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**Intro:** Welcome to the Let’s Talk Government Podcast that is provided for you by the Department of Government at Minnesota State University, Mankato located in Minnesota in the United States. I am your host Dr. Pat Nelson the chairperson of the Government Department. I want to thank you for joining us as we explore different topics about government. Some may be surprising to you and some may not, so please enjoy.

**Dr. Nelson:** Welcome to episode 16 of the Lets Talk Government podcast. We're going to talk about where do you get your news? I'm joined by Dr. Josh Berkenpas, and Dr. Amelia Pridemore from the political science program at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Both of them have taught topics courses on media and politics in the past, and you'll recognize them from prior episodes of the podcast. So Dr. Josh Berkenpas, I'm going to start with you. What is the role of the media in a democratic government?

**Dr. Josh Berkenpas:** Good question. Uh, in my classes, I teach students that, uh, media, um, mass media, as we used to say, uh, is an important linkage institution, uh, informal institution that links to the people, to their elected representatives. Uh, the institution of the media, uh, has evolved over time. Um, but it has always served as important function, um, in a representative democracy, right. We elect representatives to govern for us, um, to link the people to their elected representatives. And of course the nature of that linkage has changed over time. Uh, originally, uh, you could perhaps think of, um, you know, local newspapers and pamphlets and things like this. A little bit later, we have the invention of the radio television fast-forward cable news. Uh, and of course today we have, uh, the internet and social media. Um, but the basic, I suppose, reason that we have the media need the media in a democracy is to provide that linkage, uh, to provide, uh, information, uh, to citizens as well as to our elected representatives about what the people want, um, about important issues, um, and things like this.

**Dr. Nelson:** Dr. Pridemore, same question to you. What do you see as the role of the media in a democratic government?

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:** So I would say that the media's role in a democratic government is, uh, twofold, very related concepts. Um, one of that of what's called the fourth, the state, and the other of what's called the watchdog role and why the media is often called by, uh, called the fourth estate, is that we have three branches of government, you know, legislative executive judicial. Well, the media is often called the fourth estate because it provides another check and balance on those three branches. So basically, and this that's where the watchdog concept comes in. The watchdog role means that the media is there to keep an eye on what these systems are doing to let the people know what's up. Um, and likewise not just, you know, pair back the facts as government officials would want it, but also be, you know, be sort of the person who says, wait a minute, what's up with this really? Um, so that's where watchdog comes in, basically, they're they they're guardians of the democracy, um, in and keep a, would be, or sometimes actually, um, problematic government from abusing the public that it's supposed to serve.

**Dr. Nelson:** I imagine probably one of the most famous examples of this as the Watergate scandal, without the media, we would never have known what was going on there, although I'm kind of dating us a little bit. So, so that kind of leads me into my next question. I'll open it up for either one of you. So why do we need an independent media? Why don't we don't we just have a us media that's controlled by the state when we still get the same information.

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:** Well, you re you actually gave an excellent example right there of Watergate. So in my former line of work as a journalist, um, the gold standard that the term that we used in multiple organizations where I worked was, Oh, are you going to get a Woodward and Bernstein? That story would be a Woodward and Bernstein, meaning Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, the team of Washington post reporters who essentially brought down Nixon during Watergate. Um, if we have an independent media that state con that is not state controlled, um, two things happen, first of all, again, that watchdog role comes in. We're able to keep an eye on nefarious activity like Watergate. Um, the other thing about it is, is inevitably speaking, when you have shifts in power in government, such as you know, when you have a Republican white house and a democratic white house, as we've seen right now, um, well, okay, one person is in charge and that person says, I don't like what you publish. Here's what I like. Um, inevitably one side will say, yay, my competitor, or a person I disagree with. They, they don't get to speak out, but I do well, guess what, when there's a power shift, the other thing happens. And all of a sudden you can't speak out, but the person you disagree with can, um, you've got to have an independent voice out there. So nobody is silenced when they're, especially when there's an inevitable shift in power.

