

D.C. Wrap: Johnson, Baldwin remain divided on health care solution; Gallagher gets a challenger

Posted on Thursday, Sep 14, 2017

Welcome to our weekly DC Wrap, where we write about what Wisconsin's congressional delegation is up to in Washington. Sign up for our mailing list [here](#) to receive our newsletter directly.

Quotes of the week, Sept. 8-14

We are up to the task and looking forward to making sure our caucus continues to focus on what's most important to people across the country and that's talking about jobs and wages, something the Republicans simply aren't doing.

- U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, during a House Dems announcement Wednesday morning unveiling five Jobs for America task forces that'll work on legislation targeting working families and the economy as part of the Dems' "A Better Deal" agenda. Pocan's subcommittee focuses on access to jobs, including topics such as higher education, access to capital and more, he said. See the full news conference:

<https://www.facebook.com/HouseDemocrats/videos/10155584804623548/>

Our plan is to get this done by the end of the year — for law — so that we start 2018 with a new tax system.

- U.S. House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Janesville, in an AP Newsmakers interview Wednesday morning where he called for an "aggressive timeline" to get tax reform done this year, saying Republicans have to deliver on their promise in order to "help improve people's lives." Ryan also declined to say the GOP tax plan wouldn't raise the national deficit. See the full interview:

<https://www.facebook.com/APNews/videos/10154941837091623/>

This week's news

-- U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson and three other senators on Wednesday unveiled

a new GOP plan to overhaul the health care system, as a competing single-payer solution gains support from some Wisconsin Dems.

Johnson, who joined U.S. Sens. Dean Heller, R-Nev., Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., Bill Cassidy, R-La., and former U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa. at a news conference urged other Republicans to sign-on to their solution, saying it is a “vast improvement” over the Affordable Care Act.

“For my Republican colleagues that this isn’t quite good enough, it doesn’t do enough of a repeal: This is our last shot,” Johnson said. “I come from a manufacturing background, I will never let perfect be the enemy of the good.”

Their bill would cut Medicaid spending and eliminate the ACA’s individual mandate and largely turn over control of the health care markets to the states. It comes nearly two months after the Senate failed to pass legislation to repeal and replace Obamacare.

Meanwhile, U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., held a news conference Wednesday unveiling his “Medicare for All” health care plan, which has won the backing of U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, who outlined her support in a Milwaukee Journal Sentinel op-ed Tuesday.

Baldwin on Wednesday also blasted the “latest repeal plan” from the GOP senators, saying it would create an age tax while rolling back access to health care.

“Instead of making things worse, we should make things better by getting the job done on bipartisan solutions that lower costs, expand coverage, and make health care more affordable,” she said.

Other Wisconsin House Dems are also voicing support for Sanders’ plan, including U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, who wrote on Twitter: “RT if you agree that Congress must pass #MedicareForAll! Health care should be a right for ALL Americans, not just the privileged few.”

But U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, D-La Crosse, didn’t commit to the Senate’s single-payer plan in a statement this afternoon.

“Right now I am focused on working together with both Republicans and Democrats to keep the parts of the Affordable Care Act that are working, fix what doesn’t, lower health care costs, and make sure all Wisconsinites have access to affordable,

quality health care,” he said.

[Watch the GOP news conference.](#)

See Baldwin’s op-ed:

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/opinion/contributors/2017/09/12/baldwin-why-support-medicare-all-and-other-efforts-expand-health-coverage/657254001/>

— Those who missed last week’s WisPolitics.com breakfast forum in D.C. can listen to the audio online.

The speakers at last week’s forum were former Democratic state Senate Majority Leader Chuck Chvala; former GOP Assembly Speaker Scott Jensen; Tom Schreiber, the former chief of staff to U.S. Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner and now a lobbyist with Michael Best Strategies; and Will Stone, a former chief of staff to U.S. Rep. David Obey, D-Wausau.

Listen to the audio:

<https://soundcloud.com/wispolitics/170906dcbreakfastforum/s-dPmC9>

See photos from the event:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/150660134@N07/sets/72157685989268130/>

— Democrat Beau Liegeois, who announced on Tuesday he’ll challenge 8th CD freshman GOP Rep. Mike Gallagher next year, said the House’s “failure” on health care this spring pushed him to run for office.

