

#101 Merchants of Doubt: What's Behind the Claim that School Funding Doesn't Matter?

**Jennifer Berkshire** Welcome to Have You Heard. I'm Jennifer Berkshire.

**Jack Schneider** And I'm Jack Schneider.

**Berkshire** And Jack, I have a surprise for you today.

**Schneider** Oh God. Okay, Jennifer, you always have a surprise for me. It always makes me look bad. So I'm just going to say, congratulations on your surprise and you just wake me up when we're ready to start the show.

**Berkshire** Well, I've decided that for this episode and this episode only, I'm going to give the show a new name. I want you to try to guess what it is and I'm going to give you two hints.

**Schneider** No, I'm not going to do this. I'm not going to play. It always makes me look completely unprepared and uninformed. You just, you do your thing and I'm going to be here reading Rick Hanushek studies until we're ready to go.

**Berkshire** Anyway, I'm going to give you two hints. The first is that the name sounds very similar to the one we already have. And number two, it's pandemicized. Any guesses?

**Schneider** No. No guesses. Can I, well, can I phone a friend?

**Berkshire** No.

**Schneider** I give up.

**Berkshire** All right. The answer is Have You Herd, like, Have You Herd immunity.

**Schneider** What does that have to do with what we're talking about, school funding? What does that have to do with our topic? Is this, is this actually going to be used on the show?

**Berkshire** Yeah, it's surprisingly relevant. So in the weeks leading up to the election, one of President Trump's health advisors, a gentleman named Scott Atlas played a loud and prominent role pushing the country to pursue what's called herd immunity. And that's basically where you let the virus rip through the population. And really what it's intended to do was to sow doubt, right? That he's questioning sort of basic scientific tenets as a way to undermine confidence and ultimately support for expensive public health initiatives. One of the things that really interested me is that that Atlas is one of the most prominent figures at the Hoover institution. In fact, Hoover is right there in his Twitter handle, and it turns out that Hoover has played a key role in sowing doubt in all kinds of fields. And one of them happens to be school spending. See how I neatly made that connection?

**Schneider** It was, it was actually really good, Jennifer. I appreciate that. Right? Because this broader concept, which listeners may be familiar with, from work done on the tobacco industry, right? That the merchants of doubt concept there comes out of work by the tobacco lobby to simply sow seeds of doubt, right? That they knew that they couldn't win in the long run in terms of making the case that smoking cigarettes or using smokeless tobacco would not cause cancer, right? That was irrefutable. And so their aim was just to create a kind of cloud of uncertainty around that. It's a strategy that was then adopted by oil companies in terms of not trying to refute climate change science, but trying to sow seeds of doubt by saying, well, there is not a total consensus on this. There is uncertainty, there are scientists who disagree which then can be weaponized by politicians who make the case that we actually don't know. We don't know if humans have caused climate change. We don't know if cigarettes cause cancer. We don't know if you know, shutting down bars and restaurants or wearing masks will prevent, prevent the spread of COVID. And we don't know if more money will produce better or more equitable outcomes in public education.

**Berkshire** Well to help us dispel the clouds of doubt that so often enshroud debates about school funding, we turned to an expert and friend of the show. Bruce Baker is the author of Educational Inequality and School Finance: Why Money Matters for America's Students. And over the years he's been in front of more judges than he can recall, trying to make the case that, well, money matters.

**Bruce Baker** Because constitutional rights to equitable and adequate education are framed in state constitutions, these debates often also find themselves not just among legislative deliberations, but in court deliberations over whether and to what extent some children's rights are being deprived. All of this having big implications for public tax and expenditure policy, which is clearly a volatile political issue about, should we raise taxes and spend more on schools on the one hand, it's a political debate and state legislatures, not just, you know, should we raise taxes and spend more, but do we have to target more of that money over here to these kids who these experts are saying need more?

**Berkshire** Anything having to do with school funding is not only inherently complicated. It's also high stakes. The judges hearing these cases, well they're going to be deciding whether to order their respective state legislatures to, say, take action to remedy disparities.