**Dr. Josh Berkenpas:** And to add to that. Um, you know, we need an independence. Yeah. If we're going to, I suppose, maintain our small non Republican institutions around constitution act creates a Republic again, elect representatives to government for us. Um, and as part of the system of separation of powers and checks and balances, uh, the media has evolved over time as an extension of those principles. And as Amelia was talking about respect to this idea of the fourth estate, um, and, uh, the watchdog, uh, idea as well, um, if it's not independent, right, we lose that sort of watchdog function. Uh, we lose the ability, um, to, um, sort of keep public officials, uh, honest, right? So root out corruption, uh, and things like this. Um, it's also important. I think you, we have mentioned this yet, but, um, it's, the media is important to the socialization process, right? We all start off now, you think of it as blank slates, if you will, as, uh, empty sponges or something like this. Right. So we learned about the political world around us, uh, at first from my parents later from our peers and we go to school and then we learned from church groups and things like this, but as we advanced down the life cycle, um, we've pretty much get our information from the media, from the news sources and things like this. And if we don't have an independent source of news, um, our picture of the way the world works and the way that, uh, the political system is running and things like this, um, will not be accurate. We won't be able to form accurate judgments, easily misled, um, and all sorts of bad things like that. Not to say that those bad things don't happen with an independent media. Um, perhaps that's a, another story. Uh, the last thing I'd say here is, uh, with respect to the idea of, uh, media being a watchdog, sometimes it's criticized or being a lapdog, right. And that we'd have in the United States in particular, in other Western countries, um, independent shore, but also sort of in the pocket rights of, of, uh, corporate interests. Um, and really, um, not being as critical, uh, as they may be really pandering to a public that perhaps, um, has a greater appetite for, um, here's another term, right? Infotainment, right? So entertainment news, and things like this, rather than, you know, hard hitting investigative journalism, uh, that an expose we, uh, and academia was associated with, um, genuine, uh, independent journalism,

**Dr. Nelson:** You know, that's, that's actually a good point. It made me think of, I think I watched four episodes of different news channels last week that all ended with the pandas at the national zoo, sliding down the Hill and the snow. So, you know, it's cute, but isn't really new. So, all right. So then I'm going to kind of pose to you. We we've heard comments, you know, the media is bias. Um, I used to work up in Minneapolis and depending on who you were talking to, they used to call the stern Tribune, the red star, or the blue star, depending on if they thought it was too liberal or not. So, so how do you kind of weed through the bias and selection of news stories and agenda setting that seems to be in the media and who kind of sets that agenda Amelia, uh, Dr. Pridemore, we'll start off with you on that.

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:** Agenda setting is extraordinarily nuanced, much more nuanced than, uh, most of your textbooks will tell you. So the traditional view of agenda setting is that news media sets the agenda for what we have, basically how democracy unfolds the PR. The thing about agenda setting though, is that, um, I tell people that when it comes to, when it comes to the news, whether it be print or broadcast alike, there's always behind the scenes, a lot of puppeteers that you don't see that have much more control over them than an individual reporter or anchor does. Um, so, and it's, and there's so many that are outside of a given news organization as well. Namely advertisers kind of like what, um, Josh was saying about the role of advertising, uh, you know, corporate interests. Um, well, especially with the economy going down the tubes, you wind up with, um, you wind up with a greater need to keep advertisers going because there's always been a term of, Oh yeah, that'll sell papers. No, you gotta sell ads. That's the bread and butter, the greatest source of revenue for a media outlet. You, you can sell all the papers you want, but if nobody's advertising in it, um, that outlet is dead. So the, the thing that I would say is, um, you've got agenda setting one point that an author, Dr. GaN, Danna gal, young, um, author of a book called irony and outrage, uh, that talks about the rise of, um, a lot of talk radio on the right and satirical comedy programs that have been popular with those on the left. One of the things that she points out is that, um, sometimes advertisers are a part of what gets controlled, uh, by what she calls, basically these big corporate media executives that will sell something that is, um, Le uh, infotainment, as Joshua said, they will sell infotainment. And in the process of it, when they go to advertisers, Hey, here's something flashy that a lot of people are going to watch. Don't you want to advertise with? Oh, sure, man, everybody's going to see my product and they'll growing by it. So sometimes advertisers are played just as much as the advertisers play the outlet and also individual reporters get their, um, stories hacked and edited all the time by editors. And sometimes, sometimes I've looked at stories that I've written and I'll be like, I didn't write half of this after I went to Brett. So there's so many, um, there's so many people pulling the strings inside and outside of a given media outlet that the notion of agenda setting is, um, is absolutely not cut.

