

## RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 403 TRANSCRIPT

**Tom Morello:** I'm Tom Morello and you're listening to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*.

**Steve Skrovan:** Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. My name is Steve Skrovan along with my co-host, David Feldman. Hello, David.

**David Feldman:** Hello, Steve.

**Steve Skrovan:** And the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello, Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Hello all the way from Maui on this program.

**Steve Skrovan:** Yes. While national elections get major PAC [political action committee] money and infinite coverage on mainstream media outlets, local elections can seem insignificant in comparison. But school boards, zoning commissions, city council, and other local authorities really go a long way to shape our daily lives. On this program, we push listeners to go out and do things. Your local government is a great place to start. Regular listeners may remember Paul Deslauriers, who was a guest on our show back in 2019. He, along with other dedicated activists, took on the entrenched interests in his home county of Maui, Hawai'i. And guess what? They won. Last time he explained how their movement got started. Today we're going to hear about how it's going. As always, it wouldn't be a *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* if we didn't check in with our intrepid corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber. But first, let's get an update on democracy in Maui, David?

**Ralph Nader:** Paul Deslauriers is a grassroots organizer and the author of *Seven Steps to Reclaim Democracy: An Empowering Guide for Systemic Change*. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Paul Deslauriers.

**Paul Deslauriers:** Well, thank you for having me and it's a great pleasure to be here and to have this conversation with Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, Paul, you're a success story in Maui. I want our listeners to read your book, *Reclaim Paradise* [: *RESET for the Common Good*] [about how] Maui County shifted from corporate rule over decades to home rule--from corporate rule to home rule and the template for global system change. And I've never seen an effort like this reach the level that you've reached. Let's just tell some of our listeners very briefly about Maui. Maui County in Hawai'i is considered one of the most popular vacation spots on earth, a physical form of paradise for a reason--its beauty and year-round pleasant temperatures, waterfalls, beaches, and aloha spirit. In 2018, the county of Maui's budget was \$800 million a year with a population of 166,000. Maui is considered a wealthy county per resident yet the corporate rule still generates hardships causing the struggle for residents to survive. And then you say, "Let's take a snapshot of some key residential needs--housing, water, food education, healthcare."

In the book, you paint a history of staggering exploitation of the Hawaiian Islands after Western explorers landed on it, toppled the government, concentrated power in five big corporations, dispossessed the land of the natives, contaminated/poisoned the water. It's almost a laundry list of how corporations can control people in their own interests. Now, Maui is a very high-priced place. The average home sale was \$775,000, which requires an income of \$198,000 to apply and to make mortgage payments to a bank.

So, just to paint this picture: you land at the airport in Maui and you go around the country and you're just staggered by the beauty, but behind the scenes, there's a lot of exploitation, a lot of poverty, a lot of labor manipulation, and it's dominated by a very few people. So, you decided you were going to live in Maui. You were a consultant to over a hundred businesses as to how they can function at their optimal potential. So, you know the inside of the way corporations behave and this book can only be described as amazing. Step-by-step clear, readable descriptions of what the challenge was, starting a few years ago, how the county government was really a pawn of commercial interests and how you and a small number of people had endless conversations, discussions, analysis, and then hit the ground running.

In 2018, you won 9 of 16 seats, a slim majority. The counterattack was overwhelming. The corporations flooded the island with money, propaganda, lies, deceptions, and you persevered. And the result, you won 14 out of 16 seats. And you did it door by door, person to person, as more and more people encouraged by what you and your small group was doing joined the movement.

Now this is only one island in the chain of Hawaiian Islands and you want people not to just look at it as a sort of quirky, lucky development. You say the template is global, that the same kind of corporate concentration is everywhere. They take over the local governments and the people have to pay the consequences. You have a pyramid in the book where you have at the top, the power structure, very tiny number. And as the pyramid broadens, at the bottom are the voters and their local government.

So, here you are. You're in 2020. You've had all kinds of obstacles. You even had one of your elected people turncoat on you in 2018 and you show people all the obstacles. This is not a pollyannaish presentation, and you made sure you were not one of the elected. You stood outside so that they couldn't accuse you of anything personal [or] partisan. So, here you are, November election, you're 14 out of 16. You did some things in 2018, but it was a very slim majority. Tell us what you've accomplished.

**Paul Deslauriers:** Well Ralph, it's really been an amazing process of working with our community here in Maui County. And as you mentioned, this is something that is applicable globally. And I think that a lot of people have been so suppressed and feeling so filled with fear and uncertainty about the future because there's really no mechanism or way that they can see that, yes, this is what I could do to really make a shift and change. But what this does here and what we've done with this process is show, wait a minute, there is an uplifting way of creating systemic change; that we don't have to go along with the system that right now mainstream media is toting with this great reset. The reset doesn't have to be about this fascism and technocracy and taking away our liberties and freedoms. We can reverse that and it's not a

difficult process. Once you start to understand that we are dealing with a system and take a system approach, that's where everything becomes visible. Because right now our society has our economic, education, military, medical, judicial, transportation--these are all systems that create a framework around our society and they're like circuit boards that are directing and applying social energy. But what overrides all of that is our governance, so, federal and state. But where we really do have that access point, as you mentioned, is on a local level. And this is where we can really make a difference on towns, cities, and counties.

