

WisGOP: ICYMI: Sen. Baldwin rejects reform, opposes more than half of Trump nominees

Posted on Friday, Feb 10, 2017

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Contact: Alec Zimmerman
[\(608\) 257-4765](tel:(608)257-4765)

[Madison, WI]— While Senator Tammy Baldwin continues to stall reforms in Washington and cling to the status quo, voters in Wisconsin are taking notice. The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* highlighted Senator Baldwin's obstruction of change in an article on Thursday reporting that she has opposed more than half of President Trump's cabinet nominees.

Read the full article below or online [here](#).

Sen. Tammy Baldwin has opposed over half of Trump's nominees

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Craig Gilbert

February 10, 2017

WASHINGTON - In opposing Tom Price for health secretary early Friday morning, Wisconsin Democrat Tammy Baldwin has now voted against five of the nine cabinet nominees confirmed so far by a deeply divided U.S. Senate.

She has also announced her opposition to two of President Donald Trump's other nominees in advance of their confirmation votes.

Baldwin's stance typifies the unusually broad opposition to Trump's picks from Senate Democrats, who have failed to block a single nominee so far but have voted virtually en masse against four of them.

Republicans in the White House and on Capitol Hill accuse Democrats of withholding the deference traditionally given a president's nominees and delaying the quick formation of a full cabinet.

"I'm certainly not a rubber stamp for President Trump or (Senate Majority Leader) Mitch McConnell," Baldwin said in a recent interview about her votes, rejecting the

idea that deference dictates that Democrats be more supportive.

"I am doing my best to make a judgment about each nominee individually. And you know, when you ask the question about deference, I'm thinking about the people of Wisconsin," said Baldwin.

Political scientist Sarah Binder of George Washington University says, "This year's confirmation process for (Trump's) cabinet is far more contentious than we've seen in the past."

She points to a web of causes that include "creeping partisan polarization" in the Senate, the demands of an anti-Trump Democratic base for stiff resistance, and Senate rule changes. When the Democrats controlled the Senate and ended the filibuster for cabinet picks in 2013, it lowered the threshold for confirmation from 60 votes to a simple majority.

That change gives a president more latitude in making controversial nominations since they are much less likely to need bipartisan support to get confirmed. It also gives senators in the minority a "free" no vote (a vote without consequences) — since they can't kill a nomination on their own.

Baldwin has been outspoken, taking to the Senate floor and cable news and Twitter to make the case against a number of Trump's picks, including Price, the Republican congressman whose nomination for health secretary was confirmed 52-47 along party lines in the early morning hours Friday. Baldwin cited conflict-of-interest concerns and objections to Price's stands on Medicare and other issues. Baldwin's votes put her squarely in the middle of her own caucus.

She is one of 22 Democrats in the Senate who have now voted against five of President Trump's choices.

Eleven Democrats have taken more "no" votes while 15 have taken fewer, according to a running tally by the New York Times.

Baldwin has opposed Price, Jeff Sessions for Attorney General, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and CIA Director Mike Pompeo. She plans to vote no on Scott Pruitt for chief of the Environmental Protection Agency and Steven Mnuchin for secretary of the Treasury. (Baldwin has also come out against Trump's Supreme Court pick, Judge Neil Gorsuch).

Meanwhile, Baldwin has voted to confirm four of Trump's picks: Defense Secretary James Mattis, Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly, U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley and Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao. She also plans to vote for Wilbur Ross as commerce secretary.

Her Wisconsin colleague, Republican Ron Johnson, has voted for all of Trump's picks, as have all but a handful of GOP senators.

"C'mon, Democrats, give us a little hand here," Johnson said in a recent radio

interview. "Presidents do deserve cabinet members who agree with them...Let's not quibble over little details."

Baldwin has cited ethical and financial conflicts about some nominees.

"Sometimes, I wonder if Trump recognizes a lot of what this election was about — the feeling Washington was broken and the system was rigged," she said. "He's nominated folks that raise those very concerns."

The Wisconsin GOP said Baldwin's opposition to Trump's nominees were votes "against reform" in Washington.

Baldwin also has made broader objections to other nominees over their views, experience and political records.

In the bitter battle over the new attorney general, she joined fellow Democrats in attacking Sessions' record on civil rights. She called DeVos "completely unqualified" to lead the education department. She called Tillerson, the former ExxonMobil CEO, a "billionaire oil tycoon" who is too "cozy" with Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

There is no question Democrats are voting in higher numbers against this president's nominees than opposition parties have in the past, part of what Binder calls the "creeping" polarization that "undermines the way the Senate has done its work."

According to The Associated Press, just four of 31 votes for former President Barack Obama's cabinet vacancies over eight years drew at least 40 "no" votes; so far, four of nine Trump nominees have drawn at least 40 "no" votes.

At the same time, contentious and polarizing confirmation fights are not new. It took the last two presidents, Democrat Obama and Republican George W. Bush, longer to get their nominees confirmed than it did their predecessors. And their nominations failed more often to win confirmation, according to a broad study of all civilian nominations by law professor Anne Joseph O'Connell of the University of California, Berkeley.

Johnson voted for about two-thirds of the Obama cabinet-level nominees that came up during his first term, including one who faced a long fight and heavy GOP opposition, Attorney General Loretta Lynch. That is a higher rate of support than Baldwin is giving Trump.

But Johnson did not grant Obama sweeping deference either. He voted against eight of his cabinet picks, including Chuck Hagel for defense secretary, Tom Perez for labor secretary, Julian Castro for housing secretary and John Brennan for C.I.A. director.

Read the full story [here](#).