

# Bill Kaplan: Ford and Kavanaugh

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Last Thursday, millions paused to listen to the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, with sworn testimony from Professor Christine Blasey Ford and Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh. She said that Kavanaugh tried to rape her, while his friend Mark Judge was present, in the 1980s. Ford came across as credible, emphatic and “nobody’s pawn”. Kavanaugh’s denial was fiery, partisan and unhinged. Gone was any pretense of judicial demeanor. He said Democrats refused to accept Trump’s victory in the 2016 presidential election. South Carolina GOP Senator Lindsey Graham added fuel to the fire, complaining: “I know I am a single white male .... And, I am told I should shut up.”

Other GOP Judiciary Committee members denounced California Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein for supposedly leaking a confidential letter from Ford outlining her explosive charge. However, “Ryan Grim, the reporter for the Intercept, who first reported on the existence of Ford’s letter, has also said neither Feinstein nor her aides were his sources” (Washington Post). At the same time, GOP Judiciary Committee members and Kavanaugh opposed Democratic pleas for an FBI investigation into the sexual misconduct allegations.

But four principled GOP governors broke with Trump and congressional Republicans, and called for an FBI investigation and a delay in Senate voting to confirm Kavanaugh. Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker said: “The accusations brought against Judge Kavanaugh are sickening and deserve an independent investigation. There should be no vote in the Senate.” And, Ohio Governor John Kasich stepped up: “Without an investigation, and with so many serious issues involved, I can’t support this nomination if they choose to move forward.” Maryland Governor Larry Hogan and Vermont Governor Phil Scott issued similar statements. However, “unintimidated” Wisconsin GOP Governor Scott Walker was muted. He said that the allegations are “serious”. No fooling! In contrast, Democratic challenger Tony Evers “stands” with Ford. Unlike Walker, Evers supports an FBI investigation.

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Wisconsin Democratic Senator Tammy Baldwin tweeted: “I support the bipartisan call for the White House to reopen the FBI background investigation of Judge Kavanaugh. There should be no vote on this lifetime nomination for our highest court until the Senate has all the facts about serious and credible allegations made by women.” Spot-on! While Wisconsin GOP Senator Ron Johnson said: Kavanaugh did a “fabulous job” at the hearing, we have “enough evidence” and that there was no need for an FBI investigation. As usual, Johnson is clueless.

Fortunately, Arizona GOP Senator Jeff Flake and his GOP colleagues, Maine Senator Susan Collins and Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski, called for a one week FBI inquiry. No longer having a Senate majority for a rushed vote, GOP Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Trump acquiesced. They want Kavanaugh confirmed. McConnell needs an election year accomplishment to keep his GOP majority. And, Trump is fixated on Special Counsel Robert Mueller. “Republicans and Democrats here need to consider the real possibility that Kavanaugh was picked precisely because he’d be the most likely judge to let President Trump get away with unconstitutional antics” (Washington Post conservative columnist Jennifer Rubin).

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