INTERVIEW, SEDERBERG, JANUARY 21, 2016, RESUMED

JANET BISHOP: I have this one recording. This is Janet Bishop. And we are waiting for the second recorder to come back on. We had to pause in our oral history. The second recorder--

JANET BISHOP: Not recording? No, it is.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Technology.

JANET BISHOP: Technology.

INTERVIEWER 1: Yes, right?

JANET BISHOP: The joy of technology. OK, so to create parity between our big recorder and little recorder, backup recorder. We are resuming-- I'll repeat myself again. This is Janet Bishop. And the date is still January 21, 2016. We had to take a quick pause in our second session with Christian Sederberg. As Christian has many things going on today and had to attend to--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Local government. I said not to interrupt us unless the place is burning down. So I'm sorry about that. But you know, it's funny. The city of Denver-- just like I was talking about Ouray and Delta and these places-- the City of Denver has been sort of the cradle and the first mover and really the leader on this. And so we're revisiting some of these things we've been visiting for six, seven years now. Interestingly, going back to that June of 2010 date, the city had no real licenses for these other types. We had stores. That was it.

So we actually-- it's a funny story. Actually, Josh and I-- Josh Kappel-- we put together a memo. The memo said, OK, we don't know what the city wants for grow facilities, so here's what we do. Here's what everyone should do. Go file for this permit. Go get an alarm permit. Go get a water permit. Go get every permit-- and we got a list of all the permits we could figure out.

And we gave that to them. We gave that to our clients, and we actually sent it out to the masses. And we knew certain people would take that and send it to everyone they knew. And so people are walking around the city of Denver—we were down there-- with our list that I've never met, and I've never seen again, with our list, pulling all these things. And that was in June. And by June 30 is when you had to do all this stuff. So on July 11th or 12th, the city council-- Chris Nevitt at the time was president-- they actually took a lot of the things from our memo and adopted them into the city ordinance retroactively. Because so many people had done it.

You know, that's just like, it was their thing, and also we were taking their lead on some things. And they were helping us saying, go apply for these permits. Go do whatever. That shows that this was such a crazy time. Every local government had to deal with this. This was why Delta-- then they could also ban. They were allowed to ban. And before that, there was a question of whether you could even ban these businesses. But the law specifically said, local governments, counties can ban them. And the vast majority of them did. That didn't have existing--
But Delta was one that did have existing, but banned. Meaning they were putting people out of business. That was that uncomfortable thing. Ouray County, interestingly, had already not allowed it under their law. And there was one business there-- and that was my client. That's why I was down there wearing, unfortunately, a suit instead of, you know--

JANET BISHOP: A hat.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Or sweater. Whatever. I don't mean to frame them as just country. But it's just very laid back. It's mountain towns. They wear jeans and collared shirt maybe or something. It's not as formal as Denver and other things.

Yeah, Ouray, actually, they didn't allow any businesses, but they did let one, our business sort of be a te-- one of our clients down there be a test business. And it was a local person who'd been there for 30 years. Had a tree company and knew everybody. Was like just a very, very good guy. They've been very successful since then. And they're really an anchor down there for really good businesses.

Acme is the name of the company, which is really funny. I picture the Roadrunner in--

JANET BISHOP: Was it--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: And the bomb in the Looney Tunes.

JANET BISHOP: Was it named with irony, or--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Oh, he just really liked the name. And I'm like, just, you know? I try not to give business advice, I try to keep remembering. But it's been great. It's a really interesting group of people, really nice people. And, you know, Ouray County, the commissioners down there were really thoughtful, and said, it's here. We have to figure if this is something we do want and see what kind of impacts and revisit. But we do have a business that wants to put some money into the community and wants to be resp-- and is here to talk to us and go through this. So that was large part of 2011 too is going around state all over the place doing these.

JANET BISHOP: What percentage of counties in 2011 were banning marijuana businesses versus those that were accepting them?

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: So there's 64 counties in Colorado. And I want to say that all but-- and Denver's a city and county. I think, honestly, I don't know exactly. Less than 10 allowed it, probably.

JANET BISHOP: Less than 10 allowed it.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Probably less than 10, I think. Maybe I'm wrong on that. But like Denver County? In the Denver Metro area pretty much every cou-- so Boulder County and Denver County moved forward. El Paso County actually did allow very-- had a very restrictive
medical law. And then looking around the-- there's a swath in the mountains of some of the--
down in Salida, which is, I think it's San Miguel County, which is out Telluride area allowed it.
And a couple places. But really it's very limited. Actually it remains very limited in terms of
counties that have even moved forward with adult use stores. This is medical. And there's still a
big movement against it.

So it's still, if you look at it, it's kind of a front range-- You see the metro area which is typically
very liberal. Then you see the middle, the mountains, where there's more forward thinking and
liberal people in some of these places. You know, Pitkin County, the Aspen areas, some of these
places. And then you have Telluride, Durango, and really, which is, La Plata County and others
which we spent a lot of time in Durango and other places. But that was it. And it's still kind of
very similar.

Although some counties have started now adjusting. Pueblo County, and there's other counties
that have moved forward. It's always been very restrictive and very-- it's a very political and very
divisive issue. And I always say, I love them, but politicians don't get reelected because you're
thinking outside the box. And even if the voters have sort of spoken, but it's a close-- you can't
really interpret what they meant when they said they wanted medical marijuana or when they
wanted Amendment 64.

It could have been that they wanted the social justice part of it. Or to stop wasting money on
jails. That doesn't mean I want it in my backyard or in my community. So it's a very tricky issue,
but, again, it's all hearts and minds. And we know and we believe to our core that we're right on
the policy. But that it's going to take time. Alcohol prohibition ended largely because the ability
for local governments to opt out. That's why you still have some dry counties and in some cases
you had whole dry states until the '50s.

I think it was Missouri or Mississippi maybe, one of the states, alcohol was illegal well after
prohibition had ended in every other state. But you still, if you look at Texas and to the south,
there are dry counties still where alcohol cannot be purchased. But it can be possessed. It's very
similar in the marijuana world, both medical and adult use.

You can't be-- you can always possess in any of these places that have banned it, but there's just
not storefronts. Over time I think, what ends up happening is right on the county line-- up pops
the stores. It's like fireworks in Wyoming.

It's funny when the Wyomingins were saying, all this marijuana is flowing in from Colorado. It's
like, well, how about this. You guys stop the fireworks from coming down here, and we'll stop
the marijuana from going up there. And they knew that that was just—there's a really funny
newspaper cartoon. Showing people driving past each other with fireworks.

JANET BISHOP: Was that in the a--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: I think it was in the Denver Post, I believe so. That was really,
really funny. That local government stuff, that's really what the core was. Really, a lot of what
we were doing at that time focused on that.
JANET BISHOP: So that was 2011, very much so. So you went around county to county.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: And municipalities. And local elected officials.

JANET BISHOP: Right. Just out of curiosity, did you make it up to Larimer County?

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: I did make it to Larimer County. And Larimer County actually did move forward with medical, and then Fort Collins itself. Actually, I can't remember if the county did not go, but the city did.

JANET BISHOP: But then I thought it rescinded.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: They did. They rescinded. So we actually-- I didn't spend as much up there, physically up there. But we did a ton of work there just in terms of policy and everything else. Or just like advising and giving information for our clients to use. But a lot of this too, it's like why-- you know, it's the same thing out on the Western Slope. They don't like it when Denver-- there's been this problem. Remember this secession movement a couple years ago?

