

DC Wrap: May 19-25

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Also: Registration is open for a June 7 breakfast gathering at the Monocle in Washington, D.C. featuring U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont. Sponsored by Michael Best and Michael Best Strategies, WPS Health Insurance, AARP Wisconsin and Xcel Energy with assistance from partners UW-Madison and the Wisconsin Alumni Association.

Register: <https://www.wispolitics.com/2017/june-7-wispolitics-com-dc-breakfast-with-u-s-rep-mark-pocan/>

Quotes of the week

We are on a rescue mission to bring down the cost of coverage and make sure families have access to affordable care. This CBO report again confirms that the American Health Care Act achieves our mission: lowering premiums and lowering the deficit.

- House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Janesville, on the new Congressional Budget Office score for the Obamacare replacement bill that the GOP-led House passed.

This is just a bad bill that was never intended to help people, only to give \$600 billion in tax cuts to the wealthiest in this country, insurance companies, and Big Pharma.

- U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, adding the CBO score "confirms that Trumpcare is a terrible proposal and people will pay more for less coverage, if they can even afford it."

See more on the CBO score in a WisPolitics.com story:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/2017/dems-slam-new-cbo-score-on-health-care-bill/>

This is a long-term generational struggle and war that we're going to be in, and we need a willing coalition of the civilized world.

- U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, [in a CNN interview](#) after the attack in Manchester calling for further engaging the country's Muslim communities.

He's got to understand that the Russians are not our friends, they are not our allies, they are not to be trusted.

– U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, D-La Crosse, [in an “UpFront with Mike Gousha” interview](#) saying Congress needs assurances that President Trump will not again share classified information with people who aren't supposed to have it.

This week's news

— U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan says he is anticipating more “synergy” between the Democratic National Committee and progressive Dems after he became co-chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus this week.

That's because he's stepping into a role formerly held by U.S. Rep. Keith Ellison, D-Minn., who's now deputy chair of the DNC.

Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, told WisPolitics.com in an interview this week that he's planning to continue working closely with Ellison, as he did when Ellison was co-chair and Pocan was vice-chair of the caucus. That includes working on forming progressive policy initiatives “trying to stop some of the bad stuff we see coming from the Trump administration and House Republicans.”

But Pocan added he'll also continue working to build up and maintain the progressive base that formed as a “reaction to President Trump coming in” and ensure it's a movement and “not just a moment.”

Pocan said his district, which covers southern Wisconsin including Dane County, is “one of the most progressive districts in the country,” giving him the ability to step up in the progressive movement.

“What I'm doing is tapping into what we hear from constituents, what they want me doing here in Washington, what their concerns are that the policies that are being brought forth by this administration are going to be hazardous to their families and to our country,” he said.

— U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman says though President Trump's budget proposal may change significantly, he likes that “he's not afraid to cut something.”

Trump this week outlined his budget proposal for the next fiscal year, which begins

in October. It includes significant cuts to Medicaid, Social Security, the National Institutes of Health, foreign aid, the Environmental Protection Agency and a host of other programs and agencies.

It also boosts defense spending, the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Homeland Security, including his proposal to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Grothman, R-Glenbeulah, said in an interview a lot of the cuts “are going to have to be amended, obviously” but he’s happy with the overall direction of cutting spending.

“He does understand the average American is \$60,000 in debt and he does understand, therefore, that it’s time to say no to some things,” Grothman said.

On the Medicaid cuts, Grothman said he hasn’t delved into the details but Congress needs to address the program’s spending. He also said he objected to calling them cuts, saying it’s making changes to the program to ensure “the increases aren’t as great” as they would’ve been otherwise.

Some Republicans have said Trump’s proposed \$53 billion boost in defense spending isn’t enough, but Grothman said he’s glad Trump held the increase to a relatively modest amount.

And on the DHS spending boost, Grothman said building a wall is needed because immigrants who come to the U.S. illegally are “costing us a lot of money” through medical expenses or the criminal justice system.

He also noted he signed onto a letter raising concerns over cuts to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Trump is proposing to eliminate it entirely, but Grothman said that won’t happen and that a more mild cut is much more likely.

Trump also wants to cut NIH funding by 20 percent, and Grothman said there should be some cut, it won’t be that large. He noted he voted for last year’s 21st Century Cures Act, which increased funding toward the agency so it could fund medical research.

