



S1E7 | Year One: Progress, Pressure, and Purpose

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All right, we are back for another episode of Transparency Talks. This time, this is the very first guest that we've had on twice. Director Marshall, where we're going to discuss the first year as the director of the BOP. How are we doing? I think we're...I think we're doing okay. You know, we, we saw, the tip of the mountain when we first got here.

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And, now I think we can see at least the whole mountain anyway. So let's just talk about that. Well, that's a great place to start because we walked in to an interesting situation, didn't we? We did. And it was, you know, the urgency feels so much greater when you first get here. You want to try to do everything all at once, and you're good for me, too.

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Let's prioritize what our needs are. Let's put out as many fires as we can, the smaller fires, and start looking at the bigger picture. So, coming in here and just understanding what the reality of it was versus the perception that we talk about all the time, that was the biggest thing for me. It's kind of like, you know, when you're playing quarterback, the game's moving so fast and you don't really start to make up any ground until it slows down for you.

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And, so, I think right now it's slowed down to the point where we can actually get our arms around it. And I really think that we're starting to make some real progress. I feel pretty good about that. So let's talk about what we inherited. Okay. Because I think, you know, every day that you go in this job, you can kind of forget where it all started.

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That's why you keep lists; and I keep going back to those because you forget, right? Yeah. Yeah. We talked about the list that we started with. And then a lot of people don't understand. Right? They think you can just come in and get stuff going day one. Let me tell you: Six hundred million dollar deficit; a tremendously understaffed workforce, obviously underfunded; a workforce that has voted this place the worst place to work in all federal government for the last two years, and either last or second to the last for a total of ten years;

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facilities in disrepair. What you and I talk about this all time. Like, most, can't even understand unless you're in those facilities, being able to see a \$4 billion backlog. We had warden and associate warden vacancies all across the country. Then, really soon after we got here, the longest shutdown in this first year—I never went through anything like that before—that has experienced in US history, and a staff that's just going through some really tough time.

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I mean, being burnt out, you know, sometimes very low staffing numbers; and you could just see tired, upset, frustrated. And then we walk in the door. What was it like, as you come in, walking into such a difficult challenge? Yeah, I felt pretty comfortable with the overall situation. When I talk about, not specific numbers, but the situation, because I inherited something similar back home. It wasn't to the degree or to the size, but it was very similar.

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I think that, the approaches that I was able to take, they applied on both sides. So that was encouraging. I thought I could, and I knew of a way out of it. Now, keep in mind that \$600 million is still there. You know, and then you talk about the government shutdown. We just realized that we probably weren't going to get the budget that the president had proposed for us.

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And, you know, the president has been so supportive of us, and wanting to get us to a different level than what we are. But, right as we're learning that we're probably not going to get the budget he proposed, well, guess what? We're going to shut down. Now, when people say we shut down, I had friends and family saying, "What are you doing during the shutdown?"

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I said, are you kidding me? I haven't stopped. I mean, we are working probably harder now to keep things afloat than we were before. And I was expecting, you know, countrywide, you know, lockdowns. I was expecting a lot of noise, a lot of chaos. And what I found was, they just kept right on moving along, like everybody was used to it—except for me.

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Like, I was the rookie, right, when it came to the shutdown. You were there with me as well. We'd never experienced anything like this. We didn't know what to expect. Everyone around the table, the executive team table, kept telling me, "It's going to happen. It's going to happen." Now, what you discovered, and what I realized was, I was disappointed to see there wasn't a real plan in place for those things,

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for those who have experienced those in the past. So, when you go through those types of things, I think it makes you stronger. I think it makes things more clear for you going forward. Some of these things that you talked about, the money, the staffing, the facilities, we're still dealing with it.

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These are things that aren't going to go away anytime real soon; but we are starting to lay the foundation, going forward to fix these things. And, I think, to fix them for long term. I think that's the key—that we fix things that are going to be fixed. As I say, I don't mind helping you, but stay helped.

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Okay. So we want to try to fix these things. Lay this foundation out where it lasts for years and years to come, long after you and I are gone. So, what are some of the things that you learned in the first year of being the Director of the Bureau of Prisons? I think the first thing was, I was surprised that the situation of the Bureau was a little worse than I thought.

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You and I were told a lot of scary stories about the situation we were coming into, and we were asked several times, at least I know I was, “Why do you even want this position? Why would you want to take on this challenge?” And, me knowing you, and you knowing me, we were excited about the challenge;

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but it was a fair question. We had several directors. I mean, of the States, several former directors here going, “This isn't what you want to do.” And I had several people that were interviewing us for these positions—or, you know, meeting with us—asking us the same questions. Maybe somebody smarter would have went the other way, I don't know.