**Baker** And the evidence and the battles over that evidence do take somewhat different kind of forms when just introduced into the legislative process, clearly political enough there, versus when it becomes an us versus them kind of adversarial judicial context. And I think that's kind of leads to this concerted effort to create bodies of evidence that can muddy the waters that can confuse the courts to the point where courts throw up their hands and say, well, crap, there's nothing we can do about it.

**Berkshire** In other words, this is an inherently political process - and that's what creates the impulse to muddy the waters. Think about it. To argue that states need to take bold action and

spend more money, judges need to feel confident. And if you're on the side of not spending more money, here's where sowing doubt becomes a really effective strategy.

**Baker** So sowing doubt, even if it's sowing doubt by creating confusion, and when, when we're talking about like statistics, epidemiology, or, you know, scatterplots of school funding, I know my vision, my hand motions are going great on a podcast, but scatter plots of the relationship or lack thereof between spending and outcomes, which are relatively meaningless. Statistically, those are clouds of doubt. Those are fuzziness. Those are, if nothing else, if you can beat the judge over the head with just absolute confusion, that creates doubt to where a judge or even a three judge panel in some of the, in some states just isn't willing to, by the end of the day, they're just not convinced there's enough evidence because when you get two sides, they get to each list, the same number of witnesses that say one thing versus the other, as opposed to what the body of research says. It's just easier to create that doubt.

**Berkshire** So, Jack, I feel like we need a little bit of context here. We need to understand what the Hoover institution is and who better to provide that context and our very own graduate of Stanford, Jack Schneider.

**Schneider** Yeah, so the Hoover institution is a kind of a towering fortress on Stanford's campus. And the truth is that most students never enter it and don't really know what happens inside of it. I went in it only because as a means of learning how the other side thinks I took up an hourly position for Terry Mo the right wing political scientist who famously wrote politics markets in America's schools, along with John Chubb back in the early 1990s. And as a side note here, Moe refused to pay RA or TA wages because he found them to be inflated by a lack of competition and instead paid hourly wages that were not competitive. So no wonder that he ended up with left wing experimentalists like myself. So the Hoover institution has this sort of feel of a mid 20th century office building.

And, you know, that's not surprising. It was built earlier than that. It was built in the early 20th century funded in part by Herbert Hoover, former president. And it really came to prominence in the mid 20th century as it realized a mission, not just as a library, but as a conservative think tank its original mission as a think tank was to advance anticommunist thinking it was a product of the cold war and really began to realize its current mission in the 1970s, Ronald Reagan, for instance, in 1975, who was governor at that time was designated as Hoover's first honorary fellow fellow. And Reagan's gubernatorial papers are at Hoover and over the years, Hoover has spent millions of dollars annually operating as a think tank. It's a highly influential international think tank producing free market oriented, conservative research under the aegis of Stanford University because that's of course where it's located.

**Berkshire** Well, Jack, do you know who else has visited Hoover?

**Schneider** I have no idea. Jennifer, why don't you tell us a story?

**Berkshire** That would be me. I once had one of the strangest field trips of my adult life. I had to go there to interview former secretary of state George Schultz. And he had a, he has an office there it's kinda set up like the oval office and somewhere I have the recording of that interview. It's brief and tense. And has me asking a lot of questions, very rapidly, him giving very brusque yes or no answers. And then it sort of runs off the rails on the topic of, what else?, public sector unions.

**Schneider** It sounds exactly like every conversation I ever had with Terry Moe, except he would occasionally ask me tennis advice. I'm not, I'm not sure why. He wanted to know, you know, like various things about how he could improve his backend. And I proved myself completely useless to him. Maybe he was really looking for you.

**Berkshire** Well, listeners are learning a lot about both of us in this episode, but Jack, we need you to step in and provide one more helpful bit of context. We're obviously talking about Hoover because of its role sowing doubt on the particular issue of school spending. And there's one name that comes up again and again, in that context and that name is Eric Hanushek, or as Bruce refers to him actually kind of fondly: Rick.