And I think that all your listeners should realize that, wait a minute, we don't have to go along with what mainstream media is telling us, because they're not allowing us to look at this other avenue, this other track that we can take that can bring about systemic change that is incredibly wonderful in terms of how it supports the people, the community, and the environment; and we can very simply do this. And the engagement process can be uplifting and supportive.

So I think that first of all, realize that we have an entry to the system and that is through counties, cities and towns. And that is where we have a voice. That's where mainstream media doesn't have the level of control because we have this local network that we can co-create of communication. And that's what we did here in Maui County. We really supported it so that we created a way that our organization became an information hub of progressive issues, values, and candidates. And we became a way where people can look at what's really happening, what are the problems we're facing, and what are the solutions that work. And from that, people can start to participate and get involved because these are touching things that affect them on a daily basis.

**Ralph Nader:** You know, your group is called the Maui Pono Network for those who want to look it up. And what struck me was on page 208, you have this, "Within a short time, entrenched department heads were voted out by the new county council and replaced by bright, experienced and creative coordinators. The \$90 million construction project that primarily enriched the good old boy network was canceled. Funds were being allocated for affordable housing. They settled the longstanding injection wells case." That's contamination of water, serious problem in Maui. [County of Maui v. Hawaii Wildlife Fund--US Supreme Court]

"They made it so the community associations must approve any development. They proposed seven charter amendments, which were passed in 2020, that would rewire the county system to serve the common good. It would increase transparency and cronyism and increase citizens participation. Big money out of county, corporate super PACs responded with a vengeance in the 2020 county elections, spending \$430,000 in the last 40 days of the election. They endorsed and promoted the exact opposite of the Maui Pono Network, including its Ohana candidate slate. The Maui Pono Network helped stop this attempted coup of our local governance."

So, unlike so many reform movements that temporarily succeed and then the counterattack throws them out of office, you just got stronger in 2020. So, what you did in in 2020 with 9 out of 16 seats; now you have 14 seats out of 16, diversified as can be in terms of members and focusing on class exploitation--a perfect combination! So, what do you expect to be done in the next year or two now that you have an overwhelming majority on the county government?

**Paul Deslauriers:** Well, it's been incredible changes that have happened here in Maui County. Very positive and uplifting again, supporting the people and the environment in ways that it never had before. And you mentioned many of those things that have happened and there is a lot that continues to happen. One of the charter amendments that was passed was that instead of the mayor, who is typically part of the good old boy network, would – every 10 years, our charter is reviewed. That's our constitution. That's the way the county gets wired and how things get allocated and the power structure lines up. So, out of those, basically 11 charter commissioners, that for the first time, the county council now has an opportunity to select 9 of the 11 and the mayor selects 2. So, as a result of that, I'm one of the 11 commissioners on the charter. And right now, we're making so many changes to our whole structure and governance system so that we can eliminate that cronyism and the way things have been wired for so long.

The Hawaiian Islands were taken over in 1893 and five corporations ruled Maui County for all that time. And as you mentioned, it was horrific for many of the residents here and we're still dealing with some of those repercussions, obviously, in terms of developments and environmental standards not being kept. But we're moving forward at an incredible clip. Because again, once you get a majority of the county council and you get them elected, that serves the people and the environment, then things can move very rapidly in terms of how different types of things get changed. So, now I can list a bunch of things that will be coming up in the 2022 election that has to be approved by the voters or these charter amendments that we're proposing at that time.

**Ralph Nader:** Yeah, go ahead. You're trying to reset the constitution of the county in effect. It may sound dull, but you're trying to shift power from the way it was manipulated over a hundred years. So, tell us about that. I'm also interested, Paul, in the reaction of a million tourists who come to Maui every year [chuckle]. It's a very busy airport. How are they reacting to this new government of, by, and for the people and what are the newspaper and radio stations like? But go ahead, let's do the charter first.

**Paul Deslauriers:** Well, for example, one thing that just got passed was that the mayor would select the planning department and the people who would then be involved with the planning commission and looking at all of the development happening throughout the entire island. And obviously, it's been rigged for quite some time. And the mayor would select his group of people that was in alignment with him and what his buddies would basically want to see happen. What we've done now is we've disbanded the central planning department and now we're making planning happen through all the citizens. We'll have seven different planning districts where each of the different citizens groups then becomes the planning department for that region; so, they can really have a say in the development and evolution of their local area. And it was a very, very frustrating and obviously a huge problem here in terms of how things were evolving with the residents and the environment. That's one little shift that is going to affect all of the development throughout the entire island for generations to come.

**Ralph Nader:** You have a real water problem. Listeners should know there's water on one side of the island that is wet and the other side needs the water. And this whole distribution network for decades was controlled by just a handful of powerful people and companies, right?

