

DC Wrap: Ryan pitches GOP tax reform framework; Kind talks taxes with Trump

Posted on Thursday, Sep 28, 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. 22-28

I love American football, but I love America more.

- *U.S. Rep. Sean Duffy, R-Wausau, in an interview with the Washington Examiner about football players protesting racial injustice by kneeling during the National Anthem. Duffy said he thinks those players' actions are "disgusting" and disrespectful to soldiers and veterans. [See more.](#)*

I think today, taking a knee is becoming a broader sign of patriotism and respect for our country.

- *U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, taking a knee during a floor speech at the House and criticizing President Trump for his attacks on the NFL players. [See more.](#)*

I love the Packers, but many men and women—better than I or any sports star—have died to defend the American flag and Constitution. Their sacrifices give us the privilege of enjoying football and resolving our differences peacefully here at home. If that's not something to stand for then I don't know what is.

- *U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher, R-Green Bay, a former Marine.*

It is just a matter of time until we fulfill our promise to repeal and replace Obamacare with something far better. For the American people, when it comes to Obamacare, the worst is yet to come. That is why we believe Graham-Cassidy-Heller-Johnson is needed and will eventually pass.

- *U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson in a joint statement with the three other co-authors of the latest GOP plan to replace Obamacare, which was pulled this week after it didn't*

have enough votes. The four also said the vote “did not line up this time” but they were encouraged by members’ support for their block grant idea even if some raised concerns about the process.

Make no mistake, this is because of YOU. By speaking out and sharing your stories, we’ve stopped the partisan #GrahamCassidy repeal plan.

– U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, praising opponents of the Senate GOP bill for voicing their concerns.



This week's news

— House Speaker Paul Ryan yesterday pitched a GOP tax reform framework as “vital to America’s future.”

The framework from Ryan, President Trump and other top GOP leaders would narrow the individual tax brackets to three, lowering the top rate to 35 percent from 39.6 percent.

It also keeps several deductions in place such as one for charitable contributions and another for home mortgage interest payments. And it repeals the estate tax and the alternative minimum tax.

It also aims to “bring profits back home” from companies that offshore their money in part by lowering the corporate tax rate, as well as create a new tax structure for small businesses.

Several Democrats slammed the plan, with Sen. Ron Wyden, the ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee, saying the plan’s “offering sweetheart deals for powerful CEOs [and] giveaways for campaign coffers” without any details on how the middle class would benefit.

But Ryan, R-Janesville, said at a news conference today that the U.S. tax code is “too complicated” and that he’s looking forward to staff hammering out the details to turn the framework into a bill.

“We are taking the next step to liberate Americans from our broken tax code,” he said. “This unified framework delivers a new tax code that is simple, that is fair, that is pro-growth and pro-family, cutting taxes on hardworking Americans so that you can keep more of your own hard-earned paycheck.”

— U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, D-La Crosse, went to the White House this week to discuss tax reform with President Trump.

Kind, among the more moderate Democrats in the House, said in a statement that Congress needs to cooperate to fix a tax system that is “far too complicated.”

“During [the] meeting, I discussed with the President that any proposal must level the playing field for Wisconsin small businesses, farmers, and working families,” he said. “I also told the President that I would not support any plan that gives massive tax cuts to wealthy and powerful special interests while sticking our children and grandchildren with the bill.”

Asked for comment on the GOP framework, Kind spokeswoman Amanda Sherman said “more details are needed to see” whether it meets Kind’s vision of tax reform.

— FBI Director Chris Wray told U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson’s committee this week that the bureau has roughly 1,000 ongoing investigations of domestic terrorism cases.

At a Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee hearing, Wray pushed back against any suggestions that the FBI doesn’t prioritize domestic terrorism threats from white supremacists.

Also at the hearing, Department of Homeland Security Acting Secretary Elaine Duke said Puerto Rico’s government is “severely diminished,” with major issues in communication and delivering food and power to communities.

Johnson called the hearing to evaluate the top “threats to the homeland.”

Watch the hearing:

<https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/hearings/09/18/2017/threats-to-the-homeland>

— A proposal from U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin to find ways to help family caregivers passed unanimously in the Senate yesterday.

Baldwin, D-Madison, authored the Recognize, Assist, Include, Support, and Engage, or RAISE Family Caregivers Act with U.S. Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine. The bill would require the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a strategy to support the more than 40 million family caregivers in the U.S. RAISE stands for

“As someone that served as my grandmother’s primary caregiver, this is personal to me,” Baldwin said. “If we are serious about ensuring that our older adults and loved ones with disabilities receive the highest quality care in their own homes, then we owe it to our current and future generations to continue to fight to see the RAISE Family Caregivers Act move forward and be signed into law.”

See the release:

<https://www.baldwin.senate.gov/press-releases/raise-family-caregivers-2017-senate>

— U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson is questioning whether some states are getting more federal Medicaid dollars than they’re entitled to, driving up costs.

Johnson, chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, sent letters on Wednesday to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services administrator and governors of eight states. The letters, which come one day after Senate Republicans dropped plans to vote on a bill Johnson co-authored to replace Obamacare, seek information on Medicaid expansion, noting costs have come in higher than expected.

Johnson’s letter notes federal Medicaid costs totaled \$246 billion in fiscal year 2009, hit \$299 billion in 2014 and are projected to be \$588 billion in 2025. He writes the Affordable Care Act expansion is a primary cause.

The Oshkosh Republican questioned if the rising costs could stem from the expansion’s reimbursement formula, which he wrote gives states an incentive to categorize people as newly eligible to obtain additional federal aid.