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But the opportunity to work for the president, to work for President Donald J. Trump; it was so intriguing and, just, such a fascinating opportunity for me. There was no way I could turn away from that. But the situation of the Bureau—and I'm talking about the operations, the day to day activities—were a little worse than I thought;

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but the people that we had were better than I was led to believe. And so, there was a lot of talent in the talent pool, or on the team, some of them just weren't in the right positions to make us as good as we could be,

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and to make themselves as good as they could be. So, getting those people in place, and giving them a true sense of leadership...sometimes within an organization, they've got what they need; but they're lost. They just don't have a clear path or a clear direction. And when we came in, for better or for worse, we had a plan.

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Even if it was a bad plan that we pivoted off of, we had a plan. So we had a clear sense of direction. And, I think, the staff appreciated that. It has been refreshing seeing some of our staff who maybe weren't in positions to, or weren't encouraged to, really think outside of the box. It's been so exciting getting some of the emails.

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I mean, we opened up for the first time ever, an email communication; I think we're over 1800 right now. And you and I both talk about these often as we read them—seeing some of the best ideas, from the very people

that are right here, doing it every day. And it's been neat empowering them, to kind of, walk through those ideas and present them.

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And, I think the biggest thing that you and I have been able to do from those emails, number one, we read them all. Number two, we respond to them—not in a generic, automatic response. We actually respond to them. But, we also have the ability to put them to use; but, if we can't, we tell them why.

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And, I think it's one of those things that we've been able to do because most of the workforce, most of the employees—they just want to be seen and heard, and the fact that we would take their ideas, consider them...if it doesn't work, tell them why. I mean, they understand that

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if you give them a good, honest answer. And, I think that's one of the biggest impacts we've been able to make. When we have an employee stop here, and they tell me they've never met a director, never spoken to a director, and I bring him into my office and sit him at the table, you know, in front of the Capitol building,

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they're in awe; but I want to hear what they've got to say. I don't just want to shake a hand, pat them on the back and say, "See you later." It means something to me that they would want to meet me, that they would want to take the time to spend with me. So, I want to make sure they understand that it is important, that I listen to what they have to say.

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You've been in the Bureau twenty years. You probably know a thing or two, I would think. And, you try to take that, and you try to run with it; but give them, just, clear communication. And I think that's been the biggest thing that you and I have been able to do, is that were genuine and honest.

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They may not like the answer. My grandfathers were hard truth kind of guys. I mean, it was a sledgehammer to the forehead. I mean, if you didn't want to know the answer, don't ask the question. And so, I think maybe we got a little bit better bedside manner than that, but we'll give you the answer. And, if you don't like it, we can talk about it.

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But, you know, we're going to give you a clear direction. I think they deserve the truth. They absolutely do. I had a situation where I went over on the Hill—and, I won't mention the specific names, but we had a, you know, we had a member of Congress that's been around a while. And, the idea was to go over and talk to this individual and just kick the can down the road.

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And I said, I'm not doing that. That's not who I am. And, when I walked in, I instantly had a connection with this guy, kind of like a grandfather. And I showed him the respect that he deserved; and I didn't give him any

promises that I couldn't come through on. And he understood that, he accepted that; and it was probably, I was told from the people that were with me, probably the best meeting they've ever had with him, because I wasn't going to tell him I was going to do something that I knew

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in the back of my mind I wasn't going to. I will not do that. Now, he may have not liked the answers or the result of the question, but that was the truth. That was the truth where I was sitting that day. And, I think he understood that, respected that. You know, something you say that I think is interesting when people are asking us, "You know, my gosh, big system.

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How are you keeping up with the pace of things?" You know, I often say, "I didn't work this hard climbing out of poverty. You know, we're over here grinding, but it's not because we're reacting." And I love you. And what do you say when somebody goes mad? Bill, how are you handling this, pace that, it just has put me through.

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Well, it was just like when they talked to us about the shutdown. I'm like. I mean, the pace is what we're setting. You know, like, I think before we got here, the Bureau was kind of riding around behind the pace car, you know, waiting for that green flag. Well, the green flag is dropped now. Okay. We're racing; and we're leading this pack; and we're pushing, I think, the Bureau farther and faster than it's ever been pushed before.

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Some of our staff get a little uncomfortable with that. I understand that we're not here to break any rules, okay? We're not here to violate any laws or policy. But we are pushing and pushing and pushing because we know. I mean, Josh, we've been here a year. I mean, in a blink of an eye, we know that we've only got a certain amount of time to get things done.

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So, we're the one setting this pace. You know, I tell individuals, ask me that. Hang on, buckle up, hang on. Because, I mean, we're going as fast as we can go. We're pushing things as fast as we can go. Sometimes I get a little ahead of myself, and, you know, we got to be reeled in a little bit, because of certain, whether it's financial restrictions or staffing restrictions.

