

Christy McDonald: [15:11:51:15] We want to welcome Lieutenant Governor Brian Calley, Republican candidate for governor. Thanks so much for taking part in our gubernatorial candidate interviews. I am Christy McDonald from Detroit Public Television. In the room today and doing the questioning are members of the Detroit Journalism Cooperative. The DJC is made up of six media outlets: Detroit Public Television, Bridge Magazine, Michigan Radio, WDET Radio, New Michigan Media, and Chalk Beat Detroit. We would like to thank the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation for its support on today’s project.

Our panel includes starting on my left, Erin Einhorn. She is the Bureau Chief of Chalk Beat Detroit. Riley Beggin is the politics reporter for Bridge Magazine. Steve Carmody is the reporter/producer at Michigan Radio. Hassan Khalifeh is the reporter with the Arab American News and New Michigan Media. Sandra Svoboda is from WDET Radio. For the next hour, each journalist will ask a series of questions and follow up on your answers if they need more specifics. We appreciate you keeping your answers concise, so we can get to as many topics as possible. I will give us a 30-minute time reminder so we can keep ourselves on track and so we can take this next hour.

We are going to start off with some questions I think really on leadership and responsibility. Much has been made of the management style of previous governor, a de facto head of the party with strongarm tactics of getting things done; to our current governor who has been criticized at times for not being as politically savvy as he needed to be. First off, explain what your management leadership style is.

Brian Calley: [15:13:26:23] I am a people person. I like to bring people together. Today it seems like the political culture is just cycle after cycle since going back to the nineties, has just gotten more focused on fighting. I get it. People get passionate about fighting for what you believe in. But ultimately, the secret to our successes and the secret to moving things forward is about bringing people together. It is staying at the table, working things out, and trying to understand another person’s point of view and where they are coming from. They are even coming to a common understanding when you cannot come to a common conclusion. That oftentimes can show you a pathway forward to maintain the relationship, even if you are going to be at odds in any particular issue. I just think that is important in our system today. It does not mean you do not fight hard for what you believe in. It is not about the fight. It is about the outcome and about the results. It is about getting things done and making things happen.

Christy McDonald: [15:14:23:44] Can you get things done? People would say gosh, it is such a polarized atmosphere in Lansing and Washington. Do you believe that you can get things done with a compromise on both sides attitude?
Brian Calley: [15:14:35:23] There is. First of all, we already have an extraordinary track record of making things happen. Very different looking coalitions have come together to make the big things happen. Whether it was two major rounds of tax reform that looked very, very different; both equally impactful on Michigan. Both were scrapping the old business tax and doing something brand new and phrasing out the industrial personal property tax. Totally different looking coalitions came together to make both of those things happen.

When it was autism insurance reform on the table, that was a whole. All the giants of the political system opposed us on that. We had to overcome it with what I affectionally refer to as POAMS – Pissed Off Autism Moms. It is this army of people that were like no, this system, business groups, unions, and insurance companies might all be against this. We are just going to unite together and make this happen. They did. It was one of the most beautiful and amazing things I have ever seen. The thing is, on any particular different issue there is a different coalition that comes together to make it happen. That is why I still look at this all very much as a relationship process. Maintaining those relationships even when you are totally at odds on an issue, being respectful of another person, and understanding their point of view can often show you a way to getting things done. Even if you cannot, at least you maintain the type of working relationship you need to work together on the next issue.

Christy McDonald: [15:16:07:08] Do you see the governor’s role as the head of the republican party and tasked to carry out what the republican party’s agenda is in the state?

Brian Calley: [15:16:16:34] As a practical matter, the governor is kind of a de facto leader of the party. That is not. I do not view that as a top-down hammer type of approach. There is a grassroots organization out there that is involved in all kinds of great things. The republican party is a very, very different looking group from one side of our state to the other. There are different types of priorities, different outlooks, and approaches. Ultimately, I do believe it is one of the responsibilities of the governor to really be a unifier. We have a system where they have two major parties. Having the governor be very actively engaged and involved in the overall management of the republican party or the democratic party from administration to administration is a traditional and appropriate role.

Christy McDonald: [15:17:12:17] All right. Let us go ahead and take on I think one of the biggest issues that people are talking about in the state of Michigan. It is education. I am going to go over to Erin for our first questions on education.

Erin Einhorn: [15:17:21:03] Yeah, we heard from several people in our audience who had questions about education. Judith specifically wanted to know what your plans are for schools. Do you believe that schools in Michigan have the resources they need to succeed to serve all students, including those with special needs? Do you think that our schools right now are funded equitably?

Brian Calley: [15:17:43:17] The issues that face our schools are way, way bigger than funding. Of course, you can always do with additional resources. Economic growth has
created an environment of growth and resources for schools, as has paying down long-term debt and liabilities. I mean we have reformed the system in a lot of ways to where we are creating a much, much better future for the dollars actually reaching the classroom. There were decades. Literally, my entire lifetime of neglect of the long-term liabilities just ate into what was supposed to be for the classroom. A lot of the groundwork has been laid and the foundation has been laid for the classroom-based resources to get the majority of the economic growth in the future. There are some areas where I think there is a lot of work to do.

Specialty services are in particular. Some students have particular or intensive challenges and needs. I formed the special education task force because I was concerned. There was all this debate on education overall. It seemed like republicans or democrats – nobody was talking about special education. They are the kids that really have the largest obstacles in front of independence for themselves, and self-determination of their lives, in front of them. It is a big number. I asked the group to estimate what the difference is between what is needed and what is provided today. It is about $700 million around the state. Now when you consider that the school aid fund is now upwards of around $14 billion, keep in mind we are talking in massively large numbers here. Still, $700 million is a lot.

The task force that I led came up with several recommendations. Many of those either have been or are in the process of being implemented. Ultimately, the funding formula itself for special education needs to change. The difference between the highest funded special education district and the lowest funded education district, keeping in mind that they are still property tax based in a big way unlike the rest of education, is about tenfold. There is a ten times difference between the highest and the lowest. Some kids get a lot of services. Other kids do not get much at all depending on where they live. That is something that has to be rectified. That is why I put together the task force report. I have fully. There are heavy, heavy lifts in that. I have fully adopted it as my platform because we cannot afford to leave anybody behind.

