

# Bill Kaplan: Trump bellows for long shutdown

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On Thursday, Democrats took control of the House and elected Representative Nancy Pelosi as speaker. The diverse Democrats look like America. The Republicans not so much. Speaker Pelosi wants government to help regular folks: Education, health care, infrastructure (bridges, roads, etc), pension reform – Central States Pension Fund, Social Security and aid to farmers and rural areas.

Rejecting divide and conquer, Pelosi quoted President Reagan: “If we ever close the door to new Americans, our leadership role in the world will soon be lost”. Republicans were mute, while sitting on their now discarded principles. The Democratic-controlled House put aside fear and prejudice and moved to reopen the government, shut down by the previous GOP-led Congress and Trump. The House voted 241 – 190 to pass “a package of six spending bills that were negotiated (in the last Congress) on a bipartisan basis in the Senate ...” (Washington Post). All Wisconsin Democratic representatives voted to end the shutdown, while all Wisconsin GOP representatives were opposed. And, a short-term Homeland Security spending bill passed, with Wisconsin representatives splitting along the same party lines.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, imitating former House Speaker Paul Ryan, decided to enable Trump by refusing to consider the legislation. But on Tuesday, December 18 McConnell, then opposing a shutdown, said: “The American people don’t like it (shutdown) ... . We’ve been down this path before, and I don’t believe we’ll go down this path again”. Wrong. “The partial government shutdown started after Trump (and Ryan) torpedoed a bipartisan (Senate) deal that would have kept federal agencies open through February 8 but denied Trump any wall money” (Washington Post).

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Trump now bellows for a long shutdown for “months or even years” if he doesn’t get his wall. Ominously, Trump threatened to declare a (pretend) “national emergency” to build the wall. Meanwhile, to heck with 800,000 unpaid government employees. Or tens of thousands of “low-wage workers who probably won’t get back pay because they clean government buildings or serve food in cafeterias as contractors” (Washington Post). Moreover, the shutdown is beginning to hit Wisconsin overall.

Wisconsin dairy farms and farmers growing corn, cranberries, ginseng, kidney beans and soybeans are up against the wall. The shutdown prevents farmers, reeling from Trump’s trade wars, from getting federal aid. Moreover, federal loans and grants for housing, economic development and infrastructure in rural areas are frozen. And, taxpayers are at risk of not getting their tax refunds. Then there are over 60,000 Wisconsin Native Americans whose health services “are also on hold” (Kaiser Health News). Worse, hundreds of thousands of Wisconsinites may go hungry as funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program runs out. There is another way.

Wisconsin Democratic Senator Tammy Baldwin said: “The President can and should end his shutdown by accepting bipartisan legislation that ...(previously) passed ... the Senate and now the House to fund the government, including a homeland security bill that provides smart and cost-effective border security”. Wisconsinites – please tell GOP lawmakers and Trump to end the shutdown. People are hurting.

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