It's like-- These politicians in Denver and the people in Denver do not appreciate our values. And we should break off as a state, our own little state or whatever. This is the kind of thing where you have to be very careful when you approach these communities that it's not, I'm here from Denver to tell you how to do things. They don't like that. And I actually-- all politics is local. I'm very much a believer that the whole entire marijuana movement, it all starts at the local level. And that actually those are the most accessible people if you're in a community.

It's very difficult for someone to get a meeting with their US Senator. It's maybe a little bit less difficult to get it with your US Representative in Congress because-- or in the House of Representatives-- because they have less constituents. Still very hard. State elected officials. You know? It just drops down. The closer you get to home, the more access you have to those people. And they are the decision makers who’ll ultimately decide if there will be marijuana in these communities. And that will be the trend nationwide. As it was with alcohol. It still is with alcohol.

So it was a fascinating time. Really, if you think about what our argument is from Amendment 64's perspective is the people in Washington have a drug policy on marijuana that doesn't reflect our values and, frankly, our reality. So they shouldn't be telling us what to do. So how can you be at the state level going and telling what localities should do? I mean, that's really the fundamental argument.

And in 2011, that was actually when the federal government actually came back in and shut down a bunch of stores. And said, you're a thousand feet from a school. So we actually then had that push pull, that state versus local, because the state passed these laws. And it angered Republicans and Democrats saying, well, why is the federal government coming in and interfering with it?
But fortunately, but it was a reasonable ask. A thousand feet from a school. There's no federal law that says you can't. There's just sentence enhancers if you sell drugs in close proximity to schools. So the federal government wrote letters to a bunch of people saying you have 45 days to shut down. This was in 2011 too. That definitely changed the conversations with the cities, because then it was like, well, the federal government could come down.

County officials would ask us, and city officials, and they still do, well, am I going to get in trouble for this? If this is federally illegal, and I say you can get a license, do I face prosecutorial risk? That conversation still happens.

JANET BISHOP: Right, because one of the interesting things about Amendment 64 is the whole state's rights issues versus the federal laws and that balance. You're hinting that you may have met with people who saw this as the state's rights issues, and that's why they were backing legalization?

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: We had a broad constituency across the political spectrum. And the nice thing about Colorado is it actually somewhat reflects, from a political perspective, it reflects the nation in a lot of ways. Because Denver is relatively liberal. Sort of city liberal. Big city. Then you have Colorado Springs, which is socially conservative. Focus on the Family. I mean, the cradle of social conservatism and really the capital, in many ways, is Colorado Springs. And then you have the Western Slope, which is much more libertarian leaning Republicans. Stay out of my business, government. Small government. And everything in between.

So that's why Colorado is a very interesting place for this-- everyone says for this experiment to- - and I say it's a very interesting place for the experiment of prohibition to end. I don't say it for this experiment of legalization to happen. I say for the failed experiment of prohibition to end.

But if you look at the campaign, Tom Tancredo, a conservative Republican who, basically, I disagree with on almost everything. But he actually is a nice person when I've met him. His positions on immigration were very divisive when he was running for president. And really shifted the Republican Party's focus to some very tough and bad immigration platforms and other things. And that, that's what his legacy is, in many ways.

When he was in the United States House and he ran for president, he drove that conversation in the early debates, much like you're seeing in these early debates where there's 15 people on stage. Certain issues come up, and that's their champion issue. And that was Tom Tancredo. Tom Tancredo was also a member of our campaign. And he actually called people, and he said, this is a 10th Amendment argument. Those things not reserved explicitly to the Federal Government are the State's.

And if you're a conservative Republican-- even socially conservative-- and you believe you want to overturn Roe vs. Wade. The whole Roe vs. Wade argument is that our state doesn't share values with you, Washington DC, so your laws should not restrict my state from banning abortion and everything else. So it's a weird sort of juxtaposition where liberal Democrats support marijuana reform also have to address the state's rights arguments. Also socially conservative Republicans that want to keep a federal prohibition in place have to reconcile their
small government 10th Amendment beliefs with a very broad and sweeping Federal Government when it comes to the DEA and other things.

So it's fascinating because it actually creates-- the story's not marijuana in a lot of the politics. It's like, no one knows where to be. And Republicans don't know how to do it. And so now, the argument that you go-- Kansas, right? Kansas doesn't want marijuana, and they're not going to want it for a while-- the federal government in alcohol tobacco firearms, their enforcement, ATF, their enforcement is to help states enforce their laws on those substances and firearms and other things.

JANET BISHOP: To help states enforce their states laws.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: So if I'm driving cigarettes from Virginia to New York because cigarettes have very little tax in Virginia but very high taxes in New York, the federal government will make investigations to help New York keep that out. And they'll also do this with alcohol. Transporting alcohol across state lines and illegal stuff that's not been licensed, or whatever. That is where the federal government weighs in.

So if Kansas was smart, instead of having this broad-- Kansas and others, this broad, it's banned everywhere, but there's this enforcement problem. What they should actually be doing is saying, let's take those federal dollars that are spent in this confusing state of do we enforce? Do we not enforce? You can take those federal dollars and make an alcohol, tobacco, firearms, marijuana, cannabis, whatever. And then they could actually focus and help prevent trafficking from Colorado to Kansas in a very clear way that meets the needs and desires of the people of Kansas who have maybe not voted to legalize marijuana, or decided they don't want it. That is a much better, more efficient use of resources than just a broad based prohibition with a non-enforcement policy.

So that is where this I think ultimately goes. That's how you're going to get the 50 plus 1 votes in the Senate. And the House is going to be based upon people reconciling their distaste or dislike of marijuana with the need to somehow reconcile state and local laws. Kansas is probably an interesting example because Nebraska and Oklahoma sued Colorado because they're saying marijuana is flowing in. And Kansas did not.

And the editor of the Kansas City Star Tribune, or one of the big papers there, a very well-known conservative said, we can't join this lawsuit because it actually is offensive to our values as Republicans. And it was very influential. Because he's right. We can't argue today that we want the federal government to have this sweeping broad authority, but then argue tomorrow that the federal government shouldn't have sweeping broad authority on all these other things. It's inconsistent and it's hypocrisy is basically what he's saying.

I think that's very, very impressive and thoughtful. And I think that there are a lot more Republicans that are friendly to this simply because it's not about marijuana than a lot of people understand. And Rob Kampia, the head of Marijuana Policy Project, who's Mason's boss and Steve Fox's old boss, and the guy that raised all the money for Colorado. And the guy, the MPP
is running the initiative this year in Arizona, Nevada, Massachusetts, and Maine. He's a libertarian.

You have Americans for Tax Reform, which is this infamous organization-- and the head of Americans for Tax Reform is a staunch libertarian and very well-known and despised. They're almost like the NRA. If you vote for any tax increase and you're a Republican, they'll spend money against you, regardless of how sensible it is or anything else.

Well, he has come out in support of getting rid of marijuana laws and reforming taxes. And the Reason Foundation, the Reason Magazine, a very libertarian conservative, for marijuana reform.

JANET BISHOP: I saw Cory-- I digress and I interject in your oral history. But I recently saw Cory Booker, who, I believe, was mentioning he was working with Rand Paul across the aisle on investigating some drug policy at the federal level.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Absolutely. Yep and that's exactly right. That's a perfect example of the left side and the right side coming together. It's a circle. And at some point on some issues, the circle of liberal, conservative, or whatever, they meet. And often times it's in that libertarian moment-- not always, but that's where you're seeing people coming together.

