

# Bill Kaplan: U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson's betrayal

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Article VI of the Constitution specifies that members of Congress (and state legislators) “shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution ... .” Moreover, Wisconsin GOP Senator Ron Johnson took the following oath of office: “I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will ... faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter: So help me God.”

Senator Johnson has betrayed his oath by undermining the 2020 presidential election. Despite more than 60 state and federal courts rejecting election challenges, Johnson persists in alleging “irregularities.” Worse, despite 5 deaths, including 1 police officer, more than 100 police injured and over 400 of the January 6 Capitol assault mob indicted, Johnson said: “I know those are people that love this country, that truly respect law enforcement, would never do anything to break the law ... .” Missouri GOP Senator Roy Blunt denounced Johnson’s delusion: “We all saw what happened.”

Johnson’s betrayal extends to Wisconsin voters on issue after issue. He neither represents the entire state nor acts for the common good. Narcissistic self-interest rules. His signature accomplishment was to tilt the 2017 tax cuts more to the top 1 percent (including himself), adding about \$2 trillion to the debt.

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Recent news headlines clarify the 2017 tax cuts' impact: "No Federal Taxes for Dozens of Big, Profitable Companies" (NYT) and "Top earners skirt taxes on 20% of income" (Washington Post). Johnson, 8th richest senator, insisted on adding a 20 percent deduction for pass-through businesses such as his now former plastics company. 61 percent of the tax break goes to the top 1 percent. Only 4 percent goes to the bottom 67 percent. Worse, pass-through companies use their complexity to game the tax system and avoid paying taxes (President Biden wants to crack down on these tax cheats).

In 2020, Senate Republicans used COVID relief legislation to obscure making the pass-through tax break even more generous. What was Johnson's role in expanding a tax break for the wealthy during a pandemic? In contrast, Johnson voted against Biden's American Rescue Plan (help for all Americans), and he opposed provisions to extend healthcare coverage and consumer protections under the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Millionaire Johnson is fanatically opposed to ACA taxes on the wealthy to expand healthcare coverage to the uninsured. Much of conservative opposition to the ACA centers on a Medicare tax only on the wealthy – earnings over \$250,000 for couples and \$200,000 for single filers — and the same for a Medicare tax on capital gains, dividends and other investment income. These payroll taxes ensured the wealthy paid their fair share. More than 20 million Americans, including well-over 200,000 Wisconsinites, got healthcare coverage. And, many more gained consumer protections.

Senator Johnson does not hear ordinary Wisconsinites, the ultimate betrayal.

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