

Bill Kaplan: State of the Union

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What a week. Credible allegations of domestic violence, photographs and a restraining order, forced top White House (WH) aide Rob Porter out in disgrace. Turns out the FBI had informed WH Chief of Staff John Kelly and WH Counsel Donald McGahn months ago. Despite the allegations from Porter's two ex-wives, he played a key role in writing Trump's State of the Union address.

Trump seems obsessed with reaction to his State of the Union speech. On Monday, he campaigned in Ohio to promote his tax cuts: permanent big cuts for corporations and temporary small cuts for regular folks, while the rich make out like bandits. Then Trump hit an all-time low. He accused Democrats of being "un-American" and "treasonous" because they did not clap during his State of the Union address. As the narcissistic, venomous Trump spoke, the stock market went into free fall. Trump can't tweet away boom and bust cycles.

Illinois Democratic Senator Tammy Duckworth, an Army helicopter pilot who lost her legs in Iraq, responded: "We don't live in a dictatorship or monarchy. I swore an oath - in the military and in the Senate - to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States, not to mindlessly cater to the whims of Cadet Bone Spurs and clap when he demands I clap" (Trump got a medical deferment during the Vietnam War because of bone spurs in his feet).

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Trump didn't listen to Duckworth. He's calling for a huge military parade in D.C., despite the ongoing Afghan War, the longest in U.S. history. Americans are still dying there. However, Trump (five deferments) wants to use the U.S. military "as a political prop, even as he daily undermines the country's other real and enduring

strengths, including an independent judiciary and free press” (New York Times). Here’s hoping the Pentagon finds a way to ignore Trump. Congress did.

Last week, Trump declared “let’s have a shutdown”. Nevertheless, the GOP-led Congress passed a budget deal with Democratic support. Wisconsin Democratic Senator Tammy Baldwin voted for the budget agreement, along with most GOP representatives (except Jim Sensenbrenner, who opposed). Wisconsin GOP Senator Ron Johnson voted no, as did Wisconsin Democratic representatives. Although adding to the debt and unnecessarily increasing military spending, the agreement was the best that could be gotten out of the hypocritical, reactionary GOP-led Congress.

Senator Baldwin called it a “bipartisan” agreement that “provides (a) significant funding increase for domestic priorities over the next two years.” There will be more spending for Community Health Centers, Children’s Health Insurance Program, the opioid crisis, veterans health care, infrastructure, e.g., roads, clean safe water, rural broadband, the dairy farm safety net, disaster relief, education and the creation of a special congressional committee to address pension problems, e.g., Central States Pension Fund – covers 400,000, including 25,000 Wisconsinites. But what about the rest of the State of the Union?

What will the GOP-led Congress do about immigration and the Russia investigation? What will Trump say next? Will House Speaker Paul Ryan continue to enable Trump?

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