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But, we're the ones setting the pace; and, you know, you push me, I push you. You and I have difficult conversations sometimes, but we always come back to the same goal, right? We're all in this together. And, I don't think people appreciate, or understand, the love that we have for one another. That we can fuss at each other;

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but it's always respectful, and I love that. I love the fact that you challenge me, and you push me. Sometimes you push me to the point where I'm not really comfortable with that. And that's unusual for me because, usually, I'm the aggressive one. Right? But, I really appreciate that. Oh, you know, I think that's what you do for me to make me better;

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and, hopefully, I'll do that for you. You know, what I love is, is that it's not about us. It's about this agency. A hundred percent. And so, if either of us are debating or talking about something and doing it, the whole goal is the success of this agency, the success of the people in it. Yeah. The difficult conversations aren't about us.

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Yeah. It's about what we're doing for the Bureau. And I think that, hopefully, everybody sees the passion we have for it. When I go around to the facilities, and I talk to the staff, and the officers, and whatnot, I hope they see how genuine I am in regards to how successful I want them to be.

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I want them to be looked at like they deserve to be looked at. I want them to be looked at for all the important work that they do. And I have a real passion for it. And, if I felt like I was just kind of going through the motions, I wouldn't be here. I'll be honest with you, I have no interest in it.

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I have no interest in having a job or a position that doesn't matter. I want to be challenged. You want to be challenged. You know, we can honestly say neither one of us really have to be here. You know, we're here. We're spending time away from our families, that, you know, a time that we consider very valuable.

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But we're here because we want to see this Bureau succeed. We've taken on this challenge. I've never quit anything in my life. I'm sure you haven't either. And so, those difficult—I mean, think about the hours and hours that we spent together, having difficult conversations over nothing but this Bureau. What can we do for the people of this Bureau to make them happier, to make them healthier, to have a better work environment, and have a better Bureau?

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So, you got in a little before I did. And, you've been in law enforcement and corrections now for thirty. This is my 36th year, believe it or not. Yeah okay. So this is my first year. Yeah. I've been around it. I've been involved in it. Right. I've been studying this for a long time; and I firmly believe, and frankly we're getting to hear it all across the country, that your first year, in this agency, has probably been the most transformational year ever in the first year of a correctional environment—much less, one of the most difficult environments there are to be able to create change.

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And I'm going to go, just, through a few things, because you and I don't even remember some of these as we go, because we're knocking these things out as we—That's what I'm talking about. We'll go back through the list, and we're like, "Hey, we've done okay here in a couple of places." So we have, for the first time ever, conducted warden interviews.

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Who would have thought that they weren't interviewed before? Okay. We had, about, thirty-nine vacant when we walked in, associate wardens, twenty-one wardens. Soon after, we got here after some of the retirements

processed and those things. Sixty-five associate wardens, vacant; twenty-nine warden positions, vacant, out of about 120 prisons. We have conducted ninety-three warden interviews. Okay. It's actually, technically, a little more than that.

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We hired fourteen. We have just approved a little over twenty more; so, that'll be somewhere around thirty-four warden positions hired, about 28 percent since you started; 228 associate warden interviews, out of which, we've hired fifty-nine. We've now began, even in warden interviews, transferring. We don't even cosign on those. If they're going to move to another institution, [we're] hiring them—

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then [we're] interviewing them. Facilities: We've obviously done a lot to take over that. You told me we can't do it. I remember sitting in a meeting with you one day, and you're like, "Hey, this cannot exist. This cannot be." And I remember feeling your fire on it. I don't know if you know that; but it was about a week later,

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I just said, "Now I'm taking it over" because I just saw your passion and saying, "We're not doing it." We have already built Strike Force Teams; we've completed four major projects; saved about \$20 million; six of the eight Strike Force Teams have used inmate labor; and, we've been changing the things around that. Between us, get this: Sixty-three combined visits out to the Institutions. We've conducted—

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You've been able to get out and do eleven staff recalls, even with all you've got going on. I've done thirty. So, forty-one staff recalls total. We've done staff recall for everybody in Central Office now. But, those have been really impactful. I hear a lot of great positive information for that. Out of the things that I just mentioned—and maybe you end up talking about what we've learned at these staff

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recalls. When I think for the first time we held our staff recalls, and we actually let them speak, we don't just run through, "Hey, make a little one hour presentation or walk through." In fact, I don't think they did staff recalls for quite a while on the director level—out of those things, leadership, staffing, what are some of the things that stick out to you that you might be even the most proud of?

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Well, I think, you know, getting out to the facilities was important. I knew it was important back in my home state. When I was able to get out because, you know, coming off Covid and different reasons, there wasn't very...there wasn't a lot of leadership at the top level going to the facilities. But I think getting to the facilities, like you and I have, and walking the hallways,

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and when we talk to somebody—and I mean somebody, I'm talking about our team members, our staff—really wanting to listen to what they're giving us. Yeah. I learned so much from talking with staff while at a facility: That they would openly talk to you when you make yourself approachable—that they wouldn't normally say; and, maybe, even in an email, because they get that face to face with you.

