if it has to do with finances, it'll go to, you know, ways means committee, it has to do with environment, it'll

go to an environmental committee, etc, right. And if you're the chair of one of these committees, you have a lot of power, you can decide what comes up for a vote, you can usually use your power to get the votes you need to pass or make legislation fail. And one of the things that's explained very well in there firsthand is that to get chairmanship of these committees now, you have to raise the most amount of money for your party. And it used to be that to be the chair of a committee, you got that position because you were the most informed you knew the most about the issue that has been completely reversed now and it's all about who's the best fundraiser. So that right there, I think tells you quite Wait a bit about the way that Congress is currently functioning. And they keep they keep a list, you know who the leaders of these parties, Speaker of the House and a president, they have a list of how much each person is bringing in for the party. And if you're not bringing in enough, you're going to get heat for it. They're going to constantly be badgering you, and they're not going to give you assignments, you know, that actually give you any kind of power in Congress. So just that alone is just absolutely backwards. And there's no way government can function properly. If it's if that's how it's run. And that's what it's turned into. And you're right, they do have to go across the street because it's not legal to call from the from the Capitol grounds. So they go into call centers and they spend up to 70% of their time, calling people and asking them to fund their campaign their con it's we've created a constant campaign cycle, where instead of going to Washington, DC and like hearing from there constituents and passing legislation that people are emailing them about in their district, they are instead going across the street and talking to people who actually have the money to give them huge donations. And that's not me, you know, it's probably not you guys, it's not most of us. It's a really, really tiny percentage of the population. And that tiny percentage, like I said earlier in that study shows the correlation. That same study shows the correlation of people who actually did have enough money and the special interest to contribute to campaigns, and there was a correlation to what they wanted and what Congress passed for legislation. So, you know, this government was supposed to be dependent upon the people and it's, it's turned around now, where it's, instead of being dependent on the people, Congress is now dependent on the special interest. So that's what we must focus on and solve. We've got to fix this first, before we can think about solving any of the other issues that we really care about. And there are plenty of them.

Danny Sjursen

You know, that swamp documentary is pretty interesting. And it's a pretty good take. And I don't know, I'm just, like ready for some really artistic director to do like a Mr. Smith Goes to Washington except it's 2020. And I think that the perfect, you know, story would be one of these, I think definitely they should choose the director, right or the screenwriter, choose a democratic congressperson who the Democratic Party, one of these veterans that they very carefully right combat veterans that they very carefully recruited in 2016 and 2018. You know, to overcome that image of the republicans being the tough party, the military party, but I think it should, you know, it would be a fictional depiction or even documentary of one of those guys in particular, you know, coming in with all these high minded beliefs and then finding out what you're describing Which is that 70% of my time is in these musty call centers. And then, you know, the output, you know, sort of the animal, the Animal Farm moment, you know, where the pig starts, just, you know, walking on two legs, like the humans would be this, like, democratic congress person who served in these absurd wars voting, you know, against pulling out of Afghanistan and against cutting the defense budget by even 10%. Right. And that's kind of the moment, you know, and I don't know if people would care. I don't know if that kind of, you know, sort of cinematic

depiction would matter. But it's what you're describing. Is that right? It's like this flip of the Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, except it's it's far worse today. No,

Mike Monetta

yeah. No, I love that idea. Actually, you should have had me sign an NDA before coming on here.

Danny Sjursen

Ah, no worries. No doubt within an hour. There's too many ideas. Too many ideas. Yeah.

Mike Monetta

No, that's powerful. I think that I'm personally I think people would really appreciate that perspective. I really do. I think that's it. Good idea someone should make it. You know, one thing I've been doing recently is researching just some videos that are out there with regards to this issue. And I was really encouraged to find out that some of the best performing ones are just purely informative. But it tells me that people are really starving for information around this. I don't think people really quite grasp it. And I think further they don't really know what to do about it, you know?

Danny Sjursen

Absolutely. You know, so, okay. You know, I know you don't probably have a whole ton of statistics in front of you, but in broad strokes, you know, if we take, for example, the defense industry, which is just one of the areas that you look at, and say, you know, what are the the big wigs like Raytheon, Lockheed, Honeywell, I mean, what does it look like in practice from there and like, what what what are they throwing at these Congress people? Is it just money and You know, how does it work in practice? Right? What is the life cycle of a lucky lobbyists?

