

## **[Transcript] The Prof G Pod with Scott Galloway / Conversation with Senator Chris Murphy – Combating Loneliness, Regulating Social Media, and Understanding the Tension between Capital and Labor**

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Episode 270.

270 is the area code serving Western Kentucky in 1970.

The Beatles disbanded and the public health cigarette smoking act was signed, which bans cigarette television advertisements in the United States.

So what should you do if your boyfriend starts smoking?

Slow down and possibly use lubricant.

Go, go, go!

Welcome to the 270th episode of The Prop G-Pod.

In today's episode, we speak with Connecticut Senator Chris Murphy to discuss the politics of loneliness as well as policy solutions to combat it.

We'll also get his thoughts on the tension between capital and labor, masculinity, and addressing gun violence.

Senator Murphy has been a steadfast supporter of progressive causes, or I would just call this rational causes.

I won't even call them progressive causes.

I'm in Barcelona right now, or shall I?

I like to say Barcelona.

I'm more happy here.

It's a very bonita, great architecture, and what a gorgeous city.

And I was speaking at an event for MasterCard.

Do you know that three and a half billion people have a MasterCard?

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Anyways, I'm in Barcelona, but one of the things I love about Europe is the discussions around reproductive rights or trans rights or assault weapons. It's not even a discussion here.

It's like, let's argue over other things that these things are just like, well, of course we're not going to have assault weapons.

Anyways, happy to be in Barcelona.

I haven't been here in a while, and I love the Spanish language.

I like to think of myself as multilingual or multilingual.

I took Spanish, true story.

Mrs. Witten was my Spanish teacher.

And despite the fact, I have absolutely no ear for languages.

She liked me, and she'd always give me a B.

And so I took Spanish seventh through 12th grade.

I took five years of Spanish and went on to get a two on the AP Spanish test.

So clearly it just didn't, just don't have an ear for languages.

Anyways, enough about, enough about yo.

What's up in the news?

There's a lot going on.

The U.S. government has postponed their potential shutdown to mid-November.

And what do you know, there's an uproar from the far right

who wants to oust Speaker McCarthy for working with the Democrats.

All right, okay.

And President Trump is off to trial for fraud.

The MSG sphere in Vegas had its opening weekend with a performance from U2.

It's been reported that advertising rates go for \$450,000 for the day and \$650,000 for the week.

So let me get it.

They charge you \$450,000 for a day and \$650,000 for the week.

I'm going to go out on a limb here and use some sophisticated analytics and suggest that you go for the week advertisers.

It's like a giant golf ball.

By the way, the dog is going to U2.

I saw U2 at UCLA on the steps of jant steps.

We didn't realize how good we had other than just hot people around everywhere and alcohol and just generally good time and \$400 a quarter tuition.

I mean, it was just the 80s was such a great time to be in college for a lot of reasons.

Back to the news, the biochemist and immunologist behind the mRNA COVID-19 vaccines won the Nobel Peace Prize in medicine and they deserve it.

I think there's few things in the history of technology that have had more of a positive impact across more geographies and more people than vaccines.

And Sam Bankman-Fried is on trial for fraud and conspiracy

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in connection to the infamous collapse of FTX.

This is being pegged as one of the biggest financial fraud cases in US history.

The New York Times is calling it crypto's trial of the century.

So plenty is going on here, but let's focus on SBF.

Prosecutors are accusing Sam Bankman-Fried

of using several billion of customers' money to fund speculative investments, luxurious real estate and political contributions.

SBF says FTX collapsed because of huge management failures.

Prior to his arrest last year, he wrote in his prepared testimony, open quote,

I would like to start by formally stating under oath, I fucked up.

Well, good for you, SBF.

I'd like to say under oath that you're going to jail for a very long time.

Three of SBF's closest confidants, his co-founder,

FTX's former head of engineering and the former CEO of Alameda Research, have all pled guilty and are testifying against him.

If convicted, SBF essentially faces life in prison.

I think at the end of the day, there are governance matters.

The hard part, I would describe that the majority of management isn't like SBF.

SBF has sort of gone with this.

Well, I just rolled out of bed and I'm like a nine-year-old waking up from a nap.

And what do you know?

I slipped and fell on 90 counts of fraud or 90 indictments.

I think that's the present.

I don't know how many counts Bankman Fried is facing.

But here's the bottom line.

He's pretending this was all just an accident oversight.

Well, it wasn't an accident that he decided to incorporate in the Bahamas, which has less regulation.

It wasn't an accident that he decided not to come back to the U.S.

when he was facing criminal prosecution.

It wasn't an accident that he didn't have a board.

It wasn't an accident that he didn't release quarterly financials.

