

# Bill Kaplan: Senator Johnson out of touch on bipartisan aid

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Last week, the electoral college formalized President-elect Joe Biden's landslide win: A 7+ million popular vote margin and 306 electoral votes to 232 (flipping 5 states, including Wisconsin). "There was no fraud in this election. It was not rigged" (Washington Post). Many state and federal courts, including the U.S. and Wisconsin Supreme Courts, rejected Trump's meritless lawsuits. 39 of about 88 judges involved were put on the bench by the GOP, others were elected as conservatives (WP).

However, Wisconsin GOP Senator Ron Johnson, outgoing chair of the Senate Homeland Security Committee, held a hearing after the electoral college vote, on "irregularities in the 2020 election." Johnson pretended to be a firefighter protecting the nation, instead of the serial arsonist that he is. Delusional nonsense was peddled. Conservative columnist Michael Gerson opined about Johnson's "spread (of) conspiratorial lies." Gerson said: "This was Johnson's nasty little disservice to his country."

Meanwhile, the nation, including Wisconsin, continues to endure the consequences of COVID-19. Nationally a cumulative 17.7+ million cases and 317,000+ deaths. Wisconsin reels from a cumulative 457,000+ cases and 4,400+ deaths. We will have a dark winter while awaiting vaccination. Please double down on masking, physical distancing and skipping holiday gatherings and travel.

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The economic impact of the COVID-19 downturn is dire. 12 million Americans,

including tens of thousands of Wisconsinites, could lose unemployment aid the day after Christmas. About 1 in 3 adults, including 1 million Wisconsinites, are having trouble paying for food, healthcare, car expenses, housing and student loans (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities). Help may be on the way. A bipartisan Senate COVID-19 economic aid bill has gained widespread support. Biden calls it a beginning. It's imperfect, but does much good: More financial assistance for small businesses, extension of unemployment benefits, direct stimulus checks, funding for schools, mass transit, food programs, housing and vaccine distribution.

Wisconsin Democratic Senator Tammy Baldwin said: "I support the bipartisan plan to provide direct \$1,200 stimulus aid to Americans because I know people need help in this economic crisis." But contrarian Johnson signaled opposition to the bipartisan economic aid, twice blocking a Senate vote on the direct stimulus checks. He said: "I'm certainly lodging my objection to what's barreling through here. The train has left the station on the package that's being negotiated right now that is way too big." Johnson went on to deny that he was "heartless", but didn't want to increase the national debt.

It's impossible to take Johnson seriously. After all he added \$2 trillion to the debt in 2017, voting for massive tax cuts skewed to the rich. Missouri GOP Senator Josh Hawley responded to Johnson: "We're getting ready to spend, apparently another trillion dollars more and yet working people are told they may be last, if they get any relief at all. Working people are living in their cars, working people can't go to the doctor, working people can't pay their rent, working people can't feed their children."

Wisconsin voters must give Johnson the boot!

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