

“The Regulators”: Season 5, Episode 5: A C.A.L.M. Ending to 2023

(Preview) 2023 NAIC President and Missouri Department of Commerce and Insurance Director Chlora Lindley-Myers: *I think the challenges are the opportunities. ... [M]y ideals are that insurance is for everybody. You know, it doesn't take a political label when you're providing insurance. ... As an organization, we're able to pull together, work together on various issues, and some of them are not completed yet, but we're still working on them.*

2023 NAIC President-Elect and Connecticut Insurance Department Commissioner Andrew N. Mais: Welcome to “The Regulators,” a podcast where we break down important insurance issues facing consumers, regulators, and the industry. I'm Connecticut Insurance Commissioner Andy Mais, president-elect of the NAIC, and I'm honored to serve as your host today for a very special conversation. I know we say this every year, but that's because it's always true. It's hard to believe the year has flown by so fast. Yet here we are, recording this episode at the NAIC's 2023 Fall National Meeting in Orlando, Florida, where one of the many items on our packed agenda is electing the NAIC's 2024 officers. Earlier this year, “Regulators” listeners, and I know there are a whole bunch of you out there, had a chance to hear from the NAIC's 2023 president and the director of the Missouri Department of Commerce and Insurance, Chlora Lindley-Myers, about her C.A.L.M. approach to the year, as well as the organization's priorities for 2023. As Director Lindley-Myers prepares to wrap up her time as president, we wanted to spend a few more minutes with her on “The Regulators,” not only looking back at her term but also looking ahead. Chlora, it's great to get a chance just to sit down for a little bit during this busy national meeting, where we're always on the go, and I'm glad I got to spend that time with you. And I'm actually saying that with a straight face, so, it's got to be true. Welcome back to “The Regulators.”

Lindley-Myers: Thank you, Commissioner Mais. It is just a joy to be here.

Mais: And you said *that* with a straight face, too.

Lindley-Myers: I did!

Mais: Incredible! So, guess what we're going to do. We're going to change things up on you this time and start off with everyone's favorite segment, “Regulator Risk Roulette.” Instead of saving it for the end, as usual, it's going to happen now. And this is a chance for listeners to get to know a different side of our insurance regulators. You did great the last time you were on the show, including flipping the script on your host by asking him to answer the question, too. Not gonna do that today. Just so you know. But as a reminder, there are six categories: Risky Business, and you got to Keep That Professional, Childish Things, Very Interesting, Getting Personal, and That's Entertainment. We will spin the wheel once, and the category it lands on will be the question you can answer. Are you ready to play?

Lindley-Myers: I'm ready.

Mais: Vanna, let's spin the wheel!

(Wheel spins.)

Mais: All right. So, we're going to do Keep It Professional here, and Director Lindley-Myers, you will be happy to know that the pressure is off for the rest of the national meeting. This is the one question that you really need to answer. Everybody's waiting to hear. What was your first job? In which state?

Lindley-Myers: The state was Georgia. The first job was I was an intern for Atlanta University for the physiology department, and I worked for the head of the department, who was going to become my father-in-law, Joseph B. Myers, Sr. I cleaned out rat cages and also set up the office, which was mainly the laboratory, for the next day's experiments or whatever. So, that was my first job. I mean, I was a biology person, and I like that. I ended up going for biochemistry and psychobiology when I went to college, but I like to see the effects of drugs on, you know, how did that affect human behavior. And during that time, he was doing some research on, mainly, it was like, sort of, kids that had A.D.D. and that kind of a thing. So, he was utilizing certain drugs. And, so, I had to make sure that the animals, which mostly were rats that they tested it on, were taken care of properly and refurbished their cages.

Mais: Fascinating. Now, if I were not a nice person, I would probably ask you how cleaning out rat cages prepared you to be NAIC president. But, I'm much too nice of a

Lindley-Myers: Please don't ask me that.

Mais: But in all seriousness, as I said in the intro, we wanted to do a little looking back at your year as president, but we also want to give you a chance to look forward. Let's start with a retrospective idea. What was your favorite moment during this year?