It wasn't an accident that he decided not to have audited financials.

It wasn't an accident that he started sleeping with or was sleeping with the person who ran the hedge fund or the investment side of his business.

So it wasn't an accident that he was doing drugs with his co-workers and that they were all living together.

It wasn't an accident.

And this is a true story that when an investor asked for financials,

he said, we don't really keep financials and forwarded a text message with some top line numbers.

Don't we all just feel like idiots for not recognizing this was out of control fraud?

The reality is everybody needs guardrails.

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And when you purposely avoid guardrails and you get in too deep, you start making a series of incremental bad decisions that ultimately you get in too deep and you keep making more and more bad decisions. And then you might end up in jail.

And the positive or the silver lining here is that the financial services industry actually has an algebra of deterrence in place. What do I mean by that?

An algebra of deterrence is the likelihood of getting caught times the potential penalty or punishment of getting caught has to be greater than the potential upside of continuing to engage in this illicit behavior.

I think one of the reasons that the financial services industry is pretty well run or it prevents a tragedy that comments for all the noise around Silicon Valley Bank. No depositor lost a cent.

We have this miracle of a banking system in the U.S.

where people feel comfortable taking their life savings, giving it to somebody that they don't even know or they don't even meet.

And then those individuals because or those institutions, i.e. commercial banks, because they've set it up such that they trust people won't ask for all of their money back and take in \$100 in deposits and loan out \$120 or \$130.

So the leverage on the U.S. economy is greater than most other economies at fairly risk-free or what seems like risk-free.

Remember all the notion that I'll remember all the catastrophes, all the 50-plus in-cell panic room that was going on on Twitter when SVB went down, that supposedly was going to be contagion and take the banking system down?

Well, it didn't.

It was ring-fenced to a small number of regional banks.

And the banking system appears to have been bulletproof.

And also it absorbs some of the FDIC's reserves, but not nearly all of it.

So it just seems to me that the banking system is operating the way it's supposed to.

And all these calls for more regulation are kind of tone deaf and dumb.

When Elizabeth Warren says that the banking system needs to be bulletproof, kind of one-to-one deposits to reserves,

she's saying, I want the U.S. economy to grow more slowly,

that I don't want the U.S. economy to have any sort of leverage.

And that's the beauty of the U.S. banking system,

is that because of the diversity, because people don't ask for their money back on the same day, they can loan out more than they take in and boom, grow the economy with the extra spice and sugar of leverage.

But back to the algebra of deterrence.

The reason why we have so many regulations in banking and so many banking executives are really focused on ensuring that they have the right disclosures, that they don't play fast and loose with the law, especially with retail investors' capital,

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is because when I was at Morgan Stanley in 1988, my first year out of UCLA, Michael Milken was put on trial. Initially, I thought it was for insider trading, but I think he actually got convicted on what's called stock parking. But anyways, the point is, you had a guy worth, I think it was worth about \$1.2 billion at the time, and they said, all right, you have played fast and loose with the law, you injected huge systemic risk into the system, we have found you guilty, and we're sending you to prison for 10 years and taking half your net worth away. And what do you know? The financial services industry has been pretty buttoned up. I would argue the algebra of deterrence is in place there, and the same thing is going to happen here. And that Assemblyman Freed is going to go to prison for a very long time, and I think that it's going to send a chill across the crypto universe, which it already has. Weren't we stupid to ever think this was anything but a levered Ponzi scheme? Well, I believe it's pretty obvious, Ethereum and Bitcoin, there's some enduring value there, and the notion that there really is a use case for a cryptocurrency, especially in economies where you have massive inflation and you need to transition it out to something else, that as risky as Ethereum or Bitcoin might be, it's a substantial decrease in risk exposure from a currency like the Argentinian peso, it makes a lot of sense. And the big thought that there would be some utility around the remittance of payments or remittance back home, I was with a guy who was a politician in El Salvador last night, while I'm in Barcelona, because I'm very cosmopolitan. Professor, muy interesante. And he was this guy who was saying that the majority of GDP is remittance, and that is people in different countries, specifically the U.S., sending money back to El Salvador, and that cryptocurrencies are an efficient way to do that. So there's a use case here, but is it ever going to be kind of, you know, this whole notion that it's going to revolutionize finance? It just, I don't know, isn't happening. And also, we seem to overlook the fact that the consumption of electricity to mine Bitcoin is eating up or consuming as much electricity as literally as Argentina. It's like, well, okay, isn't that what you would call a mass of externality? Anyways, Sam Bankman Fried was under the delusion that he was a tech guy, and he was going to get to register the same non-algebra deterrence that the rest of the tech community has not experienced. But unfortunately, or fortunately for us, it's the algebra of deterrence is in place pretty severely for financial services companies, because government officials see the risk to the economy is just being much greater than, I guess, the risk to our teens vis-a-vis social media. By the way, the amount of regulation in the financial services industry is dramatic. I mean, try and open a bank, try and start a bank and just see how much regular, try and send a wire. You realize when you send a wire, usually, I always thought a wire was instantaneous. It's not. It takes a day because there's all sorts of people and agencies weighing in and saying, are you a terrorist transferring money? Is this money being used to launder money or evade taxes? There's all sorts of entities that get a peek inside of it. And you might say, well, the government should be peering into that bullshit. The government should absolutely be peering