Mike Monetta

Yeah, I bet if I think on average, for some of the top ones, it's probably around 3 million a year, from what I've seen. And it all adds up to really huge amounts of money. But it's actually more than that, if you really want to get into it. I mean, the campaign funds are sort of the backbone of the whole problem. But, you know, when a company is able to hire lobbyists, for example, to be there full time, then you're talking about a different level two, which is creating relationships. And that's, that's another thing that, you know, will likely have to be addressed at some point here, too. We're not trying to solve all problems at Wolf-PAC. We're going for the root of the problem, which is the campaign finance system. But the amount of influence that these lobbyists have is out of control, too. And I can't afford to send a lobbyist to Washington DC to be there full time. And when I come when these companies are able to do that, What they're really doing is building relationships. They're getting to know them, they're getting to know their kids, they go out to dinner with them. And then, of course, added to that is the fact that they know that if they don't vote the right way on a piece of legislation that that lobbyists could turn around and tell their company, hey, you know, look, look how they voted here this way. This is not this is not a this is not our guy anymore. It's not a woman anymore. Right. And, and, and then the campaign funds dry up. So, I mean, it's just at the end of the day, its power and influence, is really what we're fighting here. Right? It's a system that where the people's power in government has been lessened to basically zero. So, you know, you said earlier that there's the three levels of citizens, right, the people

who don't know and then there's the people who don't care. And then there's the group of people who do. They do care. They do understand what's happening. They do care what they just throw their hands up, right? And they just say, well, it's it's, it's already too far gone. Right? And what's the what's the point? And there's a stat that Larry Lessig, who I mentioned earlier that he quotes a lot from this poll, where 92% of the people, these are American citizens. 92% of the people polled said that they think the corruption in DC of big money in politics is a serious problem. But 90% think about that number 90% of those same people thought that it would not be solved or that there was no solution at all. So we are fighting, you know, a little bit of an information battle, just making sure people understand that there is a solution, which we believe we have a very strong solution here at Wolf-PAC and an apathy war as well but I am doing just to give you a little bit of Pope here. I don't think we need everybody to win this battle. You know, there's that Margaret Mead quote, that we use a lot of Wolf Pack, which is, you know, a small percentage of people can change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that ever has. So it's never 5060 70% of people that get active and change things. No way. It's a small percentage of a society that gets active. It's because we have so much power. Right? And especially with the internet, the way that we're able to connect and spread information the way we are, right now with this podcast. The fact that people can go to websites like ours in a wolf pack that organize volunteers, donors, members, you know, people who chip in just a little bit to keep us going. insane amount of power right now, to be able to organize by the way they're coming for the internet to work on right now. We still have it right. So if you think about 300 million people plus in the United States and 90 Nine out of 10 of us want this problem solved. Man, they don't have a chance. I mean, we don't even have a fraction of 1% right now, you know, active and fighting for this. If we had 1%, it would be over 2% 5% 10% Oh my god, like we'd get it done in a year if we had that kind of support. So I think it's just a matter of time. I don't I do not think it's a matter of what I mean, I don't do not think it's a matter of F. I think it's only a matter of time. And an amendment is just this is how we solve big problems, Americans throughout our history. We've amended our constitution 27 times 28. One is going to be one that, you know, ends the corruption of big money and special interest in our politics and restores a free and fair election system that we can actually be proud of. That's what the 20th amendment has to do.

Danny Sjurson

Yeah, I mean, that's, it's actually excellent to hear a degree of optimism and hope and I think it's important people on Understand that we have done this before. And I think what you're identifying is that there really isn't a salvation is not coming from, you know, your individual congressmen per se, you know, it's not going to necessarily come from the people who can, you know, be part of the problem. It's not going to come from some, you know, nibbling at the edges legislation. I mean, you guys are saying congressional amendment right the same way we ended slavery and, you know, came up with birthright citizenship. I mean, if we can make alcohol illegal and then make it not illegal, 12 years later, right, we can do this right. This is more important. And, you know, I think what you're saying about amendments is really important, because that seems to be the crux here.

