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## **WSJ CEO COUNCIL DECEMBER 2021**

### **BREAKING THE POLITICAL DEADLOCK**

#### **Interview with Joe Manchin**

**Interviewer: Matt Murray**

**Robert Thomson**

John and Ron, thank you very much for giving us that lead up to our final speaker of the day, Joe Manchin. As a key swing vote in the evenly divided Senate, he wields enormous power to set the agenda in Congress in new tax and spending measures that the Democrats wish to pass. So please welcome Senator Joe Manchin, Democrat from West Virginia, and our Editor in Chief, Matt Murray.

**Matt Murray**

Senator, thanks for coming to see us at the end of a nothing-much-going-on-right-now, but--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Thanks for having me. How are you?

**Matt Murray**

I should warn you, and I should say hello, that I want to welcome our Twitter and WSJ.com audiences out there. I know you're a big Twitter user, so.

**Senator Joe Manchin**

My staff is more than I am.

**Matt Murray**

So we started off our CEO Council last night with Mitch McConnell and the first thing we talked about was the debt ceiling and the

defense authorization--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

You should've sat them together (?).

**Matt Murray**

And they seem to be done. So that means you got one big thing that your party's looking at, and that's Build Back Better.

Chuck Schumer says it will pass the Senate by Christmas, which is now, what two and a half weeks away? What do you say?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Well, you know, he's in charge of the calendar, so wherever he's going to set it and it's time to vote, we vote.

**Matt Murray**

But you must be negotiating. You're talking to them.

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Pardon?

**Matt Murray**

But give us more. Where is it?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

The only thing I would say is that, first of all, the Parliamentarian is going through what they call the scrub to see if it fits in a reconciliation. We're doing so much in reconciliation anymore and, between you and I, it was never intended to be used for major policy changes.

Reconciliation's for budgetary matters mostly but it has been spread out to this. So the Parliamentarian, see if it meets the Byrd

rule. And they call it the Byrd bath to see if it fits and should fit or should not fit. And they'll decide what's in it now. We haven't seen the final text on it. So for me to speak on it to say, "Yes, I could be for this" or, "No, I'm not going to be for that" or, "You need to change this or that" until I see the legislation, it's hard to say that.

### **Matt Murray**

Understanding that you don't have a specific bill to comment on, you don't have a specific piece of legislation, you have commented on different policies and ideas that have been floated. You have expressed some concern about budgeting, what you call budgeting gimmicks.

You've expressed some question about some policies. We're all going to be watching this in the next couple weeks. We're all going to be wondering if this bill is going to pass or not. We're all going to know that you're at the center. Can you give us some bottom line framing of how you will think about whatever comes your way? What's going to be important to you, or what's going to be a trigger line for you?

### **Senator Joe Manchin**

Matt, we were all warned, if you will, by economists back in January of this year that we were going to be coming out of this. And when we came out of this, the pent up demand was going to be strong. We'd better be ready to go. So they said, you know, "Maybe the unemployment benefits ought

to stop in May because that sends a signal." And if it had not recovered by that, we could've extended that. We always have done that. But they were determined to go to September, October. Remember when we shut down for 12 hours? And then they wanted to raise it to \$400. I said, "You know, guys, I think you heard the same briefing I heard. Now, all of a sudden, you want me to go back to West Virginia and say, 'Boys, if you can just stay unemployed for a little longer, you'll get a raise.'"

None of this made sense to me. Nothing made sense to me. And I said, "Let's get back to work. Let's get up and go, get ready." And we can see the effects of that. We had people at that time saying inflation will be transitory. We had 17 Nobel Laureates saying, "It's going to be no problem."

Well, 17 Nobel Laureates were wrong. And now, the Feds are even saying it's not transitory and they're hoping it'll reduce. And we don't know. We'll have to wait and see. But the bottom line is, I was concerned then. And I said, "Let's take a strategic pause."

I put an op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal* for that reason. And I thought long and hard about that. My reason for saying that, and I still feel strongly about that, is the unknown we're facing today is much greater than the need that people believing this aspirational bill that we're looking at. And we've got to

make sure we get this right. We just can't continue to flood the market as we've done.