Erin Einhorn: [15:20:17:19] You talked about some inequitable distribution of funds as far as special education. The current basic funding structure we have for schools – the $7800 roughly per child that the state sends to each school, whether that be a district school or a charter school – is that basic system and equitable way of funding schools?

Brian Calley: [15:20:40:37] That is the base foundation allowance. There are a lot of additional categorical funding streams for kids that have more intensive needs, or at-risk kids in other programs. Ever since Proposal A, which closed the majority of the gap between schools, there has been still a gap in there for these out of formula districts. What we have been doing throughout the entire administration is increasing the lower funded schools twice as much as the higher funded schools. We have closed that gap about 50%. I believe about half of that gap has been closed now. Keeping on that same formula is important for
the future. When you put the different schools on an equal playing field, I think it is the first step. We have been talking about money. Right? Everybody always wants to talk about money.

But if you look at the states that have done really well, I like to look at Tennessee. Tennessee went from way behind to just performance that is much better than most of the rest of the nation. If you look at what they did, one of the components that is very different than what happens here is the way that they support their teachers. I say support the teachers, and everybody thinks money. Right? That is not what I am talking about. That is not what they did. I am sure that they do support their teachers financially, but the big difference was professional development, teacher coaching, teacher training, helping good teachers become great teachers, and great teachers become even greater teachers. Equip teachers with the latest and greatest in research and best practices. Get it into the classroom quicker.

That whole system for making that work is very intentional and robust. That is something that I am really excited about. The difference that it could make here in the school, and a new mission for the Department of Education, today is just mainly a compliance organization. I think it would much better serve schools if it was a collection of best practice, trainers, and professional developers. They had a cadre of trainers in all different specialty areas that can spread across our state and be that type of support network.

Erin Einhorn: [15:22:48:23] If I could ask you a little bit about how we measure success in schools? Given that test scores are often driven by socioeconomic and other factors, do you think the state’s current accountability system is giving parents a fair and accurate measure of how our schools are doing?

Brian Calley: [15:23:06:01] I do not. I think we have an over-emphasis on the testing today as compared to what is needed. That is not to say you are not going to have testing. Of course, you are going to have testing. You are going to have some standardized testing. Kids are not standard. At the end of the day, we are preparing kids for life. There are a lot of different pathways to being successful in life. When you try to derive everything according to a standardized testing process, you are treating kids who are not standard as though they are standard. Kids bring different types of challenges with them to school, and that has to be taken into consideration. It is not just for how we measure whether a school is being successful, but also the types of interventions that we provide. It is this idea of making sure that the intervention fits the kid instead of the kid having to fit the intervention that happens to be available.

When we talk about reading, it is frustrating. All I hear people talk about is reading coaches. Reading coaches are good for some kids. But the majority of kids that are struggling with reading, that is not all they need. That is a component, but it is like over-simplifying a very pervasive problem. It could be a child that has dyslexia, and needs a particular type of an approach, and a very specialized approach. It could be that the child has a vocabulary issue. The child
might be able to read. But if they do not know the words that they are reading, they are not going to test high in comprehension. In that case, you need vocabulary work. In other cases, they might need help with phonics. If we are providing a one size fits all intervention and never really getting to the root of what is causing the problem for this child being behind in the first place, the intervention will not work.

Erin Einhorn: [15:24:51:11] I realize you are talking about intervention of specific students. When it comes to state policy, obviously the state is dealing at a much broader level. When we talk about state intervention in education, one of the things we often talk about is school closings and using test scores to decide which schools should be open and which schools should not. What role do you think the state should be playing? Should the state be playing a role in deciding whether or not schools should close?

Brian Calley: [15:25:19:57] There is absolutely an accountability role that the state needs to play. I look at it as a very long-term partnership process. You might get to a point at the end of the day when you have been through all of the different possibilities. You just cannot make the types of changes that need to be made. It should be earlier intervention and prevention of school closing. Instead of having a school closing process, why not have a school improvement process that serves as a prevention of the need to close schools in the first place? I will always resort back to the individual student approach. But collectively, that is really what it is about. I mean if you do well with individual students, you are going to have a good outcome as a whole for the school.

That is why I am just concerned about this over-emphasis on testing. Preparing a kid to take a test is not the same as preparing them to be successful in life. Again, I will acknowledge you have to do some testing. That is not what it is about. It should not be that that is ultimately the thing. The test is not the point of it. The child learning is the point. You cannot always measure that in the exact same way. Frankly, I am not sure that we should. There are so many different pathways that a child could take to being successful in life. Most of us have strengths and we have weaknesses. We build our lives around the things that we are good at, the things that we are interested in, and the things that drive us.

I think about when I went to school. What got me up in the morning and why I went to school was music. It was music. I had a music class and there was this one girl in one of my classes too. We have been married for 22 years now. It was a thing that had me motivated. I was a better math student because I had choir class. I was a better science student because I had theatre. I mean that is what I was passionate about. That is the part that I am determined in my education white paper that I put out. It is that we have to get away from this one size fits all approach where kids are exploring their passions. Education is a whole different scenario when the child is passionate about something that is happening in their education day. When we find that, I think that is really where you have that internal motivation of a student. It is like the missing link when a
student is really struggling. If they are struggling, they are going to school, and there is no part of school that is interesting, exciting, or where they feel like they are successful; then the task of a teacher to get that student motivated to go out and learn and overcome those barriers, it becomes so much harder than if there is that thing that drives the student to be there and to want to be there.

Christy McDonald: [15:28:04:53] Steve, you have a question about DPSCD.

Stephen Carmody: [15:28:07:13] Yes. Detroit Public Schools Community District – the largest district in the state – recently released a facilities report showing that it would cost half a billion dollars to upgrade school facilities to bring them up to current standards. Because of past deals with the state, the district is not able to borrow money to pay for those renovations like any other district would. What is Lansing’s role in upgrading these traditional public schools in the city of Detroit? Should the state allow the district to fundraise like other districts?