Mike Monetta

Yeah, exactly. Right, giving women the right to vote. I mean, we solve really big, big national issues by amending our Constitution. That's what it's there for. And when at the end of the The convention when they were drafting the Constitution, I don't know if you know this history, but at the time Congress was

going to be the only body of government capable of proposing amendments to it. And general Mason stood up and he said, Hold on here, there's a flaw. What if Congress becomes a problem? What if they become corrupt and they're incapable of fixing themselves, we have to give people a second way to be able to change this document, we're going to be stuck. And they all agree. And they put in the state based route for the content for the states to be able to apply for convention when two thirds of them ply for convention on a topic, certain topic, then the states can come together and propose an amendment. Again, the ratification would be exactly the same. It would have to go out and be go out of convention and be approved by 38 states to 75% of our states afterwards. So it's an absolute no brainer in this case, and there's precedents right so for doing well Wolf Pack is doing. This goes all the way back to the Bill of Rights, just some interesting history for you. Congress initially was not going to propose those 10 amendments, and New York and Virginia called for a convention to be able to propose them themselves right at the state level. Now, that might not seem like a lot of states, but back then that was actually 20% of the state's need to call convention right now. We're only at 15. So that was the first time that it was used, and then it's continued to be used throughout our history. The best example is the 17th amendment. Very parallel situation that we have today because the way that US senators used to get into office was appointments by the state legislators. And that was very overt corruption there bags of cash left at the statehouse. Right. So the people hated of this country that they so they did petitions, they did protest, they did local legislation, state level legislation, they did resolutions asking Congress to propose an amendment for the direct level. No senators, valid referendums, I mean, they did everything right. All of that is also happening right now around this issue. Thankfully, there's groups like represent us working on state level legislation, you know, a lot lots of good activism right now happening around this issue. But just like back then it wasn't until they came in one by one and started applying for a convention for that one purpose. In this case for the direct election of senators. They got all the way to just one state shy of the two thirds needs to force the convention in Congress capitulated and propose the amendment out to the states themselves. So the best example of what may happen here, as we get to 15 2025 states, demanding a convention to fix our broken campaign finance system, Congress will very likely do it themselves. We believe the convention could write a better amendment than Congress could and we'd love to see it happen. It was meant to be used. It's a democratic process. It's got the same safeguard. of ratification. But the thing is the flaw, if there is one in in the constitution or you know, or article five, the Constitution is that Congress is going to have to ultimately call the convention. Right. So, are they ever going to get up give up that monopoly they've had from proposing amendments now for over 200 years? I don't know. You know, we might have to force him to with it with a lawsuit if we can get up to 34 states for our issue, right. But, um, but but our stance is we're gonna get this amendment, whether Congress proposes it, or the states come together to write it and propose it. We really don't care at the end of the day, we just want the problem solved. And if you guys are interested, I'll give you one more example of the conventional process being used to pressure colonies course. I would say I'm talking too much. There's just so much information, you know. So okay, so Another example is the late 1980s. The people of this country mostly progressive, or sorry, conservative minded people saw the budget as out of control. So the state started calling for a convention for a balanced budget amendment one by one. And they got all the way up to just two states shy of the states needed to force a convention on that topic. And what happened and now this is not me saying or Wolf Pack saying this is actually the Congressional Research Service did four different reports on the convention process, I highly encourage anybody to check those reports out. If you really want to dive into this. The

Department of Justice has also done reports. American Bar Association, it's really it's really interesting stuff and you can find those on our website Wolf, Wolf, dash pack.com wolf hyphen, Pac calm and just go to the about tab under Resources. And we have all these reports linked. They're very in depth very thorough, but the Congressional Research Service pointed out, and one of them that the fact that the states were calling for a balanced budget amendment convention is one of the things that spurred Congress to pass fiscal responsibility legislation which ultimately led to the balanced budget in the 90s. So that's another example of the states using this convention process as a way to pressure Congress into action. In fact, they call it the prodding effect in the Congressional Research Service reports. And I mentioned one person at one of the committees about the convention process called it akin to batting a mule, the board, which is very visual, which I love. We're essentially batting a stubborn mule, which is Congress with a board by using this process. So yeah, it's just logical, you know, and we have we have our own battles, though. I mean, we're battling misinformation about the convention process. There are some if you look if you Google it You're going to see a lot of fear about how Oh my God, we can't call for a convention on any issue because we have one, we're just gonna be able to rewrite the Constitution. It's all nonsense. And all you really have to do is go read article five yourself. It's just a paragraph and it's crystal clear, by convention only has the power to propose you can't change the constitution at a convention. That's conspiracy theory pushed by, you know, very, very tiny percentage of people in this country, but unfortunately, you know, misinformation is, is out there these days. And so that's one downside of the internet, I think, as we all know.