**Paul Deslauriers:** Yes. And this is a battle that we're facing still, but we're making tremendous progress in terms of the county purchasing some of the water infrastructure, but also there are a lot of different issues that we're facing in terms of leases. So, the battle continues. Water is a big issue because, whoever controls the water controls Maui County's future, because they can then determine where the agriculture goes, what type of crops are grown and where the developments happen since we need water as a foundation for that. It's the lifeblood of the island, and yet it's controlled by offshore corporations at this time. So, we're rapidly moving towards changing that.

**Ralph Nader:** Tell me, are the corporations going to the state government to try to preempt you the way they did in Texas when some cities increased the minimum wage. They went to the corrupt Republican dominated state legislature and preempted local authority. Are they going that way to try to block you?

**Paul Deslauriers:** Well, I think that we have a real challenge when we look at the Democrat run state government because they're corporate Democrats; [chuckle] they're there for corporate interests, not for the people. So, it's been a real challenge. That's why we're working with the other counties here in Maui, so that they can get and elect progressive state reps. We need that majority in order to really make that shift on a state level. We are working right now with the other counties so that they can form a standard pack like we did with the Maui Pono Network and organize in a way that is effective and efficient, that can influence the community narrative, which is essential in terms of the election process.

**Ralph Nader:** How is the corporate media treating you in Hawai'i, the newspapers, radio and TV in Maui and in the other islands?

**Paul Deslauriers:** Well, you'll get a certain twist, but again, we can utilize the existing system effectively and efficiently and also create new forms of communication, which we've been doing proactively here in Maui County. We have, let's say, our newspaper, the *Maui News* that has been corporate run since its existence, but they have this thing which is highly read in terms of letters to the editor. So, during election time our network of really good writers did a whole training so they would be sending - on a regular basis - letters to the editor; we always maintained a progressive stance in all of the papers through this process. There are ways to even work with some of the media to help make them a little bit more progressive. We have a new newspaper, the *Maui Times*, which is a really good way of communicating with our community. We also have local radio talk shows and a local television station Akakū [Maui Community Media] that are very open and supportive to informing our community so we've utilized them an awful lot to get the message out.

I would say that social media has been another avenue of communication that has been extremely important. We averaged in this last election about 30,000 hits on our Facebook social media site alone and then we had Twitter and all these other things we had on our website. Our website became an information hub of progressive issues and candidates. We received 128,000 hits on our website because people want to know; they want to be informed. We put together report cards on all the different candidates on how they voted. And there's nothing like [chuckle] getting the reality in front of you when you see the card and you see all these key issues, especially that relate to progressive need and change; and you see the way some candidates vote

and some don't. And it became very obvious very quickly who the progressive candidates were and were not.

So, there's a lot of different ways of communicating that I think are extremely important. The community narrative is really one of the main goals that we have. So, we are constantly putting out memes, little cartoons that depict an issue or need with little sayings. And it's amazing how they get spread around. A lot of different tools are available through the internet. And in fact, we did a lot more digital promoting in the 2020 election, compared to 2018 when we were more volunteer based. We had about 250 volunteers who participated for the election process and it was relationship-oriented where we would hand out cards like at the county fair where we had people at all three gates, and they handed out 22,000 cards in three days. And that means having little conversations with people too as they go along so an interconnection happens. We have these Friday events that happen here on the island so, we'd always be there with booths and then touting our candidates and the issues.

There are a lot of ways to get out there and communicate. And I think that when you start to have people involved and see that they can make a difference, especially now. People need something that's positive, that's uplifting, and they see that, whoa, we don't have to go along this route that they're doing right now. We can do something totally different and change the system. And again, that's what we're doing. And when people start to see the changes that have happened and how things are moving forward in such a positive way, they want to participate and be engaged.

**Ralph Nader:** One thing about this book is you really go deep into human motivation. I mean, you have all kinds of ways of motivating people and not taking credit for everything and being extremely aggregate in terms of bringing more and more people in. And I assume you're starting to bring more younger people in because people in your circle were over 50, the original circle, and it's growing. You have almost a 70% voting turnout. You use quotes like you quote Mahatma Gandhi of India. He said, "Non-cooperation is an attempt to awaken the masses to a sense of their dignity and power. I cooperate with all that is good. I desire to non-cooperate with all that is evil."

I mean, you're really into this and I say this because we're trying to motivate members of our Congress Club to begin interacting in very specific ways on major ignored redirections in our country with their senators and representatives. And it hasn't been easy. And I know they're going to want to get copies of this book and other listeners want to get it. And we'll tell you shortly exactly how to get it directly because this has not been published by a commercial publisher yet. But tell us, how do you deal with cynicism? How do you deal with the 'Ah, the pox all our houses; nothing's going to change. I'm just going to live my private life and try to enjoy myself and get a decent standard of living. And I'm not into politics, Paul.' How do you deal with that?

