

# Bill Kaplan: Trump downplays COVID-19 to get reelected

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An electronic billboard near the Waukesha County Airport was blunt: “Trump COVID Superspreader Event”. It was erected by Rural America 2020, a nonpartisan network of farmers and other rural residents in the Midwest. It highlighted their opposition to the irresponsible Trump airport campaign rally. They are opposed to Trump’s trade wars, his incompetent COVID-19 response and resultant devastation of rural America.

Farmers have lost vital foreign markets, face prices that don’t meet costs and COVID-19 disruption of supply chains. COVID-19 has hit rural, suburban and urban Wisconsin hard: nearly 200,000 cases, approaching 2,000 deaths. However, Trump told the packed, often maskless, crowd: COVID-19 is “going away” and “it’s rounding the turn.” He blamed the daily case, hospitalization and death records being broken on too much testing. Trump also downplayed the consequences of COVID-19.

Earlier, Wisconsin GOP Senator Ron Johnson said: “Generally deaths are still pretty flat ... .” – on the very day that Wisconsin hit a record of 48 deaths. And, Johnson continues to downplay COVID-19, erroneously likening it to the flu. But the CDC released a new study: “Hospitalized patients with COVID-19 ... had a more than five times higher risk for in-hospital death and increased risk for 17 respiratory and nonrespiratory complications than did hospitalized patients with influenza” (flu).

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Trump and Johnson have long been dead wrong about COVID-19. Back in February,

Trump told journalist Bob Woodward (but not Americans): “It’s (COVID-19) also more deadly than even your strenuous flu.” And, at the final presidential debate Trump said: “We’re learning to live with it.” Joe Biden responded: “People are learning to die with it.” (over 225,000 dead) All reminiscent of when Trump and Johnson tried to normalize the rising toll by comparing COVID-19 deaths to annual auto-related deaths (40,000, including about 550 in Wisconsin).

Mindless of the health consequences, Trump came to Waukesha because he needs the WOW counties to be reelected. But Waukesha is one of Wisconsin’s COVID-19 hot spots, nearly 12,000 cases and over 100 deaths. Waukesha Republicans, County Executive Paul Farrow and state legislator Scott Allen, became infected. However, Waukesha GOP state legislator Joe Sanfelippo, chair of the Assembly Health Committee, said: “There is nothing that government can do.” Complete abdication of responsibility.

In contrast, Joe Biden has a national plan. He has assembled a bipartisan expert team to hit the ground running on day one. Instead of pitting state against state, the federal government would finally ramp-up production and distribution of U.S.-made personal protective equipment (masks, gowns and gloves). Biden would work with state leaders to implement wearing masks. And, he would establish comprehensive testing and contact tracing throughout the country. Finally, a Biden administration would heed doctors and scientists to produce effective, safe and free vaccines.

Most importantly, unlike Trump, Biden would strengthen the Affordable Care Act’s coverage and protections. Note: 8.5 million COVID-19 cases means millions more have a preexisting condition. Biden also knows that a full recovery requires expanding child and elder care. He will make government work for America.

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