

# Bill Kaplan: U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson abandons Ukraine again

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Wisconsin GOP Senator Ron Johnson huffs and puffs, rants and raves and howls at the moon. Neither a problem solver nor a legislator, he is a charlatan and demagogue. Case in point. Johnson voted against a bipartisan funding bill which prevented a government shutdown while providing \$13.6 billion in economic and military aid for embattled Ukraine. 18 other GOP senators and all Democrats, including Wisconsin Senator Tammy Baldwin, voted yes.

Baldwin said: "I believe we need to keep standing strong with Ukraine, our European allies, and NATO by continuing to provide them the support they need to defend against Putin's war against freedom, and help our allies address the tragic humanitarian crisis he has created for millions of innocent Ukrainians." However, the GOP senators, including Johnson, who voted no against this vital aid disingenuously attack President Biden for not doing more.

Johnson offered two rationales for his no vote: Biden is weak and should "stop leading from behind. ... Give the brave people of Ukraine all the tools they need to defend themselves... ." However, Biden authorized an additional \$800 million in military aid from the bill, for a total of \$2 billion. Then Johnson complained "that no one has had time to read" the funding legislation. But Johnson "had time" to meet with the extremist truckers "whose convoy has besieged D.C.'s highways for nearly two weeks in protest of government pandemic restrictions" (Washington Post).

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Johnson told the truckers: "God bless all of you." A leader of the truckers said:

“We’re not going to go in (D.C.) and throat-punch them just yet, even though I know we would all love to do that. ...(We will) keep going back every day and just annoying the crap out of them.” One observer of far-right groups opined: “It does feel like they’re playing a big game now. (They’re) pushing just a little bit further every day to see what they can get away with, and that’s worrisome too” (WaPo). And, Kansas GOP Senator Roger Marshall gave the Trump supporting-QAnon truckers a Capitol tour, unmindful of the lessons of January 6, 2021.

Johnson peddled his lies and misinformation on phony COVID-19 treatments and vaccines to the truckers. However, he did not tell the truckers how he refused to lift a finger to save imminently collapsing pension plans that covered truckers and many others. Protecting those retirees was taken up by Senator Baldwin. She successfully spearheaded a Senate pension plan to help about 22,500 workers and retirees in Wisconsin and over a million nationally. Johnson voted no. He doesn’t care about regular folks.

Johnson is an imposter, pretending to be a U.S. senator. His crocodile tears about Ukraine can’t obscure his refusal to hold Trump accountable when the White House withheld military aid to Ukraine attempting to blackmail Ukrainian President Zelensky to defame Biden with false allegations. Nor should Johnson’s Moscow meeting with Russian officials around July 4, 2018 be ignored. What message was Johnson sending to Putin about Russian interference in U.S. elections?

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