

Bill Kaplan: Shenanigans on McCain and disaster relief

Posted on Monday, Jun 3, 2019

The column below reflects the views of the author, and these opinions are neither endorsed nor supported by WisOpinion.com.

The conservative Wall Street Journal (WSJ) reported that the Trump White House tried to keep a U.S. Navy destroyer, named for Senator John McCain, out of view during Trump's trip to Japan. The WSJ obtained an email saying: "USS John McCain needs to be out of sight." The ship was briefly covered with a tarp to obscure McCain's name before Trump's visit.

Trump deflected the disgraceful shenanigans, insisting his White House staff "did it because they thought I didn't like him (McCain), OK? And, they were well-meaning, I will say." Then Trump vented a tirade against McCain, a decorated war hero. On Sunday, Acting White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney went lower: "If a 23- or 24-year old (White House) staffer says, 'Look, is it really a good idea for this ship (USS McCain) to be in the background?' That is not an unreasonable question to have" (Fox News).

There used to be a taboo on this kind of abhorrent nonsense. However, it's part of a pattern: Trump's 2015 vicious attack against McCain - "He's not a war hero. ..."; violating a norm when the White House flag was raised from half-staff to full-staff, less than 48 hours after McCain died and trying to use the U.S. military as a political prop by having a military parade in front of the White House. GOP lapdogs, including Wisconsin Republicans, let most of it go unchallenged.

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

The same shenanigans for congressional passage of disaster relief for American citizens, harmed by widespread Midwest flooding, Western wildfires and hurricane

destruction in the Southeast and Puerto Rico. Congress used to pass disaster relief in a swift and bipartisan manner. Politics was left aside. Not with Trump. The White House and Republicans have stalled for months, raising one phony objection after another. The worst was Trump's despicable opposition to helping Puerto Rico.

On May 6, Trump tweeted an appeal to prejudice to derail the pending disaster relief bill: "Now the Democrats are saying No relief for Alabama, Iowa, Nebraska, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and others unless much more money is given to Puerto Rico. The Dems don't want farmers to get any help...." It was "divide and conquer", and a big fat lie. Ignoring Trump, the Democratic-led House, with 34 Republicans, passed \$19.1 billion in disaster relief for all afflicted areas, including Puerto Rico. All Wisconsin Democratic representatives votes yes, while all Wisconsin GOP representatives were opposed.

Soon wiser GOP senators stopped stalling and the Senate passed the long-delayed disaster relief bill 85-8. Both Wisconsin senators voted yes. Vermont Democratic Senator Pat Leahy said: "I don't care who takes credit. We're Americans." Later, a few GOP representatives held up final passage in the House. But it is expected to pass easily in a few days. Trump relented, saying he would sign it.

However, Trump should reflect on the 48,000 Puerto Ricans who served during the Vietnam War, and the more than 340 who died. Unlike the Puerto Rican veterans and McCain, Trump never served.

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