Chris 'Henri' Henrikson

So I'd like to like to switch gears here a little bit and talk about poverty among active duty troops and veterans. Just a quick statistic, one, one out of every 10 veterans I think it was in 2016 are on Medicaid and a great majority of them. Their injuries are not Great enough to receive VA services like I'm 100% rated so I get to go there but not everybody gets to and thinking about that and with with Wolf-PAC You know, it had me thinking about the the little amount of economic power going into the military can sometimes give you know, we we they make it seem big and flashy at the start. But after that happens you're you're left with possibly getting food stamps for your family because your your paycheck isn't high enough, whether that's active duty or as a veteran, you're receiving disability. So I'm wondering about how Wolf-PAC as an organization, how they view veterans more generally in an economic sense in terms of their power to be members of the society.

Mike Monetta

Yeah, oh, wow. Well, that's motivation for me too. I mean, it's heartbreaking honestly. So look at some of those statistics and we have some some veterans are Some of our, you know, most dedicated supporters. And oh my god, I mean I have you ever imagine you have but you seen the documentary "Thank you for your service."? Have you seen it? done by Tom Donohue. Yeah,

Danny Sjursen

Absolutely.

Mike Monetta

I mean, it's awful What? how we treat our veterans I can't... I can't even stomach it. And it's unacceptable. I mean, that's the we don't really take a whole lot of stances on things. You know, just me personally. It's completely unacceptable. And I don't think you'd find very many people in our organization who would who would disagree with me on that. I mean, these and I should have said at the beginning, but you know, thank thank you guys for your service and anyone who's listening. I mean, what you've been asked to do is so much greater than what we asked people that Wolf-PAC to do. I used to, you know, I've said this before, but we are only asking people to pick up the phone and call legislators, right? Like, that's the sacrifice that we're asking people to make. And when you can Compare that to what people gave at the beginning of this country for one picking up bayonets. And, you know, when and throughout our history, you know, picking up machine guns or whatever it might be to go and defend this country and fight for the future. My God. I mean, we couldn't possibly thank veterans enough in that sense, just couldn't the fact that I mean, you should all veterans should be getting treated like gold that I mean, how can we have money for wall street? And, you know, to bail out these people who basically took down our economy and we can't you know, we can't treat our veterans Well, it's, it's really disheartening.

Chris 'Henri' Henrikson

You know, there's a 2.2 but a billion dollar budget cut that they're wanting to make to the Military Health Care System, supposedly to put the money towards things that that go towards, quote unquote, lethality, or those kind of euphemisms those kind of Army Military death type euphemisms. You know, we we don't I'm gonna speak for Danny here for just a second but I know he agrees with me that we don't we try to look at every veteran individually. You know that the the service part of it is a very big question mark. These days if I happen to thank a fellow veteran or a service member, I usually will say thank you for your sacrifice. Because some you know like for me I've gone over my service and I don't know how much I actually served you know, I'm in a in an empirical sense and it helped my country kind of idea. But it becomes a it just becomes an easy, an easy thing for for for people to say and veterans do sacrifice a great deal. You know that between medical issues dealing with PTSD, there are a lot of have different ways. But I hope that I hope that more veterans move to a place where they do look at their individual service and say, how is this helping? How is this adding to, you know, the the needs of the country?

Mike Monetta

Yeah, for sure. I mean, that makes sense. You know, there's other, I just throw out another documentary, you know, Vice, as you've seen that one, too, just explains a little bit of the backstory. Yeah. You know, about the Iraq war and stuff and, and that's pretty maddening, right. I mean, I would be pretty furious if I learned the real truth behind you know, these wars that that that seems to just never end. It's so disrespectful to the people that are have signed up to defend this country. What can they do, right? I mean, right. What can you do the whole system, right? I mean, our list is a little bit weird here.

