

# Bill Kaplan: July 4 belongs to America, not Trump

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Acting like a tin-pot dictator, “Trump has effectively taken charge of the nation’s premier Fourth of July celebration in Washington, ... (and will) address the nation from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial” (Washington Post). Trump tweeted “Hold The Date! (July 4) for a “Major fireworks display, entertainment and an address by your favorite President, me!” Once again Trump trashes American norms.

A nonpartisan celebration of America’s independence will be turned into a Trump-GOP campaign rally. No U.S. president has presided at the D.C. July 4 event since the 1950s. However, Trump wants to rebrand the nation’s celebration. There will be a VIP area reserved for his high-flying cronies. So much for the “forgotten Americans”. And, Trump will have a flyover by Air Force One to satisfy his vanity.

However, all of the “Rockets’ Red Glare” and Trump’s speechifying can’t hide the misery and pain he has inflicted on regular folks. There will be little celebrating by Wisconsin’s dairy farmers. Since 2017 Wisconsin has lost more than 1,500 dairy farms. The New York Times reports: “Wisconsin’s milk farmers face extinction”. Low and falling milk prices, compounded by loss of foreign markets because of Trump’s trade wars, have sent farm income plummeting.

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Similarly, other Wisconsin farmers are suffering from foreign retaliatory tariffs on corn, cranberries, ginseng, kidney beans and soybeans, as well as beef and pork. Small businesses, hospitals and schools in rural Wisconsin are facing an ongoing disaster. Pessimism is rising. Purdue University’s Center for Commercial

Agriculture's new survey shows farmers losing confidence in Trump. Moreover, a Midwestern farmer told the Washington Post: "We want the border secured, but there might be other ways to do it rather than using the farmers as a stick to beat Mexico over the head. Farm states elected him ... . But if, in a year and a half, we're still in the same boat, he's not getting elected."

Trump's trademark issue is bashing immigrants and blaming them for America's social problems. However, his bigoted and nativist rhetoric is deceptive and intended to "divide and conquer". Case in point: "Immigrants have served in uniform since the nation's founding and have been naturalized in uniform or as veterans for a century. Nearly 130,000 troops have been naturalized since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks alone" (Washington Post). But the Trump administration is deporting some of these veterans for sometimes serious, and more often minor crimes.

The bipartisan "Repatriate Our Patriots Act" seeks to end this injustice. The legislation would exclude veterans who committed serious crimes, but allow other deported veterans to come back to the U.S., with a pathway to citizenship. Alaska GOP Representative Don Young, a bill sponsor, said: "It is inexcusable that service members who risked it all to protect us would be put through the deportation process". Wisconsin GOP Representative Mike Gallagher, former U.S. Marine Corps officer, should cosponsor the bill and ask all Wisconsin representatives to sign on. That would be worth celebrating.

July 4 belongs to America, not Trump.

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