Brian Calley: [15:28:42:47] I think that first of all, the work that the state did to relieve Detroit of a very significant amount of debt that accumulated over years, has given them operational room to provide programming that is better than they ever could have done without the state help and assistance. When it comes to the debt management, I think that there is an openness to taking different approaches to facility upgrades and partnership with the state in terms of the way that they borrow money. It is going to be a little bit different. I mean when the legislature made a very substantial appropriation to relieve debt, it is natural to expect that there is not just going to be wide open ability to go out there and take out all that debt again.

Working with the professionals in our treasury department, I think there is room for that discussion. I believe that signals have been sent. The door is open for those discussion on how they might be able to borrow some money to upgrade facilities. Now half a billion dollars, I do not think that just going out for half a billion-dollar bond offering or something like that is particularly realistic given where the district is right now. But doing facility improvements to get them to the standards that are required for the education system, I believe that is doable. As governor, I absolutely work with the Detroit Public School District and the Detroit Community Schools to make that happen.

Stephen Carmody: [15:30:14:14] Is it possible that the state could also set money aside specifically for school upgrades in Detroit Public Schools?

Brian Calley: [15:30:22:02] I do not think that it is particularly likely that there is going to be some sort of specifics set aside for one school district. This is to the extent that the state decides it needs to help in facilities like with hardening of schools for example, communication systems for schools, and campus-wide monitoring, secure entryways, and that sort of thing. Those types of appropriations are the sorts of things that are made. When the state gets involved, they are made available to everybody.
Christy McDonald: [15:30:49:01] Hassan?

Hassan Khalifeh: [15:30:50:13] Should Michigan change laws regarding how charter schools are governed and funded?

Brian Calley: [15:30:55:47] I do not think that the ways that charter schools are either funded or established today is the problem. The key is that we need to have the same accountability standards across the board no matter which public schools we are talking about. The thing about charter schools is that they can only survive if parents believe that they are a better option than their other options that are available. The idea of having parents in the driver seat, I just think they are in a better position than anybody else to determine what is best for their kids. Taking away options from parents is definitely not something I would favor.

Hassan Khalifeh: [15:31:33:17] What about funding? Should money allocated for public schools be used to fund charter schools?

Brian Calley: [15:31:39:27] Charter schools are public schools, and I think they should be funded the same way as traditional public schools. Charter public schools and traditional public schools I think should be funded with the same type of system.

Christy McDonald: [15:31:52:08] Erin?

Erin Einhorn: [15:31:53:02] Should there be any changes at all to the way the charter schools are overseen and authorized?

Brian Calley: [15:31:57:21] I think there is always room for improvement in the accountability for performance and results. I will go back though to this expectation that our schools across the board, whether they are traditional public schools or charter public schools, we should hold them to the same standards.

Christy McDonald: [15:32:19:17] Sandra?

Sandra Svoboda: [15:32:20:42] I wanted to ask a little bit about higher education and the cost of it specifically for colleges and universities in Michigan. Is it too high? Is it prohibitive? What can the governor’s office do about that? What kinds of policies would you have in office?

Brian Calley: [15:32:34:12] It is too high. I think one of the problems – we can talk at a macro level and let us talk about some practical things. First of all, we have convinced a couple of generation of kids of the lie that there is only one definition of success. If you are a parent and your child does not go to a traditional university, then we have convinced people that they are somehow a failure as a parent. The child is failing, or they take a consolation prize.

I hear well-meaning people all the time say not everybody is cut out for college. Those kids can go into the trades. The problem with that well-meaning statement is that it reinforces the false assertion that non-college post-high
school education – post-high school education is required. But non-college post-high school education is somehow less. What happens is you have this system that is like this service that is out there. They have the market. They are the definition of success.

If you are able to, in any other market, convince the entire public that if you do not buy what I am selling your life is ruined. Parents, if your kids or you do not buy this for your kids, you are a failure as a parent. If you had that market power, you could charge anything that you wanted, and people would line up to pay it. They would borrow money to pay it. In fact, that is what is happening. The first thing I think we need to do is to show kids all the options that they could do with their life. That is going to include competency-based education, certificate-based education, community colleges, universities, and apprenticeships. Across the board there are so many different things. The first thing is to add in competition to this equation where all of the options are on the table. Universities are competing for kids instead of kids competing for universities.

The other thing is on a more practical level. Middle college and dual enrollment is a real game-changer. Now when I went to high school, I had the benefit. I was one of those schools that was an early adopter in that. By the time I started at college, I already had almost a year’s worth of credits because of what I was able to get in high school through a local community college. That was a huge advantage. Then I continued to go to community college while I was going to a university. It brought the cost way down overall. The middle college is even better. You can spend five years in high school, but graduate with an associate degree and have half a university degree already paid for without any cost at all to the student. Those are some practical changes.

We also have to expect that universities adopt the same sort of cost controls that the rest of government has over the last seven or eight years. I mean we have made cost control measures. Local governments have. Largely, universities have not. We have been trying to increase funding for universities. I think that we should do that in tandem with them taking cost control measures so that you are doing both at the same time. You are bringing down the overall cost by additional state support, and also cost control. There are students having all the options where they have the incentive to keep the cost down in the first place.

Christy McDonald: [15:35:58:49] We talked a little bit about higher ed. Now let us look at some preschool options. Erin?

Erin Einhorn: [15:36:02:57] What can the state do about the high cost of child care and the lack of preschool options for young children?

Brian Calley: [15:36:07:14] There is a really exciting thing happening right now that I am so proud of. It is off the ground and launched now in Flint. There are two centers. One is Great Expectations. The other one is Educare. When I moved my office to Flint in 2016, I worked with a lot of different groups of people on important
things for the city to start moving forward. Early childhood education, early executive development of the brain, proper nutrition, healthcare, and all the things in developmental delay screening; they are all the things that were so important for kids zero to five. It seemed like there were programs, but they were in different silos, different locations, and different intake criteria. It worked like a bunch of programs instead of a system.

