



David Toscano on How States Shape the Nation | LTIS Episode 6

Voice: Hello and welcome to “Legislatures: The Inside Story.” A podcast from the National Conference of State Legislatures. Your host is Tim Storey, the CEO of NCSL. Tim talks with legislators, journalists, academics, political analysts and others about the ideas and policies shaping state legislatures today. Tim’s guest for this podcast is David Toscano, a seven-term legislator in the Virginia House of Delegates, who held the seat once occupied by Thomas Jefferson in the Virginia House of Burgesses. First elected in 2005, he served as Democratic Leader in the House from 2011 to 2018. In 2021, Toscano published “Fighting Political Gridlock: How States Shape Our Nation and Our Lives.” He talked with Tim about the critical role of states in affecting our daily lives, how states have led the way on a number of critical issues. And, in contrast, how increasingly ineffective the legislature is at the federal level. He also talked about the need to increase people’s understanding of the role of state government. Here is their discussion.

Tim: Hello. This is Tim Storey once again, your host for the NCSL podcast “The Inside Story” about the legislature. I am, as always, just super excited because I just love talking to interesting people and once again, we’ve managed to get somebody on the podcast who I know is going to be really interesting and has a fascinating background who knows legislatures inside and out. And that is Delegate David Toscano from Virginia. So, thank you so much David for being with us today.

David: It’s great to be with you.

Tim: We are going to dive right in and sort of, you know, help our listeners know more about your long history in and around state governments and state legislatures. So, I know ... I think you are from Charlottesville, Virginia, but take us into the way back machine and tell us your story to bring us to today.

David: I guess you could say I'm just a small-town country lawyer that is practicing law in Charlottesville, Virginia. And I've been in public service, at least until I retired recently, for twenty-five years. Twelve years in local office including Mayor of Charlottesville. And then fourteen years in the legislature holding the successor's seat to the one that was held by Thomas Jefferson way, way back. I was the democratic leader in the Virginia House for seven years in the early 2010's and got the Democrats to the point where they were within a coin toss of being at parity with the Republicans in the House of Delegates. So, I'm the luckiest guy in the world. I live in a great place. I represented great people. And I've just written this book that has given me a lot of opportunity to talk about things I really enjoy which are States and how important they are to the future of the Country.

Tim: Did you grow up in and around the Western part of Virginia, not West Virginia, but in and around the Charlottesville part of the country?

David: Well, you know it's an interesting story. I grew up in Upstate New York, Syracuse, New York. I graduated and went to school up in Upstate New York, Colgate University. Then I went onto grad school at Boston College. Got a Ph.D. there. I came down to Virginia and found myself a job at the University of Virginia teaching Sociology. I decided to go to law school a couple of years later and I've been practicing since the mid 80's. So, I've just really been lucky in my life and had a lot of great experiences.

(TM): 03:43

Tim: When you were on the UVA faculty which not everybody may know is the University of Virginia that is in Charlottesville. Home of Thomas Jefferson which I love that historic connection. Who wouldn't? And so, you are teaching there and decided to go to law school. What prompted you to do that?

David: Well, I guess like several people my age, when I graduated from college, it was all about trying to change the world. And I went to grad school thinking that I would change the world by teaching. And then I decided I could change the world by being an attorney and advocating for people in court. And that's why I moved from academia to law. I was interested in teaching primarily and not research and writing at the time. And certainly not doing a lot of the quantitative analysis that a lot of academics were doing at the time. So, I said well the law is another profession that I can help people, and I've enjoyed every single minute of it since.

Tim: I'm always curious about a little more of the back stories of how people wind up, you know, where they are especially in the legislature eventually. So, you know that seems like an unusual path to come from the Sociology world into the legal world. Did you practice, so you practiced in Charlottesville at the same time you were running for Mayor, becoming the Mayor or before that?