**Dr. Nelson:** Well. And I imagine we also have to look at that if they did a news story on everything that was happening, it would be just too overwhelming, right. Because they have to pick and choose and they have to pick things that, um, they know people will watch it versus ones that they won't watch. So. Interesting. All right. Dr. Berkenpas. We're going to ask you the big question since this podcast was sent in by a viewer, where do you get your news and why do you get it from there?

**Dr. Josh Berkenpas:** That's a good question. I get my news from a variety of sources, uh, from, uh, the morning commute, right. Listening to NPR, uh, is usually on, um, in the car. So a lot of NPR coverage, uh, periodically too, you know, if I'm feeling, uh, I don't know, feisty or feel like something different, I'll switch over to a conservative talk radio just to see, uh, what they're talking about over there. Um, uh, usually, uh, lots of, uh, sensationalism and, uh, sort of yelling and, um, blaming of the, you know, the political establishment for the, the woes of America. Um, that's good. That's good. Talk radio, right? Keep your, uh, your audience interested. Lots of interesting research out there about not just talk radio, but, uh, partisan media in general, about how, um, the goal is essentially to incite anger because anger is of powerful motivator. Um, it will keep you tuned in, right. It'll keep you engaged because you're upset and it'll keep you coming back because it gives you a little bit of a dopamine up there in the brain as well. Um, and we get all sorts of people, um, for better or worse. Um, you know, coming back time and time again, and perhaps only consuming, um, you know, from their preferred, um, um, partisan news source. Uh, but as I was saying, variety of sources, I also get news from my newsfeed, right on social media, Twitter, uh, et cetera. Um, and then, um, from personal searches, right? If a story is interesting, I want to learn more about it. And if I want to share something in class, um, you know, when you just do a little bit of research, we live in an amazing time, right? When all the information you could ever want and more is at your fingertips, uh, you know, you do a quick Google search and, uh, plenty of information comes up. It's generally, uh, ranked by generally, uh, ranked by, um, you know, the sort of popularity of the search and things like this. So, uh, typically right, your, your big, larger mainstream news sources will be towards the top and you can click through pages, uh, and get less, um, more sources with less, I suppose, uh, visibility. Right. And, uh, I think the rule of thumb is to, you know, try to understand a story from, um, a variety again of perspectives, right? Not just accepting the sort of Facebook meme or something like this as, uh, the gospel truth, right. If, if you see something and it seems too good to be true, it probably is. Uh, if you see something that seems too sensational to be real, uh, it probably is right. And quite often, you know, within the span of a couple of minutes, you can, uh, back check for yourself, right. Is something, uh, is real, uh, or not. So I don't know if that was a short answer, a long answer, but the short answer is from a variety of sources.

**Dr. Nelson:** Well, before we get to Dr. Pridemore, I'm going to put you on the spot for a second here, Dr. Josh Berkenpas, do you find that your consumption of broadcast media, it has gone down or changed because I know you have small children, so you probably don't sit down at the news at the dinner hour, watching the news. Do you find that that changes because you have small children?

