

Bill Kaplan: U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson must go

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Coronavirus is a threat to our health and economic security. Thousands of cases and hundreds of deaths nationally, a rising toll in Wisconsin, a plunging stock market and skyrocketing jobless claims. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin speculated unemployment could increase to 20 percent without massive government intervention.

Wisconsin Democratic Governor Tony Evers said: “Unfortunately, this number (state coronavirus cases) is expected to rise and things will get worse before they get better.” Evers filled the void left by Trump and declared a public health emergency, closing schools and businesses. And, he is putting together an economic relief package.

Oblivious of the dangers, some Wisconsin GOP legislative leaders have called for no more closures. They are out of step with courageous and decisive GOP Governors Charlie Baker (MA), Mike DeWine (OH) and Larry Hogan (MD). All are on the same page as Evers: prevent a public health catastrophe. At the same time, Wisconsin state Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald appears open to working with Evers on an economic aid plan. State Assembly Speaker Robin Vos has not showed his hand.

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Meanwhile, Wisconsin GOP Senator Ron Johnson keeps showing that he is in over his head. Johnson, a former business tycoon, is the seventh richest member of the U.S. Senate (Investopedia). He is inexperienced and uninformed. Johnson has tried

mightily to get rid of the Affordable Care Act. Over 20 million Americans, including hundreds of thousands of Wisconsinites, would lose coverage. And, many more would lose protections from paying more or being denied coverage because of preexisting conditions. Moreover, Johnson has no grasp of science.

Last week, Johnson dropped another blooper. In a jaw-dropping interview with Craig Gilbert, MJS, Johnson said: “Right now, all people are hearing about are the (coronavirus) deaths. ...it’s obviously devastating to somewhere between 1 and 3.4 percent of the population. But that means 97 to 99 percent will get through this But we don’t shut down our economy because tens of thousands of people die on the highways.”

On Friday, Trump was asked by a reporter about Johnson’s heartless comments. Trump quickly distanced himself from Johnson, passing the question to Dr. Anthony Fauci., who said: “First of all, I think that’s a false equivalency to compare traffic accidents with (coronavirus) – that’s totally way out. When you have something new and it’s emerging, and you really can’t predict ... the impact it’s going to have, and you take a look at what’s going on ... I don’t think with any moral conscience you can say Why don’t we just let it rip and happen and let ‘X’ percent of the people die, I don’t understand that reasoning”

It gets worse. Johnson is in bed with the vaping industry. Scientific American reported that “smoking or vaping may increase the risk of a severe coronavirus infection.” This may explain why young adults (20-44) make up a big proportion of U.S. coronavirus patients in hospitals, many in intensive care (compromised lungs and immune systems).

Time for Senator Johnson to resign.

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