**Matt Murray**

Inferring from what you're saying, it would be fair, it sounds like, to say that you're going to look particularly closely at how it's funded, how it's paid for, what the budgetary structure is like, or what your conclusion or the consensus is on the effect on inflation, the economy from this--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Absolutely. I'm so sorry to interrupt. But if I could say one thing, the bill started out, they said, at \$6 trillion. They said, "We cut it down to \$3.5 trillion." And now they say, "Well, Joe, you've been in there and you've just said it can't be that big." Now we're down to anywhere from \$1.75 trillion. I think it came from the House at \$2.2 trillion. They didn't change anything. The only thing they changed was the amount of time they're going to pay for it. So if we're going to tell you we're going to raise revenue, taxes, and make some changes, we've got three major changes in this Build Back Better that we should all be very careful what we do.

There's a major change in our tax structure. Major change. There's a major change basically in the social services that we provide. And there's a major change in our whole approach to climate and the energy sector. That's major. We get any one of those wrong, and we're in trouble.

**Matt Murray**

Just to clarify, and I want to get into some of these topics more deeply, but just to clarify, are you concerned about the speed with which it's moving, but interested in those policies? Or are you skeptical of the party's approach on those policies?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Well, you know, again, those three areas I've talked to you about, I probably have differences with most of my colleagues, respectfully. And these are all very intelligent, good people that mean well, and they're representing their constituents. I'm representing my constituents.

And we ought to respect that. You know, we don't have any errors for margins right now. But I've just never seen a piece of legislation that we're telling you that we're going to spend, take \$1.75 trillion, and here's how we're going to pay for it, all paid for.

Well, if we're going to pay for something and we're going to pick childcare, we're going to pick basically child tax credits, we're going to pick the care at the end of life, or in-home care, helping elderly, if we're going to pick all of these things we want to do, but one goes for three years, one goes for one year, and maybe one other one might go for the full ten years, do they not intend for those programs to last a full ten years? Well, if you intend for that to happen, what's the real cost, because we're either going to debt finance it if we're not going to pay for it, or

come back and change the tax code again to try to get the revenue. Something's got to happen.

**Matt Murray**

Create programs that people get to like, and you've got refund them in (UNINTEL)--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Well, sure. Look at our Republican friends, basically, they used the Obamacare, Affordable Care Act, they used that as a whipping boy and beat the living crap out of us in the 2010 election, 2012, 2014. And then in 2016, the dog caught the car. And they couldn't even get rid of it when they had the presidency, the House, and the Senate and couldn't repeal it. So I can tell you if we keep sending checks, it's going to be hard to stop the checks.

**Matt Murray**

Let me ask you about Obamacare though because part of the party's strategy was to create it, keep it alive, keep it going. It was controversial when created. The Democratic party took a whipping in 2010.

**Senator Joe Manchin**

2012, '14, and '16.

**Matt Murray**

But it has become more popular with time. That's the strategy to an extent, isn't it? So even if it costs in the short term, the argument that the advocates of the programs would say is, "Take a little pain. But over time, it's the right thing for the

country. And people will like it."

**Senator Joe Manchin**

It wasn't universal care, and we never intended for universal care. Some do, and some are trying to backdoor universal care. We wanted basically a hybrid, if you will. Can it fill the gaps in small businesses and rural areas where the economics aren't as healthy in other areas?

And I think that has stepped in and done that. And, like I said, pre-existing condition. That was the biggest factor. The biggest factor that kept the Affordable Care Act, I won the 2018 election, on one issue: pre-existing condition. My opponent wanted to get rid of it, and I said, "You go tell my grandmother, you go tell my aunt and all them that, you know, you have high blood pressure, you had a heart problem and this and that, we can't insure you. We can't take care of you."

Everyone has somebody in the family that it would've affected. And it was very, very, very popular. They tried to do a hybrid of that and could never come up with one. They did one, my friends were doing one, and I get along, you know, extremely well with all 50 of my Republican friends.

And they were telling me, they said, "Joe, we think we've got something here." I said, "Well, tell me what it is." "Well, we're going to take care of pre-existing condition only if you didn't have a pre-existing condition." I said, "That'll sell well. That'll sell well."

**Matt Murray**

I want to ask you a little bit more about climate. And I'm not thinking specifically in Build Back Better--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

I know.

**Matt Murray**

But yeah, I'm not thinking specifically what may be in the bill, but in a general sense, I think you've generally said the government doesn't need to pay for what's already happening in terms of the transition--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

That is so.