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I hope that everybody believes and understands how approachable we are. And when I break away from the pack to go talk to somebody—because I just consciously can't walk by somebody and, just give them a flip of a “Hey,” or whatever—I want to talk to them, find out how long they've been there. And, you will get what is important from them trying to get the facilities in working order.

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These little things that drive our employees crazy, they deserve to work in a safe, healthy environment. They shouldn't have to deal with those little mundane things with, you know, door locking systems not taking; you know, not working the right way with ceilings leaking; with plumbing leaking; fire suppression systems that aren't acting the right way. Things like that, they shouldn't have to worry about because they've got so much to deal with

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on safety and security. The type of structure that you've put together with the leadership of Justin Thorton, that is really starting to take shape, and I'm really hearing a lot of positive things from that as well. They are doing amazing, and when I hear—when I talk to outside stakeholders, and I talked to one just the other day, and he said, “Let me tell you how much I love Justin Thornton” I said, “You'd have a hard time loving him more than I do.”

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And I know Josh says too, because they're doing some amazing work, and it's Justin leading the charge. But there's a lot of great work going on by a lot of other people as well. But just the equity that we've already gained with the

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Bureau by just being out there and showing that we have a genuine love for what we're doing. But I really think that's probably been the biggest impact, like immediately, that we've done to be able to walk the halls. We've definitely learned a lot being out there, right? It's been amazing because, you know, there is what I call “Corrections 101” where it's—it is corrections.

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I mean it's, no matter where you are, that's what corrections are. You know, we had another state director here yesterday; and they had the same things going on. So we're able to share things. But, to see it at the level that we do it at, and the other things that we do beyond the Corrections 101, you know, I've learned a lot. In response, I've been able to help, I think, as you have as well.

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So, a few other things. I mean, and these are all major things: All the inmates that we've processed over \$1 million in donations from outside stakeholders—that's never been done before. People saying, “Hey, we want to be involved.” Some of them have been to help develop our leaders. We've got prison fellowship that donated, where we've got wardens going through their Wardens Exchange Program.

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Some of it has been to the inmates and things like that. We increased the phone minutes right off the bat, from 3:10 to 5:10, so people...inmates can stay connected more to their families. Commissary increases have been...those numbers have existed for a long time. Where, even as the prices have went up, now

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they'll be able to spend more of that money. There's a massive thing that we're really close to being able to lock in, and should be locked in here very soon: Tablets. Most people can't imagine how much work and focus we've had to put on tablets. And then, one of the things I found out that, already this quarter, we've had more volunteers serving in the prisons. The hours that they've served, [more] than half of the first half of last year.

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So already creating more engagement and those things. And then, First Step Act. First Step Act is something that was important to the president, and many stakeholders on both sides of the aisle that worked really hard on that; yet, it hadn't been implemented. Now you've got Rick Stover, you guys have built an entire team over there. And I know you've got your sleeves rolled up into that every day,

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working on the calculator. Out of those things, you know, what are some of the things that stand out? Because again, we're grinding through these, we do them, and then we go "Oh, wow, we did accomplish that." We have a real, intentionality when it comes to FSA. That was one of the biggest things that was talked about when you and I were going through the process of being where we are.

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I realized how important it was to the president immediately—you know, when we were talking to the individuals that were interviewing us and meeting with us in regards to these jobs. The fact that, when I came in, that we were kind of pioneering a lot of these things with the FSA was kind of shocking to me because it had been around for a little while.

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But, you know, and you mentioned Rick Stover, who's been a great leader in that category. Even to his admission, there just wasn't that focus that should have been placed on that program and being utilized as good as it could have been. The fact that we started up the first ever FSA department, you know, we're starting off with fifteen individuals.

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The fact that we located and, with your leadership, you know, over seventy positions that FSA was paying for that had nothing to do with FSA. Those are the types of things that we had to right the ship on. And so, I think that's probably the thing that stands out because that's even outside stakeholders, that's still the thing

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they talk about all the time. Right? Is this person's time credit correct? Did they get enough credit for the program they were in? Are they going to get the maximum amount of credit they deserved? Are they going to be eligible to get to halfway houses, into home confinement, etc.? That's been probably the biggest move of the needle we've had.

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I'm proud that—Now, don't get me wrong, we have a ways to go, yeah? We've got a lot of things that we're talking about trying to improve on. We're talking about statute, you know, changing language in the statute; maybe giving me more authority to move people through—under the rules, of course—but, you know, giving me the ability to move people in halfway houses into home confinement, which would be huge. If we can lower the inmate population,

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that takes the stress off our staff, of course. And it's not as expensive for the country as a whole; but I think the FSA is where I would probably be the most proud of. But, with saying we've still got a lot of work to do. Yeah. So, right now, because of the cancellation of the collective bargaining agreement, thanks to President Trump's leadership, this agency now is able to move through policy transformation.

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And, I don't think people understand how much is going on behind the scenes, right now, with that. Before all of these had to be negotiated and back and forth. We've got 102 policies currently in progress. Twelve you signed, I think, a week or so ago. I think there's twenty-seven on your desk to sign, and I think we do that tomorrow.

