

# Bill Kaplan: Regular folks shafted by Trump, GOP-led Congress

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Trump and the GOP-led Congress have done nothing for regular folks. No draining the swamp, just a cabinet of plutocrats. Nor is there an infrastructure program. Not even a budget. Almost an entire year spent trying to take health care coverage away from over 20 million, including 216,355 Wisconsinites. But last week GOP House Speaker Paul Ryan, using “a command-and-control process and a rocket-speed schedule to minimize Republican dissent”, passed tax cuts (New York Times). Wisconsin GOP representatives voted yes. Wisconsin Democratic representatives dissented (Representative Mark Pocan, recovering from heart surgery, didn’t vote).

However, this is not tax reform. The nonpartisan Tax Policy Center said that half of the tax cuts would go to the top 1 percent. And, the Washington Post reported: “The House bill delivers more than 80 percent of its overall cuts to corporations, business owners and wealthy families who are subject to the federal estate tax, according to estimates released by the (nonpartisan) Joint Committee on Taxation”.

The New York Times editorialized: “A tax plan for a new Gilded Age ... that would slash taxes on the wealthy and blow up the federal budget deficit ... multibillion-dollar gifts for corporations, Wall Street titans and rich families. While there are a few peanuts thrown at lower-income and middle class families, many people of modest means who take advantage of deductions and credits for things like housing, state and local taxes, medical expenses and education costs could end up paying more in taxes”.

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However, the pending Senate bill is worse. The New York Times opined: “Consider the latest changes to the Senate tax-cut bill. ... It lavishes generous permanent tax breaks on corporations, while modest tax cuts for the middle class would vanish into thin air after 2025. Millionaires would enjoy average tax cuts of \$5,580 in 2027, according to the Joint Committee on Taxation, at which point families earning less than \$75,000 a year would pay more taxes”. Moreover, Trump will make out like a bandit with cutting or repealing the estate tax, and eliminating the alternative minimum tax.

But Speaker Ryan claims that the tax cuts will “grow the economy”. However, after Bush cut taxes (largest and third-largest tax cuts), there was little job or income growth. Then came the collapse in 2007-08. Deficits soared. Regular folks suffered. And, that typical family Ryan keeps talking about “would end up paying more in tax(es) by 2024” (Washington Post).

Wisconsin GOP Senator Ron Johnson announced his opposition to both tax cut bills because big corporations are favored over small businesses. Wisconsin GOP Representative Jim Sensenbrenner said Johnson was “strutting around like a peacock”. Is Johnson serious or just posturing? More likely to oppose the Senate bill would be Arizona GOP Senators Jeff Flake and John McCain (deficit and process concerns), Maine GOP Senator Susan Collins (opposes using tax cut bill to gut the Affordable Care Act) and Tennessee GOP Senator Bob Corker (deficit concern). I hope they will vote no and prevent regular folks from getting shafted.

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