And that's why I think there's some level of inevitability to what's going on from a political perspective because reconciling these things, particularly after it's shown that it can be regulated- - and, of course, there's going to be challenges. But once you get to that point, you no longer have the argument that it's impossible to regulate it. So that's why we have to take an inconsistent position. The inconsistency of the position becomes more and more clear as more and more states come on, and more and more improvements to regulation start happening.

JANET BISHOP: Thank you. Very interesting observations. So, we're at-- I think we're still in 2011. But maybe moving towards 2012. So tell me a bit about Amendment 64 now. And what you and your partners strategized about, who you were talking to, how this came on the ballot in 2012. And also, I'll go back to my question cluster. What were the greatest challenges facing you in this legislation? You've talked a little bit about-- quite a lot, actually, about this. But tell me a little bit about that.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Sure. So obviously Amendment 64 was being drafted there in 2011, while also happening and where there was a lot of outreach. I imagine Mason could have spoken about this. Steve Fox. All these people. There was a very large coalition of people working on it, on the drafts. And actually it was being sent to people that we knew would never support us for their input. Not because we were trying to get their vote or anything, but we really wanted to reach out to the Colorado Education Association, the teachers unions, people we knew would never support us.

JANET BISHOP: And did you get calls back saying, are you daft for sending this to us?

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Yeah. And it's interesting. We got feedback from some of them, including I think-- history will show that the reason why there's sort of a carve out the first $40
million of excise taxes going to schools came with the suggestion of people that were never
going to support us that are involved with schools. And it was a public school construction fund,
not be politically hot teachers unions' issue. It just really was about building schools. That was
feedback that came from people that are involved in the educational world that were never going
to support us. Still don't.

But, you know, so the drafts happened. And there was a decision made in mid to late 2011 to do
the signature drive. And like I said, the dog years of marijuana sometimes are challenging
because I mix up some of the-- I get some of these confused. But that was that time frame that
we had to put in on the ballot which means we had to go out at get, I can't remember, 80 some
thousand, 90 thousand valid signatures. Meaning you have to collect a lot more than that because
people sign it twice. Or they don't know where they're registered. Those are invalidated
signatures. 50% of them, oftentimes. That's getting better with technology.

But that was happening in that late 2011, early 2012 time frame. In fact, we came up. We were
very close. You have to spend money on these things and volunteers. And it actually turned out
that it was a little bit short. And we had a period in January, February, I believe, of 2012 where
we had to cure. We had 30 days to get 10,000 signatures. Or something else.

The first week, of course, there was a massive snowstorm. And Steve Fox had predicted that
there would be. And I said, no, it's going to be fine. Colorado's such a mild climate, whatever. It
happened. And remember I was at a concert at the Bluebird Theater where my friend was
playing, Face Man. And I was sitting there getting all my friends who hadn't signed. I was in the
lobby by the T-shirt sales asking everybody if they'd signed. I was in the

JANET BISHOP: So hawking T-shirts and getting signatures?

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Yeah, well, my friend was hawking T-shirts for our buddy. And I
was hawking signatures. I was saying, hey, sign this. And I got all my friends who are in the
political world or who work for the federal government or other people that said, if you really
need me, I'll sign it. I said, OK. You're all here. It's my high school friends. You're all here. I
need you. And you have to sign it. So I was pounding the pavement, trying to get signatures.

And it ended up working out fine, although-- and it's actually kind of perfect. Because you don't
want to overdo it. You want to spend the right amount of money and resources to get it done. So
that's really what I mean-- after the signatures, after they're validated and everything else, that's
really when the campaign gets going. And that's when Brian left the firm. Really took a leave of
absence. Although he was still in the office next door.

But rented out additional space, parked Brain in there with a big conference area that was across
the hall from the law firm. And Brian really wasn't doing much in the way of legal work at that
point. Josh and I were still trying to-- and Philip Snow was another attorney we'd hired, and
Gabby who was our assistant at the time. We were still trying it. We had to keep the medical
marijuana thing. We couldn't let the wheels come off. So we were still working on regulatory
stuff.
Our job was to really-- my job, in particular, because Josh had a job directly working on
campaign stuff. But my job in particular was like to maintain relationships with the industry. To
make sure that their needs were met in terms of the medical marijuana laws and everything else.
But also to make sure that they knew that this path with Amendment 64 was the right path. And
that this wasn't going to put them out of business. And that this wasn't going to cause the federal
government to come in. That kind of stuff.

And so that's where, again, where I could be wrong on the time frame. It might have been in the
early 2012 time frame that the federal government wrote those letters about 1,000 feet. Because a
lot of people in the medical marijuana industry, my clients, were saying, I don't support this. I
finally got-- it's taken two years. It's been very painful. I'm finally-- I built my building. I didn't
know I had to go through all these permits and all this stuff. I've spent all this money. And now
they're going to change everything again? You guys are going to change everything again?

We had to say, look, progression has to happen. We wrote into Amendment 64 too that first
opportunity in any competitive application process would be for the people that had complied
with the laws under the medical marijuana laws. It wasn't just a straight handout to them. But it
helped them. But that early 2012 was really helping to build those bridges.

JANET BISHOP: So the proposal was-- so just to clarify-- you wrote into the law that if you
were a previous owner a medical marijuana business, you would be first in line?

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: That's how it actually ended up shaking out, once the law passed,
which we'll talk about. But that's sort of how they interpreted it. But really what the provision
says is-- because there was this trend toward nationwide in new medical marijuana states. There
was a trend towards having competitive application processes where you'd have to show a
certain amount of money. You'd have to show that you're-- and then there'd be a lottery. Or
there'd be a scoring system. And there'd be a limited number of stores, or whatever.

And so, in the law, because of that trend, we said, in the event that there is any sort of
competitive application process. We didn't want them saying, running liquor stores for the last 10
years is the most important thing. We said, the first thing they must consider is the participation
in and compliance with our state medical marijuana law. Because that meant that they couldn't
create a competitive application process that would lock out the people that have been doing it on
the medical side. But it wasn't just a straight, you're first in line. It ultimately ended up being that
way, because the state legislature expanded on sort of what was in the Constitution, or at least
the concept-- which I don't think was inappropriate, but it certainly wasn't exactly what was in
the law. So at the time it was the proposal, but then when it passed, what was put into our state
statutes.

But again, still, there's a local opt-out. And so people that were like, well I've got medical
marijuana in this place and it took us forever to get it. It seems highly likely they're not going to
move forward with Amendment 64. What about that?
And it's like well, that's a risk. But over time, you know-- and the law's specifically written not to affect medical marijuana. So it's not going to shut down your medical marijuana store. But yet, maybe you don't get to move forward.

That is actually how it played out in Colorado Springs. Colorado Springs has medical marijuana, but it does not have Amendment 64 type stores. It's the biggest community that's like that. It's the best example to look at and say-- and El Paso County too-- to look at it. I think El Paso County-- which the vote for Amendment 64 would pass by 12 votes out of hundreds of thousands. So that, yes, they still haven’t moved forward.

Though I imagine at some point in the next five, ten years, I could see them moving forward just because of tax revenues and other things that other cities are seeing. And because marijuana's in the community. But it's, again, social conservatism. So yeah, those conversations were ongoing in that early 2012 time frame.