**Paul Deslauriers:** Well, certainly, there are people who don't want to participate and be involved. But when you start to hit things that affect them on a daily basis and they see that there are issues with roads, there are issues with water distribution, there are issues with especially affordable housing at this time; when they see that, wait a minute, if I get involved and participate just a little bit, or even tell my neighbors about some of the positive change and

candidates who could support that change, then there's involvement, engagement. I think that the more you make it so that it is a local issue and it hits home viscerally, that's when you start to stir the emotion.

**Ralph Nader:** There's been inequitable property taxes in Maui, favoring the rich and the big landowners. Are you tackling that problem?

**Paul Deslauriers:** Oh, it's already been changed. So, new homes over 5,000 square feet just got additional taxes, tax increase for the different hotels that have been undertaxed. So, there's a lot happening. We're looking at some additional means also so that it could really support affordable housing. And we need to subsidize housing here. You know, what you read before in terms of the average house sale was about \$778, I think, in 2018; now it's getting over a million dollars. I think that people are seeing Maui as a safe haven and so, the property has been bought up during this post pandemic period. And I think that, again, it really emphasizes the importance of having affordable housing, but affordable housing in perpetuity. So, we're looking at community land trusts and doing all these things that are evolving and developing at a very rapid rate.

**Ralph Nader:** Are you looking at co-operatives, consumer co-operatives, food co-ops, housing co-ops? Because there's a National Cooperative Bank in Washington [D.C.], which we got enacted in 1978 under President [Jimmy] Carter. And they have more loans available than the demand. So, you could do health co-ops, food co-ops, and housing co-ops. Have you thought of that?

**Paul Deslauriers:** Yes, we have. And right now, especially with food, actually, one of the charter changes that occurred in last election in 2020 was to get our own agricultural department to separate ourselves in some way from the state agricultural department, which is focused on big agriculture with a lot of toxic chemicals. Instead, what we're focusing on is smaller farmers, education and getting this collaborative, cooperative ways of dealing with food processing. And so, it's underway as far as food goes. And we are right now working with housing issues in that similar manner.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, think of loan requests to the National Cooperative Bank here in Washington, D.C. How do you give people credit? People like to be given credit when they do the right thing and there are all kinds of ways to give people credit. How do you give them credit?

**Paul Deslauriers:** Well, I think acknowledging people is important as far as the motivation process and getting people to continue to be involved. I just look at our team; now we have a small group that's at the core. And then, from there, we have our different committees, and we have volunteers who are participating in those different committees. We always acknowledge the people on the team and put them in the forefront. And especially when it comes to candidates or people who are supporting particular issues, we put them up front and let their name be out there because we want name recognition especially for some of these younger candidates that we're supporting.

One of the things that we do for our candidates, for example, is that we started a minor league, which I think you'll find interesting, Ralph, in that basically it's like a baseball minor league where we have a Double-A and Triple-A. And they look for high school and college players who are really, really good and they ask them if they want to be a professional. We're doing, the same thing. We're going around looking at people who testify, who are involved in civic type of activities, who are working with nonprofits, who have that type of ability and skill in terms of their communication, relationships, and who are focused on progressive issues and needs. And so, we ask these young people to come in and we look at where their interest is, and then we get them involved in different ways.

For example, we have right now, six people involved with the different county council members as assistants, supporting them on specific initiatives. We have people that we help and support to get on boards. So that these young candidates who are coming up in the ranks get more and more skills as they develop, and we give them coaching as they go along. And with that we're able to truly see that we don't elect someone who then does a turncoat on us. Like we did in that first election in 2018. We learned our lesson, and we said, "We have to vet these candidates and understand where they're coming from." And we do that by getting them engaged, seeing how they show up, looking at their productivity. And from there, we can say, "Okay, here's someone I want to bring up to our Double-A league." And that means that we get them involved in our meetings. We get them more involved in social media; we start to promote them. And when it comes to election time, if they look like they're a good candidate that we really want to support, they go to the Triple-A. And if they get elected, they're in the majors.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, your boards like zoning board, your board of education, they're all elected. Are you starting to get the progressive wave there in all these boards?

**Paul Deslauriers:** Absolutely. We already did. So, with a charter, before the mayor used to select all of the different commissions and boards. But now we have what we call a Blue Ribbon Commission, which is basically main citizens who have been really proactive that are well-respected; they have high integrity. This group then of nine people will then be the people who will select them – all the boards and commissions for the county itself. So, it eliminates a tremendous amount of the issues and problems we've had with not getting qualified people or the right mix or the right representation in those different committees and boards. Now it is just open and clear in the process with a lot more transparency.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, Paul, in the interest of time, some quick questions and quick answers. Are you trying to get civic skills taught in the schools and connect the schools with outside activities under adult supervision and what is the minimum wage? And are you trying to do some about that? And what are you doing about health insurance?

