

Bill Kaplan: The economy and GOP sink lower

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The stock market plunged last week amid Trump's lies about trade concessions from China. "The Chinese did not acknowledge a 90-day deadline for the (upcoming) talks or say that they plan to 'immediately' increase purchases of U.S. farm goods" (Washington Post). Trump just makes stuff up. For example, he said China would buy \$1.2 trillion of U.S. agricultural and factory products (U.S. expected to export only \$126 billion this year). Added to the mix – higher oil prices, rising interest rates and a lackluster jobs report. All signs point to a looming recession.

As Wall Street declined, the nation mourned Bush 41. But hours before the funeral the Wisconsin GOP-led legislature passed sweeping and unprecedented legislation eroding the constitutional powers of Democratic Governor-elect Tony Evers and Democratic Attorney General-elect Josh Kaul. It was a slap in the face of voters who chose change on November 6. Former Democratic Governor Jim Doyle pointed out the contrast between bipartisan eulogies for Bush and the power grab by petty unscrupulous Wisconsin GOP politicians.

In 2014, the 25th anniversary of Bush 41's presidency, former Wisconsin Democratic Representative Dave Obey joined a bipartisan celebration. Obey said: "If there's a single word that you can use to describe Bush's approach to politics, it's governance. It was a case where the adults ran the show." A jarring contrast with Trump and the last gasp of unchallenged GOP rule in Wisconsin.

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While his GOP-led legislature was doing the dirty work, defeated GOP Governor

Scott Walker attended Bush's funeral. Did Walker listen? Bush has an honorable legacy because he broke with GOP orthodoxy. He raised taxes to pay for the first Iraq War. Walker's final defining moment has come. Will he veto the mean-spirited power grab? Wisconsin Republicans are also trying to manipulate voting regulations. A federal court previously struck down limitations on early voting, but GOP politicians are at it again. On par with Trump.

After losing the popular vote in 2016 Trump said: "I won the popular vote if you deduct the millions of people who voted illegally". A big lie. Even weak-kneed House Speaker Paul Ryan said: "I've seen no evidence to that effect...". However, Republicans keep pretending that Democrats are trying to steal elections. But they are awfully quiet right now. Why?

The Washington Post exposed voter fraud by North Carolina (NC Ninth Congressional District) GOP House candidate Mark Harris. It's clear that voter fraud took place both in the GOP primary and the general election. Absentee mail-in ballots were illegally collected by the Harris campaign and tampered with or disregarded. Many of the ballots came from black voters. Democratic candidate Dan McCready, down by only 905 votes, tweeted: "I didn't serve overseas in the Marines to come home to NC and watch a criminal, bankrolled by my opponent, take away people's very right to vote". Politico's headline was blunt: "Alleged fraud has GOP bracing for loss of NC seat".

The party of Lincoln sinks lower in Wisconsin and nationally, while a troubled economy goes down.

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