I brought everybody together. It was the school district, the ISD, Great Start, Head Start, and the local congressman’s office there to help with some of the federal issues. I had people in the Department of Health and Human Services and different programs there as well. We do daycare subsidies, Medicaid, food stamps, Great Start, Head Start, and all these different things early on. All right. How can we? Instead of doing all these programs, how can we blend these funding streams together and have full-time year-round high-quality zero to five daycare, childcare, early education, early literacy, developmental delay screening, interventions, and helping the parents get back on their feet? Could we just do that together in one place instead of like in ten different places? There were a million reasons why it would not work, but everybody worked together to make it happen.

We started with Cummings Elementary School. It was just a closed elementary school. The Mott Foundation made it like new. It reopened as this new thing. Then the Mott Foundation built a brand-new building. The University of Michigan Flint is in there as well. They do the early childhood education. They are also tracking the progress of the kids. To see the difference it makes for them starting kindergarten ready to learn, and how much better they will do after that. All of those entities together, I am just so excited about what this could mean.

On paper, it looks like it is expensive. But if you look, we do all those things anyway in other places, in other ways, and in other parts of the budget. By bringing them together, you are dealing with all of these different facets and problems at the same time. When you have an area that has a lot of non-educational barriers to learning, then there are enough kids that qualify for enough things. You can just provide all those things on site full-time year-round. It is revolutionary for Michigan. I am pumped about it. If you read my education white paper, the early education part of it is based on the work that I and many others did on Educare in Flint.

Christy McDonald: [15:39:10:17] Lieutenant Governor, before we leave the topic of education, I want to ask you something that you talked to Erin a little bit about. It was about the governing structure of the Michigan Department of Education. Do you think that should change? Do you think the governor should be appointing the state Board of Education and then therefore appointing the superintendent? Would you change anything about the makeup of the MDE?

Brian Calley: [15:39:30:31] You know that is a constitutional issue. I think you could make a strong argument for making a change, but I am not really interested. I do not
think that is really the problem. It is the governments and how people are elected and selected to go on the ballot and that sort of thing. When you bring a unifying approach, you have a new and better mission for the Department of Education. I think that that organization itself is going to do better. To go off and try to get a constitutional amendment to try out another government structure to see if it works any better than the current one, I just think that that is a whole lot of time and energy that ought to be spent on the mission of the Department of Education. This is as opposed to the government structure of it in the first place.

Christy McDonald: [15:40:16:07] Okay. Before we turn to more policy-specific questions, I want to ask about the workings in Lansing. Michigan’s term limit will cause mass turnover in the year in the Senate, especially the House. How challenging do you think the loss of institutional knowledge will be? As governor, how will you and your staff prepare to work with new lawmakers?

Brian Calley: [15:40:34:21] First of all, I think that term limits oftentimes are used as kind of a scapegoat for anything that does not work well. I just point over to Washington DC and point. There are no term limits there. I see all kinds of gridlock over my entire lifetime. I do not think it is necessarily term limits. When you have people that have an attitude about working together, whether they have been there for a long time or they have been there for a short period of time, good people do good things. Ineffective people are ineffective, no matter how long you give them to do it. I do not think the term limit is really the problem. In fact, in my time I have seen.

I would put the 2011-12 legislature up against any legislature in the history of Michigan and its effectiveness. In a situation of total economic crisis and a brand-new legislature, they did amazing work. It was like so many new people, new governor, and new legislature. They did not know they could not do all these things, so they just did them. Look what happened? There were 540,000 new jobs, 17-year low on unemployment, and the sixth fastest income growth state in the nation since 2010. We are number one inbound migration of college graduates in the Great Lakes states now after being last for a long time. We are number one three years in a row. That work was set up by a legislature that was elected under term limits. That is why I look at it and say philosophically elections are kind of like term limits. At the end of the day, I do not think that is the problem. I think culturally we have to have an attitude about working together and understanding where other people are coming from.

Relationships are important. But it does not really take that long to form relationships when you are intentional about that work. That is how I have always approached things and how I will continue to approach it in the future. It is to be with people when you are developing plans. I believe in getting a coalition of people together early in the process. Try to develop plans. Whether it was autism insurance reform, the criminal justice reform, or the opioid addiction epidemic, or the phase out of the industrial personal property tax; these initiatives that I led, you will see that I just engage with people early. I
stayed engaged with a lot of people. Then I did my best to bring people together to find a solution. I think you can do it with or without term limits.

Christy McDonald: [15:43:04:33] All right. Let us tackle roads and infrastructure. I will turn that over to Riley for some questions.

Riley Beggin: [15:43:11:11] We all know that Michigan’s roads are bad. A task force says the state needs $4 billion more just to maintain our infrastructure. How should Michigan pay to fix roads, bridges, and water systems?

Brian Calley: [15:43:23:46] One thing I want to point out is that commission’s report. I hear the $4 billion number put out there, but it is not suggesting that the state’s portion of infrastructure is four. It is kind of an all-encompassing number including private sector infrastructure. It is everything from gas lines to communications and so forth. There are airports, including roads and bridges. There are a couple of things. First things first. The last two administrations took a borrow money approach. When Rick and I got to office, our transportation fund had $2.3 billion in debt. They spent all the borrowed money, and we were left just with $200 million plus a year in loan payments. We have been faithfully paying those payments down. We have paid off more than $1 billion now of that debt. We need to continue to pay off the rest of that. That will put more than $200 million more every year into our roads.

On top of that though, we have been accelerating the phase in of the $1.2 billion package that package that passed in 2015. This is really the first year that you see a substantial difference in the amount of construction that is happening. It has been phased in. Next year it will be even bigger. Next year will be a record amount. As we are absorbing these additional resources into our roads, we are also doing things differently with integrated asset management, the way that the roads are engineered, and the standards for the roads. You have to have higher standards. That really only counts or matters when you are rebuilding the road. Thankfully, now we are actually rebuilding roads. You can put patches on old, junky roads and it does not matter. The road is falling apart. The patches are going to fall apart. It is rebuilding roads at higher standards.

