

Bill Kaplan: Governing vs. rabble-rousing

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Trump and defeated Wisconsin GOP Governor Scott Walker have demonstrated again that they reject governing and embrace rabble-rousing. Why? The building blocks of successful governing are a willingness to compromise, negotiate, respect for opponents and acknowledgement of generally accepted facts. However, Trump and Walker are rabble-rousers: constant deception, stirring up division, appealing to fear and pretending to be for regular folks, while serving corporations and the rich.

For example, the GOP-led Congress has failed to fund the entire government. A shutdown looms December 21. Democratic congressional leaders Representative Nancy Pelosi and Senator Chuck Schumer met with Trump in the hopes of avoiding a harmful shutdown. Instead of a serious meeting, Trump arranged for press to be there as he berated and patronized Pelosi and Schumer, while reading from note cards. Pelosi responded to Trump: "The American people recognize that we must keep the government open, that a shutdown is not worth anything, and that we should not have a Trump shutdown."

Having failed to persuade Mexico to pay for a wall at the U.S.-Mexican border, Trump wants Congress to fund it. Pelosi, a strong supporter of border security, but not an expensive gimmick, wanted an "evidence-based conversation" on securing the border. Then Trump threw a tantrum, saying: "If we don't get what we want, one way or the other ... I will shut down the government." An enfant terrible vs. a grown-up.

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It's the same story in Wisconsin. Sore loser Walker signed all the bills passed by the lame-duck GOP-led state legislature eroding the constitutional powers of Democratic Governor-elect Tony Evers and Democratic Attorney General-elect Josh Kaul. The sweeping and unprecedented legislation curbs Evers' role in economic development, prevents state withdrawal from Walker's lawsuit attacking the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and hamstring Evers and the executive branch in implementing state law.

Walker has been on a twitter rant. He has posted multiple tweets about his "Legacy". However, highly respected Ohio GOP Governor John Kasich was spot-on about Walker's legacy. CNN asked Kasich if he considered Walker's actions "a power grab aimed at undermining Democrats". Kasich said: "Of course that's what it is. It's outrageous... . When you lose, you say you lost. You don't go and try to reverse the election by manipulation... . These power grabs are just outrageous."

Finally, a Texas federal court delivered one more terrible legacy. It declared the ACA to be unconstitutional. Wisconsin Democratic Senator Tammy Baldwin said: "Scott Walker's lawsuit threatens guaranteed health protections and would raise costs for ... Wisconsinites with preexisting conditions that he promised to protect. This ruling is not the final word and this attack on Wisconsin families must not stand." Baldwin was echoed by American Medical Association President Barbara McAneny: "No one wants to go back to the days of 20 percent of the population uninsured and fewer patient protections, but this decision will move us in that direction". Chip Kahn, President of the Federation of American Hospitals, said: "The judge got it wrong." Trump and Walker's rabble-rousing legacy.

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