

‘UpFront’: Thompson predicts ‘pushing and shoving’ ahead in budget process

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Former GOP Gov. Tommy Thompson predicted some “pushing and shoving” in the budget process ahead for Democratic Gov. Tony Evers and the Republican-controlled Legislature but he thinks both sides can end up working together.

“It doesn’t happen overnight. It’s going to take time. You’ve got to build trust. You’ve got to be able to show the other side that you actually listen to them, and that you can go part way to meet them,” Thompson said in an interview that aired Sunday on “UpFront with Mike Gousha,” produced in partnership with WisPolitics.com.

Thompson, who spent most of his time as gov with Dems controlling at least one of the Legislature’s chambers, said his first budget “was a budget of fights” and that he “vetoed 85 items to show them that I meant business.”

“I called (Democratic leaders) in right after and said, ‘You know, we can spend the next two years just fighting, or we can get along and we can sit down and talk and be able to make peace and be able to get a lot of accomplishments. Which one do you want?’” Thompson said.

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He said the Democratic leaders wanted accomplishments.

“So, every Tuesday they would come in and we would talk and we would find out what they needed, what I needed, how we could get together and solve problems,” Thompson said.

Evers will present his first biennial budget on Thursday, and then the Republican-led Joint Committee on Finance will go to work on it. Thompson said there will be “a lot of pushing and shoving and giving and taking.”

“I think there should be vetoes,” Thompson said of Evers. “You’ve got to establish your territory.”

Republicans, he said, “are going to be testing, you know, the strength and the viability and how far they can push and how much they can get done. They have to do that.”

But sooner or later, Thompson said, “the pushing and shoving has got to stop. And the person who’s got to lead that is the governor.”

“Just like I had to go and talk to (former Assembly Speaker) Tom Loftus and (former Senate Majority Leader) Chuck Chvala and all the Democrats who really didn’t like me in the beginning. But in the end, they respected me and today they are, both of those, very close friends of mine,” Thompson said.

Also on the program, Milwaukee County Sheriff Earnell Lucas said he supports decriminalization of possession of small amounts of marijuana. Gov. Tony Evers said he supports decriminalizing the possession of 25 grams or less.

However, Lucas said he would be cautious about full legalization.

“I’m not certain that there’s enough science to show whether there’s a difference in a person under the influence of alcohol versus under the influence of marijuana,” Lucas said.

“And unless and until we solve that and a number of other issues as it relates to the legalization, then I think the appropriate step for us to take is decriminalization,” he said.

Lucas also discussed what he called a “disparate impact” of marijuana laws between the county’s suburbs and the city of Milwaukee, and the effect of current laws on communities of color. See more from the program at [wisn.com](https://www.wisn.com).

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