**Matt Murray**

There is an argument that your state particularly though has lost a lot of jobs in the climate transition, and stands to lose more. And that there is investment to be made, there are opportunities to be made to employ people, to bring jobs, and the government can help. We are seeing plants come in North Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky. Is West Virginia in on that kind of action enough?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Well, we sure want you all to come to West Virginia. We need you. Then we'll give you good, hard workers and we'll do the tough jobs. We'll do the heavy lifting. We always have. The thing about climate is this: It's global climate. It's not North American climate. It's not United States climate. It's

not West Virginia climate. It's global climate.

And if you look at basically the reduction, transition, they want to pay \$150 billion to the utility companies to start reducing to 4% a year, okay? And I said, "Okay. You're going to pay us something we're already doing." They said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Well, in the year 2000, 52% of our electricity and our energy from our power plants was coal-fired. 52%. We're down to 19% now. So we're moving in this. The transition's happening, not just for the rest of the world."

**Matt Murray**

And you think government should let it happen and stay out of the way? Government (UNINTEL PHRASE)--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Government can't do everything for us, you follow me, because they'll screw up an entire country if they do. What we can do is this. How do we transition in a way that makes sense? I said you cannot eliminate your way to a cleaner environment.

You can innovate your way to a cleaner environment. You can't eliminate it. And here's the thing. They said, "Well, if we do it, the rest of the world will follow." And I said, "Really?" In 2000, China had 1,725 coal-fire plants. They've got 3,000 now. They're building 400 more.

We had 585, around 600. We've got 504. We reduced 33%. They've increased theirs. It's

unbelievable what's going on around the world. India, everywhere. We're the only nation that's decreased our fossil use. But 40% of it was replaced by natural gas, now methane.

And our large drilling companies are doing a good job with methane. We have some of our smaller, conventional wells that we've got to fix, but there are some things we can do. But I'll tell you one thing. If you don't pay attention to reliability, what Mother Nature did in Texas and 200 people lost their lives in Texas, this will be self-inflicted by 2030 if we went down this plan.

**Matt Murray**

So you're skeptical of a government plan to speed transition, incentivize transition, incentivize plants, invest? You're skeptical of government--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

I'm just saying--

**Matt Murray**

--driving it?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

--the market usually has always picked the winners and losers. We have done a horrible job of picking winners and losers. We've been good at aspirational desires, and using your money for that, but not really picking the winners and losers.

Take EVs. Electric cars are wonderful, except we don't have any basis of building it and relying on it. I said, "I'm old enough to

remember waiting in line in the '70s when OPEC basically shut the oil off. And I'd look and see my license plate, if I could buy gas that day."

It affected our lives. It really did change everything. And we saw runaway inflation, everything going on. I said, "You're going to be putting our EV, our transportation fleet, in the hands of foreign supply chains. That's what you're doing."

So at least I was able to separate out of the bipartisan infrastructure bill to where we go down a hydrogen path to we can make all the hydrogen we want. We should not put all of our eggs in one basket. If we do, I think we'll be sorry for that.

**Matt Murray**

You've mentioned inflation a couple of times.

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Yeah. That's real. It's real.

**Matt Murray**

Well, what's the effect on people in your state right now?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Well, you know, people talked about in West Virginia they want to know what happened to the West Virginia Democrat. Our state changed more than any state in the nation, quicker than any state. We were 2/3 majority all Democrats, now we're 2/3 majority of all Republicans.

How could it change so quickly? And I said,

"I don't know." You know, when I was at the Kennedy Awards Sunday. And it was the 50th anniversary, and they had a flashback of John Kennedy. And all of us are old enough. I was a young child. I was 13 years old and I remember him giving a speech, watching television.

And I'll never forget that, you know, "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." And I still think in rural America, and I know in West Virginia, we still feel that way. We have to contribute and participate. Something's being lost here. And my Washington Democrats don't seem to get it.

**Matt Murray**

So I do want to get into that, but on inflation specifically, just to ask--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

It's hurting.

**Matt Murray**

--your people are feeling it? They're blaming Washington?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Wait a minute.

**Matt Murray**

They're blaming Washington?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Who would you blame?

**Matt Murray**

Yeah. For the spending bills essentially?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Yeah, well, now--

**Matt Murray**

Is Jerome Powell the right guy to fix it for us--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Well, I don't know. Now, I had a conversation with him. I have more of a comfort level with him now than I did. But I still have some unanswered questions I'm concerned about. I thought he wasn't hawkish enough as far as on controlling basically.