**Dr. Josh Berkenpas:** Um, I mean, you mentioned earlier about, uh, the, the Panda story being at the end of all of the broadcast. Uh, the other day as something I talk about in my classes as well, um, I, I recommend to students to, you know, sit down some night and watch the nightly news and flip between, uh, you know, ABC, NBC and CBS. Uh, and it's remarkable, you know, talk about agenda setting, how they, more or less have the same stories, more or less in the same order, more or less at the same time. Right. And they can still fit in the ads and things like this. Um, and you know, you have to, I have to wonder what sort of, you know, decision making has gone into choosing those stories as opposed to, uh, the many others that they could cover, right. Whose interests are being promoted and, and things like this. Um, so broadcast news, not so much. Um, I do, um, watch, uh, fairly regularly, uh, local news, right. Which comes on at, uh, 10 30 around here, um, children are sleeping of course. Um, so I can, uh, watch that, um, pros and cons of, of local news as well. Um, but then I should mention also, uh, the, the late shows, right. Uh, Cole bear, um, and of course, um, uh, Trevor Noah over at comedy central as well. Um, even though it's infotainment, sometimes it's nice to be entertained while, uh, you learn about new and interesting stories. Um, and those guys, well, I'd say Trevor Noah, a little better than, uh, Stephen Colbert or these days doesn't necessarily follow, um, the sort of mainstream network news sources.

**Dr. Nelson:** Yeah. All right, Dr. Pridemore, let's talk about you, where do you get your news from and why?

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:** Um, so I'm, uh, so I'm big on, uh, local newspapers. First, the Thing is, is not to not to knock, um, my former colleagues in broadcast, but the thing about print versus broadcast is that in print journalism, you oftentimes have, um, just more space. You literally have more space versus say, 30 seconds to run in and run out like in television, because television is limited by the amount of airtime that they have. It's not that they're reporters are any better or any worse. It's just, they they're limited by space. So if you really want some depth, um, a lot of times the best places to go are to a print source, um, uh, not to discount and maybe for example, documentaries and the like that you see in broadcast. But generally speaking, a print outlet is going to have more time and more depth. Also when it comes to local versus national, sometimes local gets thrown aside for, um, for a national site, whether it be print or broadcast alike. And what happens is, is the local papers are the ones who do the ground work, not only for you and what's happening in your day to day life, that affects you the most. But a lot of times they're the ones who lay the groundwork, even for the national guys. A lot of times nothing gets picked up by say the Washington post or NBC news, whoever until a local reporter does it. Um, so I was a local reporter in my day. I can't tell you how many times wire services, um, one of my stories wound up on the Rachel Maddow show. Um, and, um, but, uh, but yeah, a lot of times the local ones are doing the groundwork even for the, for the national guy. So definitely local news. I'm a little, I lean towards local newspapers a little more, um, as far as going bigger and more in depth. Um, again, I lean towards a lot of the print sources because again, they just have more time. Um, so I typically will go to, um, news outlets such as the Washington post New York times, uh, ones that have been judged to not be very hyper-partisan. Some people consider the Washington post or New York times or other newspapers to be such, but a lot of times that depends on somebody's individual viewpoint, uh, for more in depth stuff. I tend to go to magazine type publications, like the economist, the Atlantic, um, now for broadcast. Um, I tend to also look, uh, like Josh at a lot of satirical programs, particularly. Um, I have watched, uh, last week tonight with John Oliver a lot and as well as full front or full frontal with Samantha B, not only because, um, well, especially with John Oliver, there's much more depth to what, uh, what he covers. Um, and he has a lot more creative control, namely, where he works with a paid channel, uh, versus say, you know, basic cable or especially over broadcast. Um, but with, um, John Oliver and Samantha B a lot of times they're covering the material that for either time or advertiser control or reader interest, um, that a lot of mainstream sources, local and national aren't even touching. So, um, for example, John Oliver's bit on special districts, um, on chicken farmers, um, some of Samantha bee's pieces on, uh, reproductive access and the, um, the federal bureaucracy being trucked down and truck down and trunk down of, uh, good employees over the past few years. Um, we, uh, there's, there's a lot more depth to it. One thing that I do in terms of judging see sometimes like, like Dr. Josh Berkenpas I'll check out, you know, some of the more conservative, uh, talk radio or likewise, some of the stuff, uh, some of the material that you see on the left, the light, just to kind of get a view of what the more heated stuff is. But one thing that I use to judge, you know, like, Hey, should I really pay attention to this? I always say, sorry, look for a thermometer. Think of a mental thermometer when you're trying to decide, gee, should I read this? Should I believe this or not? Because if you're seeing a headline that says something that's just super inflammatory, uh, something crazy, sometimes there'll be in all caps with exclamation points, even. Um, if something just seems off the charts crazy in terms of its tone. In other words, it say it's a 10 versus a five, right? And, uh, when you're talking about the heat, if you're seeing something, whatever way it lanes right or left, that just seems like it's just a little too hot to handle. A lot of times that's when the alarm, your fire alarm in your head should be going off as to whether or not this, this is really credible.