Lindley-Myers: Probably this moment right now, as I'm nearing the end of my term. It has been a, you know, a very good year, I have to say, overall. You know, there's a lot of issues that, frankly, you can't address in one year. And, so, you know, they will continue to go on. They will continue to be an issue, you know, going forward. But I do have to say, or will want to say, that it's how as an organization, we're able to pull together, work together on various issues. And some of them are not completed yet, but we're still working on them. But on various issues to try to come out or come up with an outcome that, you know, that will be palatable for all of us, frankly. And, so, that is probably my highest moment is to make sure that we start out with something ... You never quite finish it. But, you know, you keep, you know, putting forth the effort to try to get the best possible results.

Mais: Now, back when you became president, I remember one of your opening speeches, you challenged us as state insurance regulators to make 2023 a year of C.A.L.M. Why was it important to start your year off with that message?

Lindley-Myers: I would say that because we had, you know, had some issues, you know, in the past of where I felt it was a bit of partisanship that was creeping in. And, frankly, my belief, my ideals are that insurance is for everybody. You know, it doesn't take a political label when you're providing insurance. I don't ask people, you know, "I don't have any homeowner's insurance." "Are you a Democrat? Independent? You know, Republican?" Those are not questions you ask. It's, you know, "How much do you need? What is it that we need to do?" And those things don't take on a political tone. And, so, I wanted to make sure that everybody sort of kept their eye on the prize. And the prize is making sure that our markets were stable, secure, our companies were financially solid, and, frankly, that people are getting the, or were or are, getting the coverages that they want and need and

that there are a variety of coverages that are out there that will fit most, if not all, consumers.

Mais: During your last visit to “The Regulators,” you talked about your passion for lifelong learning, for growth. Your curiosity. With that in mind, what would be some of the takeaways from this year that you'd like to share?

Lindley-Myers: I would say, absolutely, because you always learn something new. You can never say, “Oh yeah, I know everything about that.” Because there's always a new nuance. And, so, for, I guess from my standpoint, you know, I'm still searching and looking. I was doing it every month. I went to every quarter, and now I probably do it like at least twice, so far, a year in that I'm trying to figure out how has COVID affected our marketplace, both in the health area, as well as life and also in P&C. The issue there, I would say, is that, you know, there are still new things that are coming out. New mechanisms that companies are using in order to analyze and look at data. And I want to make sure that the newness, you know, the new fuzzy stuff that's out there is not being used, frankly, to disadvantage consumers. And, so, it's not, you know, it's not a new way to keep the consumer down. And, so, I want to make sure that, you know, with A.I., with some of the privacy models, with, you know, some of the things, the newer things that are out there ... They've always been there, but they're of, you know, utmost concern now, especially, you know, with the crypto market, you know, and the things that were going on there. You want to make sure that people understand, number one, what it is that they have, what coverages that they have. Is it what they want, and is it fairly priced? And, so, those are the types of things, I think, that I will continue to look at. I will continue to try to delve into and try to figure out, you know, where is the market going. You're never able to predict it, you know. But the “good” thing, quote unquote, with air quotes, about insurance is that it's so unpredictable that, you know, you utilize that unpredictability to try to forecast where you're going from here.

Mais: You've pretty much answered a good part of my next question. So, I wanted us to pivot from looking through the rearview mirror to looking ahead. What's coming up down the road. And as you mentioned, certainly with technology and others, there is no shortage of challenges for state insurance regulators, the industry, for consumers. What are the biggest ones you see that we will need to continue navigating in the years to come? And, on a more positive note, so, if we look at the challenges, what are the opportunities that you think we as regulators will have?

