

Bill Kaplan: State congressional Republicans fail Wisconsin

Posted on Monday, Jul 27, 2020

Back in May the Democratic-led House anticipated that the toll from COVID-19 and its economic consequences would continue to be devastating. The House passed relief and recovery legislation, largely along party lines. The \$3 trillion bill would help state, local and tribal governments facing huge holes in their budgets; fund more COVID-19 testing and contact tracing; hazard pay for first responders and essential workers; extension of unemployment benefits; aid to education and help with housing problems. Wisconsin Democratic Representatives Ron Kind, Gwen Moore and Mark Pocan voted yes. However, Wisconsin GOP Representatives Mike Gallagher, Glenn Grothman, Jim Sensenbrenner and Bryan Steil shamefully voted no (Tom Tiffany was not yet sworn in).

The legislation would help Wisconsin avoid draconian budget and service cuts. The Wisconsin Budget Project said the bill would: "Allocate \$8.5 billion to the state and \$7.5 billion to local governments ... provide an additional \$1.9 billion in Medicaid dollars ... (and) \$1.4 billion for education" But the irresponsible GOP-led Senate refused to consider the House bill. In the middle of a pandemic Republicans played the fiddle while everything burned down. Wisconsin GOP Senator Ron Johnson, unlike Democratic Senator Tammy Baldwin, had excuses when urgent action was needed. Finally, last week Senate Republicans bestirred themselves, but failed to pass anything. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said: "Hopefully, we can come together behind some package we can agree on in the next few weeks."

But the need is right now! For example, the emergency \$600 per week in extra

unemployment benefits expired last Saturday in Wisconsin. Moreover, thousands of unemployed Wisconsinites face eviction. And, Wisconsin Democratic Governor Tony Evers “seeks another \$250M in state budget cuts to offset pandemic revenue losses”

(MJS). But University of Wisconsin System interim President Tommy Thompson pleaded no more cuts to the UW System. (Hint for Thompson – ask Wisconsin GOP legislators to approve federally funded Medicaid expansion. State savings from it could

help the UW System). The state faces higher unemployment, on top of an epic farm crisis with over 2,000 dairy farms out of business! What’s wrong with Wisconsin congressional Republicans?

Meanwhile the COVID-19 pandemic worsens. More than 4 million cases nationally, approaching 50,000 in Wisconsin. U.S. deaths are about 150,000 with around 900 in Wisconsin. However, Trump insists COVID-19 will “disappear”. He said:

“A lot of the country is – has no problem whatsoever – most of the country actually.”

On

par with his home remedy of ingesting disinfectant. However, even Trump knows he is

in political trouble. Too many getting sick or dying and a faltering economy.

Moreover,

polling shows Biden leading nationally, including Florida.

>> 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.](#)

So Trump canceled his coronation convention in Florida. Too many ambulance sirens. And, Trump has brought back his daily COVID-19 (reelection) briefing, sans Dr.

Anthony Fauci. Moreover, to distract from the COVID-19 health and economic carnage,

Trump sent “federal agents in military-style camouflage to Portland, Oregon”

(Washington Post). He is also threatening Milwaukee. None of that can obscure that Trump and state congressional Republicans have failed Wisconsin miserably.

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