**Paul Deslauriers:** Well, let me just say about the wage thing. First of all, we've been trying. It's a state issue and the house rep would not even allow the discussion to go beyond... right now it's \$10.20 an hour. Studies have been done where in order to live here with the cost of living for housing and food, about \$17 an hour is needed. So, there's such a huge gap. We tried to make it \$15 an hour. And again, it's based on the state. So, there's a real challenge in dealing with minimum wage issues. And we're trying to do that more on a local level where a lot of the

different businesses now have put in their minimum as \$15 an hour. And we're really encouraging that. But as far as the state goes, it remains a challenge. And that's why we're trying to get the other counties to get involved in that way so that we can get the right representation, the right state reps in there.

**Ralph Nader:** By the way, listeners should know that Hawai'i has been dominated forever since it became a state by the Democratic Party. You have to look here and there to find a Republican, so they are very much corporate Democrats as you said, but they certainly don't have to worry like in Kentucky and Alabama about any resurgent Republican Party. What about civic skills in the schools?

**Paul Deslauriers:** We have Kelly King, one of our council members [who] is right now helping to bring that more into the schools. And part of what we're looking at then is to actually use that as part of the farm team into the minor leagues, basically, so we can get civic engagement happening early on. And they're putting together a mock county council, which would be done by high school kids. And they in turn will pass legislation and do different things that encourages them and demystifies government functions; it's something that they can easily participate in and understand. And we have a great video that they just did, and the county just did also through Kelly King that lays it all out in terms of civic engagement and how to do that and how to be involved and how to be involved and get elected. It is a great overview that is being shown all civics classes in all high schools.

**Ralph Nader:** Before we tell people how they can get your book, we have listeners from all over the world. We've had feedback from Hong Kong and Eastern Europe, Canada, of course. And you intend this book to apply to anywhere in the world where there is corporate rule that needs to be replaced by home rule. Why do you think people should read this book?

**Paul Deslauriers:** Well, first of all, I think that it's an uplifting solution and that's what we need. I hear so much in terms of talk radio and what's out there that the focus remains on the problems, what's happening, what the federal government is doing, what the state government is doing, lockdowns. And it becomes overwhelming. When that's all the message you hear, it gets very depressing. But this is a different message, and this is a different approach where we can actually do something proactive to really make a positive change. And I think that once people start to realize that it dissipates that fear, that anxiety that so many throughout our entire planet are feeling right now. Because I find that if there's something that is bringing up fear or concern, if I can do something proactive that I can see can create a resolution and change this, then I'd become uplifted, excited, and enthusiastic, versus these other low-level emotions of fear.

**Ralph Nader:** Before we continue on, tell us how people can get this book.

**Paul Deslauriers:** They can go to [reclaimparadise.org](http://reclaimparadise.org) and also it's available on Amazon [.com, Inc.], but I would hope that they can come over to this website so that we can start to connect with them. I think that once people get a look at how really easy it is to create the systemic change, that they want to do that within their own town, city or county. So, [reclaimparadise.org](http://reclaimparadise.org).

**Ralph Nader:** [reclaimparadise.org](http://reclaimparadise.org). You'll find out how to get this book and apply it to your own circumstances. Now, I know county government is restricted in what it can do in Maui as elsewhere and that state and federal governments have very strong jurisdictional claims on what can be done. But what are you doing in such situations as the prisons in Maui, the healthcare problem in Maui? What can you do given the limits of county government?

**Paul Deslauriers:** Again, that's where we're really working with the other counties to get a majority of progressive state reps in there. It's not the case right now. Corporate reps are in there controlled by corporations and big money interests. So, that makes it very difficult. However, when you start to, you can control what happens to a large extent. There are things that can work, but home rule certainly varies from county to county and in terms of the level of jurisdictions. But there is a lot you can do within the county that can really make a significant difference.

**Ralph Nader:** Getting back to the mechanics, how do you avoid bickering? I've seen the Green Party paralyze itself because of internal bickering at the state level. And a lot of other parties often propose things yet weaken themselves by constant bickering. Some have very personal, trivial personality differences, not policy differences. How do you deal with the bickering thing? Because you're actually doing the work on the ground. It's not just proposing or debating. How do you deal with the bickering?

**Paul Deslauriers:** Well, yeah, the whole issue of divisiveness and bickering and people attacking each other, I think, is something that we're very cognizant of and very sensitive about so that if there are issues that come up for individuals, we sit down and we talk and we deal with that. And one of the things that we've done here, what I think that this should really be based on, it should be issue-based. People are not debating whether we have issues with water or with affordable housing; these are not debatable issues in that sense. And there are very good, clear solutions that have been utilized in other counties that we could also bring within our own group. So, I think the solutions and dealing with specific issues and needs, I find it doesn't become more of a personality issue or anything like that. It's issue-based; you deal with numbers and facts; you deal with specifics in terms of what has worked in other counties and why it's effective. You make it so that it's very rational and you don't come to these far-off conclusions, but you make it so that it's very grounded. In that way, I find that people come along because they want to see these changes happen within their community. And yes, there'll be divisiveness at times. There'll be... talk about divisiveness, look at the whole vaccine issue right now. So, what we've done is we've avoided... the Maui Pono Network is not involved with any of pro-vax or anti-vax or any of these other things around pandemic. Because we see that from our perspective, that's very divisive. So, we avoid divisive, real divisive issues like that, and focus on what's really going to make a difference long-term here in the county itself.