Lindley-Myers: I think the challenges *are* the opportunities to, number one, make sure that the consumer is, going forward, going to be, you know, properly served, you know, with the new ideas, technologies, and things that are out there. That they understand what they're doing. Again, closing the gap. You know, the haves and have ... You will never make that gap all the way closed. But you can narrow the, you know, the closure mechanism and make sure that, you know, people understand, you know, what coverages that they have, whether or not it is sufficient for them and what they're looking for. And then making sure that the companies are solvent, again, making sure that information that they do give in order to secure insurance is not inadvertently disclosed. And we understand why the information that has been given to the insurer is important for them to price products or to have the various products that are out there. So, I do think looking forward, as well as looking back, I know kind of what may or may not have worked in the past. How can we refine that? Those are the opportunities to offer refinement to the things that we're utilizing now, or we utilized in the past, or to completely scrap it and go at something anew. So, I do think that, you know, it is important for us to, as regulators, and,

frankly, we're also consumers, to make sure that, you know, our thoughts are known, our, you know, ideas are out there and that we are an integral part of the process of, you know, insurance coverage and as well as getting, you know, not only the insurance coverage, but making sure that insurers are still around 20 years from now in order to, you know, pay on the claim that maybe, you know, that started now. So, you want to make sure that, you know, long-tail coverages are being taken care of, and you want to make sure that the consumer is being taken care of. And you also want to make sure that the companies understand the marketplace and is doing the right thing by the consumers and not just making money but making money effectively and efficiently with the consumer in mind.

Mais: Your time as an NAIC officer started in 2020. That was quite a year for the organization. We had a number of changes. The best one was the year before, when the new guy from Connecticut came in, but there were a whole bunch of changes in 2020 with the election, and you started as secretary-treasurer. You've had four years. You've seen it all during those four years. What advice would you have for future NAIC officers?

Lindley-Myers: I do think, you know, getting involved, it is easier, I think, and I did that for a while, you know, before I became a director in Missouri. But, you know, sometimes, you know, we want to see change, but we're not a part of the change. We're not effectuating the change. So, I do think that, you know, I would encourage members of the organization to step up. And, if you don't really want to be an officer, just say, "Hey, this is my line. This is what I like doing." You know. "Count me in on doing it," so that it's not just the same, you know, 4 to 10 people that are doing, you know, sort of everything, you know, that is out there or being the forward face of the organization. Because what is going on in Missouri, you're experiencing it in Connecticut. Jeff Rude is experiencing it in Wyoming and the like. So, it's not really something that we can really contain within our borders. It is something that we need to look at. And whereas before, frankly, insurance was somewhat cyclical in that you kind of knew if you lived on the coast, you're gonna have hurricanes and whatever. And if you lived in the Midwest, you're gonna have tornadoes. But, you know, what we've seen in the last, really, four years, if not really seven, is we've seen wildfires. We've seen, you know, eruptions of volcanoes. We've seen tornadoes, hurricanes, you know, and the like. And we've seen droughts. Certainly in Missouri, you know, we're experiencing drought. So, I mean, I do think it seems as if all the perils are coming to roost, as they were. And, so, these are things where you're no longer able to just focus on the hurricanes that might be coming, the tornadoes that might be coming. You're having to widen your viewpoint in order to have an idea of what is out there and how you can mitigate, if not eradicate, some of the issues and making sure that the consumers are aware, as well as, you know, your colleagues, you know, are aware, as well as the companies. So, you know, I think having that camaraderie between all of the sectors, you know, is very, very important, you know, as regulators, as consumers, you know, and as those that are providing coverages for the marketplace.

Mais: Director Chlora Lindley-Myers, thank you. It is time to get back to the national meeting. They do need us back outside. But I have to say, it's been a pleasure talking with you on this episode of "The Regulators." It's been even more of a pleasure working with you over the past few years. Thank you for everything that you've done. Thank you for joining me here today.

Lindley-Myers: Thank you, Commissioner Mais. And likewise, I have to say. It has just been a pleasure. And every day is an adventure.

Mais: Yes, it is. Some positive, some less so. But we keep moving.

Lindley-Myers: Exactly.

Mais: Thank you all and thank you for listening to “The Regulators.” Join us right here in 2024 for more timely and in-depth conversations and make sure to subscribe to “The Regulators” wherever you get your podcasts. We'll see you next time.