

# Bill Kaplan: Voting for change nationally and in Wisconsin

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On Saturday, in Paris to mark 100 years since the end of WWI, Trump skipped a visit to an American cemetery to honor U.S. war dead. It was raining. David Frum, conservative speechwriter to Bush 43, reacted: "It's incredible that a president would travel to France for this significant anniversary – and then remain in his hotel room watching TV rather than pay in person his respects to Americans who gave their lives in France... ." Was Trump depressed and petulant?

It was a disastrous midterm election for Trump and the GOP. "Democrats appear poised to pick up between 35 and 40 seats in the House, once the last races are tallied... . That would represent the biggest Democratic gain in the House since the post-Watergate election of 1974 ..." (*Washington Post*). A Democratic-led House will provide checks and balances to Trump. Moreover, final returns may result in only a net loss of 2 Democratic Senate seats. And, Democrats won 7 state legislative chambers, flipping more than 330 GOP seats (only one in Wisconsin). Finally, Democrats gained 7 governorships, including Wisconsin. Change.

Wisconsin Democratic Governor-elect Tony Evers ended the reign of two-term GOP Governor Scott Walker. And, Wisconsin Democratic Senator Tammy Baldwin won with a double-digit margin. Moreover, every other Democrat on the statewide ballot won: Attorney General-elect Josh Kaul, Treasurer-elect Sarah Godlewski and current Secretary of State Doug La Follette. It was the "first time since 1982 that one party – the Democrats – won elections to all those offices" (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*).

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What do the midterm results mean for the nation and Wisconsin? Well, GOP Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's scheme to blame Medicare and Social Security, instead of GOP tax cuts for corporations and the rich, for soaring deficits is dead. Likewise, congressional Republicans and Trump will no longer be able to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Health care coverage for 20 to 25 million, including over 200,000 Wisconsinites, remains in force. And, ACA consumer protections, e.g., for preexisting conditions, will still cover millions (852,000 Wisconsinites).

However, there is still a threat from the Walker and GOP-led lawsuit to have the entire ACA declared unconstitutional. Evers and Kaul will drop Wisconsin from the lawsuit as it proceeds. And, Evers wants the federal funding (pays 90 percent) to expand Medicaid to 80,000 Wisconsinites. State savings could be used for education and roads. GOP-led Idaho, Nebraska and Utah passed midterm referendums to do just that.

But there are dark clouds on the horizon. After the election Trump fired Attorney General Sessions, replacing him with a partisan hack, to undercut the Mueller Russia investigation. Note: Trump voters in a Wisconsin focus group warned the White House "not to fire Mueller" (*Washington Post*). Similarly, Wisconsin GOP legislators are threatening to take power away from Evers before he is sworn in (January).

It's time for the esteemed former Wisconsin GOP Governor Tommy Thompson to talk sense to the GOP state legislative leadership. Wisconsinites voted for change and for the state to move forward.

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