

# Bill Kaplan: Dysfunctional GOP-led House, shutdown looming

Posted on Monday, Nov 13, 2023

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

There was good and bad news last week. Despite Democratic handwringing, Democrats won big on Election Day. Abortion rights and great candidates made it a blowout: Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear won reelection in a state that Trump carried by double digits; abortion rights won in Ohio as a referendum enshrining reproductive rights in the state scored in suburbs, cities and rural areas, including 18 counties won by Trump in 2020; an abortion rights candidate was elected to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and Democrats held the Virginia state Senate while picking up the House of Delegates.

There has been much doom and gloom about bad polls for President Joe Biden. Some Democratic critics think Biden is too old and lacks charisma. Poppycock! Biden is older, but has common sense and wisdom. He is no spellbinder, but he gets things done: infrastructure, healthcare and climate change legislation, modernizing the economy (jobs) and standing up for regular folks. The likely choice in the 2024 presidential election will be between Biden and Trump. Democracy will be on the line.

Which brings us back to Election Day 2023. Kentucky GOP Secretary of State Michael Adams won reelection. Unlike many Republicans, including U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson, Adams strongly opposes election denialism. He rejects the “demagoguery” of those who falsely claim that Biden stole the 2020 presidential election. Moreover, Adams helped expand absentee and early voting with Governor Beshear. Lesson: Wisconsin GOP Assembly Speaker Robin Vos must stop listening to the lunatics in his caucus. Instead, Vos should pay attention to former state GOP Governor Tommy Thompson and Representatives Tom Petri and Reid Ribble who oppose election denialism.

**>> 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.](#)**

This brings us to the bad news. Despite big wins on Election Day, overconfidence would be mistaken. West Virginia Democratic Senator Joe Manchin regrettably announced his retirement. In 2020, Trump won West Virginia with 69% of the vote — that Senate seat is gone. A Democratic-led Senate is in jeopardy. Democrats will have to run the table in 2024. However, a Democratic-led House seems doable in 2024. Why?

GOP House Speaker Mike Johnson, supported by all Wisconsin GOP representatives, is leading the House to a looming federal government shutdown on midnight November 17. The only hope is a stopgap funding deal that only postpones the disaster. Increasingly, that seems difficult at best. Election denier Johnson is inexperienced and an extremist, out of step with most Americans, including Wisconsinites, on abortion and basic civil rights. Like Vos, his caucus is filled with nutcases.

What would a shutdown mean? No pay for the military and federal workers, inadequate federal inspection of our food and water, unsafe flying with less inspection of planes and fewer air traffic controllers, farmers not getting aid or loans, stopping medical and scientific research, little help for seniors with questions about Social Security and Medicare and shredding the safety net. Speaker Johnson says “Trust us” as House Republicans appear deadlocked. The House GOP is on Mars and voters won’t forget that dysfunctional Republicans bring chaos and misery.

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