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Yeah. There's some policies there that have been 30 years—30 years—or 28 years. Our members, we've sat down going through all the different policies. Several of them, that we heard from staff, right, that were saying, “Hey, this is holding us up. This is a problem.” As we've been up there, we just change, kind of, the discipline program where they're able to do it very quick.

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Right? We're moving through some of the backlog of very simple things that they've done—somebody didn't work; or someone didn't do something [on] a day—they're not held answering those for a year or whatever. Several policies that have been going on, I mean, this is transformational time. And we just got this ability.

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And kudos to all the team because it's, frankly, it's not just you and I rebuilding it. It's literally Bureau of Prisons. Our team members that are involved in these policies saying, “All right, hey, this hasn't made sense for a long time. Why are we still doing it?” Yeah. And, you know, I've always been a huge policy and protocol type of person.

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You know, from my early days at the state police, I was like a 3 or 4 year trooper; and, they asked for people to be on policy committees, and I volunteered. Now, I was I was told, by a senior guy that I admired, to volunteer; but I'm glad I did because I learned so much so quickly.

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You've been around corrections for a long, long time. You've worked in, you know, well with different state agencies. You've been around the globe. I've been around the law enforcement and corrections for a long,

long time; and things have changed so drastically. Over the last 28, 29, 30 years that when I was reading the policies—and I read all 300 and some of them, it'll put you to sleep, some of them will, trust me—

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but I did exactly what you said. I'm like, "Well, this don't even make sense." And there was a number of policies that could have been merged together that, you know, that were really, really simple, what we call low hanging fruit. But, you know, even back to my commissioner days in West Virginia, we, you know, we had not consolidated all the policies. You know, 3 or 4 years after consolidation of all three legacy agencies there.

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And so, I was big on pushing that through. Your policy is a living, breathing thing. If it's not working for you. You know, you tried to build a policy that meets the needs of what we are now. And so, it's been exciting for us to be able to do that because—when you talk about changing a Bureau or, you know, transforming an agency—policy is the foundation of all of that.

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And, when you're going around the facilities and you're saying, like you say, "Why are we doing that? Why don't I—let's look at, let's see if it works for us." And most of the time, to this point, it hasn't. I mean, you talk about, you know, thirty or forty knocked out already, that we're ready to sign, and we have by the end of the year, even more and more of that.

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That to me is the foundation of what we're doing. It's extremely critical; and, like I said, if the policy don't work for you, let's fix it and let's make it make sense. You know, I think few will appreciate, until years down the road, how impactful President Trump is being currently right now on our government. Right?

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I mean, in the news, you get, you know, you hear the wars and the different things, and the other problems he's solving. But he's hired a lot of leaders to get into these agencies all throughout government with the mission of making it better. I think that few will appreciate it until years down the road—right, where that judgment is done—

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on how transformational this will be. I mean, as a non-government person, I've never been a government. It has just been, frankly, encouraging, seeing what's going on here; now, coming in to see what existed—which, it's just dysfunctional—to really putting common sense things in place. And without, frankly, somebody like him and his leadership,

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none of this would even exist. And this is happening in agencies all across of government right now, going through these very same things. And, you know, I worked for somebody very similar to him prior to coming here. Senator Justice, Jim Justice, who was the governor back in West Virginia. He put me in place.

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He was a businessman. He wasn't a politician. He was a lot like what the president is; and, he and the president are friends. And, so it was almost a natural fit for me to come over and continue to work for somebody like President Trump because they run it like a business. They give the leaders more autonomy than anybody else I've ever been around or worked for.

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They give you the ability to do your job. They empower you. And so that's been very refreshing for me. I've always said, "Listen, I'll come in and I'll be happy to work as hard as I can and run a Bureau, run a division, or whatever. But if you're going to select me to run it, let me run it."

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And that's what they do. And, as a leader, that is so refreshing to know that, you know, think without limitations. Right. Let's work hard; let's try to find the best way of doing things. And, really, anything is on the table that we can work through. Now, you know, everybody will see one crisis after another, right?

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I mean, they say the next crisis is just around the corner; but that doesn't change what we do every day. You know, we might be forgotten about, you know, from one thing to another, but we still have to grind through all these things. And, you know, our country is, it can be pretty chaotic, right now; but we have strong leadership at the top,

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and that's what makes me feel good about it. And we will come out of all these situations better than what we were when we went into them. So, you and I have really been working on a lot of the leaders in leadership. And you've said right off the bat, "Hey, this is this is how you make a difference."

