

# Bill Kaplan: Shutdown hurting Wisconsin

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The partial government shutdown, initiated by Trump (beholden to hard-right bomb throwers Ann Coulter and Rush Limbaugh), is the longest in U.S. history. It would not have happened if departing weak-kneed House Speaker Paul Ryan had not enabled Trump. Now, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has become Trump's go-to politician, despite his previous opposition to a shutdown. 800,000 federal workers, including over 3,000 Wisconsinites, have been furloughed (no pay) or worse, forced to work without pay. And, taxpayers are no longer receiving essential services.

Opposition to this cruel and senseless shutdown is building. The bipartisan National Governors Association (NGA) called for an immediate end to the shutdown. NGA leaders, Montana Democratic Governor Steve Bullock and Maryland Republican Governor Larry Hogan said: "A federal government shutdown should not be a negotiating tactic as disagreements are resolved. Governors stand united in telling the federal government to open the doors of currently shuttered agencies ... ."

Wisconsin Democratic Governor Tony Evers echoed the NGA: "With the two levels of government entwined when it comes to providing ... government services, the shutdown hurts not only local federal employees, but also the people on the receiving end of those services. As it drags on, the problem is it becomes political theater, which is hurting the people of Wisconsin ... ."

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Wisconsin farmers beset with low prices and the loss of foreign markets (Trump's

trade war) are up against the wall. “Now, farmers and farm groups say that federal crop payments have stopped flowing. Farmers cannot get federally backed operating loans to buy seed for their spring planting, or feed their livestock. They cannot look up new government data about beef (and milk) prices or soybean yields to make decisions about planting and selling their goods in an ever-changing global market” (New York Times).

Wisconsin dairy and other farmers are no longer receiving special payments because of the loss of foreign markets. “States like Wisconsin, which lost at least 638 dairy farms last year, are particularly vulnerable” (New York Times). Wisconsin Democratic Senator Tammy Baldwin had added programs to the farm bill to help alleviate the burden of low prices and resultant stress. The shutdown has put everything on hold. Baldwin said: “More uncertainty and more stress. We can’t afford to wait months. We need to get this moving now.”

The shutdown also threatens FDA inspection of Wisconsin food processing companies (vegetables). Similarly, EPA inspections of state Superfund sites, chemical and industrial factories and water treatment facilities, are on hold. And, Wisconsin Native Americans are in trouble. The Oneida Nation said: “the shutdown is putting the health and welfare of our community and our members at risk and impeding our economic development potential”.

It’s time for Senator McConnell to do his job. He “could bring a ‘clean’ funding bill to the (Senate) floor, free up his GOP caucus to support it and could quite possibly secure enough votes to override a presidential veto” (Washington Post). Baldwin would be supportive. But where’s Wisconsin GOP Senator Ron Johnson? Wisconsinites are hurting.

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