

# Bill Kaplan: Trump and Johnson, duplicitous and deadly

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Trump and Wisconsin GOP Senator Ron Johnson made the U.S. number 1: more COVID-19 cases and deaths than any other country. There are about 6.5 million COVID-19 cases nationally, skyrocketing to near 90,000 in Wisconsin. U.S. deaths are about 195,000, over 1,200 in Wisconsin. Was this catastrophe inevitable? No.

Trump told author-journalist Bob Woodward, on tape, that he intentionally downplayed the virus for months, despite knowing it was easily transmissible “deadly stuff”. Johnson also minimized COVID-19 by falsely claiming that more people die in auto accidents. And, he heartlessly said COVID-19 was “not a death sentence except for maybe no more than 3.4 percent of our population ... probably far less.”

Trump kept comparing COVID-19 to the flu, pretending everything was “under control” and that COVID-19 would soon “disappear”. Moreover, Trump and Johnson proposed dangerous or unproven treatments. Trump, advised by “My Pillow” executive Mike Lindell, wants oleandrin, so-called medical herb, reviewed by the FDA. Why all this disingenuous nonsense?

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Trump and Johnson are not the brightest bulbs. In March, Trump told Woodward: “I wanted to always play (COVID-19) down. I still like playing it down because, I don’t want to create a panic. This is deadly stuff.” Laughable, there has never been a president who engages in more scaremongering than Trump. Johnson, seeking to distract from COVID-19 and the failing economy, smears Joe Biden: “hyping Biden-

Ukraine conspiracy theories right before the election, (advancing) a Russian disinformation plot” (Washington Post).

Trump and Johnson don't want COVID-19 and the recession to tank the stock market, built on a house of cards. But Wall Street and Main Street are not the same. The top 10 percent own 83 percent of the financial markets. Main Street is about production, services and jobs. However, Trump and Johnson keep saying the economy is “roaring back”, ignoring widespread human misery.

“Yet there is ample evidence that Americans are hurting. Roughly 14 million people remain out of work. Last month, about 40 percent of renters were facing the prospect of being kicked out of their homes for failure to pay rent. About 29 million people are drawing some form of unemployment assistance ... . Permanent job losses continue to rise at an alarming rate ... while thousands of small businesses are at risk of closing for good without additional help” (WP). Farmers face disaster and Americans are going hungry.

However, Trump said: “Our country is doing so well”. And, Johnson hit a new low: “Possibly, some of our unemployment insurance might be funding (rioters in Kenosha).” The MJS flatly said: “There is no evidence... .” Both hope that the Supreme Court will strike down the ACA with its protections for preexisting conditions and coverage of millions. Meanwhile, Trump and the GOP-led Senate twiddle their thumbs. What to do?

Biden has assembled a bipartisan team to distribute-produce personal protective equipment, increase testing and work with scientists on creating affordable, effective and safe vaccines. He will expand and strengthen the ACA. Controlling COVID-19 will enable a genuine economic recovery.

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