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into the transmission of funds. Otherwise, there would be no tax base to pay for food stamps or our military. Otherwise, terrorists would be able to fund or people sympathetic to terrorists would be able to fund it. Otherwise, governments where we believe that they are contrary to our interests, our sanctions would have absolutely no teeth. So we need regulation. We need an algebra of deterrence. Also, what's a great algebra of deterrence? A relationship, specifically guardrails, your own board, your own kinship cabinet, because here's the thing. Here's the thing.

When you have no one that is helping you to maintain some level of, I don't know, discipline around the way you behave, the way you act, right? You end up lost. You end up making a series of bad

decisions. It is hard to read the label from inside of the bottle. If you don't have guardrails, if you don't have enough, seek them out, seek advice. Everybody needs guardrails. And the best guardrails are relationships. We'll be right back for a conversation with Senator Chris Murphy.

It's not just sci-fi anymore. Virtual reality for work is here.

Mixed reality for work is here. And companies everywhere are using them both to transform how they operate. Architects are able to walk through buildings in mixed reality before they're even built. Co-workers from opposite ends of the earth are working shoulder to shoulder in VR spaces.

And all sorts of workers, from pilots to underwater welders, are getting trained in a virtual environment that's safer and more cost effective. That's meta for work. Giving you VR and MRTEC to work smarter, closer, safer, together. Learn more at [forework.meta.com](https://forework.meta.com). Support for our show comes from Fundrise. With Fundrise, investors of all sizes can invest in promising private pre-IPO companies, including those working on the next chapter of AI. According to Fundrise, the platform is already America's largest direct access alternative asset manager, and they just launched a brand new venture capital product that's available for all investors. It's become clear that AI has the potential to create a major shift in our world. From large language models to autonomous vehicles to disease research, AI is poised to radically alter day to day life. If you're an investor, you might be wondering how AI is going to impact your portfolio. With Fundrise, you can invest in some of the top private pre-IPO companies in the world. Before, it would have been virtually impossible for the average investor to put their money into these kinds of companies before they went public. According to Fundrise, almost two million people have already used the service to invest. If you'd like to join them, you can visit [fundrise.com](https://fundrise.com) slash prop g to get started. That's f-u-n-d-r-i-s-e dot com slash prop g. All investments can lead to loss.

Welcome back. Here's our conversation with Senator Chris Murphy.

Senator, where's this podcast behind you? I'm in Washington, D.C. Right now, we're in the middle of a afternoon vote series. Nice. So let's bust right into it. You've written and spoken at length about the politics of loneliness and suggested there are levers the government can pull to combat loneliness. Let's start with that. How have we let loneliness become an epidemic and what do you think are the policy solutions? Listen, we've always had pretty high levels of loneliness in this country. We're all familiar with this emotion. There's nothing that public policy can do to erase from people's lives the feeling of being alone. But what we have seen is a dramatic rise in social isolation of late, which is leading to higher rates of

