

# Bill Kaplan: Shutdown averted, time to throw GOP bums out

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With hours to go, Congress voted overwhelmingly to postpone a needless government shutdown for 45 days with passage of a stopgap funding bill. Speaker Kevin McCarthy, following Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and most Senate Republicans, finally faced reality, turning to House Democrats to keep the government open. The House voted 335 (209 Democrats and 126 Republicans) to fund the government at current levels; 90 GOP representatives and 1 Democrat voted no. And, the Senate voted 88 yes and 9 no (49 Democrats and Independents and 39 Republicans yes with all 9 no votes from GOP senators).

All Wisconsin Democratic members of Congress, including Senator Tammy Baldwin, voted to keep the government open. From the beginning of this crisis Baldwin has consistently shown principles-based leadership. In contrast, Wisconsin GOP Senator Ron Johnson obstructed and opposed an initial bipartisan Senate bill to head off a shutdown. But in the end he voted for the stopgap spending bill. Wisconsin House Republicans were split – Representatives Scott Fitzgerald and Tom Tiffany nihilistically opposed the stopgap funding bill. All other Wisconsin GOP representatives voted yes.

This was a manufactured crisis, initiated by House Republicans and a few GOP senators, including Johnson. Months ago Congress overwhelmingly passed a bipartisan agreement to suspend the debt ceiling and hold nondefense discretionary spending flat for 2 years, with more spending for defense and veterans. Tiffany and Johnson opposed the debt ceiling agreement and plotted to blow it up. They were joined by 149 GOP representatives who had previously voted yes. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy began introducing measure after measure to renege on funding the government at levels in the agreement, without any thought to a bipartisan path to keep the government open. McCarthy's word apparently means nothing.

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Vote after vote by Republicans to deal with their manufactured crisis failed. Studied incompetence. Moreover, there was breathtaking cruelty. House Republicans took up a bill to cut most nondefense discretionary spending by 30 percent: federal law enforcement eviscerated, hundreds of thousands of children would lose child care and Head Start, 1 million elderly without Meals on Wheels, 3.2 million women and kids denied nutritional assistance, huge cuts in medical-science research, many fewer rail inspections, Social Security assistance curtailed and much more. All Wisconsin GOP representatives voted yes. Vote them out in November 2024.

Finally, there was one glaring omission in the stopgap funding: no help for Ukraine. Moreover, Fitzgerald, Tiffany and fellow Wisconsin GOP Representative Derrick Van Orden, voted previously to cut or eliminate Ukraine aid. Congress must correct this betrayal.

A terrible week for House Republicans, almost shutting down the government, abandoning Ukraine, theatrically launching an impeachment “inquiry” with no basis against President Biden. Democrats aren’t perfect, but it’s time to throw the GOP bums out. Our economy, standard of living, climate change, reproductive choices, civil rights and democracy are on the line. The last few days make this crystal clear. Moreover, we only bought a 45 day grace period. It’s far from over from the GOP wrecking crew.

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