

Bill Kaplan: U.S. Senate advances bipartisan infrastructure bill

Posted on Monday, Aug 2, 2021

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

The Senate voted 67-32 to begin debate on a bipartisan infrastructure bill. 17 GOP senators, including Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, voted for cloture (against filibuster). Ohio GOP Senator Rob Portman, who helped negotiate the bill, said: "It's going to help with regards to our roads and bridges and our ports and waterways, and also helps expand digital infrastructure, broadband. It's very popular." West Virginia Democratic Senator Joe Manchin, another negotiator, agreed: "I've never seen a pothole with an R or D name on it. It will bust your tire, tear your car up, doesn't care who you are."

Wisconsin Democratic Senator Tammy Baldwin shared their enthusiasm: "We are moving forward on bipartisan legislation that will create good-paying jobs and put America to work rebuilding roads, bridges, water infrastructure, and expand access to affordable and reliable high-speed broadband for Wisconsin families, small businesses and farmers." However, Wisconsin GOP Senator Ron Johnson voted to obstruct (filibuster) the bipartisan bill. Once again, Johnson is out of step with voters and many GOP senators, including McConnell.

Senator McConnell called the bipartisan infrastructure bill a "focused compromise" and said he was "happy" to advance the bill. Why? McConnell's vote suggests a GOP division in the Senate, some actually want to legislate. Moreover, the deteriorated outdated Brent Spence Bridge, connecting Kentucky and Ohio, needs replacement. And, perhaps McConnell is sick and tired of Trump's unhinged insults and interference: "Under the weak leadership of Mitch McConnell, Senate Republicans continue to lose. ... RINOs (Republicans in name only) are ruining America, right alongside Communist Democrats."

>> 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.](#)

Trump never cared about governing – compromise, negotiation, respect for the opposition and a basic acceptance of facts. Trump’s “Infrastructure Week” was rolled out ad infinitum and became a long-standing joke. Even with a GOP-led Congress, nothing was achieved. In contrast, President Biden helped negotiate and shape the bipartisan infrastructure bill. After the cloture vote, Biden said: “I want to thank the bipartisan group for working together and the (congressional) committee chairs for raising their ideas and concerns with me, Vice President Harris and members of the Cabinet. This deal signals to the world that our democracy can function, deliver and do big things.”

A White House “Fact Sheet” detailed “The Historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal:

- Makes the largest federal investment in public transit ever
- Makes the largest federal investment in passenger rail since the creation of Amtrak
- Makes the single largest dedicated bridge investment since the construction of the interstate highway system
- Makes the largest investment in clean drinking water and waste water infrastructure in American history ...
- Ensures every American has access to reliable high-speed internet
- Helps us tackle the climate crisis by making the largest investment in clean energy transmission and EV (electric vehicle) infrastructure in history ... (and) will repair and rebuild our roads”

The bipartisan infrastructure bill will send billions to Wisconsin to repair and rebuild our antiquated deteriorated infrastructure. Moreover, it creates good-paying Wisconsin jobs. All of Wisconsin will be helped, including cities, rural areas and suburbs.

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