David: I finished my law degree, and opened a small firm in Charlottesville. And I decided about five years into my practice that I saw political decisions being made in the city that I thought I could do better. So, I offered myself for election and won. I then won again and became Mayor and then was reelected again. I retired from city council in 2002. When the delegate from this area who had been our representative for twenty-four years decided to retire, I ran for the seat. And I was elected immediately into the minority within the House of Delegates in Richmond. That experience was shocking because they just really did things differently in Richmond. There was a lot to learn. You know they talk about one of the cardinal rules of politics, which is that you must learn how to count. When I was on the City Council in Charlottesville, I only had to count to three because there were only five members. Now, there were so many places where counting was important—in subcommittees, full committees, and on the House floor. Even if a bill passed in the House, it went over to the Senate, and I had to count again. And there was always a Governor out there willing to veto something that he didn't like. There were a lot of things that you had to learn.

My sociological background was helpful because it taught me about how informal norms of a body can affect outcomes. And how you respect other people to get things done.

Tim: Help me with the timeline. When did you get elected to the House, the House of Delegates?

David: I was elected to the House in the fall of 2005. I was elected the same year the time Tim Kaine was elected Governor. I came in at a time when there might have been thirty-seven Democrats out of a total of a hundred delegates. The Senate was controlled by one or two votes by the Democrats at the time. The majority in the Senate went back and forth constantly through my time in Richmond. All my time in the Legislature was in the minority. And that just puts a very different wrinkle on how you approach your job.

Tim: Just a little more background before we dive into the book. Virginia had been held by the Democrats of course for probably over a hundred years, ah, up until the early 2000's. It probably only went to the Republicans in I'm sort of guessing 02 or. Well, you guys have that odd year election. 01 or 03. Somewhere in that range. Well, it might have been before that. It might have been in the 90's. I take that back.

David: No, it was really about 2000. In decades past, the Virginia Democratic party was still conservative and some members still sounded like Dixiecrats. Charlottesville had been kind of a liberal haven. The changes in the party over the last twenty years in Virginia have been unbelievable. But you must remember, I'm a guy coming from the North. When I first arrived in Virginia 40 years ago, I would walk into a public building and would see paintings of Robert E. Lee. This was different from places in the north where the paintings I would see on the wall were paintings of Abraham Lincoln. You never saw a painting of Abraham Lincoln in a public library in Virginia. You'd see Robert E. Lee and you'd see statues of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson all over the place.

Tim: And Thomas Jefferson too, right? I mean. And Jefferson and Madison and Monroe. You know all those Virginians who were in the founding fathers' group. But I take your point and it's also reassuring to me that the House of Delegates. Not only are you in Thomas Jefferson's seat, you know he was in the House of Delegates before becoming President and his many other things he did in his resume. You know, it's also the oldest Legislature in the United States. Right? The House of Burgesses is the, you know, forebearer of the House of Delegates.

David: Except for the House of Commons, it's the longest consecutively operating Democratic body in the western world.

Tim: In the Western? Well in the World period. That's an interesting pedigree to this whole background that you bring to sort of looking at today's politics. And it's a little more background for me. Who was the Speaker? Was Bill Howell the Speaker Howell, the Speaker the whole time you were a minority leader or Democratic leader?

(TM): 09:30

David: When I came in, Bill Howell was the Speaker and he retired two years before I did. He was the Speaker the entire time. There was a two-year Speaker, Kirk Cox and then he left when the Democrats took control. So, it was really Bill Howell and me duking it out every day on the floor when I would be raising procedural motions and questions about different bills that that Democrats opposed.

(TM): 09:57

Tim: So, we have alluded to the fact that you have a new book I guess just published in only the last few months. A month or two formally. The University of Virginia Press? Is it through the University of Virginia?

