

Bill Kaplan: Trump, his racist mob and Ron Johnson lost

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Last week began with Democratic Senate wins in Georgia and control of the Senate. Senator-elect Raphael Warnock said: “We are sending an African-American pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, where Martin Luther King Jr. served, and also Jon Ossoff, a young Jewish man, the son of an immigrant, to the U.S. Senate. ... In this moment, we’ve got to bring people together in order to do the hard work.”

Then a racist mob, waving Confederate flags and some wearing clothing adorned with “Camp Auschwitz”, stormed the U.S. Capitol, killing a Capitol Police officer and desecrating the Capitol, including a memorial to civil rights icon Georgia Democratic Representative John Lewis. The mob had marched to the Capitol after Trump called his presidential election loss an “egregious assault on our democracy” and told his followers to “walk down to the Capitol” and not show “weakness.”

Wyoming GOP Representative Liz Cheney said: “There’s no question the president formed the mob, ... incited the mob ... addressed the mob. He lit the flame.” In December, Trump tweeted: “Big protest in D.C. on January 6th. Be there, will be wild!” It was: 5 dead, pipe bombs and a truck filled with 11 Molotov cocktails (crude bombs) and a semiautomatic rifle. The Capitol invasion halted a congressional session to officially ratify the presidential election. The session was previously interrupted by Wisconsin GOP Senator Ron Johnson and like-minded GOP colleagues, to raise baseless allegations about “election irregularities.”

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However, a group of historians and constitutional scholars said: “Never before in our

history has a president who lost reelection tried to stay in office by subverting the democratic process set down by the Constitution. ... Unable to accept his defeat, President Trump and his collaborators have falsely charged massive electoral fraud ... They have concocted and spread falsehoods that inflame Americans against their own government, and against each other.” Moreover, the voters have spoken, courts rejected Trump’s lawsuits and the Electoral College ratified Joe Biden’s win. But Johnson disingenuously said: “We are not acting to thwart the democratic process – we are acting to protect it.” A lie.

Before Congress reconvened, the National Association of Manufacturers issued an extraordinary statement: “Armed violent protestors who support the baseless claim by outgoing President Trump that he somehow won an election that he overwhelmingly lost have stormed the U.S. Capitol today, attacking police officers and first responders, because Trump refused to accept defeat in a free and fair election. ... This is not law and order.” A chastened Johnson dropped his objections. It doesn’t remove his stain of dishonor.

Johnson hears conspiratorial voices, but doesn’t hear those fearful of losing their pensions, healthcare or jobs, or small dairy farmers crushed by market forces beyond their control. He must be defeated if he runs for reelection in 2022.

Impeaching Trump or invoking the 25th Amendment are fool’s errands. Moreover, Congress officially confirmed Biden’s victory. He takes office January 20, hitting the ground running to begin an economic recovery and end the worsening pandemic.

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