We were able to stave off a health crisis and a financial crisis. And he started buying \$120 billion a month in April, I understand. Quantitative easing, buying our bonds and buying our debt. Never stopped. Never took the foot off the pedal. We're still buying it. And they said, "(UNINTEL)." So I've been raising a lot of cane about that. Now, they're going to come back and say, "We're going to reduce it 15," \$15 billion a month, okay? You're clear up until next June.

**Matt Murray**

Well, they're sending more hawkish signals than that. They might start raising soon.

**Senator Joe Manchin**

They're saying because we're pushing the living daylighters at them. Say, "Listen, come on. You're going to have to get hawkish if you can. Don't let this runaway inflation kill us, because we've seen that happen before."



**Matt Murray**

You're more comfortable with him than you were, meaning?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Meaning I want to have another conversation.

**Matt Murray**

Okay. So you're not there yet? You're not buying it?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Yeah. And you're talking about West Virginians, I will say this about inflation, how hard it's hitting us. Our average worker drives 50 miles a day for a job. So we have one of the largest transits in the country, 25 one way, 25 home. With that and food, and now with utilities that are going to be spiking, utility prices, this is real.

This is hurting people. So they're saying, "Well, how come these bills aren't more popular? It's going to help your state." Well, they're just seeing what's really affecting them now. You've been trying to help them. We've spent \$5.4 trillion out the door. We have another \$1.2 trillion with the bipartisan infrastructure bill. We've done so many good things in the last ten months, and no one's taken a breath, you know, to have a little breathing room. And I said, "\$5.4?" I couldn't get my head around \$5.4 trillion.

So I said, "Give me something to compare it to. World War II, we save the world. United

States of America saved the world, World War II. And then you had the Marshall Plan, rebuilt Europe. Today's dollars, it's \$4.7 trillion." \$4.7 trillion, today's dollars. So compare what we got for what we've done and what we did before.

**Matt Murray**

With the deficit much higher now.

**Senator Joe Manchin**

\$25 trillion.

**Matt Murray**

I want to ask you about one other policy, and then I do want to talk a little bit of politics. But you've been against the president's OSHA vaccine mandate for private businesses.

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Hold on. We'll get that corrected.

**Matt Murray**

Well, Chuck Schumer went at that bill today a little bit I think. We've got this new contagious variant. And your state I think has had a low vaccination rate. You don't favor the OSHA mandate, right? But what should government--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

I basically--

**Matt Murray**

--or business be doing?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

--am 1,000% in favor of the federal government having a mandate, that anyone

working for a federal government--

**Matt Murray**

The federal government?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

--paycheck, anyone in the military, should have it because basically, we're working for your tax dollars and my tax dollars for the services that you depend on.

**Matt Murray**

But what about private businesses?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Private businesses? No. And I'll tell you the reason why. If there's 100 employees or more, and that's all it affects, they've done something right, I don't think they're going to give up their market shares or subject their employees and lose their customers' base because of not making good decisions. And I don't think the government has to make every decision for the private sector. You know, you've been doing quite well without us.

**Matt Murray**

Is there a better approach than a mandate that government--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

I've always said--

**Matt Murray**

--should be doing--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

--incentivize--

**Matt Murray**

--that they're not?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

--don't penalize. If there are different programs that we're letting you borrow into or things, you know, you're accessing, then we'll incentivize. And then they can make a decision. "Is this worth it to us to get involved in this program or not?" But I wouldn't penalize. I just won't do it. I'm by myself on this one.

**Matt Murray**

No, I do want to talk politics, but just because, you know, Chuck Schumer blasts the bill today, I think we all know it's pretty hard to go very many days without even somebody these days in your party blasting you, or people, you know, criticizing you, you--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

I'm a spear catcher.

**Matt Murray**

--may be the key vote. You probably are the key vote on this Democratic bill, whether it gets through or not. Two questions about that. One, does it bother you to be kicked around like that? Or how do you deal with it?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Here's the thing, Matt, I've told people. If you look at my record and my involvement in public service, I've never changed. I have never changed. I am the same person. I say I am fiscally responsible and socially

compassionate. And I think that's probably 60%, 70%, 80% of Americans.