JANET BISHOP: And hopefully at some point we'll get to talk to Brian Vicente. But you said he was across the way in his own special office with a table. Was he doing PR? Was he doing outreach? Was he the voice and face of the Amendment or--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Yeah, Brian was-- like you said, and I'll make sure you guys find some time with him. But he was really sort of coordinating relationships and seeking endorsements from our coalition partners and timing strategy, all of that stuff. The face was actually Betty Aldworth. There's many faces. Mason, I think, is certainly considered a face of this. But also Betty Aldworth was hired.

Betty is now the executive director of a very large organization called Students for Sensible Drug Policy. In DC is where she's based, but she splits time here. But she was hired to be sort of the volunteer coordinator. And she ended up really becoming the face.

She did a lot of PR. She did a lot of media. And she got the boot camp from Steve and Mason about how you stand, what you do and don't say, and that it's perfectly OK during a press conference to say, you know what, I'm gonna start that over, and the cameras aren't gonna just put that on like, oh, these guys don't know what they're doing. Or if they did, Mason would make sure to browbeat them into submission. He'd already done that for years, so they knew not to.

So Mason's keeping check on everything. And then Brian, Steven, Mason and others are developing the message for her. So she was really the face. And that was intentional, because you know, the critical demographic that had been identified, that we needed to speak directly to and thoughtfully to, were women 35 to 50.

JANET BISHOP: You thought women would tip the balance?

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Yeah, because if you're running a campaign, you've got your supporters that you know are gonna vote for you, probably. You need to be there for them, you can't just assume they're going to be voting for you. But you can't spend that much time and money on it.
Same thing, you can't try to convince the people that are never going to be convinced. Although you might pick off a couple, it's not an efficient use of resources. You need to identify what demographic is going to decide the issue election. And then you need to speak to them and make the arguments. You need to craft your arguments to what you think will be the most compelling argument for them.

Now, that doesn't mean we didn't do outreach to the most conservative people. We never turned down an opportunity to go. Even if it got like, really nasty, it's still in the paper. There's at least one or two that you'll get a good quote or something, you'll get a good line in there. But really the core was focusing on women.

This is just my interpretation-- historically, marijuana reform, even though the polling indicates there's a lot of support for it, it's what's known as soft support, which means they say it when they're talking to somebody. Yeah, of course, stupid what we're doing with marijuana. But then when it comes down to it and a young parent is in the voting booth, they might have thought the whole time they were gonna vote yes, but they get in there and they're like, you know what, I don't want my kid getting, smoking marijuana. Even though they might smoke it, or have smoked it, they know what it is.

But at the same time, the joke is-- and I joke to my parents about this-- like, when you become a parent, it requires you to become a hypocrite on some things, you know? And that's not a judgment or a bad thing, but that was the hump that people never got over. And that is why, I think, the message about marijuana as a less harmful substance than alcohol and the seven year educational campaign that Mason and Steve were running through SAFER and Brian through Sensible Colorado, that was very important that people's minds changed on that. Like the fact that President Obama said last year, on an individual basis marijuana as a substance is not as harmful as alcohol is, because it doesn't have the toxic effects or other things. Wildly controversial, but in reality, it's fact.

And so educating people on that so they go in there, well you know what, these messages that were so controversial time like-- hey parent, when your kid goes to college, do you think it's better that they're binge drinking or do you think it's better that they have an option to use marijuana. At least they don't get kicked out of school for using marijuana. So therefore they're going to say, do the smart thing, because I don't want to get kicked out of school, and end up binge drinking-- which, a one-time incident can and does end to young people losing their lives. And that's the thing that I think is really important about getting those people over the hump.

Also it's just a good time. A lot of young people generally don't have that problem, right? But they're also not the most consistent voters. The most consistent voters are older people who, at this point in time, still don't like marijuana. The sort of 65 and up, that's the one demographic in the polling that still doesn't want reform.

JANET BISHOP: Although, it's interesting-- and not to assume, but-- if the baby boomer first one of those cohorts would be born in 1945, so that's--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: My father was born in 1949, 1950.
JANET BISHOP: And so I would think that baby boomers, since many went through the '60s and experimented, would be supportive of Amendment 64.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Yep, again, it goes back to sort of the hypocrisy thing. And also very successful business people, the big reason I think there's a lot of galvanization at the state level of all the elected officials that came out against Amendment 64, which is Governor Hickenlooper, the mayor-- like all these cities' mayors, all the editorial boards, everyone-- was because they saw it as being harmful to the image of Colorado. Which would ultimately be harmful to the economy, which would ultimately be harmful to business, which would ultimately create what they believed to be a slippery slope towards real economic difficulties.

They were wrong about that. And they've admitted as much by now, but that means that even if I believe it myself, it's like, well, I don't want to create a policy that then Colorado becomes sort of this free-for-all. There's people that are smoking marijuana everywhere, or our workforce becomes lazy because some of these sort of stupid assumptions about what marijuana is or who marijuana users are.

They're presented in the minds of many of these people as sort of the wino in the gutter with, like, the paper bag. Whereas, that's just the extreme example of alcohol, the same thing is thought of for marijuana. It's like the classic stoner joke, sitting on the couch eating, you know, Cheetos and Goldfish and not being a productive member of society-- when in reality, many people that use marijuana just can't talk about it, even though they're very successful members of society. The last three presidents, for example, have acknowledged using it. Although one of them of them didn't inhale, you know?

I think it'll evolve on that at some point. And especially President Obama had said he was part of the Choom Gang. There's that picture of him. And he very much acknowledged that there was a period of time. And he's not proud of it, but you know what? His future was not ruined by it.

But that's the key. That's why the face of the campaign, the message was oftentimes really focused on that demographic. But again, it was focused on every demographic.

JANET BISHOP: And this is an interesting thing to contemplate, why women were so pivotal in this passage of this legislation. So that's something to write down to ask even more for oral history narrators.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Sure. And I'll actually posit that women are critical in every single issue and every single race in this country. They're an incredibly important demographic because there's actually a lot more women in the workforce, business-wise. It's a different time now. So there are women that are not at home being mothers.

But at the same time, they still are. They're mothers. Their role, traditionally, even if they're now in the workforce. It just has always been something where women-- and in general, I think women are a lot more thoughtful, to be honest, on voting on these things. And they don't necessarily vote party line stuff.
That's why, in the presidential elections you see, whenever anyone says something that's like, derogatory towards women, it's like the biggest no no, you know? You've got such a historic election right now. And it's really interesting if you think about reform in 2016.

All these campaigns that are going on-- I've always said, if you don't address that same message to women, you're going to have a lot of women who maybe haven't voted in a while but are coming out to vote for Hillary Clinton or Carly Fiorina. Which is not going to happen at this point, I don't think, but-- or coming out to be like, you know what? I don't like how Donald Trump has spoken to women.

So that sort of could skew the demographics. And these could be very close elections. So I think that's going to be a fascinating thing to look at after this next election. So I mean, like I said, it's not just we focus on women because we found some magic. I think most political operatives will tell you, that's the demographic you need for almost anything-- particularly President, and all the way down.

JANET BISHOP: Interesting. So 2012, you got the signatures you needed through scrambling. Tell me about the spring of that year leading into summer. And you're on the brink of this Amendment being on the ballot.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: That was that transition where Brian really stepped away. We had expanded our office. Like I said, it's right down the street here. Not nearly as nice as this place, but there's multiple offices on the third floor.

And we'd grab another office up there. There was no one but us up there. There was a guy named Brian, he was a real nice guy. He was there too, but we're expanding. Brian's really stepped away.

