

Bill Kaplan: Speaker Vos struts, Governor Evers problem-solves

Posted on Monday, Feb 22, 2021

The column below reflects the views of the author, and these opinions are neither endorsed nor supported by WisOpinion.com.

Wisconsin GOP Assembly Speaker Robin Vos acts like a bantam rooster. He badgered Governor Tony Evers to lower the U.S. and Wisconsin flags to honor the late talk-radio host Rush Limbaugh. The 600,000 Wisconsinites infected with COVID-19 and the families of 6,300 others who died of the virus have other priorities. They deserve better from Vos.

Limbaugh, oblivious of facts and science as the pandemic began to spread worldwide, said: "It looks like the coronavirus is being weaponized (against) Trump. You think I'm wrong about this? ... I'm dead right on this. The coronavirus is the common cold..." 28+ million Americans who contracted COVID-19 and the families of about 500,000 dead would strongly disagree.

However, Vos can't help being a provocateur. He has been pecking away at Evers even before he was sworn in, leading the coup to eliminate or reduce gubernatorial authority. Worse, any effort to control the pandemic was taken to the state Supreme Court. Vos also orchestrated blowing up a compromise COVID-19 relief bill between Evers and the GOP-led state Senate. Then he got the legislature to end Evers' mask mandate (since reinstated by Evers).

>> 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.](#)

Vos creates or exacerbates problems, while Governor Evers is a problem-solver. He has developed a productive relationship with UW System President Tommy Thompson to contain COVID-19. The former GOP governor established a model program of masking, physical distancing and testing so UW campuses can stay

open. Moreover, Thompson has “deployed nursing, pharmacy and other healthcare students to hospitals, clinics and vaccination sites.” Bipartisan problem-solving.

Evers is also determined to solve other problems. Thousands of Wisconsinites lost jobs and healthcare coverage because of COVID-19. His budget calls for Wisconsin to join 38 other states, including 17 GOP-led, in expanding Medicaid. It would be paid entirely with federal funding under President Joe Biden’s American Rescue Plan (ARP), expected to pass by Congress in March. Wisconsin could then cover about 90,000 more Wisconsinites while substituting federal for state funding. State spending would be saved on uncompensated care, mental health and drug-alcohol treatment. Savings could be used for broadband expansion, roads and schools.

Evers also called for Wisconsin to join 18 other states in establishing a state-run healthcare marketplace for Wisconsinites to enroll in an Affordable Care Act (ACA) private insurance plan or Medicaid. Kaiser Health News reported: “State policymakers say they can run their own (marketplaces) more cheaply and efficiently (than the federal one), and can better respond to residents’ and insurers’ needs.” In the interim, Evers has taken advantage of Biden’s reopening the federal marketplace. Thousands of Wisconsinites who are now uninsured will again be able to enroll in a no-cost or subsidized ACA private insurance plan.

Moreover, the ARP will greatly improve ACA private insurance, fully subsidizing ACA private insurance coverage for many poor and the unemployed and providing substantial financial help for middle class enrollment. Evers has also proposed a public option for Wisconsin in which Wisconsinites ineligible for Medicaid (BadgerCare) could buy into it. Evers and Biden, partners in problem-solving.

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