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loneliness. I think over the next five to 10 years, we'll show even bigger rates of loneliness. And that social isolation comes in all sorts of different forms. People have less friends, than they used to. They spend less time with friends. They spend more time on their screens. People are working more at home, not in person. And I just think at our foundation, we are social beings. I think we exist to interact with others. All the happiness data I see tells us that we are happiest when we are spending time with family and friends. And I think this is a really dangerous moment for the human race, but for Americans specifically. And I get it that there are limited things that government can do here. And I know that a lot of people look at my work on loneliness and think that there's kind of an illegitimacy to government trying to help you make friends. But we got here in part because of choices government made and choices we didn't make in the areas of neglect. And so I just think we have to have an honest conversation about how lonely people are feeling and the ways in which different government decisions can give more people a chance to connect with peers and friends and family more, which I just think will make the whole country happier and probably also have the byproduct of safeguarding our democracy a bit. So on the ground level, does that mean national service, investments in third spaces, parks? What types of investments or programs can D.C. or the federal government make that helps facilitate or reconnect people? I think it's a pretty long list. First, we have amongst many Americans, low and middle income Americans, a crisis of free time. So one of the most important things we can do is to just make sure that a 40 hour work week provides you with enough money to feed your family so that if you choose on the evenings and on the weekends, you can engage in leisure activities, which will often involve being part of the community. So right now, you need to work today 70 hours to earn the same amount of benefits for your family as 40 hours would have 40 years ago. And so that's a crisis in and of itself, but all that time working means less time to engage in leisure activity, which often is socialization. Second, I do think public investment in third spaces matter. The public pools were shut down in Hartford, Connecticut this summer because there was a funding crisis in my city and they couldn't find or pay lifeguards. And so there was no place for families to go. They couldn't pay to belong to a private pool. And Republicans, conservatives got in a bit of a kerfuffle about that. Why should government pay for pools? But we have a long history, whether it be rec sports leagues or public parks or public pools of the government providing places for people to go. And now lastly, we just through neglect have allowed a handful of technologies to take over our lives. And you've spent a lot of time talking about social media, but we should also talk about online commerce and the way that that sort of guts healthy downtown, which is also a place where people tend to connect and meet. And if we better regulated things like social media so that less kids get addicted, maybe that means that less adults are addicted. And maybe that means that you're spending more time outside of your house. So those are just sort of a handful of pretty simple ideas about how government can be part of the solution. So let's double click on social media and the idea of regulation. Is it removal of 230? Is it antitrust? Is it age gating? What magic wand or what would you like to propose? And what do you think is realistic in terms of legislation coming out of DC as it relates to

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big tech, of which I would argue there has been absolutely none. Yeah. And first of all, thanks for your work and your moral authority on trying to compel an end to this era of nothing. But I do think there's a critical mass right now. I think there's just something fundamentally different in the air in Washington today than there was even two years ago. I see Republicans more interested in this than ever before. Listen, I am sort of willing to start wherever we can start because I just think exercising this muscle is really important. You know, Senator Blumenthal's bill is the furthest along. But the piece that I'm maybe most excited about as a parent who's sort of watching my kids get addicted to social media is control of algorithmic boosting, right? So I've got a proposal with Republicans that would say for those under 18 years old, sites can't collect your personal data and use it to perfect content, which is the way in which most kids get hooked. That would be a fundamental change to the way TikTok and Instagram work. But I think if you are more careful about kids getting addicted and giving the tools of addiction to the companies, then those kids have a fighting chance and they are less likely to be addicted as adults. So that's one of the places that I would love to begin. And there's sort of interesting bipartisan consensus around that idea of controlling algorithmic boosting.

So we aggregate the military, alcohol, pornography, certain types of content driving, aggregating or saying that these organizations can algorithmically elevate content for people under the age of 18. That just strikes me as sort of infinitely reasonable, even under the category of a no-brainer. But I feel as if we keep getting our heart broken. Do you think this legislation is going to pass? Who and what are the arguments amongst the people who are fighting this?

So I think some significant social media regulation is going to pass. As you see right now in Congress, there is a lot of understandable interest in the broader topic of AI and machine learning. Obviously, there's a lot of AI in social media. One of my worries is that we sort of skip over the easy stuff, like you mentioned aggregating social media. And you don't even have to do what I'm talking about. You could just compel the companies to age verify for under 13. They say they don't allow kids under 13 on. We'll make them actually age verify that. My worry is that we are going to kind of skip over social media and get involved in a much more difficult, much more complicated conversation about broad AI or AGI regulation. And so my pitch publicly and behind closed doors to my colleagues is let's do social media first. Where's the pushback? Of course, the pushback is from the industry who says that if we over-regulate, then we won't innovate in the United States. Those jobs will go somewhere else. There's often interesting pushback from the left who say, well, if you sort of make it harder for vulnerable kids to get online, well, that's where they find connection. And LGBTQ kids are going to be hurt if you make it harder for them to be online. So there's a variety of places where the pushback comes, but I don't think it's going to work. I've been around here long enough to know when there is a gathering critical mass. And I know why you're skeptical because we've been talking about it for a long time, but you've been talking about it. Like the ground level of the Senate has not been disengaged until the last 24 to 48 months. And what do you think that it is that's created sort of this coalescence around we need to do something? Has it been people's witnessing their own kids' problems, the kind of mendacious behavior of these firms? Do senators feel lied to? Is it folks on the right for whatever reason want to go after these companies for censorship and people



