

Bill Kaplan: Lies and truth, January 6 and Ron Johnson

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The congressional hearings on the January 6, 2021 violent desecration of the U.S. Capitol are a wake-up call for Americans. We must snap out of denial and pay attention as we celebrate July 4th, Independence Day. We the people declared independence from a tyrannical unbalanced king. And, began an imperfect journey towards equality, life, liberty, pursuit of happiness and other “unalienable” rights.

Retired conservative U.S. Judge Michael Luttig testified: “On January 6, 2021, the prescribed day for choosing the American president, there was not to be a peaceful transfer of power – for the first time in the history of our Republic. ... On January 6, 2021, revolutionaries, not patriots, assaulted America and American democracy.” Judge Luttig emphasized: “Donald Trump and his allies and supporters are a clear and present danger to American democracy.” He is not alone.

Former Wisconsin Representatives Dave Obey (D) and Tom Petri (R), in a MJS op-ed, said: “What we observed come to a head on January 6, 2021, was something we had never seen before and hope no American ever sees again; an effort directed by the sitting president, residing in the White House, to overturn the lawfully certified vote of the American people in the 2020 presidential election. An effort which ... involved assembling a mob ... and stirring them up to attack the Capitol as our Congress was receiving the results of the presidential election as certified by the governments of our 50 states.”

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Obey and Petri urged “everyone (to) watch the hearings ... seeing the truth without

the taint of partisan lenses, and doing all that we can to stop the potential for sabotage of future elections before it happens.” The bipartisan hearings, led by Mississippi Democratic Representative Bennie Thompson and Wyoming GOP Representative Liz Cheney, have masterfully filled in the blanks with mostly Republican witnesses.

Contrary to Wisconsin GOP Senator Ron Johnson’s assertions, we have learned that January 6 was an armed insurrection, with far more carrying guns than thought previously. And, testimony was provided by former Trump campaign manager Bill Stepien and Attorney General William Barr that Trump lost the election, despite his baseless claims, contradicting Johnson. Moreover, Vice President Pence’s White House lawyer, Greg Jacob, testified that Pence had no power to overturn state election results, refuting Johnson, who initially wanted to do so. And, a bombshell was dropped showing that Johnson tried to pass a list of fake Wisconsin Trump electors to Pence as he was preparing to present the Electoral College results.

Another hearing highlighted Cassidy Hutchinson, top aide to White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows. The Washington Post reported she testified that: “(Trump) knew his supporters were carrying weapons, insisted on personally leading the armed mob to the Capitol, physically assailed the senior Secret Service agent who told him it was not possible, expressed support for the hanging of (Pence), and mused about pardoning the rioters.” Hutchinson’s courage and integrity mightily contrasted with Johnson’s everchanging lies.

Johnson left in the dustbin of history.

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