

Bill Kaplan: Why Ryan must go

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Principled young people are inspiring Wisconsin and the nation. On Saturday, thousands participated in the March for Our Lives demonstrations in Madison, Milwaukee, Washington, D.C. and elsewhere. These eloquent activists are calling for common sense gun control laws, e.g., banning military-style rifles as well as high-capacity magazines, raising the age to buy guns and comprehensive background checks. They are calling on Americans to vote for change. Activists are also going to Janesville, where GOP House Speaker Paul Ryan lives.

Patience has run out on Ryan's expressions of "thoughts and prayers" every time there is a slaughter by a shooter. The U.S. is the only modern democratic society where these massacres are acceptable and routine. Enough! Young people are speaking truth to power. Time to learn from their call for change. Voters in the First Congressional District (CD) have an outsized role. Ryan must go.

It is not just because Ryan will never support gun control or stymies consideration of limited reforms. Ryan does not get it that he is Speaker of the entire House of Representatives. Nor does he seem to understand that he helps lead an equal, separate branch of government. Checks and balances. Moreover, he has forgotten where he comes from. Ryan doesn't care one whit about regular folks.

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During the Great Recession the U.S. auto industry nearly collapsed. With the exception of one inconsequential vote, press releases and talk, Ryan did nothing. Later he lied and blamed the Janesville General Motors assembly plant closing on President Obama. However, conservative Washington Post columnist Robert Samuelson opined: "Obama's role was crucial. Against (GOP) opposition, he decided

to rescue General Motors and Chrysler” (the Janesville plant was largely closed before Obama’s inauguration). Moreover, the First CD has been hemorrhaging industrial jobs because of automation and outsourcing. Ryan’s solution for this and all else: tax cuts for corporations and the rich.

New York Times columnist Tom Edsall said: “The rush to enact the tax bill was designed to mask – as a break for the middle class – what is in fact a \$1.4 trillion package of benefits for key donors and lobbyists, the richest members of Congress, President Trump, his family and families like his”. Corporations got permanent tax cuts, while individual tax cuts expire. The resultant deficits setup the GOP-led Congress and Trump to cut Medicare and Social Security. Meanwhile, Ryan can’t find the time to meet with the Wisconsin Committee to Protect Pensions.

Finally, Ryan refuses to fulfill his constitutional duty: checks and balances on a chaotic, dysfunctional White House. Trump is an authoritarian megalomaniac who is undermining our institutions, e.g., independent judiciary, the FBI and a free press. As indictments mount from the Russia inquiry, led by Special Counsel Robert Mueller, Trump tweets threats. Ryan says he has “assurances” from the White House that Mueller will not be fired. However, Trump is a pathological liar who fires by tweet after viewing Fox News. Ryan will never step up. He must go. Only a Democratic-led House will provide checks and balances.

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