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on the left feel like they're storing jobs? What are the forces that are bringing everything, bringing people together? Yeah, I think it's all of the above. There certainly is this strange political alignment here where Democrats sort of see the harm being done to kids. And our instinct is often to sort of see common sense regulation as a way to help that harm. And then you see Republicans who kind of think that every big company, but in particular, every big tech company is woken in the pocket of the liberals and they just sort of want to take steps to own those companies. But I really think the most important thing to change is the anxiety level of parents. And I have just, so I have a 15-year-old and an 11-year-old and so I'm in the middle of this. And it is just true that parents had a fighting chance 10 years ago when you were really sort of thinking mostly about YouTube and a little bit of Instagram. And now that you're fighting against just superior algorithms from TikTok and Instagram and YouTube, parents just feel like they're not able to compete. And you do see these numbers which are real in terms of the way that girls are feeling, the way that boys are retreating, and parents are just demanding that something change. That was really interesting the way you put that, the way girls are feeling, the way boys are retreating. What about specifically TikTok? Do you think TikTok should be banned, forced to be spun to U.S. interests? If and what is the threat you perceive from TikTok and what would you suggest is the remedy? I mean, so I would, I have no problem banning TikTok. I don't think it's a little weird that we allow a Chinese-owned company to have this much information about our kids, but I think it's a distraction from the real problem which is that they have tapped into a market and they have perfected a technology that others are perfecting and somebody else will perfect if they disappear. So I have not been sort of the leader of the ban TikTok bandwagon because I think you need a broader regulatory regime that applies to all these sites. I've got one kid on TikTok, I've got the other kid on YouTube, and I don't necessarily, TikTok seems particularly addictive, but man, like for a lot of younger kids, the YouTube algorithms are pretty effective as well, so you need to handle it all. You said something earlier in the pod that a family needs or someone needs to work 70 hours versus 40 a couple decades ago to have the same sort of opportunities and create the disposable time, like disposable income, to establish those relationships.

What, I mean, there's unions, there's, my big rant recently is why wouldn't we raise the federal minimum wage to 25 bucks an hour? I would argue we spend too much time focusing on unions which

represent 11% of the workforce, that it's almost become sort of a false flag or a bit of a distraction that we talk about unions as if we're going to solve the problem of labor and putting more money in the hands of middle class Americans when it's 15 million people. I think the majority of Americans feel that the tension between capital and labor, the healthy tension that's existed, has become unhealthy. That capital has just been beating the crap out of labor for a good 30 or 40 years. CEO compensation, 30 to one now, 300 to one, top 1%, 90% of all income gains and wages have just been flat for 30 or 40 years. What do you think practically are the most obvious solutions to trying to do what I think three quarters of Americans would like to see happen and that is to see more

of this prosperity, I don't want to say trickle down, I don't even use the term trickle down, but waterfall down to the lower and middle classes. I don't think there are particularly

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new and creative solutions here. You are right that today a relatively small percentage of Americans belong to unions, but this is in our lifetime a historic low. It is also true that very few people make minimum wage, certainly very few people make federal minimum wage, but what we know about raising the minimum wage is that it is the quickest way to raise the entire salary structure because when the lowest wage workers start to make more that puts pressure on the rest of the salary scale, I think the same thing holds for labor unions. When more people belong to labor unions and labor unions deliver more generous contracts, benefit levels, that has pressures throughout the industry. My belief is that we should just sort of unskew the balance right now between labor and management and allow more people to join these unions, but the other two things you can do are to make it harder on companies to take profit and earnings and stash in places that are not increased wages and earnings. So prior to 1982, you couldn't take your profit and dump it into stock buybacks. That was seen as an illegal manipulation of your stock price and it's probably time for us to put some constraints on the other places that profit and capital go. And the final thing you can do is just look back at historical data. If you sort of look at sort of the broad sweep of civilization, from what I understand, the input that matters most to the separation of wealth is educational investment. The benefit of having all this money accumulated at the very top is that it's a source of taxation to provide benefit level for those at the bottom. And so if you just tax folks who are making all the gains at a slightly higher rate, use that money to update the educational guarantees so that everybody gets a college degree instead of a high school degree, that would automatically have a pretty substantial impact on wage growth and also just make the country wildly more competitive. So I mean, that's a sort of series

of policies that you could start with and I'm sure there are more nimble, more nuanced policies to layer on top of that. So let's unpack that a bit. The whole idea of a progressive tax structure, most people agree that a progressive tax structure creates harmony and that is people who do really well end up contributing more that we can reinvest back in the economy, innovation, social programs.