Putting more technology in the roads can help us lower the overall cost of the work that has to be done. When we knew that we had a really bad congestion problem between Brighton and Ann Arbor. Putting an additional lane on 23 both ways and replacing the road because the whole road had to be placed, it was going to cost like $400 million. We could not afford $1 million. We challenged the engineers to come up with a better option. They were able to turn the shoulders into temporary lanes and put the sensors in the road. They make it V to I technology in the road that can open up a lane when congestion gets higher. You do not want to always use a shoulder. The shoulder is there for a reason. You do not want to always use a shoulder as a lane. But for two hours in the morning and two hours at night, we turned a $400 million project into a $100 million project. We still replaced the whole road with higher standards than what the original road was built under.
The final thing is integrated asset management. This is a simple concept, but it takes a lot of innovative management to make it happen. It is the expectation that everybody who shares the right of way has to coordinate the repair maintenance and replacement schedule. You do not have a road that is paved, and then they have to tear up a year later to put a new sewer line in or something. Then tear it up down here to put a culvert across the year after that for fiber or whatever. It is like the concept if you had your driveway paved when they were paving the road by your house. It is a lot cheaper because the equipment and the materials are all right there. That cost is shared. We think that it could be very substantial savings by implementing that statewide. At the end of the day, I still think it is going to be necessary for us to take, like we have been at the last couple of revenue estimating conferences. Take additional money that is available from growth and put it into our roads. Ultimately, all of those things together are going to create a better future for our roads.

Riley Beggin: [15:47:13:07] I know on the campaign trail, you have talked a little bit about Flint and your experience in Flint. As the recovery efforts continue there, what have you learned from the situation? How would that inform what you do as governor?

Brian Calley: [15:47:25:43] A couple of things. I have talked to a lot of public officials about lessons learned. There are things that I really hope that everybody takes away from this. First of all, when somebody says they have a problem, even if there is disagreement about that, the default position should be to believe them. In Flint, it is like we have this problem. Somebody says it is not really a problem, you do not really understand, or everything is okay. Still, you have to stay at the table. Keep talking. Keep working towards it. Keep validating. Just get to the bottom of what it is. Today I think we have a trust problem naturally, so we have to keep working at that. In the beginning, people were right. The experts were wrong. That is the first thing. If people say they have a problem, default on assuming that there is a problem and we have to get to the bottom of it. This is even if it is a different problem than what you think it might be on the front end.

The second thing is do not accept bureaucratic speak as answers to plain questions. It is the frustrating thing about looking backward. We sent all these emails out there. I saw so many of the right questions being asked, but half answers being given that were more compliance speak as opposed to real answers. As an example, if you were the mayor of a city and you asked your water department is the water safe in the city. The water department person comes back and says according to our most recent set of samples, the tier one sites have tested within the federal lead and copper rule. That kind of sounds like a yes, but it is not really a yes. Remember the question was is the water okay.

We cannot allow for these technical compliance speak answers. There are so many different factors. In this case, is the federal rule or standard even right in
the first place? Should that be our standard? What about the samples? Were the samples right? In Flint, it turned out that the samples that were being relied upon were not as they were represented. How about the trend? Maybe it is still underneath the rule. But is the trend looking bad? Is it looking good? Or is it looking stable? There are so many different additional pieces of information aside from a compliance statement. That is where I really hope that every person in public office can take away from this. Plain answers should be required when plain questions are asked.

Riley Beggin: [15:50:07:57] You touched on that with the federal rule standards. Would you push for changing that at least at the state level? Is that something that you could do?

Brian Calley: [15:50:15:32] Absolutely. In fact, I had led the Childhood Lead Poisoning Elimination Board. Even though I know that the name of the board is not necessarily that big of a deal, it was not the Lead Reduction Board. It is the Lead Poisoning Elimination Board. That is huge. Even in Flint, the majority of lead poisoning is not and never was from water. It is from lead in paint, dust, and soil. There was. This is a problem across the whole nation. While it is a lot better than it was when all of us were growing up, any of it is bad. Our goal should be to eliminate this. If we apply that to water infrastructure, the city of Lansing is a great example. They decided without anybody requiring it that this is a risk that we do not need to have in the ground. You can manage the risk, sure. It is with the right kind of water treatment. Why would you want to leave that kind of risk anyway?

They had a systematic approach neighborhood by neighborhood where they just took out all the lead pipes. It took them 12 years. But over the course of 12 years, they eliminated that risk from the ground. I think that that is a reasonable approach. As we moved forward on how we all eliminate this risk in the future, that type of an attitude like we have standard and the standards are a lot better than they used to be. It is all bad. So, let us just take an approach in getting rid of all of it.

Christy McDonald: [15:51:49:27] Let us keep along the water quality questions. Steve?

Stephen Carmody: [15:51:53:43] What would you do as governor to safeguard the Great Lakes?

Brian Calley: [15:51:56:58] There are a lot of facets to that. First is invasive species. We have to be aggressive on this. What I like about the approach that we have taken so far is to bring all of our partners with us. The thing about the Great Lakes is that even though four out of five Great Lakes prefer Michigan, we do share borders with other states and provinces. If we do not have everybody on board with what the practices are, then our greatest natural resource is at risk. In cases like the Brandon Road Locks, this is an area where the Army Corps of Engineers has been frustratingly slow and not treating it as urgent as what it ought to be. There was a lot. The shippers and everything in the other states that do not have as much at stake I guess as us, they were in the way of that. Then getting
the Great Lakes governors and premiers together and reconvening that group was the basis for those relationships and the discussions on how we best protect our Great Lakes. We are finally seeing some progress there. We actually put in the budget this year some resources to support pushing that project. We are getting more states, cities, and provinces on board with what needs to happen. Invasive species is one really important area.

Another is closing down decommissioning line five. That absolutely needs to happen. The main risk that was identified in the report was an anchor strike. People wondered. Who is going to drag an anchor through that area? Why would they? Then it happened. Thankfully, it was a strike and not a hook. Who knows what could have happened? What are the feasible alternatives? You still have to move the fuel. Moving it by truck is worse. There are more risks involved with that as opposed to a pipeline. But we decided to go from there to studying the feasibility of different options. You can actually tunnel. You can tunnel a line far beneath – maybe 75 feet below the bed of the lake. Having a tunnel that you can walk through and do visual inspections on the outside and the inside of the pipe at the same time I think is a very logical approach. That is what I would like to see happen in the future, and what I absolutely will push for as governor.