Calling the plan the House GOP passed in May a “travesty,” Liegeois said the chamber should have looked into a comprehensive bipartisan solution that would safeguard pre-existing conditions and address high costs of insurance premiums.

Gallagher, who won his seat in a 25-point victory last fall, voted for the House GOP bill, saying at the time that it was “far from perfect” and would see improvements in the Senate.

Liegeois, who grew up in and currently lives in Allouez and has been assistant DA of Brown County for more than nine years, said he also had concerns about the drinking water quality in his district and securing higher-paying jobs for working middle-class families.

Liegeois also said he would support constitutional term limits in the House and Senate, as well as every public office. In the Senate, he'd like to see limits of two terms, while U.S. representatives would be limited to four terms.

Should that legislation not come to fruition, he said, he would still hold himself to spending eight years in the House if he was elected.

Gallagher authored a bill that would add an amendment to the Constitution on term limits. The bill would limit House members to six terms and senators to two terms, although it wouldn't apply to any current member and offers exemptions for those who took office for only part of the term.

But Gallagher previously told WisPolitics.com he won't hold himself to those term limits because one person doing so is "not going to fix the problem."

Asked about his thoughts on Gallagher's tenure in office, Liegeois instead chose to focus on Congress as a whole.

"I'm not letting anyone off the hook," he said. "I think the entire Congress has failed us."

Madison Wiberg, spokeswoman for Gallagher's campaign, said the Green Bay Republican isn't commenting on Liegeois' candidacy, adding he's "focused on fulfilling his promise to the people of the 8th District to change politics as usual and force Congress to do its job."

"The endless campaign cycle pollutes our democracy which is why Mike has introduced multiple pieces of legislation that would stop Congress from going home to campaign until it gets its work done," she said.

— U.S. Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner, R-Menomonee Falls, is highlighting a list that calls one of his bills a "no-brainer" for taxpayers.

The National Taxpayers Union last week released its annual "No-Brainers" list and included a bill from Sensenbrenner that ensures businesses need to be physically present in a state for them to be taxed or regulated. Sensenbrenner said in a news release that "over-taxation and regulatory burdens weigh heavy on American businesses."

See the release:

<https://sensenbrenner.house.gov/press-releases-statements?ID=5F601A4D-B8C4-4685-8EDE-A8BE4BAE7197>

— **Sensenbrenner this week recognized a Wisconsin veteran who was named the 2017 Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year.**

Kenneth Lee, a Brookfield native, won the award from the group Disabled American Veterans.

See the release and a photo of Lee:

<https://sensenbrenner.house.gov/press-releases-statements?ID=76A80BE9-C849-4FE0-A279-9E60C323A762>

— **U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin last week joined nine other senators in calling on President Trump to do something about the opioid crisis, calling “continued inaction” on the topic “deeply concerning.”**

Trump last month said he was drafting paperwork to declare the opioid crisis a “national emergency.” But the letter noted since then, Trump’s administration “has yet to make such a declaration, leaving another unfulfilled promise to provide overdue relief to the individuals and communities who continue to suffer.”

The letter also listed a series of questions about the consideration of an emergency declaration and the steps the administration’s planning to take to address the opioid crisis.

See the letter:

<https://www.baldwin.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/09.08.17%20-%20Opioid%20emergency.pdf>

— **A new bill Baldwin introduced last week aims to bump up the number of employee-owned businesses.**

The “Worker Owned Health Act” looks to make low-interest loans available to employees interested in purchasing or growing their company.

“We must do more to reward hard work and raise incomes for working families,” she said. “Wisconsin has a rich history of employee-owned businesses that fosters innovation and increases productivity, and I’m proud to be encouraging more workers to establish and expand the employee-owned stakes in their companies.”

See the release:

<https://www.baldwin.senate.gov/press-releases/wow-act>

-- Baldwin is also the recent recipient of two awards: the National Farmers Union's 2017 Golden Triangle Award for her support of family farmers and rural communities; and the National Woman's Party's Voice for Women Award for her work in creating the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission, celebrating 100 years of women's suffrage.

— U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman this week slammed an Obama-era rule that he says puts a burden on franchisees.

