

Bill Kaplan: Wisconsin on its own until January 20

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There will be no coup to enable a defeated Trump to remain in the White House. The courts, military and mainstream press will never support such lawlessness. However, Trump continues his failed National Enquirer-like campaign to reverse his landslide loss. But the air is leaving his balloon of lies. President-elect Joe Biden will take office on January 20. In the interim Wisconsin is on its own as the pandemic turns more catastrophic.

White House chief of staff Mark Meadows said: "We're not going to control the pandemic." Nationally a cumulative 12+ million COVID-19 cases and 255,000+ deaths. Wisconsin staggers from a cumulative 350,000+ cases and 3,000+ deaths. Former Wisconsin GOP Governor Tommy Thompson, reacting to the horror, said: "We're Badgers and we're gonna beat this enemy, but let's do it together. It's not a Democrat. It's not a Republican. It's not a commie. ... It's a common enemy, and that common enemy is COVID-19." Spot-on!

Others are on the same page as Thompson. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) have "abandoned" Trump (Axios). NAM said: "(G)iven ... the threats to our economic and national security, and most importantly to the public health" the transition must begin now. "There is no time to waste nor room for error." Similarly, the American Hospital Association, American Medical Association and American Nurses Association have called for the transfer of power to begin so Biden can hit the ground running to control COVID-19.

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Biden is talking with both Democratic and GOP governors. He said: "You need help. I want you to know I will be your partner in the White House." And, more GOP governors are stepping up to enact mask mandates. Last week Iowa's Kim Reynolds and North Dakota's Doug Burgum joined 35 other governors in adopting mask mandates. They know that such action can "avert future lockdowns." Individual responsibility is not enough.

It is better late than never for Wisconsin GOP Assembly Speaker Robin Vos and the Stop the COVID Spread coalition to support wearing masks. However, there is more for them to do. They must join Thompson, GOP governors, national business and health groups in supporting a mask mandate. It's not optional. Moreover, the Stop the COVID Spread coalition could move forward on producing PPE.

An action plan for the coalition: Wisconsin desperately needs N95 masks and gowns for health care workers. Why not make them in Wisconsin? Look at the "Made in North Carolina (NC)" initiative, "Blue Cross (NC) teams up with North Carolina providers, experts to manufacture N95 masks." Similarly, "Premier and 34 health systems ... partnered with ... medical manufacturer DeRoyal ... (for) production of isolation gowns." Made in America. We are Badgers and can do this.

"There is hope on the horizon." Pfizer and Moderna announced their vaccines are effective. But it will take months to vaccinate everyone. (Wisconsin Democratic Governor Tony Evers, other Democratic and GOP governors).

Please wear your masks, maintain physical distancing, and avoid big social gatherings or demonstrations.

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