Christy McDonald: [15:54:32:22] Hassan?

Hassan Khalifeh: [15:54:34:53] How do you intend to combat water contamination caused by industrial chemical spills like PFAS?

Brian Calley: [15:54:42:14] First of all, having standards in the first place is really important. We were surprised to learn that there really was not a federal standard on PFAS. There were suggestions. By rule, we established a standard so that we would have something to even enforce in the first place. PFAS is a good example of an issue where the main contaminants or problems are things that happened in the past. They are being recognized or realized now. We have to be very aggressive. We are developing the science. We are part of developing the science around this in the first place. Surprisingly little has been done around the country, even though this is a problem all over the country. It is everything from military bases to like Scotchgard operations that use that type of material. Setting up testing facilities and identifying what the extent of the problem is is the chief or the first step.

Then in terms of how to fix it going forward, really there are only three states that are actively engaged or working on this. This is including Michigan. I expect that this is going to be a big national issue. This is going to be something that other states wake up to. It is my hope that working together, we can find a better path forward.

Christy McDonald: [15:56:01:11] We have a little less than 20 minutes left. We have a couple more topics to get to including immigration, taxes, tax incentives, transparency, and a
couple of other things here. We will move along to immigration. Hassan, you have a couple of questions there.

Hassan Khalifeh: [15:56:12:48] Yeah, Governor Snyder established the Michigan Office for New Americans in 2014. He declared June as Immigrant Heritage Month this year. What steps would you take to attract more people to come to Michigan given that we might lose a congressional seat because of the population decline?

Brian Calley: [15:56:30:44] Yeah, attraction of talent in from around the country and around the world has been just part of what has made America, but especially Michigan, so successful in the past. There is the diversity of our state. I have been on the campaign trail running for governor. I have gone out of my way to reach out to communities that a lot of times republicans do not show up at. What I found is there are a ton of shared values, entrepreneurship, innovation, hard work, and the importance of family. I mean there is just so much that unites us. Attraction of talent and being a welcoming place is really important. We have to work hard.

I think we have to be very intentional about separating out a debate around illegal immigration and legal immigration. Legal immigration is such an important cornerstone of Michigan. It is something that I think across the political spectrum, you can get people to really rally around. The thing is recruitment of people around the work. Heck, we can do it without even leaving Michigan. We have these world-class universities that attract in talent from all over the world. I think that we have all the tools. The Office of New Americans was established as a way to help attract that talent.

Ultimately though, we do need federal immigration reform. There is only so much progress that you can make at the state level on these issues. We hear about it from industry and workforce shortages all across our state and in practically every industry. They are saying we just cannot find enough people to fill all these jobs. In fact, I think at MiTalent.org we have about 110,000 open jobs right now. Work force development, training, and connecting people that are left out to those jobs. It is a great opportunity to leverage the job growth to help people. It is also a great opportunity to attract people in.

I want to point out that that has started. The population decline is stabilized and now we are growing. On the inbound migration of college graduates – the net inbound migration into Michigan – we used to be 51 behind 49 states and the District of Columbia. Now we are twelfth in America. We are number one in the Midwest three years in a row. It is Chicago and Illinois where we lost a whole generation of kids to, they are last now. They are literally 51. There is an inverse relationship there. We are getting our kids back from Chicago.

Hassan Khalifeh: [15:59:13:21] Do you think refugees should be a part of this plan?

Brian Calley: [15:59:16:07] People that are seeking help from religious persecution, I think that this is a really important aspect of America and what we have represented
in the past. I do think that we have to be careful of course in the process. That is something that we need to remain open to. I want to point out, though, that the way that immigration happens today, I am afraid that we set other countries up for failure. As we kind of take the best and the brightest people from other areas, the ones who would really – physicians, civil engineers, and people that you really need to have a healthy thriving community; when they are removed from another place, then the ability of that place to be a thriving, functional, and growing place is diminished. That is why I just think we need.

Again, I am not running for Congress, United States Senate, President of the United States, or anything of that nature. But in this entire debate, I think that we need to really focus. When there are a lot of people that want to come here because there is something bad happening in the world, to the extent that we can fix that something bad so that they do not have to leave. Who wants to leave home? That is the part of this equation that I think needs to be in that conversation.

Hassan Khalifeh: [16:00:55:41] Some people are forced to flee. I did want to ask you if you would support the EB5 Visa program.

Brian Calley: [16:01:01:56] Again, that is a federal issue. Supporting it or not supporting it is just an opinion as opposed to a policy. The EB5 program has been used in this state to create entrepreneurship and job growth opportunities in the past. The key is we just have of course – I feel like we always have to qualify this – we have to be careful. In everything that we do, we have to be careful because the world has become a very dangerous place. As long as we have the proper processes in place for how people enter into this country and our assurance that people have the best interest in mind, then I think that it is a great opportunity for growth and making our community stronger.

Christy McDonald: [16:01:43:47] All right. Let us go ahead and take a look at some taxes and tax incentives. Riley, I am going to bring it over to you.

Riley Beggin: [16:01:48:04] Do you believe that economic development deals with tax credits, incentives, et cetera are necessary and useful for Michigan’s communities?

Brian Calley: [16:01:55:07] In some cases they are. But they cannot be your go-to strategy. You cannot make up for a bad environment by offering a tax incentive. In the previous decade when we had a tax code that was uncompetitive and labor laws that scared people away, and a regulatory environment that was very unpredictable; the idea was I know all of these things make it really hard to operate here. If we pay you, will you come? That was kind of the way that economic development was done before. It does not work. We did as much or more economic development incentives as anybody else in the country, yet our economic performance was worse. Our approach has been, and what we need to continuously do, is be competitive for everybody. You have to have a good environment across the board to attract in new investment and growth among
your current businesses, and for startups to be successful in your state. That is the baseline.