David: Yes, it's called "Fighting Political Gridlock: How States Shape Our Nation and Our Lives." Senator Mark Warner wrote the foreword to the book. It was published by the University of Virginia Press this September. It's getting some good traction so I hope people will pick it up. And you know it's written at a great time because there are so many things going around in the States right now. The book opens with the discussion of how States reacted to the Pandemic. People think that the Federal Government has all the power, but you know Joe Biden could not enact a nationwide mask mandate even if he wanted to because it wouldn't be Constitutional. But state constitutions allow the Governors to impose all kinds of restrictions under their emergency powers. And that's what they did. The Book starts with a discussion of Executive Power in the Governors throughout all the States. These emergency policies were enacted not by legislatures but by Governors. In fact, the Governors pretty much left Legislatures out of the mix. Now we are seeing a backlash and a lot of Legislatures are saying "well wait a minute now. This is too much power." And they are trying to cut back on the Governors' ability to govern through emergency orders.

(TM): 11:37

Tim: Believe me, I heard a lot about that from both parties. And I think it is probably because of the access of the Legislatures. You know they were hearing it daily from many constituents who did or did not like necessarily what the Governors were doing. And of course, the Governors were acting in their emergency capacity. And a lot of States went back and reviewed those emergency capacity laws like how long does this band aid exist so it's a fascinating topic. Why now? When did you start the book and what made you decide to write this book now?

David: I started the book two years ago. I kept notebooks of my time in the Legislature for all fourteen years, so I had been notes about many events. I originally intended on writing a book that

encompassed all twenty-five years of my public service experience. But my editor looked at the manuscript and it was over a thousand pages long. She said you can't publish this. So, we broke it in two and into two books--- one that all about States and has a National focus, and a second, which focuses on Virginia and its changes in the last twenty years.

People just don't understand how significance of the States in explaining what happens in this Country. For example, a lot of people don't even realize that redistricting is a State function. They think that the Congress redistricts or at least they think that Congress draws its own lines when in reality the Legislatures do it. And the way the Legislatures draw the lines affects who gets elected to Congress and therefore what politics are enacted by Congress. So, you think about that and in the context of the last Federal election, you begin to see the States can have incredible power in what goes on at the national level.

Beyond that of course, states mostly control everything from education to criminal justice. Some people think it's the Federal government plan that led to higher rates of incarceration around the County when in reality it's about State policy. States make the laws that people violate. When punished, most serve in State prisons. And its state rules that allow them either to get out early or stay longer. People are just are so focused on Washington, they don't pay attention to the States.

(TM): 14:15

Tim: Yeah, I mean you honestly are preaching to a very sympathetic ear as someone who believes that maybe the States are appropriately the right place to be making policy on these big issues in partnership with the local Governments that fit to that as well. Is there any? You cited criminal justice you know and CJ issues, but are there any like antidote for factoid that brings this home? You know that says hey American public and I haven't checked this in a while, but the last time I saw less than 17% of Americans could name one of their State Legislators. I'm sure it is higher for Congress. Probably not dramatically higher, but you know certainly everyone knows the President. Probably people know their ... they probably know their Governor or at some higher rate. But the disconnect between the general public's knowledge of the impact of the State policy, you know the State Capital is on their lives versus Washington on their lives. Anything that just really brings it home for you?

(TM): 15:17

David: Well, there are many examples out there but think about this one. Access to clean safe water is key to our lives. What happens when your water supply is contaminated? We recently saw what happened in Flint, Michigan in the last decade where the city decided to change the source of its water supply. Everyone thinks that that was done at a local level and to some extent it was. But it was a function of State policy. Michigan has a law that allows the State to essentially impose an emergency manager on a city that is in financial stress. This makes some sense because you want to try to help cities. And in Flint, of course, had undergone the deindustrialization for years, losing jobs, income, and prosperity. It became a very, very poor City and was in danger of falling into bankruptcy. Michigan the State stepped in through the Governor and said we are going to take over this City. And an emergency manager was installed. He decided that to save money, they would get water for the city from a different source. They didn't treat the new water and what happened was that the lead pipes that brought the water to homes and businesses started to corrode. People got sick. Some people died. An action that was supposed to save the city a lot of money has cost millions of millions of dollars.

And the problem is still not fixed. This colossal error was the return of state policy and state action.