At a committee hearing this week, Grothman, R-Glenbeulah, criticized the “joint-employer standard” as one that gives the owners of a franchise too much power over franchisees’ decisions. Grothman told a business owner who testified that it’s a “shame that the government is trying to drive people like you out of business.”

See the release:

<https://grothman.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=404>

— A bill from U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher aimed at hiring Department of Homeland Security analysts with a wider range of skills passed the House this week.

Gallagher, R-Green Bay, said after the bill passed it makes sure “our analysts have the robust skillsets necessary to combatting the threat of terrorism and cyber-attacks, securing our borders and infrastructure, and strengthening our defenses.”

See the release:

<https://gallagher.house.gov/media/press-releases/gallagher-s-homeland-security-bill-passes-house-unanimously>

— U.S. Rep. Ron Kind is hosting his annual corn roast on Friday evening in La Crosse.

This is the 16th year the La Crosse Dem is holding the fundraiser, where he'll also be recognizing Wisconsin veterans Petty Officer Martin Severson and Staff Sergeant Louis Ferris.

See more:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/2017/kind-campaign-kind-to-honor-wisconsin-veterans-at-16th-annual-old-fashioned-wisconsin-corn-roast/>

See event info:

<https://us.eventbu.com/west-salem/ron-kind-s-16th-annual-old-fashioned-wisconsin-corn-roast/5690963>

Posts of the week

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BY6LInGzQ/?taken-by=senronjohnson>

[#OfficeDogTodd](#) is ready for some football! [#GoPackGo](#) ☐☐
pic.twitter.com/4WeFbcgBJ6

— Rep. Glenn Grothman (@RepGrothman) [September 10, 2017](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/repmarkpocan/posts/1505666749513060>

ICYMI

Ron Johnson, Tammy Baldwin remain on opposite sides of health care debate

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/news/politics/2017/09/12/ron-johnson-tammy-baldwin-remain-opposite-sides-health-care-debate/659016001/>

Tammy Baldwin, Ron Johnson weigh in on tax overhaul

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/news/2017/09/11/tammy-baldwin-ron-johnson-weigh-tax-overhaul/653758001/>

Sen. Baldwin Looks To Boost Employee Ownership Of Companies

<https://www.wpr.org/sen-baldwin-looks-boost-employee-ownership-companies>

Leah Vukmir enters Republican U.S. Senate race in bid to unseat Democrat Tammy Baldwin

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/news/politics/elections/2017/09/07/leah-vukmir-enters-republican-u-s-senate-race/641042001/>

Ron Johnson wants unredacted transcripts alleging James Comey started clearing Hillary Clinton during investigation

<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/ron-johnson-wants-unredacted-transcripts-alleging-james-comey-started-clearing-hillary-clinton-during-investigation/article/2634115>

Ron Johnson explains vote against bill on disaster relief, debt funding

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/news/politics/2017/09/08/ron-johnson-explains-vote-against-bill-disaster-relief-debt-funding/646880001/>

WI members of Congress vote against debt bill

<http://whbl.com/news/articles/2017/sep/11/wi-members-of-congress-vote-against-debt-bill/>

Liegeois to challenge Gallagher in 2018 8th Congressional District race

<http://www.greenbaypressgazette.com/story/news/2017/09/12/liegeois-challenge-gallagher-2018-8th-congressional-district-race/654654001/>

Democrat announces run in Wisconsin 8th Congressional District

<http://www.wrn.com/2017/09/democrat-announces-run-in-wisconsin-8th-congressional-district/>

GOP Rep. Duffy: Trump “Empowered Democrats,” Schumer “Doesn’t Want to Make America Great Again”

https://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2017/09/08/gop_rep_duffy_trump_empowered_democrats_schumer_doesnt_want_to_make_america_great_again.html

Veteran joins Duffy’s Hudson office

<http://www.hudsonstarobserver.com/news/government/4322877-veteran-joins-duffys-hudson-office>

Glenn Grothman announces rescheduled town halls in Mount Calvary, Beaver Dam

<http://www.fdlreporter.com/story/news/2017/09/11/glenn-grothman-announces-rescheduled-town-halls-mount-calvary-beaver-dam/654224001/>

Grothman votes for Harvey relief, debt bill; Gallagher votes no

<http://fox11online.com/news/political/grothman-votes-for-harvey-relief-debt-bill-gallagher-votes-no>