

Bill Kaplan: Wisconsin GOP representatives hijack defense bill

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As Trump faces multiple indictments, the GOP chaos continues in Congress. House Republicans, including all Wisconsin GOP representatives, hijacked the traditionally bipartisan National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) with extraneous amendments. The annual NDAA normally lays out defense spending and national security priorities. However, the GOP-led House passed the NDAA, weighted down with nonsense, on a near party-line vote, 219 — 210. All Wisconsin GOP representatives voted yes while all Wisconsin Democratic representatives voted no. Why?

Republicans continued their unconscionable and politically suicidal effort to forbid all abortions. An amendment to the NDAA passed 221 — 213 “to prohibit the Secretary of Defense from paying for or reimbursing (travel) expenses related to abortion services” for members of the military. All Wisconsin GOP representatives voted yes while all Wisconsin Democratic representatives voted no. Wisconsin voters who support reproductive health services must hold their GOP representatives accountable.

But GOP knuckleheads in the House were not done. They passed another amendment to the NDAA 227 – 201 “to prohibit funds ... to promote (that the) U.S. is a fundamentally racist country (or that the) Declaration of Independence or the U.S. Constitution are racist documents.” All Wisconsin GOP representatives voted yes while all Wisconsin Democratic representatives voted no. Although there were bromides in the amendment about racial equality, the amendment was ahistorical. GOP bomb throwers pretended that nostalgia is reality.

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In 1925, the Army War College issued a report “Negro Manpower”. The report said: “The cranial cavity of the Negro is smaller than whites’ In general the Negro is jolly, docile, tractable, and lively He is a rank coward in the dark.” Repugnant. Moreover, the U.S. military did not begin desegregation until 1948. Finally, U.S. Navy Admiral William McRaven Ret., former SEAL officer who led the effort that killed Osama bin Laden, said “diversity and inclusion are essential to our national success” What the heck is wrong with Republicans?

Fortunately, other crazy GOP amendments to the NDAA failed. Georgia GOP Representative Marjorie Greene sponsored an amendment to end a U.S. training and equipment program for Ukrainian troops. It lost 341 – 89. However, Wisconsin GOP Representatives Scott Fitzgerald and Tom Tiffany shamefully voted to end the program. Fitzgerald, having served in the military, should know better. Tiffany is just an idiot. Then Florida GOP Representative Matt Gaetz went further with an amendment to end all U.S. military aid to Ukraine. It lost 358 – 70. However, Tiffany again voted yes, going down the road of appeasement.

But the lopsided votes against the Ukrainian amendments only made the partisan NDAA a little less odious. There were other amendments to the NDAA that passed: prohibiting medical care for transgender troops or funding diversity, equity and inclusion efforts. Wisconsin GOP Representative Mike Gallagher, also a veteran and on the Armed Services Committee, knows that his committee approved a cleaner bipartisan version 58 – 1. The partisan House bill is DOA in the Senate. However, House Republicans struck another blow for chaos. Trump must be very pleased.

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