And then there are other things. Think about energy, and what happened in Texas just a year ago when the state was hit with a surprise dramatic snowstorm and their entire electric grid almost collapsed. Now you say to yourself well that's a federal issue. Well, maybe not. The problem was generated because, years ago, the Texas Legislature and the Texas State Government decided that they were going to separate Texas from the National electric grid. They then began operating their own grid for electricity. And state regulators made other decisions that contributed to the problem. Over the years, they took actions that many states do—keeping rates low to save money for consumers. This is an admirable goal, but in the process, the utilities did not accumulate enough money to reinvest into the system to create resiliency against this kind of dramatic event. This is yet another example of a series of State decisions that had a really dramatic effect on Texas.

Tim: I mean and then the other side of the coin what's not being resolved in Washington. I'm not going to be entirely accurate, so I'll imprecise as I say this, but roughly in the 117th Congress was I think was the last. I think we are in 118 now if memory serves. I could have that slightly wrong. The last Congress. The two-year biennial Congress that you know President Trump was in the White House. Democrats controlled the House and I think Republicans controlled the Senate. Yea. So, you've got a divided Government. They enact roughly four hundred pieces of legislation and roughly a third of those are rename a Federal Building or to issue a commemorative coin. And then there is another. You know many of them were discontinuations, you know extend laws that were up for expiration. So, they are just not able to do major policy in Washington. Now, of course, there were some big Covid Stimulus Relief Packages. I don't want to imply that Congress does nothing with the President. But at the same time, you know States had passed tens of thousands of pieces of legislation.

(TM): 18:59

David: We do four hundred in a day. I mean it's amazing how fast the State Legislatures work versus the Federal Government. I didn't mean to interrupt you, but that's the case.

Tim: No, no that's a great point. I love that actually. And it drives home the point. And it's not to say that more bills and more legislation are the right or best thing. There is obviously a balance there. You know back to the old saying of you know the Republic is safe again the Legislature has adjourned or something along those lines. What were the other takeaways? When you started thinking about this big question of what happens in the State Capital versus what happens in Washington. You know what did you take away from that?

David: Here's another example, Tim, and I think you can appreciate this. There are examples from the progressive side and examples from the conservative side where States act when the federal government cannot or will not. On the progressive side, people are very concerned about climate change, and wish that the Federal Government would do much more about it. It will not be addressed without a federal response. But the federal government is having difficulty doing enough. So, states act, sometimes very creatively. In the Northeast, for example, a consortium of States created what is called the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. They call it RGGI ... in which a group of States, I think it's nine or maybe ten now, are joined together to try to cut emissions in their States and affect the CO2 levels in the atmosphere.

State policy can also be a model for federal legislation. For years, there were efforts to provide health insurance to all Americans. Various measures at the federal level failed. So, Massachusetts says well ok. You guys won't do it so we will at least do it for our people. And, under a Republican Governor Mitt Romney, they passed the Massachusetts Affordable Care Act back in 2006. It's probably one of the greatest examples of States as the laboratories of democracy you can find. Massachusetts passed a law to create the individual mandate modeled after on the conservative principle that everyone should have "skin in the game," i. e., they should contribute to a benefit they receive. This would keep costs down and more will be insured. The law provided subsidies for those people who couldn't afford to pay. This law became the model for the Obama Care.

Tim: Another element to this, of course, when you embrace this kind of Federalism is that you are sort of acknowledging that there are some States that are far more conservative and some States that are far more progressive and liberal. And they might pursue policies that Nationally you'd never get agreement to. I was trying to think of a conservative analog to that and I don't know if this fits perfectly. But I was thinking about the fact that Arizona and Texas have been very concerned about issues along the border that are extremely complicated. And not just you know people coming into the Country, but also illegal activity on the border in terms of drugs and that kind of thing. You know so Texas steps in and starts to do more border security and these kinds of things which may not be something you'd ever get agreement on in Washington. Washington has been looking at the immigration issue for decades without really doing anything of note on it, anything of substance. When you hear that, you know how do you ... is that the way it should work that you know conservative States pursuing conservative solutions. And you know even when those diverge often, I mean look the some of the social issues we're looking at you know. And of course, there's National law that's being sorted out by the Supreme Court. So, what are your thoughts on that?