**Dr. Nelson:** I'll jump in here on my news, where I get my news. Um, so I'm a native Minnesota. So I grew up with, uh, the star Tribune as our print source in the cities. Uh, when I moved down to the Mankato area, though, I found that we have KYC for the local broadcast and then Mankato free press. And then I live in a smaller town that also has a weekly newspaper. So I'm blessed that way that I get, uh, various, however, unlike you guys, I don't do national print news. I actually go international like Al Jazeera English, uh, BBC, because I find that their perspectives on what's going on in the United States is sometimes more informed than our national perspectives of that. Um, and because I studied terrorism, it's always easier for me to get better and more global coverage. Then I'm sticking with our nationals. I do watch the national news. Um, we're, we're kind of limited on channels where I'm at. Um, but I also try to pick up some of the twin cities news as well. Um, I, I am, I will admit I am not one who watched the late shows because they drive me crazy. Uh, so it's always really interesting. So now both of you have lived in different areas of the country as well. So I'm going to ask you this question. Do you find your news consumption changed depending on the area you lived in? Um, and why? So I'm going to start with Dr. Pridmore, cause she's done both Florida and Texas as well as other areas. So did you find your news consumption, change? Why and how did it change?

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:** So, uh, so the thing that, the thing that, uh, affected me was, um, in terms of the news that I consumed was the concentration of ownership and a given area, as well as just, you know, how financially well off a given area was. So I'm a West Virginia native, and I also, I started my career in Ohio just across the border, uh, from, uh, West Virginia and Kentucky. Um, but I can tell you that, especially where, uh, at the paper where I started out, I mean, we had hard working reporters, not just me, but hardworking reporters who just absolutely busted their tails to do the best, uh, do as well as we could and do an awesome job, won lots of awards, but we only had a newsroom staff of six people. Um, we could only cover so much, especially if you're talking about a super decentralized government like you have in Ohio. Um, in the one CA uh, County of 50,000 people, mostly Appalachian, where I worked in Ohio, we had seven local school districts in a place with a and seven school board superintendents, et cetera, in a County of 50,000 people. When I teach state and local government, I always say that places that are County only like West Virginia and Florida, when it comes to their school boards. Okay. Miami Dade County in Florida, where I did my PhD work. Um, there's one school district for all of Miami-Dade County, which is, uh, just under 3 million people. So you have one board for 3 million people, meaning only one school board to cover if you're a outlet versus, and I mean, we're talking and we're talking about Miami, right, where there's much more money than there is in Southern Ohio, one school board for 3 million people versus seven that you somehow try to cover. And we couldn't, we just couldn't with that many school districts and as low resources as we had, the other thing is with West Virginia. So that's where I spent the bulk of my reporting career was in West Virginia, where I spent the bulk of my life. That's where I come from. Right. Um, so what's happened in West Virginia, particularly in very recent years has been there's one company called HD media. Um, they have basically gone and bought every newspaper in the state practically. Um, so a lot of times when you have very few owners owning, uh, also you got to keep in mind with deregulation. A lot of them, the same companies will also own broadcast outlets in the same market, too. So what happens is, is when you have few owners and multiple media outlets, well, even if there's three newspapers and two television stations covering a given market, well, if they're owned by the same people, you're going to see the same stuff. Um, so a lot of times, and it's very easy to go in and buy a small town paper if you're a major corporate outlet then by the Miami Herald or the Austin statesman, uh, where, where I was living after I lived in, um, after I lived in Florida, but still yet even outlets like the statesman has changed corporate hands. Um, you know, it's been, um, in, in Texas, in particular, even before a lot of regulations were relaxed in terms of media ownership, um, in Dallas for years on end, a, an outlet was grandfathered before restrictions were put in place that were eventually lifted on ownership of broadcast and print outlets in a market. So in Dallas, there was, uh, the Dallas morning news that I also owned a bar, uh, that also was under the same ownership of a broadcast outlet. But now the regulations have been lifted and lifted and lifted so much to where basically just one entity can own so much. And you often find out that content is spread amongst these outlets. So, so a lot of times you literally don't have very many choices when there's a big domino effect. Yeah. You see this in, in, um, in smaller poorer areas more often, but you sometimes still see it in a major metropolitan areas.

