

Bill Kaplan: GOP leadership

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Leadership means being bigger than your political party. It requires courage, moral clarity and truthfulness. Leaders inspire, bringing people together. Few politicians are leaders. Some examples.

Foxconn. Wisconsin GOP Governor Scott Walker has taken the state to the bottom to lure Foxconn. No unions, corporate taxes, environmental regulations or candid discussion of the pros and cons of a deal with Foxconn. Just exorbitant giveaways. Moreover, Walker laments that opponents are “upset because they think this is a victory for me.” Wisconsin is in Walker’s rearview mirror. Another presidential run?

Walker dislikes being challenged by pesky reporters. When asked why Foxconn didn’t build a promised Pennsylvania factory Walker said: “Pennsylvania changed governors. It’d be a pretty good idea not to change governors over the next couple of years.” Walker can’t stop being self-serving. Pennsylvania did change governors, but that was not the reason Foxconn reneged. The Washington Post reported Foxconn blamed the cancellation on “material changes to the business and operating climate at that time”. Another Walker half-truth. More.

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Ohio GOP Governor John Kasich wants Foxconn to build a factory there. However, in contrast to Walker, Kasich said: “It’s not going to take us 40 years to make back the investment we make. We don’t buy deals”. Finally, when Kasich succeeds he says: “It’s not an important win for me. It’s an important win for Ohio.” Governor Walker, are you listening? It gets worse.

Afghanistan. Last week, Trump, supported by House Speaker Paul Ryan, doubled down on America’s longest war. There were few details on a new strategy or how

many more American troops will be sent. It is a secret plan, reminiscent of Nixon's pledge to "end" the Vietnam War and "win the peace". Moreover, Politico reported that the Trump administration has already sent thousands more U.S. troops to Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, above the publicly declared caps. Only U.S. troops will sacrifice as Trump and Ryan have not called for an earmarked tax to pay for the escalation.

Governor Kasich's response was spot-on: "Sixteen years and the lives of over 2,000 American heroes are more than enough of a price to have paid to eradicate a terrorist sanctuary. America cannot afford to make an open-ended commitment of further lives and treasure to the improbable proposition of building a cohesive nation in Afghanistan". It didn't work for the British Empire or the Soviet Union. More failed leadership. And, real leaders.

Charlottesville. Walker and Ryan failed completely in calling out Trump on his pathetic responses to KKK and Nazi violence. Trump argued that there were "very fine people on both sides". Walker was silent on that, while Ryan said: Trump "messed up". Incredible! However, Mitt Romney and Wisconsin GOP Representative Mike Gallagher stood up for the party of Lincoln. Romney exclaimed: Trump "caused racists to rejoice, minorities to weep, and the vast heart of America to mourn". And, Gallagher reacted: "The president needs to be crystal clear that hatred has no place in our society, but he is currently failing at it". Leadership.

— *Kaplan wrote a guest column from Washington, D.C. for the Wisconsin State Journal from 1995 - 2009.*