Chris 'Henri' Henrikson

Powerless is an appropriate word here.

Mike Monetta

Yeah, right, exactly. So do you see...do you think that...to what extent and you said that a lot of the supporters of Wolf-PAC like some of your most ardent supporters are in fact veterans. And while I think Henri and I both sort of reject like the fetishization of all things military and, and even veterans, I think we've gone like we've swung that pendulum so far. So we've gone sort of beyond the thinking to like almost an adulation of the militarist. But so in that sense, we're like, skeptical of veterans like being more right just because they're veterans are or should be listened to more. However, we also live in the world as it is, right? Where if you can have an effect because of your platform, you should so I guess my question is, you know, can you dig in a little more on your experience with like, veteran supporters of the organization and what role you think the veteran, especially post 9/11 combat veteran community could play potentially in pushing the message and, you know, sort of exposing profoundly the the obscenity of the problem. Yeah, I mean, we don't have, I can't speak for what motivates them. You know, as far as why they signed up, I think at the root, it's really just, you know, an injustice of what what's happened to our government and everyone just wants us to go in a different direction, or wants to change course. As far as having people who speak to the corruption issue and how it affects veterans, we don't, we don't really have someone who has been able to go out and do that, you know, be be a spokesperson, do media write articles, I would love to have someone who, you know if anyone's interested in doing that, I would say reach out to me directly. And I can connect you with our communications team. I would love to have that perspective. You know, I think it's really, really important. You know, and we one thing we always try to do is connect this issue the corruption issue to as many issues as we can, right because it does at the root, it does connect to all of them, and one way or another. So I would love to see more veterans get involved in sort of an active role, you know, and if if someone wanted to do videos, or something or you know, talk to people in their community, yeah, we're always open to having people do that.

Danny Sjursen

While you may have come to the right place, Mike, because yeah, we I mean, obviously, we, we, we write and more importantly, I think we're connected to at this point, after three or so years of doing this, we're connected to a pretty broad spectrum of veterans who give a shit frankly about a lot of these things, whether they're libertarian republicans or lefties like us, kind of a broad range. And so I think that there is like a potential for an ongoing relationship between cuz I think we need to contribute. And, you know, not everyone has to be a direct action, you know, Super Street resistance type like some of us. But, you know, after we were tossed out of the Trump rally in Tulsa, you know, I was with a group of anti war vets, you know, I mean, an army sniper from the first Infantry Division in Iraq, you know, who now leads veterans for peace, literally, like as we were coming down from our you know, kind of adrenaline high said to me that, you know, he had done X number of hundreds of patrols in his time in Iraq or whatever and, and yet he felt like this little seemingly minimal thing we had done at the rally was the most important mission you've ever done. And the reason I mentioned that is I think that there are a surprisingly large number of veterans out there just across partisan lines who think that money in politics is obscene, and who are looking to continue serving because one of the things I think that we can both agree on is and so many do. When you leave uniform, you lose like a part of your identity and largely identity is the whole, you know, army value of selfless service. And so there's a symbiotic possibility here. And I think, yeah, offline, we should really dig into this because there's an opportunity if

it's not us to kind of link in Wolf-PAC because I think there are a lot of veterans who agree with the core message and in a non partisan way, which I think will support which is, I think, in line with you.

Mike Monetta

Yeah, I love it. Absolutely. Let's definitely continue the conversation. And I'll throw this out there. I can't make any promises. But if you are, if you guys are interested, I could probably make it work where we can talk more about this, you know, and a little bit, you know, towards the end of the show, but we have an event coming up at the end of September. That's like a three day workshop and we teach people how to be active citizens. We have many events, and some are educational, but some are fun. Like we're doing a virtual five k Run, run for representation. That's going to be I think a lot of fun. But different panels and it would be amazing if you guys might want to join us and maybe even do like a live show from there or maybe interview somebody who you've had on your show in the past who you think is a really good, yes. Who can break this in or make this connection to, to corruption, you know, or or even just yourself? If you're interested. Let me know we can talk more about that too. I think that'd be a really cool thing. I