But we have solely but surely created a tax structure that is progressive up until about the 99th percent and then it goes progressive. What do we do to restore progressive tax structure at the top? Is it elimination of capital gains tax? Is it increasing tax rates? Is it closing loopholes? Like what do we do to take my tax? I'm very transparent about this. My tax rate the last ten years has been 17 percent. What do we do to bring that more in line with average working Americans? Yeah, I think in the end you are likely, no matter how you rejigger the tax code, I just always worry that there are means and mechanisms for smart people with armies of lawyers and accountants to be able to figure out a way to get a lower rate. And so these ideas around

a just basic minimum tax level for the very affluent is probably the neatest way to solve for this problem. Yes, you can get rid of some of the most egregious tax loopholes that exist like carried interest, but you are probably just going to need to impose a basic minimum tax level. On your point about capital gains, I think it's a really important one because there is already a natural incentive to glean your earnings through investment. Since the beginning of time, investments has tended to bring you higher returns and higher income than labor,

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than salary. And so you are always going to have human beings incentivized to invest. And so I think it's a really important question to ask, do we need the additional tax incentive? And especially in an era where that tax treatment is not incentivizing domestic investment, but is incentivizing investment outside of the United States, it seems particularly antiquated. And I come from a state in which obviously a lot of people make a lot of money that gets taxed at capital gains rates, but I just think it's time for us to ask the question whether we need it or not, especially at a moment where money is coming back to the United States. This is a moment where people are really wary more than ever before about investing in places like China and other unstable places. There's a lot of reasons why investment is going to be here because of global geopolitical factors. I want to cover a few issues because I know we don't have much time with you. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it's worrisome for those of us who hear history. I would say that when you get to my age, you have two choices. You can take an interest in World War II history or smoked meats. I mean, I'm just fascinated with World War II history. And it bothers me that people don't see more parallels between what happened in the middle of the last century, both bad, an autocrat, a fascist, invading Europe, and the good that the West comes together to fight tyranny. And yet we were obsessed and we were all in on World War II. And it was just so important. We just weren't going to lose that war with everyone supporting it. And I worry that it's going from the front page to page two to page five. I would love to hear your thoughts on the invasion of Ukraine and if and where you think we're getting it right and wrong.

Well, and I think to your point, it's important to remember that we did learn a lesson here. I mean, of course, one of the stories of both World War I and World War II is how long it took for the United States and for the American public to become convinced that those were worthwhile endeavors and are reluctant to enter those wars ended up prolonging the conflict, costing millions of lives. And so it is in part a determination to not allow that to happen again. And it is also, I think, just absolutely true that if Putin had been given a green light into Ukraine, he would not have stopped. Would he have tested a NATO ally? Maybe, but he's got plenty of

other places to go in the Balkans, in his more immediate neighborhood, in the Caucasus, in Central Asia, where there's no NATO guarantee. And so I just think America has become the preeminent political and economic power in the world because of the post-World War II order in which big countries don't expand their borders by invading small countries. And if you don't preserve that world order, then I think that is part of what ends the era of American influence in the world. And what a small investment we're making. I mean, compared to the World Wars, compared to Vietnam, compared to Korea, Ukraine's not asking for a single drop of American blood. They're asking for a fraction of our GDP, and they will do all the fighting, and they're doing it pretty effectively. So I just think that this is a massively smart investment. But I can talk to you if you want about the reasons why this is a hard sell for the American public. It's in part due to years of foreign policy failure and military adventurism overseas that looked and was pretty unsound, that there's just a lack of faith that when we commit ourselves militarily overseas, that it's actually in the best interests of the country. We'll be right back.

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You're one of the few senators or elected officials in general that is talking openly about masculinity. You tweeted that open quote, we cannot avoid the biological evolutionary differences between men and women. It's not toxic masculinity that causes men to commit 90% of murders, for instance. Both biology and thousands of years of culture have wired

men differently. Policy has to acknowledge that. Say more about, first of all, I find that as a courageous thing to say, that whenever you just... I don't know why it is, but I mean, I certainly got a lot of shit for it, but it sort of seems obvious to me. It strikes me in my experiences

that whenever you advocate for men, there's a gag reflex, and they worry that you're going down a thinly veiled rabbit hole towards misogyny, and that advocacy is a zero-sum game, and that people... So many negative voices slipped into this void of not talking about various obvious challenges that young men are facing, that I think correctly, people have a bit of a gag reflex.

But first off, I just think that's just an incredibly important starting point to acknowledge that generally speaking, men and women are predisposed to different types of behaviors and receive things differently. Talk about masculinity and how you think we can develop a more modern vision of masculinity, a positive vision of masculinity, and if and what role government plays in that. Sure. And to this point about the skepticism, I got it from my teenager who read that tweet and said to me, he said, Dad, it's too soon. And I said, what do you mean? He said, we're engaged in these huge fights for women's healthcare and gay rights, and those are the things you need to be engaged in, not a conversation on behalf of men. And to our friend Richard Reeves's point, I just think you have to be able to do more than one thing at once. And I guess I come into this issue through the prism of violence, right? So I spent the last 10 years of my life working to try to lower the rates of violence in this country, and you just can't spend 10 years working on this issue and not understand that men are hardwired for violence.