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You know, we've been through the interviews, we've been through these, different things. We've been holding trainings that have been unlike, before. How important is leadership to you? Why is it so important? And what role does that play here in the Bureau of Prisons as we move forward into this next chapter? When you're leading a group of individuals, I don't care whether you're coaching a team, leading a government agency, leading a private business,

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you can't be an imposter. Because, if they see through, you, you're done. They won't follow you if they don't believe in you. You ever watch a ball game? And I was watching one last night, and I love to watch the head coaches when something critical happens; or a big shot's made; or a field goal is missed. And, you'll see everything around that head coach, if he's a good one, just jumping up and down celebrating, or in agony—you know, hitting the floor or whatever;

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and the head coach is still. He don't react. He's still in the moment. He's still coach in that situation. He's calm. He's under control. And that's what I want to be. I don't want to be that leader that jumps up and down, and screams and hollers, hot and cold all the time. You have to be that steady force, for everybody, all the time.

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And it's hard. It's hard to be on, you know, all the time. And when I get home, I'm able to, what they say, let my hair down a little bit with my wife and my children. But that's what I look for in a leader. Do you have control of the situation when things are really chaotic and rough or really great?

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Because, if you go strutting around your chest at all the time when things are great, people is going to shoot them arrows at you. You know, trust me. I don't care about having a bull's eye on my back. I love it. Bring it on. Whatever it is, I don't care. I don't back away from nothing. I don't back away from the truth.

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I don't back away from tough situations. I don't back away from tough questions. I've been warned from several people, "Hey, when you get to the hill, this, that." I'm ready. Whatever they want to throw at me, I'm ready. I'm not going to lie to them. I'm not going to make anything up; but I'm looking for those leaders that are calm, cool, and collected.

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And if you watch ball games, you'll see, because I always focus on the head coaches. The team the other night made a big shot. Guys are jumping up and down. The assistant coaches are down on one knee, pumping their fist. They're sliding across the floor, and the head coach is still there in a moment. He's locked in, because that ball still got to go out of bounds.

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He's got to come in. We got to play defense, for at least a couple of seconds. That's what I look for. That's what I love about good leaders. You know, something else that has happened in this agency that has—we've heard a lot is, we've started to communicate. Nobody's ever communicated before. That's communicating internally, to our people; that's going out and doing the visits and those things; communicating through surveys, where we're learning about them;

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we're engaged with stakeholders; we're putting out videos to everybody, staff and our general public; updating some of the things we're seeing; some of the things we're challenging. Which, I do think it's kind of funny because, I think if you added up all of our followers that we have, we might get twenty before we came in.

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So, it's not like—I tell people out there: If you ever look at my personal social media, you'll never see me holding a phone up, taking some video of myself talking about something. This is literally something we've done based on the feedback of saying, "We need to communicate to our staff." They deserve to know these things and outside stakeholders deserve to be able to see what we're doing.

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Congress—like our contraband stuff, the things that our staff are doing great jobs every day. We've not done one thing to change that, yet. All we've done is communicated it to highlight what they've done. What has

communication, you know, what does this mean to you? Because I know you and I talk many times about how uncomfortable, sometimes, it is.

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Right. Even doing this, I mean, exposing myself, all of our Facebook lovers out there, all of the ones that are going to do all their great comments and the bitterness and those things...What is communication, and that, meant to you as you've done that? So, you know, my extent of social media, right? And, you know, my genuine of "I do not care about the comments," and whatnot.

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You're going to break their heart now. Yeah. They're going to really be upset. Well, if you look at my personal, social media, which I don't have very many platforms, you're going to be pretty bored because I don't really do much on it. I do a lot of reading on some different, platforms.

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But as far as, like, you know, going down the whole, as they say, and posting things, I just don't. I just don't do that. I think that, our employees, they're starting to see the importance of the surveys that's been sent out; because, you see more and more participation in those as they go out because they're seeing now, "Hey, they're really going to impact what we do.

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They mean what they're saying when they send those out." You know, we've got more attention now for the Bureau than probably ever in the history of the Bureau. Since 1930, which can be good and bad. Right? So, you know, we want that attention. We want that, we want those eyes on us because we're going to be doing great things.

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Now, old school corrections will tell you, "Stay out of the funny papers, good or bad." Right? Well, we've kind of gone against that, okay. Because we've got a lot of people that are interested in us—outside interests, high profile individuals—that really want to help us. And so, I think the communication that we have developed with the videos, with the visits, etc., has been really impactful because you hear all the time, "Well, we're so disconnected from Central Office, we never hear from Central Office."

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I've heard it called the Puzzle Palace, the Ivory Tower, you know, whatever you want to call it. But I think we're bridging that gap between us and the field—at least, that's what I want to do. I want them to know we care about them. I want them to know that, the decisions and the opinions they have, is going to affect what we do.

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I mean, you can have real change. So, you know, having a seat at the table with DOJ; just, having that kind of interaction, and that kind of focus on us, has really made a huge difference in how you view the Bureau.

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Like you said about the contraband, we're really not doing anything any more. I mean, we're getting a lot of contraband, but they were getting contraband before we got here. They were doing hard work and getting contraband before we arrived. We're just able to show it, now, to where people are saying, "Hey, look what they're doing." And I think it impacts what happens on the Hill as well.