“I am seeking to better understand these rising costs, higher-than-expected enrollment and potential eligibility mistakes, especially in states where costs or enrollment are increasing especially quickly,” Johnson wrote to CMS.

The guys who were sent the letters are: Jerry Brown, D-Calif.; Jim Justice, R-W.Va.; Bruce Rauner, R-Ill.; Andrew Cuomo, D-N.Y.; John Kasich, R-Ohio; Christopher Sununu, R-N.H.; Rick Snyder, R-Mich.; and David Ige, D-Hawaii.

See more:

<https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/media/majority-media/johnson-requests-data-from-cms-and-state-governors-on-medicaid-expansions-exploding-costs>

— U.S. Rep. Sean Duffy and his wife, Rachel Campos-Duffy, published a joint op-ed saying President Trump’s upcoming visit to to Puerto Rico will “help make Puerto Rico great again.”

Trump has faced criticism for a lagging response to helping the island, which has been devastated by Hurricane Maria. But Trump this week stepped up federal government disaster relief commitments and said he’ll visit Puerto Rico next week.

The Duffys wrote in their Fox News op-ed that Trump ran for president to “fight for forgotten Americans,” including those in Puerto Rico. And they knock President Obama, the first to visit Puerto Rico since Gerald Ford, for making a brief campaign stop in the island on his way to Cuba.

“President Trump won’t go to Puerto Rico to fundraise or campaign,” they wrote. “He’ll go to show the people of Puerto Rico that he cares, to see the island-wide damage up close and personal, and to make sure that the federal government and mainland Americans don’t forget about our fellow citizens struggling in Puerto Rico.

Read the op-ed:

<http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2017/09/27/making-puerto-rico-great-again.html>

— U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, and a bipartisan group of lawmakers are pushing for the reauthorization of the Perkins Loan Program.

The program, which expires on Saturday unless Congress takes action, helps provide low-interest loans for students from low-income families. Baldwin’s office says more than 23,000 students in Wisconsin currently get those loans, totaling \$57 million in aid.

U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, is also leading the push for the reauthorization of the program.

“No American should ever be denied the opportunity to achieve their dreams, especially when they have worked hard and are the first in their family to attend college, as many Perkins Loans recipients are,” he said in a news release, calling for

the House to vote on his proposal to fund the program for two more years.

See the Baldwin release:

<https://www.baldwin.senate.gov/press-releases/perkins-letter>

See the Pocan release:

<https://pocan.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/pocan-and-stefanik-call-for-vote-to-extend-perkins-loans-as-more-than>

— Baldwin announced a \$25,000 economic development grant that will help the village of Brokaw as it recovers from the closure of a Wausau paper mill.

The grant comes from the U.S. Department of Commerce and will be managed by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. Baldwin had written to Secretary Wilbur Ross asking him to approve the group's application for the grant.

See the release:

<https://www.baldwin.senate.gov/press-releases/brokaw-grant-announcement>

Posts of the week

Happy [#NationalPancakeDay](#) from [@foxandfriends](#) & (most of) the Duffy Family! <pic.twitter.com/bVxFCosMx8>

— Sean Duffy (@SeanDuffyWI) [September 26, 2017](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/repronkind/photos/a.385335637954.165850.89152017954/10155223825482955/?type=3&theater>

Congrats to the latest class of Milwaukee [#JosephProjectWI](#) graduates. Good luck with those interviews! <pic.twitter.com/CbMZkVsGNU>

— Senator Ron Johnson (@SenRonJohnson) [September 22, 2017](#)

ICYMI

Ron Johnson won't give up in his quest to repeal and replace Obamacare

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/news/politics/2017/09/26/ron-johnson-wont-give-up-his-quest-repeal-and-replace-obamacare/706721001/>

'We cannot stop now': Tammy Baldwin urges continued opposition to repeal and replace

http://host.madison.com/ct/news/local/govt-and-politics/we-cannot-stop-now-tammy-baldwin-urges-continued-opposition-to/article_a92926daf156-5297-9c68-47d507abe14d.html

Fans and state lawmakers respond to Packers call for unity

<http://www.wbay.com/content/news/Fans-and-state-lawmakers-respond-to-Packers-call-for-unity-448343153.html>

Another Democrat takes a knee on House floor to support NFL protests

<http://thehill.com/blogs/floor-action/house/352448-another-democrat-takes-a-knee-on-house-floor-to-support-nfl-protests>

GOP senator probes rising Medicaid costs

<http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/352671-gop-senator-investigating-exploding-medicaid-costs>

U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson meets with offenders to discuss Joseph Project jobs initiative

<http://www.jsonline.com/story/news/2017/09/20/u-s-sen-ron-johnson-meets-offenders-discuss-joseph-project-jobs-initiative/686565001/>

House Democrat makes a word cloud of Trump insults

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/onpolitics/2017/09/26/house-democrat-makes-word-cloud-trump-insults/705120001/>

Sean Duffy: 'I love American football, but I love America more'

<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/sean-duffy-i-love-american-football-but-i-love-america-more/article/2635691>

Congressman Duffy seeks reform to national flood program

<http://www.superiortelegam.com/news/wisconsin/4333280-congressman-duffy-seeks-reform-national-flood-program>

Federal Digital Tax Bills Frozen as High Court Case Heats Up

<https://www.bna.com/federal-digital-tax-n73014464492/>

After Senate repeal failure, Democrats urge bipartisanship on health care

<http://wjla.com/news/connect-to-congress/after-senate-repeal-failure-democrats-urge-bipartisanship-on-health-care>

U.S. Sen. Johnson questions Hawaii's Medicaid spending

<http://www.staradvertiser.com/2017/09/27/breaking-news/u-s-sen-johnson-questions-hawaiis-medicaid-spending/>