**Dr. Nelson:** Well, interesting. Dr. Josh Berkenpas. What about you? Yeah,

**Dr. Josh Berkenpas:** So I came from, uh, Michigan, uh, my PhD in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Um, and you know, when you move to a new place, one of the first things you try to do is get the, get the lay of the land, right. So I start paying attention to the local newspapers. Um, one of the things I look, I like Facebook for, um, Twitter, to an extent as well as you can, like all of these pages, right. And they show up on your newsfeed. So, you know, I didn't have the, the local news sources, um, you know, in my newsfeed prior to moving to Southern Minnesota. So you've figured out what those new sources are. Again, you try to include as much as possible. So you get the fullest picture of what's going on in the world around you. Um, so in that way, um, I suppose news consumption, uh, or at least the sources of news, uh, change. Um, I'd also talk a little bit about, um, I suppose, the, the power of word of mouth, right? Um, to influence the new stories that you find, uh, interesting, uh, you know, in the, before time, uh, we would, for example, run into each other in the hallways and inevitably some sort of news story would come to, uh, enter into the discussion, um, and sort of water cooler type, uh, discussions. And sometimes, you know, we'll bring up things you haven't heard of. So you got to do a little investigation yourself and you become informed in that way. Um, I suppose the closest analog right now in the zoom world is still like to do current events in my classes. Um, and inevitably students bring up stories. I'm like, Oh, that's interesting. All right. Um, and I tried to connect it to some sort of course content, but every now and again, they'll bring something up. I have no idea what they're talking about. So right after class, make a little note to check it out. Um, and sometimes it's a really interesting story that I can use, um, you know, to, um, intro that the next class period. Um, but you know, people are out there, they're talking, right. I'm not just on social media, but talking to their family members, coworkers, and things like this. Um, and that is another way that, uh, news stories can, uh, circulate.

**Dr. Nelson:** So really kind of what we've talked about is the value of multiple types of media. Um, making sure that you're not just listening to what you want to hear, right? Cause you guys both talked about checking out different political opinions from yourselves. Um, the actual sharing of information between people is still news, right. Going back and forth. And that it's not always just broadcast media that we, uh, focus on. Alright. So, um, let's wrap up with your final thoughts. So if you had somebody just moving new to the area, maybe an international student coming in and they, they come to you and say, where should I start watching and learning news about the United States? What would you, what kind of advice would you give them? And, uh, Dr. Josh Berkenpas, we'll start with you. And then we'll end with Dr. Pridemore here.