**Schneider** Eric Hanushek is the classic foil for anybody on the left, making an argument about the importance of education spending in terms of adequacy and equity. He produced a number of influential studies in the 1990s and early aughts, essentially arguing. And some would say proving that it really doesn't matter if schools get more money. What really matters is how they use what they have. Along with conservative economist Caroline Hoxby, Hanushek's work has been used over the years to make a case both in terms of you know, legal cases and in terms of the larger rhetorical case, making that the right engages in about the importance, not of school finance and equitable funding, but instead about you know, running a tight ship budgetarily and setting clear priorities in terms of student instructional objectives.

**Berkshire** Back to Bruce. When he's not in a courtroom making the case that money matters, he can often be found debunking misleading graphs and wrongheaded charts. Which means he's pretty busy. There's an entire genre of graphs devoted to propagating the idea that money doesn't matter, or worse, that we spend way too much money on public education and get little back in return.

**Baker** That long-term trend argument is one of the standards. The money went up, the test scores stayed flat, actually one of the best rebuttals to that was the one that was created by Kirabo Jackson recently, where he zoomed in on and altered the wide scales to show that as the money went up, the test scores went up, but as the recession hit and the money flattened and went down. So too, did the test scores in an expected lag that in fact, these things do track and then he did a more rigorous empirical analysis to show the negative effects of the recession on student outcomes. But it's, it's his less rigorous analysis of mapping those two curves alongside each other to show what happens when you just correct the Y axes, that's probably been more compelling and probably why fewer people are jumping only a handful of people still jumped to use that as an example, the more common example that's repeatedly thrown out

there is a really old graph from Cato with data that goes up to about 2008 or nine that shows test score Danes as a percentage increase over the base to, and test scores are on an artificial scale to begin with and then cumulative expenditures across 12 years of schooling.

So it's like the dumbest version of that graph that floats around in a small set of circles. Handshake. We'll still use it as intro fodder in an expert report, but there will be a lot more of how many, how many different versions of a cloud of doubt I talk about using scatterplots a cloud of doubt where on the X axis you have per pupil expenditures and on the Y axis, you have test scores that every time you look at which districts are spending more or less versus which districts have higher, lower test scores, there's just not much of a relationship. And if you do that for four every year and every test, I think some of my expert count up well, and you check in this one, put in 36 different scatterplots, throw out 36 different scatterplots that show no kind of relationship, even if they're completely meaningless by 34 of the judges, like half asleep and thinking, okay. Yeah. Okay. There's no relationship.

**Berkshire** So Jack. It happened that as we were putting this episode together, the 2019 NAPE scores came out for 12th graders and Betsy DeVos made a statement which fits right in to what Bruce was just talking about. I've got it right here. I'm actually gonna read it because I don't want to miss anything. "It's particularly troubling to see the results for our lowest performing and most disadvantaged students getting worse. Education funding flows most heavily to these students' schools." So that like that to me, it, it rung so many bells. It's kind of dog whistley in a way, right? She's, she's making a false claim, but she's also telling people that the schools with the neediest students are a money pit. And I want you to unpack that for us a little bit, because I feel like lost in the, you know, beneath all the doubt that's being sowed is this larger argument that's being made about, you know, what wealthy people do and do not want to spend money on. And I just want to make sure that that comes through,

**Schneider** Right? So this is an excellent example of the sort of thing that Bruce is talking about here. So Jennifer, you just referred to NAPE scores. That would be the national assessment of educational progress sometimes referred to as the nation's report card. This is a no stakes standardized test that is run by the federal government that is given to a representative sample of American students on a regular basis to track performance across time. And what we have seen and Devoss points this out is that low-income students and students from historically marginalized, racial groups score lower on the NAPE and Devoss would have us believe that that's because their schools stink. Well. We actually know that they score lower on exams like the NAPE, because they are less privileged than they are economically and racially privileged, white middle-class and affluent counterparts that tells us far less about their schools than it does about the conditions that surround them from birth.