**Ralph Nader:** And you go through a lot of this in chapter nine. It's called "The Road to Home Rule: Get Started, Build a Local Citizens Political Action Committee". This is what you want, listeners, so, pay heed to [reclaimparadise.org](http://reclaimparadise.org). And let's get Steve and David in on this. I hope, Steve and David, you talk about how do we apply some of these lessons from Maui to the mainland, to the Congress Club, and get people to think that any level of civic energy can have just returns and replicate the motivation in a kind of leveraged fashion. I take it, Paul, you

haven't gotten much media coverage from the mainstream press, have you? NPR [National Public Radio], PBS [Public Broadcasting Service]?

**Paul Deslauriers:** None, whatsoever. No. No, I haven't. So we're still in the early stages of trying to communicate this, and being on your radio show is certainly a big part of that, Ralph. So, thank you.

**Ralph Nader:** We're going to try to get the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. Once they do it, then you'll get a lot more media because these are publications that discover the so-called new activities. So, we're going to try to help out, Steve?

**Steve Skrovan:** Yeah. I wanted to kind of pick up on just what you were saying, because, Paul, we spoke to you almost exactly two years ago, December of 2019. And I was going to ask if other communities have reached out to you? Have you, if you'll excuse the expression, been able to spread the contagion?

**Paul Deslauriers:** [chuckles] Well, I would say spread the good news, and yes, it has been. There are a few counties that are engaged in that. But what we did was two years ago, after *Seven Steps* was published, it was outdated two months after it got put out. And so we said, wait a minute, we have to take a step back and let's not go ahead and promote and get this going. Instead, we had to go back to the drawing board because instead of being more relationship oriented in our approach, we had to become more digitally oriented in our approach.

So, with that, for example, during the lockdown, we reached out to all the candidates, and we got them on video on Zoom [Video Communications]. And basically, we recorded an hour interview with all of the candidates, both progressive and non-progressive. And then we had that on our website and it became a real source for people to become informed. Just on Facebook Live, we were doing this. We were getting over 2,000 views and then we had it on Akakū, which is our local community television station. So, there were a lot of things that we did that basically were a lot different that we wanted to utilize in this next edition. So, we have both. We have post pandemic and pre-pandemic approaches that will work based on the level of lockdown or issues that are faced within each community. We've just finished that, and Steve, we're just putting this out right now. So, there will be more effort after we really got a way/a system/a process that really, really works, working with both lockdown and non-lockdown.

**Ralph Nader:** You know, I can't let the program end without getting your views of the native Hawaiian sovereignty movement, which has really developed since the mid-1970s. When I was in Hawaii, I met with some of the organizers of this and they're moving to get tribal recognition the way native tribes in the US have under US law. But they also have other programs to recover some of what was destroyed. Eighty percent of the native population was destroyed in the early 20th century and all kinds of diseases that came from the sailors--tuberculosis, influenza, measles--that the natives had never experienced [and] had no immunity toward. Can you give us a capsule of what's going on there? Because I know you're part of that effort.

**Paul Deslauriers:** Yeah. I think that what happened with all these different types of native Hawaiian movements that were happening in 70s, 80s and 90s; they never really unified in a way

that I think is necessary to move the needle. If you have different factions that are fighting against each other or not collaborating in alignment, then that will dissipate the energy being created through that movement. And that's exactly what happened with the Hawaiian movement to a large extent. Now, it was revitalized on the Big Island with Mauna Kea recently and a lot of the Hawaiian groups came together and unified around these issues. And I think that's a key thing to keep in mind regardless of native Hawaiian or any type of group. You've got to avoid that divisiveness/separation, because our strength and power comes from the unity and collaboration that can happen among us. So, that's the thing to really encourage. It's still there, but it's in factions to a certain extent. But it got together on the Mauna Kea issue, which was about putting out these huge telescopes, size of three football fields on the top of this very sacred place of the Hawaiians.

**Ralph Nader:** Is there anything else you want to tell our listeners, Paul, that we didn't cover? Are you available for interviews on local radio around the country?

**Paul Deslauriers:** Oh, well, first of all, yes, I'm definitely available for interviews. And in terms of just the last message, I really want to encourage your listeners to get involved and participate because there is a way out. We don't have to do this reset that's being promoted by mainstream media or these lockdowns in the way that they're doing. What we can do is have our local governance support the people in the environment and also have a protective screen against any of, let's say, tyranny that may be coming from above down. So, having this grassroots base, this foundation of people supporting each other, their community, the common good, I think, is so crucial as we move forward. And there's a countermeasure that we can do that is involve locally so everyone can participate.