We're still grinding on the medical marijuana stuff. It's never slowed down, still hasn't slowed down-- just the regulatory work and the client work. But more and more volunteers were coming in. The summertime was really when the campaign was going to kick in at full force. So everyone was just sort of getting ready for that. And working furiously but trying not to burn out, and those types of things.

JANET BISHOP: And then summer a flourish of volunteers, of commercials I imagine--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: The TV commercials were really-- the media buy was made early on for that October time frame, because the earlier you buy it, the lower the price. And then that was a presidential election year. So that's where the vast majority of the money went.

And Steve and those guys that ran the campaign at the highest level, they made that buy early, knew they could save a lot of money. We're talking millions of dollars in those TV spots. Those were coming through late summer, but really October was a big push too.

I can't remember exactly, because my role at that time too, I was sort of a proxy. I'd go do debates, or I'd go to some weird town hall or something and try to help out where I could. And
really just go meet and keep the coalition inside the medical marijuana industry, hopefully as tight as possible.

JANET BISHOP: Together.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: So as the summer went on it kept ramping up and ramping up. And it was just event after event after event. You go to Red Rocks, and we'd have the booth there, or just volunteers there handing out literature and doing some really interesting stuff. One of the really interesting things in that spring, right before the summer around Mother's Day, there was a web ad that went up that was really geared toward social media. There was a young woman sitting under a tree in college, saying, “dear mom, I actually prefer marijuana over alcohol because I don't feel comfortable being in this environment where everyone's drunk. It's just my preference.”

And so it was kind of a weird sort of-- throwing stuff at the wall, I think, in some ways. And there's a thing called the Talk it Up Campaign, and it was designed as well to sort of talk to your parents about your preference, or about what you feel, because we wanted to-- that stuff needs to trickle up when you have honest conversations about these things. It can't hurt. All it can do is help. It's part of the whole thing, the Hearts and Minds campaign as well.

JANET BISHOP: Yeah, I think Mason-- not I think, I know-- Mason mentioned some of these campaigns. Just quickly-- I don't want to linger on this, but-- your parents were very open and supportive about your work. What were the other reactions of any of your associates, friends, or family? Were they all saying, Christian this is great stuff? Or, were your Regis High School friends saying, whoa. What happened?

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Well, interestingly, on the campaign there was three people from Regis Jesuit High School that were part of it-- me, Philip Snow, and Joe Magazzi. My mom was the president of the Regis Moms, which was like the secret spy club network of moms that would find out where we were--

JANET BISHOP: Keep you in tow, yeah.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: --on a Saturday. When I was supposed to be bowling and I was actually at a party, I'd get home, and it was like, how was the party, because the network of the Regis Moms. And Philip Snow's mom was the president before my mom. He was on the campaign. And then Joe Magazzi's mom was very involved and active at the school.

So it's funny. So of course there was some people-- no one ever gave me a hard time, and they all thought it was really interesting. Frankly, I was surprised how sort of open people were to it, and how they thought it was cool. I think some of them were just more concerned that I was throwing my career away.

And I was like, look, no matter what happens, I have an opportunity to be a part of something really amazing. And if it doesn't win, the next one will. And we'll hopefully have helped that cause, not hurt it, to get there. And either way, it's gonna be an awesome ride.
But you know my mom and dad, I think they hid it from my grandma for a while. They were probably afraid that--

JANET BISHOP: And when your grandma found out, what did she say?

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: You know, she thought it was great. Just very, very supportive. I don't really have anyone-- I'm trying to think of people that wouldn't talk to me, were really kind of mad at what I did-- that was never the reaction. The most cautious was always like, well I think it's really interesting that you're doing something so challenging. That was still positive feedback, but really constructive criticism of my decision to do this, in a way.

But no, I mean, I think my parents actually probably-- when they put up the "Yes on 64" sign next to the Mitt Romney sign in their yard in southeast Denver--

JANET BISHOP: That's an interesting combination.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: --on the corner where, I think, a lot of the neighbors' eyes were opened. And I bet you they probably got a harder time about it than I did, if I had to guess. But I mean honestly, it was pretty well-received.

And I frankly didn't want the negativity. So I didn't seek it out to see, like, I bet you that person doesn't want me to do this. Let me go ask them what they think.

But during that time there still was negative stuff. I mean one of the sort of darker moments, or whatever you want to call it, but really one of the scarier things was, we got a letter that said-- I don't know if I still have it, it's a weird thing, but it said, whatever, Dear Brian and Christian, or Dear Vicente Sederberg, or something. It was like spring is here, the birds are chirping. Enjoy it, because you'll be in a box in the ground before the summer's over or something. And I gave it to Brian and I was like, is that-- yeah, it's a death threat.

So we called the FBI and the Denver police department. They examined it. They said they didn't know what to do with it, but we should make sure we keep our doors locked and be careful about it.

And it was sort of a really eye-opening thing that there were people out there that vehemently believed-- even if it's just they like to scare people-- but that really did believe this was, like, immoral and something that needed to be stopped at all costs. Not necessarily a person who was going to act on that. But a threat like that is very serious.

Really, it was a tough time, because it was like, how do I tell my staff? This is a bunch of young, cool, smart people who are already sacrificing so much to be a part of this. And I don't want them being scared. Or, but I don't want to also keep them totally in the dark.

JANET BISHOP: So did you tell your staff?
CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: We did. But we didn't necessarily read it and say, hey look at it. Because it's really scary to think about it, just because it was so cold. The way it was presented was so troubling. It wasn't just, like, the letters from a magazine, ransom note type thing. It was really like, scary.

And so we just said, look, there have been people that have been calling and saying threatening things or doing threatening things. And we've talked the police to the extent that anything happens, we are totally gonna keep an eye on it. But just be safe.

The big thing was the side door, people would prop it open downstairs. We were like, we gotta lock that door. There's a call box there for a reason. And so you can't just ignore the fact that there's people out there that want to get in here, steal our computers, do bad things, or whatever.

So we just said, really, you guys need to keep an eye on everything that's happening. So that's how we presented it without trying to scare them but also I tried to keep an eye on them, make sure I tried to leave-- Josh and I were leaving super late anyways, so we were just trying to, you know, be diligent.

JANET BISHOP: And you're a positive optimist. I gathered that from our interview time today and previously. But I think I'm going to interject this now after the death threat letter. And it's actually a more reflective question. Is there anything you know now that you wish you knew when you started with this? And I think this is a good time to ask because I'll go into the victory of the fall now. But in looking at leading up to November 2012 and the passage of Amendment 64, you've alluded to some things, but what lesson, if you had to do one thing differently--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Yeah, that's a tricky question.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: And you mentioned that I'm a positive optimist. And actually, through this process, what's been really interesting to me-- which is really I think the thing that most fundamentally changed about me because of all this, and I tell people this, it's like a mantra or whatever-- it's that I trust the universe. Because even when terrible things seem to be happening, everything seemed to work out the way it was supposed to work out.

So, small example-- federal government sends us letters, right? It seems like the end of the world. Josh Kappel, Brian's in Mexico. Josh calls everyone to our office. We do what's known as a day of action where we've got everyone on the phones to call all your elected officials, every one. And we call them and complain, write letters, thousands of emails.

