

Senator Johnson is Wrong

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Sen. Ron Johnson's comment "we got the \$800 billion stimulus which basically went into the pockets of public unions" at a Green Bay campaign stop last week is dead wrong. I was there in 2009 and we faced a \$50 trillion hole in the economy, and unions did not cause the mess. It was the losing Republican ideas of "Trickle Down" economics, deregulation, borrow and spend budgeting, and our nation's unnecessary involvement in wars overseas.

APPLETON, WI - [Sen. Ron Johnson's comments](#) last week about the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 deserve our attention.

In wrongly stating "... we got the \$800 billion stimulus which basically went into the pockets of public unions," Johnson suggests working class women and men caused our economic mess.

Johnson is wrong.

By 2008, our economy had been driven into the ditch by irresponsible Republican policies including trickle down economics, where money was supposed to trickle into pockets of working class families after rich people were given huge tax cuts. It failed miserably.

Johnson's majority party also borrowed and spent money government did not have and deregulated banks on Wall Street, sinking us even deeper into debt.

These were not union ideas; they are Republican realities.

The fact is that without paying for any of it, Johnson's party handed out tax cuts to billionaires, created massive federal budget deficits and wasted \$3 trillion destroying Iraq where 4,488 American heroes gave their ultimate sacrifice.

Johnson is dead wrong.

I was there in 2009. We faced a \$50 trillion hole in the economy from the housing market collapse; the stock market was crashing; 750,000 jobs across the nation were being lost each

month; and our financial system was frozen — a combination not seen since the Great Depression.

There was a complete lack of confidence in capitalism itself. Banks would not loan money to anyone, for they were not certain they would be paid back. Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson told me 75 percent of America's assets were in 17 banks and these banks had no money: "They are bone dry."

Working together with Democrats Dave Obey, Herb Kohl and Russ Feingold, I helped create the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the boldest action taken by government since the Depression. We brought back billions of our own tax dollars to Wisconsin to rebuild our schools, roads and bridges while delivering the biggest tax cut in American history.

Johnson just does not get it.

Unions did not cause this mess. It was the losing Republican ideas of Trickle Down economics, Deregulation of Wall Street, Borrow and Spend budgeting and our nation's unnecessary involvement in never ending religious civil wars overseas.

Now more than ever we need elected officials who will think things all the way through; women and men who will enact laws to reward work instead of wealth as we begin to solve our differences in conversations not confrontations.

Appleton's Dr. Steve Kagen is a former congressman who represented Wisconsin's 8th District.

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