So research by psychometricians like Stanford's Edward Haertel has shown that about two thirds of a student's standardized test scores can be predicted by out of school variables and only about a third by in school variables. So first of all, Devoss is intentionally misleading us here. Second, what she's doing is she's linking school funding to this, and she's claiming erroneously that low-income schools receive the lion's share of funding in terms of public

education funding. Now that may be true in terms of federal funding, compensatory, federal funding, largely via title one of the elementary and secondary education act, but federal funding accounts for about 9% of overall school funding on the whole. What we see across the U S is that state funding on average makes up roughly 45% and local funding derived chiefly from property taxes makes up about 45%. That is the highly inequitable part, that local property tax based funding in States like Massachusetts.

We have funding formulas that are designed to try to use state funding to address the differences, the discrepancies across local communities, but in many States, no such thing exists. So in Illinois, for instance, wealthy districts have far more resources than low-income districts on average. So what DeVos is doing here, she's engaging in a rhetorical strategy designed to stoke resentment among the affluent classes about these takers who not only are taking right, who are using the tax dollars of middle-class and affluent populations. But they're also not performing as they should, right? That these are wasted tax dollars. That's the argument Devoss is making rather than saying what is more true, which is that the dollars that go into the education of low-income students and students from historically marginalized racial groups are presently unequal. And even if equal would not be adequate because we need to fund the education of those young people at a higher level, if what we want is to produce something resembling equal outcomes. And that of course is completely antagonistic to her ideological aim.

**Berkshire** Well, Jack, while you were talking, I thought, well, how it, Betsy DeVos be responding to this? So I just put my fingers in my ears and I, I hummed a little tune. And now I'm going to, I'm going to read you the rest of her quote as a kind of punctuation mark on your statement.

**Schneider** Or as a kind of punishment for me. Thank you.

**Berkshire** "These data make clear money to schools alone will not fix the problem. It's a problem of approach."

**Schneider** And here's somebody who has read the classic Hanushek studies of the nineties and early two thousands and much the way that Donald Trump wanted to stop voting in places like Michigan. As soon as the tide turned, people like Devoss wanted to stop reading the research. As soon as it became overwhelmingly clear from research like Bruce, like Kirabo Jackson, Jesse Rothstein, who we've had on the show that school funding does in fact matter a lot

**Berkshire** Back to the obscuring of truth on education money matters. Well, as regular listeners to this show are aware, our own Jack Schneider is not a fan of narrow measures of school quality. Which got him thinking about the role that the fixation on standardized test scores plays in undermining the case for investing in public education.

**Schneider** It seems to me that having the debate on the terms of test score outcomes is actually a debate that, win or lose, the merchants of doubt are going to win, right? Because the aims of education are expansive. David Cohen said that education is the business of human improvement. It is a very wide reaching broad enterprise. And if the aim is to promote relatively equal opportunity for all kids, that potential for expenditures, there are almost boundless. But if you say that the aim of education is academic learning in two subject areas, and that we know how to measure it. We just input standardized test scores into a computer and have that computer tell us how students did on multiple choice questions. The aims of education have been narrowed dramatically. And if we want to produce relatively equal opportunities for kids to score relatively equally well on machine rated, standardized test scores, even if the merchants of doubt lose, and there is consensus that more money equals higher test scores, there is still a dramatic winnowing of the aims of education and a reduction in the potential costs of educating all kids equally.

**Baker** That's, you know, the, the really hard one from an evidentiary standpoint is to say, you need this much money to achieve these goals, especially for those bigger, broader outcomes. What I think is the easier question is that the way you were phrasing it around equal opportunity, clearly you're not going to have equal opportunity to achieve any level of goals. If kids in an impoverished impoverished city or outlying town had the same or fewer resources than kids in the affluent suburb, whose outside of school, resources of that much greater. So to me, it should be easier for courts or legislatures to deal with the equal opportunity issue and who has what and who needs more or less to have equal opportunity versus what's the overall level we get to shoot for to hit a constitutional standard. That's that, that second one's a lot harder question to answer that second one, the balance of uncertainty is much more difficult to grapple with, but, but clearly kids in Lowell and Lawrence require not merely even the same, but more resources than the kids in Lexington and Winchester to have an opportunity to get to the same outcomes.