Then we did a follow-up where we said, we want to meet with your staff. So Brian and Josh and me went and met with Ed Perlmutter's staff and Jared Polis's staff. And Mike Coffman, who's now-- Cynthia Coffman, his wife, is the attorney general-- he's a Republican down in the Aurora area. So Brian went and met with Mike Coffman.
And Mike's-- the person who met with him was Joe Magazzi, who went to high school with me. He's like, yeah, Christian, I took this meeting, I'm a higher level staffer, I took this meeting ‘cause-- I know Christian and I really think it's cool what you guys are doing. After, he ended up not liking his job as much with Representative Coffman, he ended up quitting. And he called us and said, I wanna work for your guys' campaign as a Republican, as someone who knows Tom Tancredo very well, I can bring in some really conservative people and fight that fight.

I think he gets a lot of credit. And he should get as much as anyone gives him, because he was the one getting tomatoes literally thrown at him when he went into these conservative areas. But he's a credible conservative-- libertarian, mostly, but also a credible conservative. And so I just realized that, like, these bad things were happening but they were working out the way they were supposed to work out. And that is just one of many, many examples.

I don't have regrets. I know that sounds sort of cliché. I was like, what if the federal government would have not sent those letters? Then we wouldn't have had Joe. Would we have won? What if things would have worked out way better on that one thing we did or, like, I'd have done something differently? What is the lingering effects?

And there's a movie, Charlie Wilson's War. Charlie Wilson, in the end, how they crippled Russia and Afghanistan through all the stuff they're doing, and at the end of the story one of the characters tells the old Chinese parable about the guy in village. His kid, you know, his horse runs off one day, and they're like, oh, what a terrible thing-- comes back 10 days later with 50 horses behind him. And they're like, oh what an amazing thing! And he says, we'll see, we'll see, negative or positive.

And his son gets on the horse, gets bucked off, breaks his leg. They're all, what a terrible thing. We'll see. War in the village-- you know, all the able-bodied men must go, so his son doesn't have to go. And they say oh, what a wonderful thing. He said, we'll see.

And that's how I sort of view the world. Because, like, bad things happen but we are on a path towards good. That's perhaps naive also, because I've never had terrible, terrible things happen to me. So I'm not unconscious to that.

But in terms of my professional life and in terms of Amendment 64, I've said that's what is the most fundamental thing about me that's changed. I was positive anyways. But now I really focus entirely forward. I screw up all the time, everyone does. Sorry to give you a lame answer to that. I wish I was there something I could point to. But really--

JANET BISHOP: No, this is your story and your oral history.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Well thanks. Yeah, I mean, I am sure I could come up with something. But in general, everything happened the way it happened for a reason, the good things and the bad things.

JANET BISHOP: OK, thank you. So let's leap to the night in November that the amendment passed. And being the optimist that you are, you were probably pretty sure it would.
CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: This is perhaps the exception to that--

JANET BISHOP: Oh, OK.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: --because I figured I was actually-- there was this negativity that was like, you know what? They're going to find-- the polling looked good, we knew that we had done everything right. The campaign was over. On Halloween night-- or the Saturday before the election, right around Halloween-- I was actually at a Young Democrat event.

And one of the people who ran the No campaign was there. And she came up to me and she said, I just wanted to say like, I never really wanted to be a part of this No campaign. It was never really our issue and I know people that use marijuana-- all these things. And she walked away.

And I looked at my partner who was with me and I was wearing-- I don't remember, I was dressed as Mr. Clean or something-- and I was like, was that like a mini concession speech? Like, why would you say all those things if you were winning? Not that they'd come over and spike the ball and say, you guys never should have done this, whatever. But the fact that they were sort of backpedaling on what they did was very interesting.

And Mason had actually heard from the AG at the time-- who's now the mayor of Colorado Springs, but the Colorado attorney general-- a couple days before he was like, oh yeah, I think you guys are gonna win. That poll that came out-- And Mason was like, what poll? I haven't seen any new polls, and that's my job. He's like, I mean the poll, the one that sets you guys up all these points. And he's like, oh no, it's the internal polling from the No campaign.

So he like leaped-- unintentionally, and it didn't matter at that point. So I felt very good. But then I thought, they're going to find a way to not let this happen. But I mean, I still was like, it's gonna happen, it's gonna happen.

Actually I drove over there with Mason to the bar Casselman's, where we were going to have it. I remember I was getting there early. And I remember we drove up and all I saw was-- you know those big TV antennas, the ones that come off the truck, that are like 90 feet tall-- huge ones-- and there was, like, ten of them. And then we walked in and it was just media people all around. There was no one else there except for media people setting up.

I talked to this reporter from a Brazilian national news stations and this Russian, and then all the national and local people. And I was like, whoa. This is going to happen. You know? These people all polled the stuff too, and they know or they know it's going to be close or whatever. So still worried about it.

I talked to this reporter from a Brazilian national news stations and this Russian, and then all the national and local people. And I was like, whoa. This is going to happen. You know? These people all polled the stuff too, and they know or they know it's going to be close or whatever. So still worried about it.

So everyone's having a party right? And there's all these guests and volunteers and everyone's there. And Dan Riffle, who just left Marijuana Policy Project recently, and Steve Fox and I are sort of like the numbers guys, and I'm the guy who knows Colorado, so we're watching the election results coming in county by county. And I'm a pacer and walker. If you see weird spots in our carpet, it's where I walk in circles while I talk about phone or do whatever. My nervous energy-- so I was just pacing around, and I was pacing back to this computer.
And Steve and I were looking at it, and it's like, OK. I was like, if Arapahoe county and Weld County come in and El Paso-- like, those are the ones. We're doing the numbers like, OK, this is the population. And I was having Andrew Livingston run algorithms all day, and I was like, I need you to do spreadsheets. I always see you with all these spreadsheets. And I was like, I need you to sort of calculate for me outcomes based on percentages of population that we know we can win.

Like, what are the bellwether things we have to look at? And it's like, Arapahoe County comes in higher than 46, Weld County comes in higher than 46 or 47. And actually what happened is they came in sort at the same time at a little bit 7-ish, 8-ish. And they came and Steve Fox and I looked at each other like, we won.

And so instead of like, jumping up and down, our first reaction was, we need to find the AP reporter, because the AP officially calls ballot initiatives. Kristen Wyatt is her name. She's a wonderful person who's covered this issue very, very well for the Associated Press for the last six, seven years. So we grabbed Kristen and we were like, you guys have to call it, it's over.

And the reason we wanted to do that is because Washington State's polls were closing shortly thereafter. And we wanted to officially be the first to legalize marijuana. And that's exactly what happened.

JANET BISHOP: So it was called right before Washington State.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Right, like about an hour actually is what we had. We beat them by an hour is what people say. But then obviously, if you've looked back since then, we were the first to open stores, we were the first in many, many fronts. But I mean, it's not a competition.

But it's great to truly be able to say you're first. Like, if I was on the other side, I wouldn't actually say it. I'd be like, Colorado was first, because I don't really like misleading. Even though they're the exact same time.

But it was just wonderful. Some of my family members came down, a couple of my friends that didn't really understand what I did or how I did it were there, and they were like, holy cow, like this is insane. We got a bunch of people, just close friends and people that are just pure activists and nothing to do with the business, and the business people, and one elected official. One elected official showed up at that party, even though it was such a massive, groundbreaking thing. And that was Chris Nevitt, who is the city council president in Denver.

And he was just so excited. And he said, look I'm going back to the Obama party and the Democrats' party, because the Democrats had done very well. But he said, I want to come over to shake your guys' hands. And let's talk soon about the future.