**Dr. Josh Berkenpas:** I'd probably say I would probably direct them towards, uh, you know, social media. I would direct them towards, um, now Facebook and Twitter and things like this, where you can like different news outlets. Um, you know, when you, like, let's just say a New York times, for example, on Facebook, it gives you a bunch of helpful suggestions. So while you're there, you can like BBC or Washington post or whatever else comes up and start building your newsfeed. And you'll start to get, um, a lot of interesting stories, um, you know, that are being put out by these major, uh, publications. I would probably also tell them, um, you know, that, uh, American, uh, society and American news, uh, um, environment is incredibly complex, right? So be patient, right. It's not all going to make sense right away. Um, it takes a long time to, you know, perhaps you will never fully understand, but to try to make sense of all of this complexity, uh, to try to, uh, I suppose, build a capacity for being comfortable with that complexity. Um, and I suppose, um, I guess with the idea that if you're looking for the truth, um, you may not find it right. Um, being comfortable in knowing that, um, stories are evolving and changing all the time. Again, we get to this idea of, uh, perspective and finding multiple sources for your news

**Dr. Nelson:** Dr. Pridemore, What would be your advice?

**Dr. Amelia Pridemore:** So, um, and I've actually had this conversation sometimes with, um, with people who are new to the United States, whether it be, uh, international students, recent immigrants. And the first thing that I would make sure to let them know is, you know, this is in, in this country, we do have this ideal of having an independent non-state controlled state media, a non-state controlled media, um, because this is not the rule and a lot of other countries and explain what I, what I explained before about the importance of having that independent voice, that's a check and balance and a watchdog on the government for the people. Um, and kinda maybe contrast that with some of the things that we've seen in state controlled outlets in other countries, such as, um, such as this, uh, it could be anywhere from the inflammatory to, uh, you know, my, my political opponent is so terrible. Let me tell you, let me do this hit piece on him, to the ridiculous, such as in perk menace, Stan, when there were rumors that their dictator was dead, um, they didn't just come out and say, Hey, our dictator isn't dead, but they did this ridiculous. But to show how strong he was. So, you know, part of their show that this ridiculous bit about how strong he was by having him doing donuts in a Jeep around a fire pit, um, this, uh, when you have an independent non-state controlled media, these are things that you are trying to avoid. So this is, this is one of our principles behind this independent voice in this country, because it always worked that way with, uh, all the puppeteers, uh, controlling a lot of what you see in here. Not exactly, but we don't want to have what I just described to you when you have a lot of state controlled media. So that's one thing I would definitely tell, uh, an international arrival. Um, the other thing that I would say is kind of like what I said before of, you know, using that thermometer is this, if it's too hot to handle, it's too hot to consume, you know, you don't, you don't, uh, you don't eat the cake right after it comes out of the oven, right. You're going to get burned. Well, the same thing happens when something is just, Hmm, is it too good to be true? It probably is. And a lot of times you can Pell that when it just seems like the temperature is just way too hot. Um, I'd also direct them towards a lot of the sources that Dr. Josh Berkenpas and I have talked about such as, um, local newspapers, local television. And the other thing that I would make sure to note is that it's not perfect. Um, a lot of times you will see things that you may, uh, not want to see and hear, but it's important to a lot of times, listen to what you don't want to see and hear sometimes because as part of a democracy, um, you, even if you walk away still disagreeing, you've at least maybe come with an understanding as to why, uh, other people have different ideals than you and that's, and that's part of a free exchange in a democratic society.

**Dr. Nelson:** Well, that was just beautifully sad. We're just going to end with that though. So thank you both for talking about, you know, why, what news you consume and why, and I appreciate having you here and hopefully we'll have you guys back again. Thank you.

**[music]**

Thank you for listening to this episode of Let's Talk Government. If you have suggestions for future episode topics or other areas, you'd like us to cover, please visit our website at link.msu.edu\let'stalkgov to submit your ideas. Join us every Tuesday for a new episode and thank you for listening.