(TM): 23:02

David: This is why your job is so fascinating and why my writing is so interesting to me because there are so many different examples like that. Even on things that I disagree with. Let's take the issue of reproductive choice. In States like Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas, Legislatures have passed laws in order to set up a legal challenge for the United States Supreme Court on Roe v Wade. They are using state action to get conservative positions adopted nationally. And the constitutions of some states make it easier for their people to change laws than in either the federal government or other states. A good example of this would be marijuana legislation. Several states have recently passed laws to decriminalize or even legalize marijuana for recreational use. Many of these changes came because of what is called "citizen initiative." This is a process written into the state constitutions in a number of States where citizens can directly put an issue before the electorate to change a law by popular vote. It is a very powerful avenue for change. After voters got marijuana legalized in a number of States, legislatures began to act as well. Several Legislatures then decided that maybe it was safe to take on an issue that years earlier would not have been considered.

"Citizen initiative" is not found in the U.S. Constitution. In fact, there are many provisions in State Constitutions that are not in the Federal Constitution and that people can use to change state law. We are now seeing much more litigation at the state level to protect voting rights,

partly because state constitutions are explicit in their guarantee of the franchise and partly because advocates think that federal jurisprudence does not allow as many protections.

All these differences between states raise important questions involving the future of federalism. The philosophical issues are fascinating. What should be the proper balance between State's rights and federal authority? As we encourage state experimentation, do we run the risk of creating two separate countries within the United States. And I think that's a big issue we've got right now. Is there going to be an overarching set of values or norms that are going to operate our Country or are we going to let the Red States go their way, the Blue States go their way? I don't mean to make light of it, but it's an important philosophical issue that's going to face the Country for a while.

Tim: Yea and of course we all eventually you know the real clashes get wound up at the Supreme Court right. Just as the, you know, the abortion law in Texas is now before the Supreme Court and to see if it complies or not with Federal law. Of course, actually the case, we can't go into the weeds on this, but this case has to do with this enforcement mechanism in that law. But the bigger question, I think, will become before the Court in some form or fashion. If you believe in Federalism, it's for these local voters to decide and of course the Texas Legislature is and many of these Legislatures are supported heavily by the voters on the Republican side just as there are other Legislatures that are supported heavily by the voters on the Democratic side.

(TM): 26:14

David: And all these States are different. I don't know how many of your listeners realize that Virginia is an incredible outlier when it comes to the selection of Judges. Most States elect their Judges. We do not. We select our Judges from the Legislature. I have come to believe that this is a better system, but it is different. I've been in Virginia long enough that I think this is the best way to do it. But we're the outlier. If you look around the Country at how much money is now being spent on these judicial elections and how politicized they are even though they are supposed to be non-partisan, it gets you worried about the ability of people to do their job in a way that just follows the rule of law and not some interpretation based on an ideology.

Tim: By the way, you know NCSL is headquartered in Colorado, so I am you know physically located in Colorado and we were one of the they were one of the two States that did enact the retail use of cannabis through the ballot like you said. There are twenty-six States where citizens can put something on the statewide ballot. Functionally it is less than that. Some of those are nearly impossible to get some on the ballot, but around twenty States if that's the case. I guess this leads me to another question which is what are you worried about you know in terms of Federalism and you know the State's role in policymaking and the disconnect between citizen understanding of what happens at the State Capital versus what happens in Washington and the lack of engagement there? What troubles you?