And he said Trump’s proposed tax cuts should be more geared toward the middle class.

"I think it's important that they be aimed at the middle class, and I'm not sure that's where we are quite yet," he said.

Meanwhile, U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson said Trump's budget "recognizes that for far too long we as a country have spent beyond our means."

"I stand ready to work with anyone who is serious about prioritizing spending on the core functions of the federal government to develop a budget that is in the best interests of both our state and our nation," the Oshkosh Republican said.

And U.S. Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner, R-Menomonee Falls, noted presidents' budget proposals are "essentially a wish list" that Congress makes significant changes to. Given the country's debt levels, he said, it's "critical that any budget passed by Congress include significant cuts in order to decrease spending."

"This will require difficult but necessary decisions about our national priorities," he said. "It will not be an easy process, but it must be done for the health and continued success of our country."

— Dems are slamming Trump's budget, with U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore saying she was "utterly aghast" by the cuts affecting the working and middle class.

Moore, D-Milwaukee, also blasted the budget for being "misguided and cruel" in its funding for Medicaid and Social Security.

She, U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin and U.S. Rep. Ron Kind also highlighted the Community Development and Service Block Grants, which would be eliminated under Trump's budget, with Moore arguing it would hinder the ability of lawmakers to support the nation's rural and urban communities.

Baldwin pledged on Twitter to "fight in the Senate to restore funding for this critical program," while Kind, D-La Crosse, said in a statement there was "nothing fiscally responsible" about cutting the grant program to "pay for outdated military equipment."

Meanwhile, Baldwin also criticized Trump's cuts to nix the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, which which forgives the balance of some federal student loans after making more than 100 payments and serving as a public service employee.

“The #TrumpBudget breaks the promises made to many of our teachers and law enforcement officers, cutting relief on their student loan debt,” the Madison Dem wrote.

U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, issued a joint statement with Congressional Progressive Caucus leaders, where he called out Trump’s budget for benefitting “the wealthy over people aspiring to be in the middle class.”

“The real winners of Trump’s budget are CEOs, defense contractors, and big corporations while seniors, students, teachers, and rural communities lose out,” the progressive Dem leaders wrote.

— The state GOP on Wednesday bashed U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin for failing to support a candidate for state Dem party chair ahead of the convention next week.

“Tammy Baldwin is nowhere to be found and appears uninterested in the fate of her party’s leadership,” state GOP spokesman Alec Zimmerman said. “Her silence makes clear that even she has jumped ship.”

The Dems are holding their annual convention June 2-3, where they’ll vote on one of four candidates for state party chair: incumbent Martha Laning; Joe Donovan, a former Waukesha County businessman; Eric Finch, an attorney; and Bryan Kennedy, the mayor of Glendale and former AFT-Wisconsin president.

Baldwin’s campaign did not return requests for comment.

See the state GOP statement:

<https://www.wisgop.org/2017/05/democrats-bogged-disarray-senator-baldwin-jumps-ship/>

— Baldwin, D-Madison, is touting the passage of a VA accountability bill through a Senate committee that she says will protect whistleblowers trying to improve the system.

The bipartisan bill, co-sponsored by Baldwin and more than 20 other senators, now heads to the full Senate for a vote.

The legislation includes measures to provide the Veterans Affairs secretary with a stronger ability to discipline poorly-performing employees.

“Now that our bipartisan legislation has passed committee, we must continue to work across party lines to push our VA reforms forward and make them a reality,” she said. “Our veterans deserve nothing less than high quality service and care.”

— U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson’s committee this week explored a “broken system” that’s failed to fully stop gang members from coming into the country.

Johnson, R-Oshkosh, chairs the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee, which yesterday held a hearing on “the rise of MS-13 and other transnational organizations.” Johnson noted MS-13, or Mara Salvatrucha, actually started in Los Angeles in the 1980s and was formed by immigrants who had come from El Salvador.

Watch the

hearing: <https://www.c-span.org/video/?428981-1/hearing-examines-rise-ms13-crim-e-gang-us>

— U.S. Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner is introducing a bill aimed at ensuring more Americans can deduct medical expenses from their income taxes.

Americans can do so right now if their costs are at least 10 percent of their annual income, but Sensenbrenner is looking to get rid of that threshold.

“As Congress continues to debate health care and tax reform, now is the ideal time to repeal the arbitrary medical tax deduction threshold for medical expenses and give a hand up to Americans struggling to pay for necessary medical expenditures,” he said in a news release.