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It's so important for us to tell our story; and you said there is a little bit of danger of putting yourself out there. But, as long as we're honest and genuine about things, I'm okay with that. That's what I want to do. I can't tell you how many different podcasts I've done. I've done a handful;

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and they say, "Well, people are studying them, and they're going to trap you, etc. This congressman, or this." I'm like, I don't know how they're going to trap me because I don't take the cheese. I mean, it's one of those situations where I don't tell them anything that's not true. It's not genuine. Oh, if you are going to trap me,

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I don't know how you're going to try to do it. Now, I'm ready for any tough question. I'm not going to make anything up. But those communications, I think, is putting a light on the Bureau—that is a positive thing; because, now, we're looking at state agencies across the country saying, "Man, you guys are doing great work." But, what they didn't realize, was a lot of those things were already being done.

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We're just showcasing it now. We're showcasing the talents of our individuals that we talked about, that we inherited. We've run the bad actors out, we're showcasing that as well. So, that's a big thing as well. So, you want to see they're good, but we're going to show you the bad also. We're going to pull the curtain back.

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"Hey, listen come in and see what you see. Tell us what you think." And I think the communication has been huge. And it'll continue as long as I'm here; and I know it will as long as you're here; and we're not about patting ourselves on the back. That's not what this is about. This is to showcase, the Bureau.

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This is to showcase our people that have stood this Bureau up for decades. That's what this is about. Absolutely. You know...your focus from the beginning on staff that has been, I mean, just a very difficult workforce. You know, we talked about how they voted this is the worst place. By the way. I just found out, just a couple of weeks ago, I've said that many voted it the worst place to work.

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I just found out there's over 400 Government agencies that they voted that in. I mean, that's—If you're a football coach, and you're the defensive coordinator, and you're ranked 400, and or you're right rated 398th out of a 400, how long you think you're going to keep that job? You know, you're not stopping anybody.

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So what you know, you got to get to make some improvements somewhere. I like what you said. You say something like, "It's not like we inherited—"We did not inherit the 1960s Vince Lombardi Packers." There you go, there you go. "Or the 1970s the Dallas Cowboys have Tom Landry."

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I mean, you know, we inherited an outfit that had talent. I think we need to do a better job building our bench. But we had talent. They just needed those right leaders to get them fired up; to show them that we believe in them; put them in the right position to succeed, because that's what every leader, good leader does.

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You take a person, maybe struggling in one area, but you see talent; you see a good person there; find that position for them to succeed in, and then you'll see what happens. And it's exciting when you see, it's so exciting for me as a leader when I see two or three young people develop into good leaders, inspired by my leadership, and inspired by your leadership.

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It's good to have that that young energy; and, what I mean, young you could be in this Bureau for 15 years, but you're a new leader, a new supervisor, a new leader. I love seeing those leaders develop. I love seeing people succeed under us. I love seeing people that want my job. That's what I want. A lot of people will kind of keep things at bay.

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They'll keep some trade secrets in their pocket. Not me. Not—and not you. I want you to want my job. I want you to aspire to be who I am. I want you to think like, being at the top. And that's going to develop a great successful Bureau in my mind. So, it's been a challenge, right? When you have no money, you've got this deficit on how to show appreciation to the staff.

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Now, thankfully, we had the Big, Beautiful Bill, so we were able to do some things to focus on some of our most hurting staff; some of the retention pay in certain places; some of the focused in some of the struggle positions we've got, sometimes it was area specific; taking just a few dollars to be able to do that, to try to point it in the right direction; to help as many people as we could.

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We've listened too. Right. There's some things that don't cost money. So, we've tried to listen to the schedule; and we've asked their opinions; and gotten the survey results back. And, really looking to say, "All right, how do we improve this agency?" Why has that been so important to you in your first year? I think it just shows that we genuinely care about our people.

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Well, I think when they see us working, and they see us pushing, and they see us talking about things—I think they feel like, "At least they're paying attention. At least they're trying to do something the right way." You talk about, you know, the money, the spending plan. You know as well as I do, you're never going to please everybody, you know. And, I have an experience where, you know, I was the state police commander, and

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I had a bunch of troopers who were fussing over overtime. You know, this guy was getting this much, that guy was getting this much, etc., you know, and I just brought them all together. I said, "Guys, listen, okay? I mean, I could give each one of you all a bag of gold bars, and you would bitch and complain that you had to drag it to the cruiser.

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Okay?" I'm like, "Guys, we can't solve everybody's problems here, but we can collectively work together to where everybody can end up at the same pot of money. But we have to do it together. We can't be divided here." So, you know, those are the types of things that, you know, the spending plan that you put together with Lanella Burns and others to try to get some retention bonuses out there, to try to show the people that—especially through the shutdown—how much we appreciated them.