David: Well, there is a lot to worry about. The last chapter of my book is entitled *Reimagining Civic Engagement*. I want to get State Legislators to think about what that really means buttress our political guardrails so that we maintain our system of democracy. For me, it's not just the question of the philosophical balance, but how you strike the balance in terms of engaging with each other. Our polarization is ripping the country apart at the seams. I don't want to be too hyperbolic about what happened on January 6, but it did scare me right down to my toes about what that meant for the future of the Country. There are plenty of people who are agitated on

both sides of the political spectrum . It is incumbent upon leaders to tell their bases “ hey cool it here. This is a place where you just can’t go any farther than this.” And if it means I don’t get reelected, so be it. It is hard, of course, but leaders need to speak the truth and say that the Country is more important than each of us just playing out our own angst in the political system.. Election issues emerge huge in this discussion. And they are State issues. If we allow people who have a political agenda one way or another to get ahold of that system, we’re going to be in trouble. And so, I’m worried, I mean philosophically I’m worried at trying to find that balance. Certainly, we’ve been doing that for two hundred and thirty years. The difference is that we are now losing track of our shared values and the legitimacy of our system, particularly elections. We can’t let that happen

(TM): 30:01

Tim: I mean you sort of talked about really two things. There’s civic engagement getting people more aware and involved in what’s happening at the State level. And then there’s this civility question. You know there are so many elements to that including social media and you know how primaries are influenced how ... Legislators have to respond to sub-constituencies and their constituencies. So, you know what do you think we should be doing on civic engagement? Just getting more people to understand and educate them about the process. Any ideas? Bold ideas for that?

David: The first thing they should do is read my book.

Tim: Okay. That’s a good idea.

David: I make light of that, but we have got to get people off their complete focus on Washington, and get them thinking more about their State Capitals. You know we have lost a lot of news media in State Capitals. The good news is there’s kind of a resurrection of the non-profit news that is trying to report on State and local issues. That’s a good thing. But we have to get people to try to understand better how their States operate because a lot of the people who end up being in Congress come out of the State Legislatures. And if they don’t learn good traits at the State Legislative level, it makes it harder for them later.

Tim: I really recoil at this sort of you know you don’t hear it too often like oh the Legislatures are the minor leagues and then you go to Congress. To me, that’s absurd. Mainly because well one I know a fair number of people who have come and been through Congress and they are of course no more or less talented than the people in Legislatures. But too it’s just that you can get so much more done in a State than you can in Washington. I really think the action is in the Legislatures.

David: Yes and the State Legislatures are interesting because they tend to recognize talent independent of party. You can develop an expertise so long as it’s not too political and you could be the go-to person in the State Legislature anytime a bill like that comes. And people value you for that independence - or your seniority. If you are elected to Congress, you could be four hundred and thirty-five out of four hundred and thirty-five and you won’t have the ability to affect anything for at least a decade. In the State Legislature, you can jump right in and do things.

I remember my first session. I was assigned to the Courts of Justice Committee and nobody in the Courts of Justice knew anything about adoption law. A whole rewrite of adoption law had

been proposed. I knew something about it. I helped write the law. This was a freshman Legislator in the Virginia House of Delegates who was able to jump right in and make a difference. And there are stories like that all over the Country.

Tim: What I think is true about that too is that you get that respect across both parties right. You can establish that expertise you know and that's one path I think perhaps the best path you know in terms of building reputation as a problem solver and getting something done. What about civility? You know you did sort of touch on it. I also, you know, can't ... we can't pretend that we don't know Charlottesville of course just four years ago roughly was the epitome of the breakdown facility in the nation. One flashpoint of that. You know what can we do about civility? How can we get back to you know and how would you characterize civility when you were the Legislature? Is it better? Worse? And how can we make it better?

(TM): 33.50

David: Well, there is civility and polarization. They are not necessarily the same things. With civility, it's how you treat other people and respect their point of view. That doesn't mean you can't be partisan and argue very vigorously for your point of view, but the key thing is to have some humility and understand that people come from different places. You try to put yourself in their shoes so you can understand where they come from. And then eventually you have to take a vote and take a vote. But in the process, you can build these relationships with people that allow you under very stressful conditions to understand their views a lot better and try to reach some accommodation occasionally.