**Matt Murray**

But hasn't your party changed? I mean, there are a lot of voices in your party, the progressive voices--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

They've changed.

**Matt Murray**

--would say he should move--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

I'm not a Washington Democrat, Matt. I'm not a Washington Democrat. I guess I'm a rural Democrat or a West Virginia Democrat. Or, you know, I still believe in my Republicans are not my enemies. They're my friends, we just have different opinions. I don't approach anything like, "Well, they're wrong and I'm right." I need the input of everybody. And when we don't have bipartisan buy-in, usually you don't get anything that lasts. It won't last. They'll change it as soon as they get in power. None of this makes sense to--

**Matt Murray**

So are you waiting just for the world to come back your way? Or would you ever leave the party or be an Independent, because you are caught between the two, there's no doubt about that--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

I'm caught between the two, but the bottom line is you have to be caucusing

somewhere, you follow me? And if they would ask me to leave, I would just have to say, "I guess we'll have to abide by your wishes." I don't know. I don't think that'll happen. I don't intend to leave. But I intend to be honest.

**Matt Murray**

You feel more a Democrat than a Republican still?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

You know, the hard thing is, is that, you know, I watched my grandparents, I watched my parents. I've always said this: We're all a product of our environment. A lot of us are who we are because of how we were raised, where we were raised, and who raised us.

And I saw the compassion. I just saw the good and the compassion that they had for people, wanted to help people all the time. Now, I don't relate the the Republicans don't because I have a lot of good Republican friends that feel the same as I do. That middle has gotten so small, there are not many of us left here.

**Matt Murray**

But why is that?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

I don't know what happened, Matt--

**Matt Murray**

But why is that though? I mean, you know, why aren't there ten Joe Manchins and Kyrsten Sinemas in the Senate instead of

two? Why are, I mean, really, both parties more on the fringes that way, because I think you're probably saying you feel you're more where a lot of Americans are than the extremes in either party.

**Senator Joe Manchin**

I feel comfortable. I feel comfortable where I am and (UNINTEL)--

**Matt Murray**

Why is there so much about the two of you? Why aren't there more like the two of you?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Yeah, I never had to think, "Oh, did I say something different last year or the year before?" I've been pretty much right where I am now. So only thing I've told my colleagues, I said, "If you guys are upset, just go out and elect more liberals. I'm not liberal. I don't know what to tell you. I love you all, I'm just not." I don't try to change Bernie. Bernie is true to himself. I respect and appreciate that. Why do they want to change me?

**Matt Murray**

He's actually a model of sticking to your guns and letting the tides of history come around (UNINTEL)--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Bernie and I can show you how to anchor both ends.

**Matt Murray**

So are the Democrats headed for a shellacking next year?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Well, I would say that the warning lights are up. They should be concerned.

**Matt Murray**

Yeah, why? Why do you think?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

I mean, there's so much good. You know, I brought something. I'm going to give this to you so you can use it, okay? Let me tell you if you all are new, what we get--

**Matt Murray**

This is the deposition? No, I'm kidding.

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Huh? Remember in December when we were deadlocked for five months, couldn't make a deal? It wasn't the leadership that did it, Democratic and Republican. It was five Ds and five Rs. We got together and said, "We've got to do something." So we came up with the 908 bill. Remember that? Got that one done. Got us through. And then we had the Bipartisan Energy Act, which you haven't heard much about. First time in 12 years we ever did an energy act. Bipartisan, me and Lisa Murkowski. Then we did the Hate Crimes Bill, passed 94 to one. Haven't heard much about that.

Everyone thought that was going to be a big political fight. We did the emergency supplemental. Emergency supplementals, which could've been really politicized, we did that with unanimous consent. We did on top of that Juneteenth, national holiday.

That could've been politicized. Unanimous consent. Repeal of the Trump (UNINTEL). We did all these things here.

**Matt Murray**

So you're saying--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

But you all haven't heard--

**Matt Murray**

--the parties get along--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

--about that because the party hasn't--  
(MATT MURRAY: UNINTEL)

**Senator Joe Manchin**

--told them what they're doing. And we're doing it in a bipartisan way.