**Schneider** But it seems to me an intentional strategy to make the conversation about outcomes rather than about opportunities because outcomes are so narrowly measured. If you can confine the conversation to measure outcomes and say, Hey, we don't care about inputs. What we want is for all children to succeed, we want to see results. Let's look at the evidence that that is a really shrewd way of narrowing the conversation and reducing the aims of education and therefore reducing tax expenditures that, you know, might have done a tremendous amount of good in terms of expanding opportunities, but you can play the data card, right? You can play the evidence card if you're trying to sow doubt here,

**Baker** Yes and no, because I would also argue that the disparities reflected, even in those narrow measures, when integrated into a nap, in an analysis of the resources that are available and the students to be served, those disparities in the outcome can also be used to reveal how

much more would you need to probably spend in Lowell and Lawrence. Again, I know we're speaking to a national audience, but I'm going Massachusetts on this. Now how much more would you need to spend in these towns to even give those kids equal opportunity to equalize those narrow outcome measures compared to Winchester and Lexington. And this is why I'm kind of shy to say, dump those data all together, because they've been very useful in showing how much more or less do you need to spend here or there to even equalize these narrowly measured outcomes.

**Berkshire** If you remember way back at the start of this episode, Bruce told us that the impetus for undercutting the case for school spending is fundamentally about taxes and reducing the tax burden on the wealthy. But in recent years, the anti-tax right picked up some new allies in this crusade: education reformers.

**Baker** Taxes was number one, but I also think there, there came a point where others saw it somewhat as opportunistic in you know, in framing the failing schools argument and in finding ways to divert money that existed in the public system into other systems. And then there was a convenient argument around, well, it's not about more money. It's about taking that money and giving it to some, not even saying, make them use it better and how they use it. And it was about creating separate entities that could, you know, whether it was through voucher systems or through charter schooling, even before charter schooling, it was about private management of public schools. And then the private managers became the operators of what became charter schools. These were concurrent evolution. So yet during that 2011 ish period, the new normal in school funding, there was a big push that, of course, you know, schools don't need more money, just give it to charter schools who will use it better. And when you have a large lobby backing the charter school industry, that finds kind of convenient alignment with an otherwise seemingly adversarial group of anti-tax folks, because charter schools depend on taxpayer dollars too. They can align together to say, no. The issue is just to take the money from the district schools and to move it over to these schools. It was strange yet at the same time, not to never see major charter school advocacy organizations or charter school operators ever advocating for increased state statewide school funding. They have been beneficiaries.

**Schneider** I just want to hear you react to this. Because it seems like one of the things that you're saying is that actually the school choice movement and particularly the charter school movement played a kind of unintentional role in elevating this myth. That money doesn't matter because they benefited from the perception that traditional public schools were bloated and mismanaging their resources. And that really, it was about doing more with less or doing more with the same amount. But if people accept that not only will there be more of an embrace of charters as a strategy, but there will be significant resistance to the idea that the problem with traditional public schools is that they aren't adequately funded.

**Baker** Or even the problem with charter schools that aren't doing well. And in many cases they're operating in states that aren't adequately funded, like Arizona. So yeah, I think they conveniently benefited, but then they took that, at least advocacy organization. Certainly not all operators. I've talked to operators who run charter schools in many states who acknowledged

that in a state with a robustly funded system, there are a heck of a lot better off, but yeah, they, they benefited. But then some of them took that on as, as part of the early, certainly the advocacy organizations took that on as, as part of their kind of mission and goal. And one of the other things that further kind of advanced and enabled that was our tendency to kind of do what I refer to as the match comparisons of charter school versus hosted district school test scores. And whoever's got the higher scores is the winner. And even in the better empirical studies to frame it largely around the same that your counterfactual is how well the kids would have done in the district schools. The point is that showing that charter schools are better in that model of analysis is sometimes a result of finding a way to make the counterfactual weaker. If we robustly fund the public system, showing the charter school advantage, maybe harder to do, but in reality, that means everyone is actually doing better, which is probably a good thing

**Berkshire** After all this talk of how sowing doubt and confusion is actually a strategy to weaken support for investing in education perhaps you're feeling a little confused. Well, Bruce says don't be. We asked to make the case that money matters in as uncloudy a way as possible.