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95% of the murders in this country are committed by men, and that is because our biology just works differently. And so I do think it's a really important conversation to have, especially at this moment where there's this remarkable change happening in the workforce and in the economy where this sort of seminal idea of men as the breadwinner is being erased and for good reason, because women should be able to participate in the workforce at the same rate. But you have to kind of speak to this loss of control that American men are feeling today. Now, I think all Americans are feeling a loss of control and agency, but I think when it comes to economic control and agency, that feeling of disempowerment is even more cataclysmic for men. And so when I think about the need to make wages be living wages, when I think about the need to sort of put people back in control of their economic lives, I think that is in particularly important for men who have long believed that their masculinity, that their identity was tied up in earning enough for their family. And well, I think that they will always, for the foreseeable future, feel a threat from women in the workforce. At the very least, we can make sure that if both parents are working, as they sort of work through the change that's happening, they at least have enough money to feed their family. I think that is particularly emasculating this idea that you can work and not make enough to send your kid to college. So wage policy, earnings policy, I think is a really important piece of re-delivering men the meaning that they have lost. Yeah, it's, I mean, even a real leader around gun control. And when you hear about these mass shootings or you turn on CNN and you see a bunch of SWAT teams surrounding a school, you know who the shooter is before you know. And what I also find kind of interesting though is that we will talk about how 90% of murders are committed by men, but also men are much more likely to commit violence against themselves or times more likely to kill themselves. It feels as if the frame through which we look at men is we're very comfortable talking about the crimes they commit and trying to recapture social status. But we're not as empathetic to them that we don't, we want to punish a 19 year old male for the sins of his father and his grandfather. Is there a way we can address these problems, but also begin to frame masculinity as a positive as opposed to a negative? I mean, you're raising two boys. What are you telling your boys about masculinity and about what it means to be a man? Yeah, I think that's a, I'm not somebody who necessarily does a lot of telling, right? I mean, I think I do more showing. I mean, I just try to model for them, you know, what a leader looks like, you know, what kindness and caring looks like. I try to show them that sort of nurturing, you know, matters for men, right? That that's something that brings tremendous value. And it's not something to sort of shy away from. I try to spend much more time sort of modeling what being sort of a good person, a good human being is rather than modeling for them what being a good man is. And maybe that's the luxury of class, right? I mean, maybe my kids are going to grow up in a relatively economically secure manner. And so they may not have some of the crises of identity and meaning that others have that tends to coincide with economic powerlessness, but sort of the choice that I've made. I don't know, it sounds like good parenting, Senator. Whenever I try and lecture my kids, that's a guarantee they're going to turn off and probably go the other way. What advice would you have for young fathers in terms of what you think you've gotten right,

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what you've gotten less right? Yeah, it's a great question. I do see this retreat that is happening. And I find myself being much more purposeful in the work that I do with my kids to put them in social settings than my parents were with me. I just don't think I had any other options. There were less mechanisms for me to withdraw. And so I think as a parent, I always look back on my best moments as the moments where I wasn't telling my kids what chances, what socialization opportunities they needed to take, but that I was pressing them hard to put them in those spots. And I just think that's the consequence of an environment today where it's really easy for kids to be on their own. I think the other thing that I have learned is that the amount of academic pressure on our kids today is pretty overwhelming. And my kids, for instance, I don't know if the same for you, my kids have an online grading system in which they can see their grades in real time. And that starts in sixth grade for an 11-year-old. That's so unhealthy because the measure of success for them is not the grade that they are getting in math or science, but they feel such pressure to measure to those standards instead of other standards, like being a good friend, being a leader, being a moral model. And so I've been at my desk as a parent where when I have depressed the emphasis on academics and increased the emphasis on understanding other ways to assess your worth. I think the last thing is what I've seen is that this culture of owning people you disagree with is really central to being a teenager or a boy today. And just working through that with kids and understanding that there are other ways to feel good, besides saying something nasty about somebody you don't like online or through a text and you've just got to spend real purposeful time working through how in the end that is not going to bring you fulfillment. And moreover, I've gotten to observe you. You don't get to observe me because you're in such a public spotlight. But the thing that always struck me about you is you're talking about some of the most emotional issues in America, specifically gun violence and literally the havoc it has wreaked on our society and people's lives. And what I find just impressive is just how even kill you are, just how unemotional you can be. I mean, you're talking about the most emotional topics and you're not adroit, but you're just very sober and very pragmatic and very measured. And I'm just curious when you're off camera, where do you feel the most joy and sort of awe, if you will, and also what really pisses you off? Where are you most frustrated? Where do we see the peaks and the valleys in Chris Murphy when you're not in Senate? I think part of what I'm good at is unplugging. The set of issues that I deal with are just immensely emotional. I mean, this issue that I've chosen to be in the center of gun violence, right? I mean, it's unlike any other because I spent all my days with people who've gone through the unthinkable and lost their kids and they count on me to deliver something for them. And so part of the way I deal with that is to just unplug, to go back home and watch the Red Sox, to hang out with the kids, to manage my fantasy football team. Like I'm pretty good at doing that and sort of stopping thinking about all of the rest. But on this issue of violence, I mean, I get absolutely furious at how broken this system is because I'm in the midst of an issue where 90% of Americans want to do something and democracy can't deliver. And that is absolutely infuriating to me. And I'm not somebody where you see that all the time. But the reason that I think I've had success on this is because I just don't give up. I don't give up. I don't care how the odds are stacked against me. I don't give up because inside,