Danny Sjurson

mean, yeah. tentative. Very Yes. And we'll go from here. Yeah. But there's, there's definitely some great people to link in, and we're all about that. And it'll be great when things especially kind of open up and, you know, getting involved on the ground again. So, I so here's what I want to ask. So we're, we know, the problem basically, we see the state conventions as the route obviously, because, you know, we have a situation where even the kind of anti war Congress people who are vocal and doing good work like ROH Khanna. I mean, I believe that His wife recently was, you know, outed as owning like \$376,000 worth of defense contractor stocks or and he's one of the good guys, right in terms of the this like anti war issue. So I think that identifies, okay, here's a problem, the people who would presumably solve it are complicit. So you got to work around them. So we got this convention. So education obviously is a big part of it, right? Just you've mentioned getting people to realize that there's that route. And so now because I think it's so important for the listeners to highlight what you are doing, you know, what is what does it look like? What is your day to day work looked like in the organization to, you know, I hate to say lobby, but to kind of press for the state conventions it what what does that look like from an organizational action perspective?

Mike Monetta

Yeah, sure. Well, essentially, you know, if you volunteer with Wolf Pack, you're going to realize that one of our main focuses is just getting you to take the first step. So Are the thing that we try to do the most is get people comfortable engaging in local politics. Because people don't, a lot of people don't realize that you can just go and meet with your state legislators. And like I said, the beginning, right, or you can go and testify to committee here. You know, because there's this experience with Congress, right, and then being out of touch or never in the district. So that is really at the root of what we do at wolf pack is we teach people how to engage with politics on the local level. So it's essentially building teams in every state in every district. And if we can get at least one person to form a relationship, now real relationship, you know, not one that's just Hey, I don't see you once a year or send an email or call and say, hey, I want you to do this for me, but actually taking the time to get to know that person and go to

the statehouse whenever possible, if possible, but but continuing and to To build that relationship, so it becomes not only about our legislation with for a lot of people, we actually becomes about building that power at the local level. Because if you think about it, if we had relationships with every state legislator in the country right now in every district, in how much power that is, I mean, that's that right there, we could get this done. Because when we when you have real relationships when people trust you, and that's at the end of the day, that is a big part of getting legislators to trust us to feel comfortable with our plan. Now, because we're fairly new on the scene. A lot of the organizations that work in state houses are, you know, been around for decades, right? And they have high paid lobbyists and all that even that stuff exists at the state level, too. It's not nearly as bad, but it's there. And one of the things that we do differently is that we put a lot of emphasis on our volunteers. So we stand out in a lot of places and a lot of state houses because we have so many volunteers turnout. We had a committee hearing in Washington last session that 250 people showed up for no Normally, you know, I think even actually for that same legislation and year before, I think maybe only like 15 or 20 days, right, something like that. So when we engage people and try to make our case, right to the people in the community and to our organization, and they show up, it makes a difference. We actually had a vote, a swing vote that was gonna vote against our legislation that day and said it actually at the hearing, so that he changed his mind and he's gonna bow to the will of the people because so many people showed up, that happens on the state level. Still, that's not gonna happen. Congress, but it happens at the state level. So that's really it, you know, getting people to engage and we were in Illinois, Illinois was our third state to pass the legislation, Wolf-PAC legislation asking for convention on campaign finance reform. And our vote, one of our volunteers was in one of the offices of a state legislator there. And while they were in there, having the meeting, another one of our volunteers called the office to ask them to support our legislation and they said, Wow, you guys have a Mountain army here. And that's it, right? That's how you win. You build a mountain army of citizens across the country with the right plan. Now you can have a mountain army around the wrong plan. It's not really going to matter the end of the day. But with us, we actually have a plan that can work. And there's historical precedents that doing what we're doing does actually work to get amendments, or constitution or if not an amendment, then congressional change, right. But in this case, we really do need amendment because we need to go above Supreme Court and Congress. But yes, I mean, that's what you can expect. Get engaged, learn how to testify committee hearings, you know, you'll learn how to learn about how to speak, you know about our legislation, the details of it, but I really think the most important thing you learn is just is just how to how to be an active citizen and we've had volunteers run for office, you know, even after you know, after we pass our legislation in that state, moved on to do something else you know so that's that's what I would say.