See the release:

<https://sensenbrenner.house.gov/press-releases-statements?ID=2D904F8F-1ACC-4B5F-91F0-27975D789D38>

— Sensenbrenner is also praising the House reauthorizing a 2006 law that he introduced aimed at preventing sexual exploitation of children.

The Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act strengthened sex offender registry requirements, boosted penalties and added funding for programs combatting the issue.

“Today’s reauthorization the Adam Walsh Protection and Safety Act ensures that serious action will continue to prevent the ongoing sexual exploitation of our nation’s children,” he said.

See the release:

<https://sensenbrenner.house.gov/press-releases-statements?ID=E42F2085-1E12-46C6-ACE2-0B8BF44AB207>

Posts of the week

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BUaRaoADISy/>

Stopped by [@CWAUnion](#) picket line in Madison to show my support for [#attstrike](#) & affordable benefits, fair wages, and job security.
<pic.twitter.com/9WLWgMbhse>

— Rep. Mark Pocan (@RepMarkPocan) [May 20, 2017](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/RepGrothman/photos/a.742443722518349.1073741828.736644256431629/1337722829657099/?type=3&theater>

ICYMI

Dems slam new CBO score on health care bill

<https://www.wispolitics.com/2017/dems-slam-new-cbo-score-on-health-care-bill/>

‘UpFront’: Kind knocks Trump over sharing classified information

<https://www.wispolitics.com/2017/upfront-kind-knocks-trump-over-sharing-classified-information/>

PolitiFact: Evidence lacking for Tammy Baldwin’s voter suppression claim

<http://www.wisconsinrapidstribune.com/story/news/2017/05/24/politifact-evidence-lacking-tammy-baldwins-voter-suppression-claim/340283001/>

Sen. Ron Johnson peppered with questions about health insurance

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/news/health/2017/05/21/sen-johnson-peppered-questions-health-insurance/335309001/>

Ron Johnson Calls For Partial Slowdown On Obamacare Overhaul

<https://www.wpr.org/ron-johnson-calls-partial-slowdown-obamacare-overhaul>

Mark Pocan to lead Congressional Progressive Caucus

http://www.wiscnews.com/news/state-and-regional/article_dc91ed4c-91d0-5bb5-8272-369fc01f6b6e.html

Betsy DeVos vs. Mark Pocan: the art of deflection

http://host.madison.com/ct/news/local/govt-and-politics/betsy-devos-vs-mark-pocan-the-art-of-deflection/article_1c8aeb00-d14f-5b0f-9ad8-928ca1794331.html

Ron Kind: Russia investigations may be a distraction, but Trump's the one causing division

http://host.madison.com/ct/news/local/govt-and-politics/ron-kind-russia-investigations-may-be-a-distraction-but-trump/article_9cf024da-da7c-5a78-9e3e-8c6fc29b6d65.html

Rep. Kind asks government to help severe weather victims

<http://www.wxow.com/story/35480281/2017/05/21/rep-kind-asks-federal-government-for-flood-help>

Duffy: Evidence of collusion between Trump campaign and Russia would already have come out

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/may/19/sean-duffy-evidence-of-collusion-between-trump-cam/>

Duffy calls for stepped up attention to drug-impaired driving

<http://www.rivernewsnow.com/main.asp?SectionID=6&SubSectionID=47&ArticleID=77309>

Protesters of proposed health care bill play dead at Sensenbrenner town hall

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/news/local/milwaukee/2017/05/22/protesters-proposed-health-care-bill-play-dead-sensenbrenner-town-hall/335489001/>

Protesters attend U.S. Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner's town hall meeting

<http://www.lakecountrynow.com/picture-gallery/news/2017/05/22/protesters-attend-us-rep-jim-sensenbrenners-town-hall-meeting/102001426/>

US lawmaker Jim Sensenbrenner wants to abolish H-1B visa lottery system
<https://www.americanbazaaronline.com/2017/05/23/us-lawmaker-jim-sensenbrenner-wants-to-abolish-h-1b-visa-lottery-system425658/>

As chaos mounts, House Speaker Paul Ryan tries to power through the Trump turmoil
<http://www.jsonline.com/story/news/politics/2017/05/20/chaos-mounts-house-speaker-paul-ryan-tries-power-through-trump-turmoil/334507001/>