Once you have accomplished that, the idea for doing incentives for game-changer deals that create more opportunity for everybody, then the bar needs to be very high. The structure of those needs to be such that the state cannot lose. In other words, you pay after the fact. It is after something happens as opposed to in anticipation of something happening. If you follow those guidelines, then it is appropriate. For example, there will be a building. The tallest building between Chicago and New York will be in Detroit. That is pretty cool. That is a game-changer type of move for a city. It is quite a statement to make to the rest of the nation. Create all kinds of opportunity and demand. That is the sort of thing where there are some projects that create so much residual benefit, that yeah maybe it does require or deserve to have an incentive. Incentives should be looked at like appropriations. It should meet that requirement.

Christy McDonald: [16:04:05:21] I am sorry. Go ahead Steve.

Stephen Carmody: [16:04:06:27] The economy is going well now. It is likely in the next four years that we will have another recession hit. Do you have any specific budget priorities that you have to help Michigan weather that storm that we expect is coming?

Brian Calley: [16:04:19:04] First of all, I would never go into a period of time with like a defeated attitude. It is inevitable just because we have had so much growth in the past, that we are bound to have a downturn. Our state has done a lot to prepare ourselves in terms of diversification. It is our overall economy, lowering the debt load, better budgeting processes, and also saving in the rainy-day fund. All those things have set us up well, which is good solid management. When it comes to priorities, we have to be smart and provide value for dollars. The infrastructure has to be a priority. Our roads and bridges, like the circulatory system of our economy, that has to remain a priority.

Talent is really the new currency of economic development. People. I mean that is how you attract in business, investment, and growth. It is when you have the people that can do the work. That is why I just think that the people investment part of it, investing in our kids, lifelong learning, and helping people make transitions and find new pathways when the world changes; that is essential. You cannot let that slide.

Christy McDonald: [16:05:37:33] All right. Erin?

Erin Einhorn: [16:05:38:58] Debbie and Ray in our audience want to know what your plans are for car insurance. Specifically, what would you do to lower rates?

Brian Calley: [16:05:45:12] Lower rates. We absolutely do need to lower rates. The problems in the past have been that advocates for auto and no-fault insurance stack six,
seven, or eight major changes into one bill. They try and muscle it through the process, but it always dies under its own weight. Year after year after year nothing changes. I would take a much different approach. What I would put on the table now – I think you could even get it done this year. Even in the middle of an election year, you can get this done. Start out with two major starting initiatives. First is a real fraud authority. Staff it up and give it teeth. Make it a deterrent, whether it is over-utilization or inappropriate billing. They are the things that will make the biggest difference in the areas where the rates are the highest. I would start there. Then also apply transparency to the system.

One of the problems that I see with this debate over auto and no-fault insurance is that everybody brings their own facts to the table. They do not match up. There is a lot of guesswork. If you were to subject the entire process – not just the MCCA, the Catastrophic Claims Association – but the whole rate making process to total transparency. You can see the areas of what is driving the rates on both the collision side and the healthcare side. I do not think that you have to make a choice between good coverage and lower cost. I think that we can manage the cost better if we had the whole thing subjected to transparency. That would show us the areas and reforms that need to pass in order to lower the cost the most.

Christy McDonald: [16:07:25:02] Sandra?

Sandra Svoboda: [16:07:26:12] I am interested in transit. How would your administration approach transit policy both for southeast Michigan with what is going on with the Regional Transit Authority, and also some of the rural areas of the state?

Brian Calley: [16:07:37:27] Let us talk about southeast Michigan here first. I think the whole discussion needs a game-changer. Asking the same old question over and over again, I do not think you are going to get a big difference in the outcome or the answer that the public gives. We are in the middle now of this revolution in mobility. There are autonomous and connected vehicles, but also just everything about transportation. It is how vehicles and infrastructure work, are owned, and operated. What I would love to see happen now is to insert a first in the world advancement in taking this technology that is being developed and deploy it to solve transit problems in our state. Give people a reason to be excited about it.

It is something bigger than a fixed line transit system. If you need to go on this route and you can meet up with our schedule, here is your option. I just do not think that people in Michigan – they have not been willing to pay for that in the past. I do not think they are going to be as willing to pay for that in the future. If you were to combine that with a real mobility solution that advanced the technology that we are driving here in Michigan, I just think people would be really excited about that. We could further solidify being the international leader of the future of mobility.

Christy McDonald: [16:09:04:58] All right. There are two more questions left here. Riley, go ahead.
Riley Beggin: [16:09:08:52] What is your stance on the ballot initiative to change the way that we draw district lines? If you oppose the voter’s and not politician initiative, what solution would you suggest to address what some people say is gerrymandering?

Brian Calley: [16:09:20:41] I definitely oppose that. I mean I do not want to sound totally dismissive of the effort, because I appreciate the concerns. But everybody has politics. No matter who is drawing the lines, everybody has politics. The idea of we are going to have these people’s politics at play as opposed to those people’s politics at play. Somebody who has to face voters, I just think that is a better option in terms of drawing the lines. There are also rules in place in Michigan that are very objective. They have been respected ever since the Supreme Court – around the time I was born actually – put into place. That is that you have to break as few county lines as possible. To the extent to keep populations the same and you have to break county lines, you break as few township and municipal lines as possible. To the extent that you have a bigger place like the city of Detroit where you are going to have districts inside one city, break as few precinct lines as possible. There is an objective standard.

I do not really know how you come up with a standard more objective than that one. If you were to come up with a map that broke jurisdictional lines less than what was passed, I think you could take it to court and beat it. That is. There is an objective logical standard in place. I get the idea that people say some of these districts are lopsided. People do tend to live in communities that have the same types of political positions as them.

In Michigan, we see that. There are some areas where if you wanted to make Detroit a 50/50 district, you would have to gerrymander it. But if you do not gerrymander it and follow the non-gerrymandering rules that we have in place today, then they are going to be lopsided districts. Within the city of Detroit, it is 90% plus of people vote for Democrats. Then you have other parts in our state where 75% to 80% of people vote for republicans inside certain counties. When you take those things into consideration, I just think that the whole approach is well intentioned. But I think it makes it less objective than the system that we have today.

Christy McDonald: [16:11:36:41] Okay, quickly we are going to try to get in two more quick things here. Sandra?