JANET BISHOP: And so the day after you probably slept in.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Yes, well after that, we went back to our friend's house with all the campaign folks and a bunch of friends. We went back to our friend's house. I think she ended up
getting evicted because of the party that she had that night on a Tuesday night until 6:00 in the morning or whatever.

JANET BISHOP: Oh so you didn't sleep in. You just put--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Oh no, yeah, I slept in for a couple hours. So I went back to—Steve and Mason, I think just walked. There was a press conference at 11:00 in the morning by the capitol, between the state capitol and the city council building. And I woke up, same shirt, same stuff, steamed it while I was wearing it, I think, to make it a little bit less wrinkly because I'd slept in it for three hours.

And I went down to the press conference and there was-- I'd never seen anything like it. There was a hundred media people there. And Mason approached the microphone and said one of his many, many brilliant things, one of my favorites, which was, "We called this press conference to find out where all of you people have been for our previous press conferences." It just got a good chuckle out of everyone. And then of course Brian and Mason, they just totally nailed it and talked about the historic nature of what was happening, why it was important. I think they maybe took a little shot at the governor, who when asked on election night, on our night, what he thought about Amendment 64, he said, "Don't break out the Cheetos and Goldfish just yet."

JANET BISHOP: Which was quoted in Time Magazine.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Oh yeah. And that's been an ongoing joke for a long time since then. Frankly I'm past it, but it was offensive to the people who really cared about the issue and understand that it's just like, the first time a very groundbreaking law passes, you kind of sit there and throw water on it, even though 55% of the people voted for it, even though 50,000 more people plus voted for it than voted for President Obama that night.

Certainly could have messaged that a lot better. But I think also it was a visceral reaction. And it was also his night. And instead of being his night, it became about marijuana. And I think that's one of the biggest issues.

I think the governor's done a great job, frankly, of all the stuff that I know. It's been following him around since his early days with Mason and everything. So it's always been something that sort of his political and the destiny of his legacy has been inextricably intertwined with marijuana. Like, sometimes you fight that and you fight that, but you got to just embrace, at some point, the reality of what's happening. And I think he's starting to get there. And I think his concerns were real. They were just not founded.

But I think that night was a vindication for a lot of people, including medical marijuana patients, because the whole argument that was being made about our medical marijuana law and our regulated medical marijuana system was that it's a bunch of 24-year-old snowboarders faking back pains so they can get a medical marijuana card. And the Constitution was about small patients having small caregivers that were just helping them in their house. And we just voted, and 55% of the people said, 24-year-old snowboarders, with or without back pain, should be able to buy this in those stores which you've been saying were never justified.
So it created clarity on all the fundamental criticisms of the regulated medical marijuana program. So there's a lot of vindication. And it was just also, I was incredibly happy to be able to see these guys that worked their whole lives for this goal-- not just our team, but all the-- I say we stood on the shoulders of giants. It's like you don't take all the credit when you score a touchdown because you got it from the five yard line. You don't forget about the 95 yards that’s come and the people that have suffered and that have worked their whole lives.

Never about credit, and certainly I give massive amounts of credit Steve and to Brian and Mason. And I say how it's pretty cool that my business partner is also my hero and my closest friends in the world are my heroes. But it was all built on years and years and years of work from a lot of people-- many of them never got to see it happen. I'd say it was the greatest night of my life. I'm pretty sure it was.

I'm planning on having greater. The greatest night will be when the federal law changes. Because then I might actually be able to sleep through the night perhaps at that point. Hopefully it happens soon.

JANET BISHOP: Yes. So I only have about four more questions if you have time.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Mm-hm.

JANET BISHOP: So we've talked about Colorado and why this might have passed here. And there are certain elements of the state that are interesting in terms of looking at it as a reflection of the nation as a whole. And this may not be an easy question to answer-- so moving beyond Colorado, what do you think has been the most significant impact of the legalization of recreational marijuana-- either culturally, socially, economically, one, or both, or three, or many?

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: For me, just specifically what I think is a big impact that a lot of people don't think about or talk about, is how it's changed the conversation at the international level about the international drug war. We talk about social justice in terms of our communities and our country. But if you look at where there's been governments overthrown, planes blown up by Pablo Escobar, the mass amount of violence, the 50,000 people that have disappeared or been murdered in Mexico, almost absolutely drug war-related, marijuana was a part of that.

The United Nations is revisiting-- they're having this thing called UNGAS. It's a special session of the United States Nations General Assembly this spring in March or April--

JANET BISHOP: March, 2016, yeah.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: --in New York, yep. And you know, Uruguay moves forward. Uruguay federally legalizes marijuana, and largely based upon what the United States did, because the United States is in violation of international law.

We violated an international treaty obligation. And it's a treaty that we use and have used to put-- oppress may be too strong a word, but many people would say it's not-- smaller countries. And
we've used these laws to basically create our morality, the Nixon and Reagan sort of drug war mentality. We've used it and spread it across the world. And it causes great, great harm.

JANET BISHOP: And just to clarify-- so what you're saying is, the United Nations is meeting to examine this particular policy?

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: This is one policy of many. The global drug-- we talk about in this country--

JANET BISHOP: And related to the--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: And the conversation has shifted. This relates to sort of like what the biggest impact is. The conversation has now shifted to say the drug wars is a failure. Marijuana is just one example. We need to figure out-- not legalization of all drugs, but we need to figure out a better approach.

Obama's been doing a great job of commuting nonviolent drug offenses, all these things. But internationally-- now with the United States violating international law and then Uruguay said, well they're doing it and we're going to do it because it's a human rights issue-- the treaty on drugs that makes drugs illegal is trumped by the human rights treaties. And a real serious conversation is happening in Canada now about legalizing marijuana.

And I'm not saying it was because of us. But I'm saying it's because of the movement of marijuana reform, and then having the victory. That changes the conversation internationally, and that's very important because the impact of the drug war throughout Latin America, Africa, Southeast Asia-- people get executed for possessing certain amounts of hashish. It's changed the global conversation.

You're turning a ship, right? And it's a massive ship that you're trying to turn. And there's some more hands on the wheel pulling to the left now to get this thing turned around. And I think that, to me, is by far what I think is the coolest and really most amazing thing about it, even though most people never talk about it.

JANET BISHOP: And so, correct me if I'm wrong-- you've worked as a consultant to various countries, have you?

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: So we worked in Uruguay--

JANET BISHOP: This will be 2013?

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: This is 2013, yeah. So 2013, Uruguay. Brian and I went down there through the Woodrow Wilson Foundation and the Washington Office on Latin America, some nonprofits. We went down to Uruguay and met with their secretaries of agriculture, basically their whole cabinet, and talked about how did we do it, how do we regulate it, and what was the strategy, how do you make it work. And to be able to do that was absolutely incredible.
Certainly consulting or whatever, I’ve always said, Uruguay is very special place. Even though there could've been business opportunities or anything else, I don't make introductions to clients and I don't try to push anything because their take is coming from such a different place of human rights. And 30% of their people support it. That's the opposite of what happened here.

And with them I was actually invited to speak in front of the United Nations Convention on Narcotic Drugs that year in Vienna, Austria. So I'm sitting there and they're translating it in all these different languages. It was the coolest moment of my life.

I said that night was the coolest night of my life, and this is the coolest moment. When I spoke to all those people-- thousand plus people-- and afterwards a guy came up from-- I can't remember, Belgium or something-- and he told me, in 27 years this is the most important meeting that has happened. This is the most important discussion about this issue that's happened. And I was like, wow.