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even though I may not wear it on my face, is a fury about how badly we've screwed up life for a lot of kids. And lastly, here's what really makes me angry is the invisibility of the kids in my neighborhood. So I live in the South End of Hartford, pretty violent neighborhood. Those kids in my neighborhood, school is the safe place for those kids. That in schools, they feel great when they're in school. It's outside of school when they can't leave their house. Their parents tell them when you come home from school, you lock the door and you don't go out until I come back home. That's what makes me furious is that those kids are invisible. And the only thing we see are the mass shootings. That's just unacceptable to me and part of what drives me on the issue. So if you could ask, we'll get about 200,000 people will listen to this podcast. If you were to ask them and say, all right, I'm working, I'm working at this. I have sacrificed for this. I'm doing everything I can. I need you to do this one thing. The majority of Americans realize this issue is not only out of control, but has this really tragic normalization happening to it. It's sort of a benefit and a flaw of humans is that we're adaptable. We're getting used to climate change, which is not a good thing. And unfortunately, we're getting less and less horrified by these mass shootings because we're just seeing them so often. What is the one thing, doable thing, you would want people listening to this right now that would help move the needle

Listen, American politics is about organized political power. And for 30 years, the gun lobby had organized political power, and we didn't. We have it now. But that's only because we have these groups, right? And there are a whole panoply of them, moms to man action, march for our lives, Giffords. That's where the power comes. And so the one thing you can do if you care about the issue of gun violence is join an organized political group. And occasionally, not every day, maybe not even every week, but every two weeks, respond to one of their action alerts, because it is that volume level that we have created on the issue of gun violence now higher than the volume level that comes from the gun rights groups that has put us in a position to change laws that allowed us to pass the law last summer. So join a political organization. Don't think that advocacy is just opening up your Twitter feed and replying to somebody or liking a post. Advocacy is joining an organized political organization.

Chris Murphy is the junior U.S. Senator for Connecticut, the youngest person elected to the Senate. Since the Newtown School shooting in December 2012, Senator Murphy has become the best known leader in Congress in confronting the plague of gun violence in America. Now in a second term representing Connecticut, Hanna's wife, Kathy, and attorney have two young sons, Owen and Ryder. He joins us from Washington, D.C. Senator Murphy, appreciate your service and keep fighting the good fight. You too, Scott. Thanks.

This episode is produced by Caroline Shagrin. Jennifer Sanchez is our associate producer, and Drew Burroughs is our technical director. Thank you for listening to The Property Pod from the Vox Media Podcast Network. We will catch you on Saturday for No Mercy, No Malice, as read by George Hahn, and on Monday with our weekly market show.

It's not just sci-fi anymore. Virtual reality for work is here.

Mixed reality for work is here. And companies everywhere are using them both to transform how they operate. Architects are able to walk through buildings in mixed reality before they're even built. Co-workers from opposite ends of the earth are working shoulder to shoulder in VR

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spaces. And all sorts of workers, from pilots to underwater welders, are getting trained in a virtual environment that's safer and more cost-effective. That's meta for work. Giving you VR and MR Tech to work smarter, closer, safer, together. Learn more at [forework.meta.com](https://forework.meta.com). Support for this episode comes from Canva, who just launched Magic Studio, a set of AI-powered tools that supports every part of your workflow. With Magic Studio, you can create custom designs from just a text prompt, generate sparkling copy in your brand's voice for any design or document, edit images, or create new ones. Generate beautiful content, fast-track your first draft, automate tasks, and design like an expert. All the power of AI, all in one place. Explore Magic Studio at [canva.com slash magic](https://canva.com/slash/magic).