**Baker** Quality schooling requires sufficient funding. There are no substitutes and, and, and that's sufficient funding is there to provide for competitive wages for the, you know, the, the best quality of people we can get into schools. And enough of them it's really about hiring enough good people to have direct contact with kids, to provide a good education, and that costs money. So, you know, no matter how much we play around with these big, broad statistical issues of doubt, some kids need more resources to have equal opportunity than others. It costs more to do that. And that money translates into straightforward and basic things like qualified people to do the work with kids. The underlying equation really is quite simple. It makes sense. And it's quite honestly, the reason why when faced with the money doesn't matter argument, that judge Terry Bullock in Kansas rolled out his phrase, "That dog won't hunt in Dodge." It just didn't pass the basic smell test to him that no matter how much money you had, you could be expected to provide a constitutionally adequate education.

**Berkshire** We couldn't let Bruce go without addressing an argument that you're no doubt familiar with. It's not how much money schools have, it's what they do with the money they have. Bruce Baker: have at it.

**Baker** The simplest response to that is if you don't have it, you can't spend it. So it's the Moneyball argument there. Well, those who have less and have more difficult circumstances within which to use it just have to get more creative in how they use it. They have to find a way to rate rank creatively, you know, compensate their employees. This is a more complicated kind of response, but we're also, when we say to Lowell or Lawrence, you gotta play money ball. You gotta be more creative. You gotta be the underfunded baseball payroll. We're all, we're, we're applying an inequitable qualification on them and their use of money versus what we're asking Winchester and Lexington to do. And that's not fair. And again, and the money ball...I often point out to the subtitle of the book Moneyball was 'the art of winning an unfair game.' It's fine if Major League Baseball wants to operate an unfair game. It's not fine to consider public education inherently an unfair game. It's our job to try to make it fair.

**Berkshire** That was Bruce Baker. He's the author of Educational Inequality and School Finance: Why Money Matters for America's Students. And Jack and I will be right back to talk about why there are so many efforts to sow doubt these days, including in the election process. And speaking of the election, Jack and I will be offering our bold predictions for what the election results - including some pretty grim stuff at the state level - mean for public education - in the In the Weeds segment of our show. If your ears perked up at that possibility, just head on over to [Patreon.com/haveyouheardpodcast](https://Patreon.com/haveyouheardpodcast) to get in on the fun.

**Berkshire** So Jack, until you suggested the topic for this episode, I had not read the book merchants of doubt. It came out in 2011, it was by Eric Conway and Naomi [inaudible]. And I really felt like it opened my eyes to a pattern that I now see everywhere. And it's really helped me make a lot of sense of the response to the pandemic, but also our current sort of voting debacle, right? That we're, we see the effort to sow doubt all around us

**Schneider** And it's particularly effective in the 21st century. When these efforts to sow doubt can be paired with the decentralization of media, right. That anybody can start a blog that it's not actually that difficult to create a digital Xen or a digital newspaper, something that looks legitimate that can be reposted on Facebook. Now we don't just have a small number of national conservative talk radio pundits. You know, people can like us begin recording in their home studios and make their own podcasts, their own content, right? This de-centralization has been great in so many ways in terms of increasing access to knowledge and expanding people's access to news and to research, but it of course has also opened up the opportunity to expand disinformation campaigns. And so these efforts to sow doubt combined with a decentralization of media via new media, digital media has been incredibly effective for demagogues, right? Like Donald Trump who have no interest in the truth who is a kind of classic want to be strong, man, who insists on making his own reality by asserting whatever it is that's convenient for himself. And these clouds of doubt are perfect for somebody like that. Because in the realm of uncertainty than the most extreme argument, the strongest argument, the argument with no nuance is the one that is going to drown out the more evidence-based the more nuanced, the more sort of difficult to comprehend ideas out there.