Sandra Svoboda: [16:11:40:47] Michigan recently was rated lowest among all the states in the amount of transparency we have for state government. I am interested if you think that is a problem, and what you would do to address it I guess specifically with the Freedom of Information Act and campaign finance disclosure.

Brian Calley: [16:11:55:39] It is a big problem. As a legislator, I actually introduced some of these reforms. I actually put it in the book that I put out as well. It is just a free digital download book at FutureofMichigan.com. The Freedom of Information
Act is subjecting the legislative and executive branches equally to it. There was something that passed through the legislature recently that said the executive branch has a higher standard. There is just a name only for the legislature. That is not good enough. They have to be equal standards. Financial disclosure, absolutely. We could use the federal form for financial disclosure or come up with our own. Either way, I do think that there should be a random audit process for that as well. This is where the financial disclosure could be checked for accuracy.

There are conflicts of interest. That is what you are getting at there. Then there is income disclosure. We hear people talk all the time about tax returns. That is great. I put my tax returns out there the last two years. What are the sources of income? That is more important. You cannot tell that from the tax return. You cannot see where the income came from. That is another important conflict of interest issue. Financial disclosure is absolutely yes. But it needs to be auditable. It also needs to have the actual sources of income included or spelled out.

Christy McDonald: [16:13:21:53] Steve, you want to end on a question with marijuana?

Stephen Carmody: [16:13:24:17] Michiganders vote on recreational marijuana this fall. What is your thoughts on that? If it does pass, how will your administration implement it?

Brian Calley: [16:13:33:07] I oppose it. I will be voting against it. If it does pass, I will faithfully respect the will of the voters and implement it the best I can. We have other controlled substances in the regulatory system, so it is very doable to regulate it. My main concern is not one about where I think marijuana would be the worst thing ever. It is just that we already have a problem with filling all the jobs out there today. I just think this is going to make it worse. People do not maybe realize that. Just because something is legal does not mean that you can use it and still qualify for the job. There are a lot of jobs that people, if they become users, will take themselves out of commission for. Having another mind-altering substance out there kind of with the endorsement of the state or government on it I think is a bad thing. If it passes though like tobacco, alcohol, and those sorts of things; we will have to come up with a regulatory system in order to make sure that we keep it as far away from kids as we can.

Christy McDonald: [16:14:31:08] Okay, there are six quick fun questions. I know all of this has been fun, but now we are going to end with some fun questions really quickly. Erin?

Erin Einhorn: [16:14:38:21] What is the make and model of all of the cars currently in your household?

Brian Calley: [16:14:45:32] A 2012 Ford Fusion, and a 2010 Buick Enclave. Then we are actually renting a Ford Expedition for a couple months. Those are the two family cars. By the way, my Ford Fusion has 300,000 miles on it. Ford ought to put that in a commercial or something.
Christy McDonald: [16:15:09:56] Wow. Sandra?


Brian Calley: [16:15:17:03] I do not have an answer for you on the favorite Michigan author. I guess I have never looked at authors and where they are from in books I read. When it comes to favorite Michigan food, I would say I mean I am kind of old-fashioned. The simpler the food the better. It is just homestyle macaroni and cheese. It is not out of the box, but where they mix all kinds of cheese and it is kind of crunchy on the top. I could eat that all day long.


Brian Calley: [16:15:50:17] I mean naturally we have the best cows.


Christy McDonald: [16:15:54:04] Hassan?

Hassan Khalifeh: [16:15:55:39] I am just going back to the race for a second. Can you recall any interesting or touching moment along the campaign trail while talking to voters?

Brian Calley: [16:16:04:11] Yeah, actually there was a lady who tapped on my shoulder. I was sitting right in front of her. She asked kind of shyly. She said excuse me, are you the Lieutenant Governor? I said yeah. You never know how that is going to go. I said yeah. She said I have a son with autism. We were lost. We could not get any help for him. Everything changed. He has ABA therapy and he is doing so great now. He went from not speaking to speaking. I just know that that was only possible from the work that you did. I could live off an interaction like that for a month. I had put up with $1 million in negative ads against me. An interaction like that makes it all worth it.

Christy McDonald: [16:16:55:07] Riley?


Brian Calley: [16:16:59:41] Actually, my daughter and I are reading together a devotional book. It goes through chapter by chapter in the Bible. I actually started just for it to be with me. But then we decided to do that together. A lot of my reading these days is work reading. It is required reading for work, and not necessarily for leisure. It is a lot of really interesting things out there, including reports from Bridge Magazine.

Christy McDonald: [16:17:31:51] Steve?
Stephen Carmody: [16:17:32:58] When you are not campaigning, what makes for a good weekend? What do you enjoy doing?

Brian Calley: [16:17:38:17] I would have to think really far back in my history for that one. I love running. On my fortieth birthday, I had this thing where I said I do not want anybody to do anything. Then the day before my birthday, it was clear that nobody was doing anything. I thought man, I am turning 40 and nobody is doing anything. I signed up. That was on a Friday and my birthday was on Saturday. I signed up for the Ann Arbor marathon on Sunday. I did not know how that was going to go because obviously I did not do a whole lot of preparation for it. I was not worried about timing or anything. I just settled into a ten-minute a mile pace. I just ran 26.2 miles. Ann Arbor is way hillier than I thought it was, but I love running. I just absolutely love running. I love playing piano. Those are my two kinds of go-to things when it is just to clear my mind or a stressful day. I love doing that.

Christy McDonald: [16:18:33:27] What was your first job?

Brian Calley: [16:18:36:51] I worked for my dad in his office filing papers. That was my first job. But my first job outside of that was a janitor in a nursing home. That was a tough job. I definitely learned how to work hard back then.

Christy McDonald: [16:18:51:39] We appreciate all of your time. That is going to conclude our conversation with republican candidate for governor, Lieutenant Governor Brian Calley. Many thanks to the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation for its support. On behalf of the Detroit Journalism Cooperative, I am Christy McDonald. Take care.


Christy McDonald: [16:19:07:03] Thank you so much. We appreciate your time. Thank you. We went a little over. We wanted to make sure we got every --