Chris 'Henri' Henrikson

What relationship do you guys have with Justice Democrats?

Mike Monetta

Um, we we don't really have any formal relationship with them. The founder of justice democrats is the...well, one of the founders Cenk (Uyger) who hosts TYT (The Young Turks) who you might know, same founder, I mean that that would be the only connection we don't really coordinate with them. I love what they're doing. We think, you know, I think it's really important to be working at this from all

angles, right getting getting people in Congress that aren't beholden to the special interest. So, like I said earlier, to win the change that we need right now systemically, no one thing is going to do it. We need to be chipping away from all different angles, right? So if we just got an amendment, and we there wasn't a group like represent us passing really, you know, significant legislation at the state level, am I not it's not going to be enough and vice versa. If represent us was alone, just passing state level legislation, it's not going to be able to be protected for the long run without a US constitutional amendment. So, you know, having people in Congress, so really good thing, you know, if we look, if we end up getting enough states to demand a convention, it's going to be very beneficial thing for us to have enough people in Congress. You know, that actually support it right, that they're good. They're going to say, yeah, you know, I'll propose this amendment to the States. And the more people who are not beholden to special interests that are in Congress, the better that amendment is going to be. So I think it's really great work that they're doing. I wish there was an equivalent on on the right, do you guys know of one. And they're, they're obviously progressive. But I mean, if there was a conservative group that essentially said the same thing, hey, we're not going to take pac money. We're not going to be beholden to special interests. I feel like there's some space for that, you know, I think people would support those candidates.

Chris 'Henri' Henrikson

I can't think of one off the top of my head. But I want to say they have something. But I can't I can't think of what it what it was off the top of my head.

Danny Sjursen

I mean, it's a, it's not quite exactly the same. But if we tack back just quickly, although it's not the only place to go, but, you know, if we tack quickly back to veterans, I mean, there is the group, which is kind of libertarian inflected bring our troops home.us which is like not even all that anti Trump for To be frank. That is, you know, would would I guarantee support this idea and do some, some do so from the Mountain West? Kind of, you know, paleo, right, you know, and so, I bet you there are other organizations that are more specific to that, but there is this like burgeoning Alliance, and I'm sure you guys are already looking into it, between the libertarian wing of the Republican Party and then Of course, the progressive left and everyone always talks about the foreign policy, the cold, you know, coalition that exists, there are a budding coalition. But I think it's also there on money to a certain extent, because these are folks who use phrases like deep state elites establishment in pejorative ways, which is, you know, good and bad and can have its problematic aspects. But overall, what it shows or what I think it demonstrates is a genuine sort of fear of those big moneyed interests. And so there that that exists, I think, on the right, and, you know, we owe you a better answer on that. But I know there are places that that you could work with, because that's important, right? Because when it looks like it's a bunch of hippies or something, then a lot of folks get turned off to something they might otherwise support, which is what I think you're kind of raising.

Mike Monetta

Yeah, no, that's encouraging to hear. I think that that would be phenomenal, if any, I mean, again, anyone can reach out to me directly. If you're listening to this and you want to get involved. It's Mike at wolf pack for me, Mike at wolf hyphen Pac calm. And I would love to, to collaborate. And you're right.

You know, it is a challenge a little bit right now because it is seen as more of a left issue, even though again nine out of 10 Americans right want it fixed. So I'm not sure why it's looked at quite that strongly as well as left thing, but I can tell you that we have seen quite a bit of success in state legislature is getting bipartisan support. We've passed, although the five states that we've passed so far have all been democratically controlled. We have passed multiple chambers that were controlled by Republicans, we passed the Missouri senate twice, with the majority of Republicans supporting us leading the way in fact, and one of them even stood up and said, You know, I don't know what amendment would ultimately come from a convention if we have one, but we've got to do something about the campaign industrial complex is what he called it Which I thought was a great one. That's Yeah, it is. And we've had many republican sponsors, right champions of our legislation. We passed two committees in the Tennessee house this year with a with the one of the most respected republican sponsors. So we, you know, yeah, we've made some real progress. We've had the New Hampshire house, which is controlled by Republicans, we've passed the New Hampshire Senate, when it was controlled by Republicans. We just haven't we didn't just pass haven't been able to pass them in the same year, which, which apparently have to do, or working on. So yeah, we need to build that coalition. That is what we have to do to save the future of the United States at this point in time. And last, we must build that coalition.