And I didn't even know I was speaking. I found out the day before. And I pretended like I knew.

JANET BISHOP: And this was in front of the United Nations.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Yeah, Vienna, Austria, there's a very large office of the United Nations. And it's the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Convention of Narcotic Drugs. And tens of thousands of people work there. It focuses on those treaties every year.

They talk about it, and there's a large component of the nongovernmental organizations, NGOs, and that's who I was with. I actually was credentialed through the ACLU. So the ACLU credentialed me because Alison Holcomb from Washington State also spoke on the same panel with me, along with the drug czar of Uruguay and Martin Elsman, who's an international law guru. He's been working with the United Nations on the NGO side.

So it was what is known as a side event, which is like, an officially endorsed thing. But you're not at the podium in front of the delegates, but they come. And other people can come and ask us some questions after we spoke about the things that we did. And yeah, it was incredible.

JANET BISHOP: Do you tour states that want to legalize, or do you go to states now?

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: We both go there, but we also have an organization called the Council on Responsible Cannabis Regulation, CRCR, that actually invites people to come. Some we've had, of the 50 biggest cities in America, 47 of their city attorneys came through. And we toured them through facilities. We've toured-- I don't even know how many countries-- Columbia, Canada, France, Germany, various elected officials from those countries.

JANET BISHOP: What about the Netherlands? Is it officially legalized?

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: It's not legal there. And they don't have a [INAUDIBLE] system. It's just tolerated. And it's very interesting. And it's an evolving policy.
And they have a more conservative government now than they have in the past. So they've actually somewhat ratcheted down to these things. And they're having the same problems that Colorado was, which is, people come there, cross the border, and then cross back. And also potency, 15% percent-- if marijuana is too strong there, it's considered a hard drug, which actually has significant criminal penalties, similar to cocaine or other things.

It's a different country, but recently they have had a more conservative government. But it's just a tolerance issue there. It is not legal there. Although everyone thinks it is. It's an interesting thing.

JANET BISHOP: Very interesting. So I noticed one of your assistants coming in. So I know that you're tight.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Yeah, we have a couple minutes. She's the one who keeps the trains running on time, and I'm the guy that like, is the worst conductor ever.

JANET BISHOP: Slowing down the system.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Exactly. I must drive her crazy. But she's the best.

JANET BISHOP: So with our gift of a couple minutes' time, tell me about the past couple years. And I'll combine this with another question. So, tell me about your work in the past couple years. It sounds like traveling, consulting, talking to the UN, countries who are interested in this-- probably not a lot of legal defense work or legal work at all.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: You know, actually, quite a bit of legal work, but more overseeing my staff that's grown from four to 40 or so.

JANET BISHOP: OK, so your firm has grown--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: --Significantly larger. We've opened offices in DC, Boston, Las Vegas, but we have relationships everywhere. But I still do, at a very high level, work with businesses and help businesses do stuff. But the governor appointed me to be on the Amendment 64 task force after the election in December right after the election because I was sort of like-- as Brian, Steve, Mason, kind of go down, my specialty was hardcore regulatory implementation policy stuff.

And so he appointed to this task force. It was December, January, part of February. And we made recommendations to the state legislature. They didn't have to take those recommendations, but we made these recommendations-- large task force meetings, and all bunch of sub work group meetings. It was a natural fit that I would then become sort of the person at the capitol doing it.

And so I actually hired four lobbyists. Joe Magazzi was one of them, but some other folks, and Mary Kay Hogan, who was top, top, top staff for the previous governor, and just an amazing woman, an amazing lobbyist and everything else. And we worked through that whole process. I know I'm hard to meet with, or do whatever, but I'd be happy to talk about or give contacts.
Fortunately, it's a lot more covered by the media because it became all of a sudden a hot topic. But I'd be happy to talk about it. Those were some crazy days.

JANET BISHOP: We'd be happy to come back.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: I actually think there's a lot of really interesting things. I mean, it's because the implementation, everyone says. I always say, I was very much behind the scenes and happy being behind the scenes during the campaign and everything else. But being well-known amongst the political class perhaps, or at least the regulatory class. But in the mix, not going on TV and all that stuff.

But as soon as I became sort of this person on the task force, all of a sudden, they're like, well now starts your 15 minutes. And I'm hoping it's 14:59 because media is not my strength. I'm long-winded and I speak too fast. My head's real shiny. I'm not as photogenic as some of these other guys.

But really that whole time, I spoke to the media 10 times a day, every day. And then I went to the capitol. I was there every day until the legislative session ended, including an attempt to repeal Amendment 64 through a backwards referred amendment to the Constitution by the democrats in the state senate, which is just John Morse. He was the president of the senate who ended up being recalled for his vote on guns that same session.

And then, because of that, I just naturally evolved into a government affairs type role where I'm the liaison to the governor's office here. I have now done four legislative sessions since then, where we've passed restrictions on edibles, restrictions on the amount of marijuana that can be purchased, in conjunction with the people who were on the No campaign, who still hate it. But we have no monopoly on good policy and good ideas, and certainly I want this work.

It's not about the next tobacco, or the next big alcohol. It's about creating policies that work and honoring the spirit of what we did and keeping a north star on that. Lost a lot of clients because of that, that didn't agree with my position that their edibles shouldn't be in gummy bear form or look exactly like products that could accidentally be ingested by kids.

So you know, it's been a slog. Right now I'm in another one in Denver. The fights continue.

I do enjoy that work. But everyone says, you must love to be a lobbyist and going to the capitol. And I absolutely despise it.

I see the worst of myself, and the worst of people at times, when you're in these real big fights. And politics in Colorado is probably as clean as almost any state in terms of corruption and other things. But it's still a very frustrating thing. And it really shines a light on some of the structural issues with the way our country operates in terms of who has access, how they get access, and all those things.

JANET BISHOP: Very interesting.
CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: I'm trying to make my life boring. My goal is to make it so that if I call the media and ask them and beg them to talk to me, they won't. That's my goal.

JANET BISHOP: Well that is the curse when you live in interesting times.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Yeah, exactly.

JANET BISHOP: So we're right at almost wrap-up time. And maybe if we come back, maybe this last question is best saved for then. I was going to ask what you think is most important for marijuana legislation in the next 10 years, but that may be a whole other--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: That's a very long discussion. If you guys wouldn't mind, I mean, I would love to, because there's still-- You probably got lot of information from Mason. I have a different perspective on a lot of things. But a lot of what I've done, what I continue to do, started after the election was over.

JANET BISHOP: After the amendment.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: That's really where I came into the scene.

JANET BISHOP: Well we did three sessions with Mason. So maybe this is the Vicente Sederberg--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: If that's OK with you guys, I mean--

JANET BISHOP: That's fine.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Like I said, that's why I don't want to do media. I am very long-winded. I pontificate and do other things.

JANET BISHOP: We're trying to capture the historic record, so this is fine. This is perfect. So with that, I think it's a wrap for this session.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: OK.

JANET BISHOP: So again now I'm forgetting it's the new year. It's January 21st, 2016. I'm finishing my interview with Christian Sederberg of Vicente Sederberg as part of our Stories of Amendment 64 Oral History Project. It looks like we will probably come back and talk to Christian about the couple years of post-Amendment 64.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: The city council stuff will be over soon. My schedule is like crazy already. That just screwed it up. So I apologize. It's been difficult.

JANET BISHOP: That's fine. Thank you so much again. And we'll see you soon.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Sounds good.
JANET BISHOP: Take care.