**Matt Murray**

You think the party's not telling its story well, but it's a good story to tell?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Both parties should be telling their story. Democrats and Republicans, we can work together. Don't throw the baby out with the bath water. Don't get rid of the bipartisan spirit that we have there. The spirit of the Senate, and I think from the Founding Fathers, can you imagine when Washington or Jefferson had to go and said, "We're going to have a bicameral body. "We have a People's House over here, which is the House of Representatives, and we're going to have a Senate." And they had to go and tell big, bad New York and had to tell

Virginia that, "Guess what? Rhode Island and Delaware are going to have exactly the same representation you're going to have. You'll both have two." Now, you think they weren't thinking about the minority's participation in this process of ours?

**Matt Murray**

Well, but Senator, you are a Democrat. So your party takes a shellacking--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

You saying I don't sound like one?

**Matt Murray**

No. No. I'm saying let's say your party takes a shellacking next year. Senator McConnell last night seemed I think reasonably confident that it was shaping up to be a Republican year. Democrats are back in the minority. Isn't that worse for your position to get things done that you want to get done? And what do you tell your fellow Democrats about where you think they've gone wrong?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Well, we should be taking advantage of the opportunity to work with our colleagues, as we have done. I'm going to get that for you. Take that with you.

**Matt Murray**

No, no.

**Senator Joe Manchin**

But I'm just saying--

**Matt Murray**

But realistically, there's not much reward for

people, politicians in either party--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Not today.

**Matt Murray**

--these days to be seen to be working across--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Well, for my--

**Matt Murray**

--the aisle.

**Senator Joe Manchin**

--Republican colleagues, I've told them. I said, "You were with me on January the 6th. That was not a visit to the Capitol by those people, okay? They came after us. And now to not even acknowledge it?" And now not to acknowledge, you've got 40 million people that Joe Biden was the duly elected president. We had 40 million people on the other side when Donald Trump. If we can't basically have a transfer of power--

**Matt Murray**

But how do you solve it?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

We're going to have to stand to tall. Don't be afraid of getting defeated. This is not the best job I've ever had. I swear to you. And I don't know, I said, the consolation is send me home. I am not going to sell my soul for this.

**Matt Murray**

We're just about out of time, although we

could go on for a while. If you don't mind, I want to ask you quickly, but I think it's an issue you feel strongly about. I know you're very concerned about opioids.

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Oh my.

**Matt Murray**

Your state's been hit hard. We've had two presidents in a row who have talked forcefully and I think sincerely about the opioid challenge. But a few weeks ago, as we saw drug overdose deaths at a 12-month high, crossed 100,000, how do we address this problem?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

You know, when this started way back when, all of us thought that it was a choice. Then we found out it was an illness, like mental illness, like any other type of addiction, it's an illness. And you have to treat it with treatment centers. We don't have enough treatment centers, you know?

**Matt Murray**

And you'd support government funding for treatment centers?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Let me tell you what I did support, a bill that I have and you might've heard of it, and maybe you don't agree with me. I thought that basically, the way this product come onto the market, should never come onto the market the way it did, misleading the public, thinking that it's going to be a

wonderful piece of pain relief that's not going to be addictive, and here we go down that path, you can return.

You know, the fifth element of wellness was pain for the military. That's where this really, as I'm told, really got its roots and started and it came out. And my brother's a doctor. I said, "Hey, John, how much training have you had on dispensing?"

He says, "Oh, about two weeks." Out of eight years, eight, ten years of education? So they rely on whoever comes in and tells them what to do. And the scenario I've said, "Okay. We've got a problem now. I need a cure." So I have a bill called The Lifeboat. And The Lifeboat is this: if you're going to produce this product, these opiate products, then you're going to pay one penny per milligram for treatment centers, and treatment centers only. We need treatment continues all over this country if we want to cure this problem. And that one penny is \$2 billion a year. That tells you the enormity of the problem we have.

**Matt Murray**

Part of the problem we're in now is illegal opiates though, right? I mean, I know when I go to my drug store, I assume for you, opiates are much harder to get. They're locked up. I went to the hospital this year. I couldn't get Demerol.

**Senator Joe Manchin**

We've done everything we can to shut it down.