**Ralph Nader:** Listeners, to be clear, what Paul was saying is this isn't about trying to persuade your elected representatives to do the right thing, representatives who have been indentured to a lot of commercial and invested interests. This is about replacing them! You have a slate of candidates who represent of, by, and for the people and you replace them and take over the local government. [chuckle] That'll save you a lot of time. That's what you're saying, right, Paul?

**Paul Deslauriers:** Well, exactly. In fact, what I'm really saying also is that you want to go to the primary place of change, not secondary and third-level repercussions that'll get you nowhere. So, when you go and protest, you're protesting to politicians who enacted the problems in the first place and whose loyalty is somewhere else. So those efforts become dissipated and not effective. What I'm saying is take that energy and focus it on this key point: getting a majority of the county council, for example, or the board in the towns and cities. Let that be the focus, not so much what's happening on a national level, vote on a national level, but where we can really have control and influence is by gaining this progressive group of representatives who will provide that protective shield and protect those residents within there. And I think that's what we have to focus on, especially in terms of what's coming down. We don't know exactly how far this is going to spin down in terms of fascism. But I'm just saying that this is a way.

**Ralph Nader:** This is a way because if you recover the elected county or the elected town or elected city council, then you can begin replacing the corporatist heads of the departments in the local government. You can then get more people elected to the boards of education and zoning

and assessors, et cetera. So, it isn't just the electing the legislature, so to speak, of the local government. It transforms the entire local government once you do that first step. Is that right?

**Paul Deslauriers:** It's systemic change. And this is, from my perspective, the way to do systemic change. I don't think we can access it on a federal level or a state level, but we can on a county, town, and city level. And this is where the protection happens in the future as we move forward.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, thank you very much. We've been talking with Paul Deslauriers, author of the book, *Reclaim Paradise: RESET for the Common Good*. Maui County shifted from corporate rule to home rule and the template for global system change. And people listening to this program want to hear Paul talk about this in your local community on local radio or cable, you know where to go, [reclaimparadise.org](http://reclaimparadise.org). Thank you very much, Paul. To be continued.

**Paul Deslauriers:** Thank you, Ralph, and again, a pleasure.

**Steve Skrovan:** We've been speaking with Paul Deslauriers. We will link to his work at [ralphnaderradiohour.com](http://ralphnaderradiohour.com). Now, let's check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber.

**Russell Mokhiber:** From the National Press Building in Washington, D.C., this is your *Corporate Crime Reporter* "Morning Minute" for Friday, November 26, 2021; I'm Russell Mokhiber. Switching seniors to Medicare Advantage plans has cost taxpayers tens of billions of dollars more than keeping them in original Medicare, a cost that has exploded since 2018, and is likely to rise even higher. That's according to a report from Kaiser Health News. Richard Kronick, a former federal health policy researcher and a professor at the University of California, San Diego, said his analysis of newly released Medicare Advantage billing data estimates that Medicare overpaid the private health plans by more than \$106 billion from 2010 through 2019 because of the way the private plans charge for sicker patients. "They are paying [Medicare Advantage plans] way more than they should," said Kronick. Giant insurer UnitedHealthcare [Inc], which in 2019 had about 6 million Medicare Advantage members, received excess payments of some \$6 billion. For the *Corporate Crime Reporter*, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

**Steve Skrovan:** Thank you, Russell. Hey, we have a special treat for our radio listeners this holiday week. We're going to conclude the show. We're going to play a fun segment that was available only to our podcast listeners couple of months ago. Ralph was complaining about how corporate branding was intruding on his enjoyment of listening to his beloved New York Yankees radio broadcast. So, we put together a parody that highlights that absurdity. Enjoy. We hear the closing chords of the National Anthem.

**Radio Announcer (Skrovan):** Hello everybody, this is Tommy Dudley and it's time to "play ball" here in the Windy City for the first of a four-game tilt between your New York Yankees and the Central Division leading Chicago White Sox. Our "Salute to America National Anthem" was brought to you by LensCrafters.

“Oh, say can you see?” Well, you certainly will after you schedule your eye exam at one of the many convenient New York area locations of LensCrafters

.  
It's a beautiful day here at Guaranteed Rate Field on the south side of Chicago. Game time temperature is a balmy 72 degrees. This beautiful day is brought to you by our friends at Comfort Pros Heating and Cooling. No matter what the season, Comfort Pros can make every one of your days beautiful.

Looking forward to today's game. The Yankees, Gerrit Cole, goes up against the Sox, Lucas Giolito, in a battle of American League aces, a heavenly pitching match-up brought to you by Chock Full O Nuts coffee -- New York's heavenly coffee since 1932.

Umpiring tonight's game. At first, we have Angel Hernandez. Second base will be manned by Bill Welkie. At third is Ron Kulpa. And behind the plate, crew chief Joe West. Tonight's umpire alignment sponsored by Levy, Phillips and Konigsberg, a leader in asbestos litigation. If you or a loved one suffers from lung cancer or mesothelioma, let Levy, Phillips and Konigsberg call your balls and strikes.