Chris 'Henri' Henrikson

Well, Mike, I think that's a good place for us to wrap it up for today. Um, before you go, will you let the listeners know any upcoming events or projects you're going to be working on like what you'd mentioned towards the end of September.

Mike Monetta

Yeah, for sure. So at the end of September, it's starting September 25, running through September 27. It's a three day event. We're going to be having what's called the wolf pack or your workshop. It's usually in person, we love to get together, and just train and have fun. But this year, obviously, because of the pandemic, we're going to be having it online. And I think it's going to be awesome. So Friday, it's going to start at 7pm. It's going to go through Sunday, 7pm. Lots of panels speakers, like I said, maybe you guys can be a part of that. If you want. I think it would be a huge benefit to our audience to hear your perspective. But there's going to be some fun events. A virtual five k run is essentially going to be just to raise awareness, you know, and funds for our fight. And you can you can find out about this by just by going to our website, it's wolf hyphen, Pac calm, and get on our email list. You don't even have to sign up to be a volunteer. You can just put your name and email in the signup box and we'll keep you updated. We're going to Sending lots of updates about the workshop as we go forward over the next month. And if you wanted to help out to become a member, we always seem to appreciate that we are very grassroots funded and 99% of our funding is people just chipping in like 10 bucks a month. So if you can do that, that's great. You know, any any amount of support whether you have time, or you want to contribute we we always really appreciate it here Wolf-PAC we're citizen funded movement. But uh, yeah, the workshop, you know, there's going to be I'll tell you one more thing about it. That's kind of fun. So on Saturday night, we are going to be attempting to break a world record a Guinness Book of World Records for the largest live stream for a virtual karaoke. Working with Guinness. Yeah. So it should be fun. That's going to be we're going to attempt to do that at exactly 7pm. Eastern on Saturday,

September 26. And all you have to do is watch the karaoke to be part of this. To be counted as part of the world record, and we're going to be seeing the song, we're going to highlight probably like 20 people 15 to 20 people singing, and then everyone else will be watching otherwise it would be a disaster. But we're going to be singing the song never surrender, which is the 80 song by Corey Hart. If you remember that one, and it's no I do. Yeah, and he's actually already given us His blessing us a song. So yeah, I read that so many I coast and said, Yeah, go for it, which is cool. So we're gonna have a panel right before the record attempts at 6pm. That's going to be called united against corruption that's going to be getting to know some of the other leaders in the movement. So like I said, represent us American promises another one. Stamp stampy take back our Republic is this group. I don't know if you know them. But John Gardner started that. who ran the Dave Brat campaign. If you remember that one that was a big deal a little while, a while ago that replaced Eric Cantor. So he's a big ally. So yes, it's gonna be, it's gonna be a really interesting workshop. And if you want to be part of a world record, you can show for that. But more than that, just come and learn more about our plan and meet some of the amazing volunteers that we have that Wolf Pack has, we're going to be highlighting some of some of them as well. So should be fun.

Chris 'Henri' Henrikson

Sounds great, Mike.

Danny Sjursen

That's awesome. Thanks so much for coming on. And we're, let's We will definitely stay in touch and follow up right after this because I think we would like to be involved in in this and sort of upcoming collaboration and events because this is huge. This is huge. You know, I'd said before we started the show that, you know, of all the issues out there, one of the ones that just doesn't get talked about enough because it's not typically, you know, sexy or easily, you know, highlighted in That sort of exciting way is this idea of money in politics because there really isn't another issue. War healthcare, you name it climate change, where it doesn't play. And so you've chosen to go to the crux of the issue and, you know, your organization has and we applaud you for that because we're we really are all allies and let's stay in touch and thanks so much for coming on.

Chris 'Henri' Henrikson

Thanks, Mike.

Mike Monetta

All right. Yeah, well said. Thanks, guys. Really appreciate it.

Danny Sjursen

Okay. Talk soon.