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You know, going forward, trying to maximize that \$3 billion out of the Big, Beautiful Bill. If that don't show them that we care about them, that we're trying to give them everything that we have, we can't give them anything we don't have. But everything that we have goes back into them. I mean, what more could you ask for as an employee?

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You know, as you reflect over your first year, what do you see? Well, we'd mentioned it earlier, it's a shame that the financial crisis exists for the Bureau. I'm encouraged by the amount of talent that we inherited. I'm encouraged by the amount of talent that we have brought in. I think that, we've brought some outside people in, and it has really made a difference because they've had a fresh perspective on things.

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I think that has been very, very important because they brought ideas from other areas. You say it best when you say, "I don't have to make that mistake. I've already seen that mistake made. I just use it and as an experience and move on." I love the fact that we've been able to put people in certain positions to succeed.

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I love the fact, when I call someone and say, "Hey, we've selected you as a warden at this facility," the pure joy and satisfaction they get out of out of out of getting that call. It didn't, you know, it fires me up a little bit. I've been glad that we have people that really want to do what they need, what we need them to do to make a successful Bureau.

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I'm really impressed by the fact that we have people that will go from one side of [encampment] to the other, for the mission. I can be honest with you, I'm not so sure I'd have been that guy at one point. But, you know, here I am; you know, away from home; you know, five hours. Yeah, five days a week at least.

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But, you know, we make a phone call, we need a leader, and they're on the West Coast. Well, next week they're going to be on the East Coast, because that's the mission. I'm impressed by that as well. So going into

year two, what's the hope? I hope that we have put out most of the bigger fires. I hope that we have set the culture.

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At least they understand what our mission is, what the culture is. You know, just little things like setting up the diversion programs, getting people to see that there is an end in sight to some of this, some of these silly things that they've had to deal with. But I'm hopeful that they understand now what you and I are. We're not the new leaders anymore.

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I mean, we're at a point now where we own this stuff now, right? You know, I'm not a big blamer on the past anyway; but, we don't deflect things. And so we're—now, we're not the new leaders. We are the leaders. But we've, I think we've put out a lot of the fires that we inherited.

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We still have the budget issue that we're dealing with. I'm so thankful for the Big, Beautiful Bill money, the \$5 billion dollars that President Trump gave us. I'm hopeful that we can utilize that money to really make a difference for our Bureau. You know, you talk about the \$4 billion in deferred maintenance, the facilities, the way you've structured it, the way it's been worked do right now; I feel very good about what we can do to maximize that money we've been given.

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But, I guess the biggest thing is to see, this is who we are. We've been this way since day one. We're not going to change the mindset. We have a core set of values that we want to stick to. We understand the mission of the Bureau, but we've laid out the culture. As my father would say,

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I, quote him all the time. "Get on the bus, get off the bus, or get ran over by the bus." This is what it's going to be for the next, however long were here, however many years were here. This is the standard we're setting. And, it always kind of shocked me when you tell people, "Listen, just do the right thing"; and they look at you like, you know, they don't know what you mean.

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So you have to drill down a little bit deeper on that. But, doing the right thing, treat people the right way. You know, making sure that we're still advancing. I mentioned the FSA earlier. We still have a lot of work to do, but it's a heck of a lot better today than it was last year, I can assure you that.

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And I think it'll be better tomorrow than it was today, and I can assure you of that because we will be working hard to get that done. Well, I just want to tell you, it's been—this year has been an interesting year, or the time that I've been with you, most of it. And watching your leadership, your passion, your care, the focus, you know, the intentionality of making it happen—

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it has been just, frankly, for me, refreshing to be able to serve on that. And, I don't say that because I don't have to say that. Again, this is a job, as you pointed out, we could leave at anytime. Our retirement doesn't come from here. You know, one of my really close friends asked me, and I told you this recently,

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“Hey, are you and Josh still getting along?” I said, “Yeah. We love each other, man. We're having a great time. We're in.” And they're like, “That's so impressive” because we really haven't known each other all that long, right? I mean, so, about a year and a half or so; and so, they were impressed that we were still in it together.

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I said, “Listen, we have the same passion, the same vision, and we have a genuine respect and love for one another, and that'll never change.” I said, “So, you know, we are still getting along.” I know that sometimes the employees treat us like we're divorced parents because they don't get the answer from me, they go to you, you know what I'm saying?

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But we are in this together; and, I really, I honestly say I wouldn't want to do it beside anybody else. Yeah, well, listen, we have, a lot to react to every day. A lot of challenges in this agency, a lot of things that we face every day. But it has been a pleasure getting this, you know, to this point.

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And it is exciting to see what your leadership is for another year. What—As the team gets together is, we're getting some of these things figured out, what can be accomplished now that we're getting things right. And so, hey, listen, you're the first one that's been on two of these. I feel honored. We'll, just go ahead and plan the one next year. Okay.

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And, then, we'll be able to reflect just like we did today. I love it. Sounds great. Looking forward to. Thank you.