And I would be remiss if I didn't let you know that this game is brought to you by your Tri-State Ford dealer where you can save big on a fuel-efficient Ford Escape SUV. Get to your Tri-State Ford dealer and make your Escape. You'll be rolling over with pleasure.

Okay, the White Sox have taken the field, and we're ready for the first pitch. Leading it off for the Yankees in your McDonald's "I'm Loving It" line-up is left-fielder Brett Gardner. Brett Gardner is brought to you by Four Seasons Total Landscaping. Brett is one Gardner who won't plant himself in the batter's box before visiting Four Seasons Total Landscaping. Tell 'em Brett sent ya. And use the promo code: Guiliani

We're ready for the first pitch. Giolito toes the rubber and looks in for the sign. The first pitch of the game is sponsored by First National Bank of Long Island. When you're looking for a loan, let First National Bank be  
Your first pitch.

Giolito winds and we're underway. Gardner takes a fastball for a strike. Right at the knees that just painted the outside corner. And painting the corner is sponsored by CertaPro Painters. Whether it's an inside or an outside job leave your painting to the pros at CertaPro.

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The count now, 0-1 on Gardner. Giolito winds. Change-up drops low, which brings the count to 1 and 1. And you know what that means. Taco Bell's one and one special, featuring the new 99 cent Beefy Nacho Burrito. Now the crunchy chips, real seasoned beef, warm nacho cheese sauce and cool reduced fat sour cream on your nachos are all wrapped up in a burrito. Buy one get one free.

The one-one pitch. Up and in with a fastball that spins Gardner out of the box! A little chin music. And if you're looking to repair a musical instrument, look no further than Raffy's Musical Instrument Emporium and Repair. Fine workmanship at low prices. At Raffy's, they'll get that broken violin back under your chin, so you can keep on making beautiful music.

No score here in the top of the first inning. 2-1 on Gardner, who steps back in. Giolito looks in for the sign, nods, fires. Gardner swings and sends a line drive just over first baseman Jose Abreu onto the right field grass, sponsored by Scott's Turf Builder. The ball rattles around the corner, which is brought to you by Sal's Corner Bar and Grille. If you're looking to heft a tall cold one after the game, like that baseball, head to the corner: Sal's Corner Bar and Grille.

Gardner motors for second as Eaton airmails the throw over shortstop Tim Anderson's head. That error is brought to you by FedEx where unlike Adam Eaton's throw, your package will arrive on time and online. Gardner races for third as Yoan Moncada gloves the ball with a mitt made by Rawlings, the official glove of Major League Baseball.

Gardner slides! The tag! The call! Safe! This safe call brought to you by ADT Security Systems. Call ADT and you'll always feel safe at home.

It looks like White Sox manager Tony La Russa is signaling he wants to challenge the call at third. This replay review is sponsored by our friends at Replay Poker. While you wait for the call to be overturned. Log on to replay poker dot com and go all in on a hand of high stakes Texas Hold 'em.

I'm looking at Gardner over there at third. He is limping around a bit after that slide. He's feeling the back of his leg. This hamstring tweak is brought to you by Zoid, Zoid, and Zoid. When life throws you a 95 mile an hour fastball to the face, call the injury lawyers at Zoid, Zoid, and Zoid.

Looks like the umpires are removing their Sony headsets, and the call is upheld. Gardner is "safe." You can hear the crowd doesn't agree. And neither does Tony La Russa! He's charging out of the White Sox dugout toward home plate umpire Joe West.

Boy, is he steamed! And if you're looking to get steamed at home you need to call Thermasol. Build your own luxury experience with a steam bath by Thermosol

And La Russa has just been ejected from the game! This ejection brought to you by Rico's Bail Bonds. When you need to get out of jail, you have a friend in Rico.

Oh boy oh boy. La Russa stomps back to the White Sox clubhouse as action resumes and Aaron Judge steps up to the plate for the Yanks. Aaron Judge is brought to you by The United States District Court for the Southern District of New York. No one prosecutes a baseball like Aaron Judge. And no one puts as many bad guys on the other side of the fence like The Southern District of New York. Go to [nysduscourts.gov](http://nysduscourts.gov).

And the first pitch to Judge, swing and miss on a breaking ball...

**Steve Skrovan:** Guess what, it's time to say goodbye. I want to thank our guest again, Paul Deslauriers. For those of you listening on the radio, we're gonna cut out now. For you, podcasts listeners, stay tuned for some bonus material we call "The Wrap Up." A transcript of the show will appear on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* website soon after the episode is posted.

**David Feldman:** Please subscribe to us on our *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* YouTube channel. And for Ralph Nader's weekly column, you can get it for free by going to [nader.org](http://nader.org). For more from Russell Mokhiber, go to [corporatecrimereporter.com](http://corporatecrimereporter.com). Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. Thank you, Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Thank you, everybody. Listen to what's going on in Maui. It can happen in your locale.