Tim: How did you do that? Did you was that sort of part of your thinking when you came in and how did you go about doing that?

David: One of my goals of being a leader was to be able to raise issues that the minority party really felt was important but do it in a civil way without actually bashing people personally. And I'd like to think that that might have been part of my legacy. And I think people in leadership really have this special responsibility to do that. It's not easy to do in this hyper partisan environment, but we've got to rely on the leaders to do it. If you don't have civility, the order can break down and it's very difficult to do anything without force and coercion and that just feeds on itself. You can't have that in this Country and still survive as an effective democracy.

Tim: We just have a couple of minutes left. I was thinking about the fact, this wonderful element to you that you come from Thomas Jefferson's district right. We mentioned him and namechecked him a couple of times here. Are you much of a student of Jefferson? Did you spend time thinking about him and?

David: I have spent a lot of time reading and thinking about Jefferson. His words and his life are a fascinating amalgam of contradictions. Just start with the meaning of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." In some people's view, the pursuit of happiness was something that people strived for together. The pursuit of happiness was not about making so much money that I can so I can play golf once a week and go on these big vacations. It wasn't like that. The notion that the founders like Madison, Jefferson and the others had was one of civic virtue, that you had a responsibility to try to help other people and move the Country forward. And that's what was the basis of the civility and the pursuit of happiness. You would find your happiness in helping other people. And lots of folks don't look at those words in that way. Jefferson has

justifiably been taking so much heat because he was a slave holder. He criticized slavery, but he was a slave holder. There is no doubt about that. But you must admire the power of those words in the declaration that have animated so many people across the world to think about their lives at different ways. You can't get away from that.

Tim: If anyone is listening who has never been to Monticello, you just have to go to get inside of the head of this gentleman who you know was human. That had ... was deeply flawed of course on slavery. There is no question about that. And had the thought in so many interesting and creative ways about how he lived his life and of course had a big stamp on the system that exists to this day. So, I would like to close, but with this one the name of your book exactly so people are putting it into Amazon. They know exactly what to type in.

David: "Fighting Political Gridlock." Put that in and you will find it.

Tim: Published by the University of Virginia Press I guess is right. And so aside from that book, what else are you reading or what would you recommend to Legislators or Legislative staff who just need to know more about this topic or anything? You know what would make them a better part of the Legislative institution? What would you suggest or even a TV show or movie? What do you tell people to look into?

David: I'm reading "A Hundred Years of Solitude" right now. You can only spend so much time doing politics right. But if you want to go to a place where you really can learn a lot about States, go to the website of the National Conference of State Legislatures. There are things about healthcare. There are things about State Constitutions. But just keep reading. The biggest joy in my life is I learn something new every day. If I can keep doing that, I will be in good shape.

Tim: That's the secret right there you know. You can keep living if you keep learning, that's for sure. That's part of it. Thank you for the gracious promotion of the website. I would agree. We have an extremely robust website with everything and anything about State policy that goes way back. Not back to 1619 House of Burgesses in Virginia. Ahm do you know why they adjourned? This is one of my favorite trivia questions. You know they adjourned after just five days. Do you know why they adjourned on such a short?

David: You have got me there Tim. You got to tell me.

Tim: There was a malaria outbreak and one of the Delegates actually one of the Burgesses died actually on the third day of the session. So, we've come a long way at least. At least you could see by the response by Legislators to Covid go into remote sessions. Had they had Zoom back then maybe they would have done that, but they decided it was better to go home and the public safety. Well, we won't fault you for not knowing that trivia about Virginia which has such a deep history, but delightful conversation and really, really appreciate your time and I hope people will take advantage of the thoughts you put into the book and how much time you put into it.

MUSIC

Voice: And that concludes this episode of our podcast. We encourage you to review and rate NCSL podcasts on Apple podcasts, Google Play, Stitcher or Spotify. We also encourage you to check

out our other podcasts: *Our American States* and the special series *Building Democracy*. For the National Conference of State Legislatures, thanks for listening.