**Matt Murray**

But we are being flooded with Fentanyl, dangerous Fentanyl, other drugs. Are we doing enough?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Well, they're coming across the border, and we've got to have border control. We've got to have border security. And I don't care what, Democrat or Republican, how they may believe, and it should not be politicized, but you've got to have border security. People need--

**Matt Murray**

And we don't?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

--to come to this country--

**Matt Murray**

You don't think we do?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

--the right way. We don't have it. No, we don't. We happened a 2013 bill, bipartisan bill, that was worked on. It's a great piece of legislation. And it basically gave people a pathway to citizenship. And we have people that came here, as you know. And they were babies when they were brought here. They should have a pathway. If you go in the military, you go look in the military, who's serving right now, I was up to the missile sites up in Alaska, all Puerto Rican National Guard. So I'm just saying, everybody's contributing.

**Matt Murray**

Under President Trump, we had border security. Do you think what he did worked?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

It was moving in that way, but it wasn't a compassionate way. You've got to have that compassion with the sternness that we're going to do this, okay? And have a pathway forward. And basically, you can't entice people by giving them benefit packages that are hard to explain to the American public, we're giving benefits to people who haven't come through the proper way.

Also, we have to be compassionate to people that are here, that have contributed to society should be made part of the society. And I can tell you right now, the lack of workforce we have, we need a good, solid immigration policy that allows people to come for the right reason, not come through the wrong way for the wrong reason. And that takes security.

**Matt Murray**

Very last thing, and then I will overall let you go, but President Biden, will he run again in 2024? And should he run again?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Well, the people that decide that, and him and his wife Jill will decide that. I think Joe Biden is the right person, the right place, the right time for us right now. We just have to come together. And I have said this: when Donald Trump was president, I did

everything I could to work with him.

I think all of us as Americans owe it to the president. You want all of us, as a good American, want your president to succeed. If they do well, we all do well. But you have to be honest, you know, and you have to be able to speak to power, truth to power. And tell them. And sometimes it's hard when you're sitting in the White House, you're sitting in the Oval Office and just you and the president are there. And they say, "I really need you on this." And I say, "Oh, here we go." That's a tough one.

**Matt Murray**

We could only imagine the conversations--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Oh, we've had some good ones.

**Matt Murray**

--with the president you're having.

**Senator Joe Manchin**

We know each other well. And I've had great ones with President Trump. I've enjoyed, you know?

**Matt Murray**

When is the next time you expect to be in the Oval Office having the president have that conversation with you, would you say? Christmas Eve?

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Yeah, we'll see. I've been all over, so. The main thing is all, of us, this is a wonderful country we have. And the opportunities. And all of us have that opportunity to experience



this American dream. We want it for everybody. But we've got to work together. We're tearing our country apart, because of politics. Politics has become a blood sport, you know? When John Kennedy was running in 1960, I was 12 years old. Thirteen, just going 13. You know, we're a Catholic family, so I saw my parents and everybody's all excited.

And I'm thinking, "I've never seen them excited about politics before. Why are they so excited?" So he's a Catholic running. He's young, about the same age as they were.

And I'm thinking, "Oh boy. This is good. Okay. That's who I'm for." So we're sitting there watching him.

It had to be Walter Cronkite one night, Matt. And he says, "It's been said that if John F. Kennedy becomes president, the Pope will run the country." And I look at my mom, I said, "Boy, Mom. They don't know the Catholics we do." So religion, you know, religion used to be the thing that kind of kept us at the kitchen table not talking back because people would get upset.

Can't talk about politics anymore. It's awful. Politics should bring you together. Fix the problem. And if you're not willing to do and you want to throw the filibuster out and just throw caution to the wind, then I think we will not have the prestige we have.

We won't be a super power if we lose that. I really believe that because then, we won't be consistent enough to where people can

say, "Okay, America's dependable." You know, like Winston Churchill says, "Don't worry about the Americans. Don't worry about the Americans," but trying to get us in World War II. "They'll always do the right thing when they've tried everything else."

**Matt Murray**

I know. Okay. Senator, we'll leave it--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

I'm saying don't worry. We're going to do everything. We'll try everything maybe first, but we're going to do the right thing.

**Matt Murray**

We have to leave it there. We'll all be watching. I expect we'll all be reading your name a lot in the coming weeks. And we'll be--

**Senator Joe Manchin**

I wish that would not be--

**Matt Murray**

--watching you go.

**Senator Joe Manchin**

--the case, but you're probably right.

**Matt Murray**

Yeah, okay. Thanks for taking the time.

**Senator Joe Manchin**

Thank you, Matt.

\*\*\*END OF TRANSCRIPT\*\*\*