**Berkshire** Well, thinking about this whole strategy of sowing doubt made me reflect on something that is often on my mind right now. That would be our new book, A Wolf at the Schoolhouse Door, which will be out imminently. And Jack, one of the arguments that we make is that there's this long running cost, cutting crusade. That's so relevant to what we were just talking about. And that basically you have a lot of wealthy and powerful people who would very much prefer not to have to pay taxes, to fund something like public education. And you can see how this sort of statement we heard from Betsy DeVoss or these scatterplots, how that plays right into that effort. You know, like why spend all this money if it's not going to do anything?

**Schneider** I think it's important here to underscore what public education costs. So the contribution at the federal level is just a drop in the bucket. It doesn't compare in any way to the spending on the big issues like Medicare and Medicaid, social security, national defense. But if

we look at aggregate spending in terms of local spending contributions, state spending, and federal spending together, the math gets pretty staggering pretty quickly. And I don't mean that the math is complicated. I mean that the numbers get really big. So if we're talking about 50 million students in the United States at a ballpark per pupil expenditure of \$10,000 per pupil, we're talking about half a trillion dollars annually being spent on this. Imagine if those dollars weren't spent, imagine if instead families were responsible for funding education for their own kids out of their own pockets, that then would return tax dollars to private individuals for their own savings, their own consumption and to direct at their own will rather than redistributing via taxation. And that rather than running a system rooted in democratic politics we would have a system that is more rooted in the logic of the market, that this is a long-term far right aim. And we can see why given the size of the national expenditure on education every year, we can see why dismantling public education is at the very heart of these plans to unmake the nation as we know it.

**Berkshire** Well Jack, by the time this episode drops, we will hopefully know who the next president is. I will hopefully be able to sleep through the night. Last night I was awakened repeatedly with these sort of PTSD dreams where there was actual polling data in the dream.

**Schneider** Well, as of 10:39 on November 6th, I think it's pretty clear how this election is going to turn out, but I'm not going to say anything because I don't want to be on record with a Dewey beats Truman here. So I'll just say we are waiting with bated breath.

**Berkshire** Well, Jack, to protect you, I'm putting you behind the paywall. I'm going to let you predict wildly. And, and, and our Patreon subscribers will get to hear what you think is going to happen next. If this interests you, all you have to do is go to [Patreon.com/haveyouheardpodcast](https://Patreon.com/haveyouheardpodcast), and you'll see a list of all the extras you can get by supporting the show. We do things like put together a custom reading list for each episode and Jack and I hold forth in an area that we call in the weeds. And this time we are going to be making wild predictions about what's next at the state and federal level. There's some pretty interesting and frankly, bleak stuff coming down the pike. So I'm eager to hear what you have to say, Jack.

**Schneider** Well, before we jump on the wrong side of the paywall to have that conversation, Jennifer, I want to first remind listeners that there are ways that they can support the show without emptying their bank accounts. They can, for instance subscribe to the show and give us a rating wherever they download their podcasts, that helps people find us, helps us reach new listeners. They can go on and let us know what they think of the show and share ideas for future episodes with us, by tweeting at the shows Twitter handle that's at, have you heard pod as regular listeners? Know my favorite is when seasoned listeners bring on new listeners via personal appeals. I find that to be just really compelling for some reason. And of course, you know, there is the new book out there. So if you buy a copy of it, you know, sticking it in your little free library when you're done or passing it on to a friend or encouraging a friend to actually pay for it would probably be a good idea.

The second thing that I want to do, Jennifer is just say one more thing on this side of the paywall and that's to remind listeners that however, this election turns out. And if it turns out that Joe Biden does defeat Donald Trump and Betsy DeVos' days are numbered as secretary of education, that none of the threats to public education go away. That DeVos has been a very effective secretary in her use of the bully pulpit to normalize radical right wing rhetoric about public education and to normalize an extreme agenda about unmaking public education. But as we've talked about many times on this show, the greatest threats are at the local and state level. And actually the blue wave that may have swept across this national election did not sweep states. And the deepest red states are where we have seen the sort of biggest threats to public ed. But it's also increasingly in purple states, like New Hampshire as well.

**Berkshire** Well, on that grim note, I'm Jennifer Berkshire

**Schneider** And I'm Jack Schneider.

**Berkshire** This is Have You Heard, "HERD."