

DC Wrap: Gallagher says he'll continue efforts to overhaul 'broken' Congress

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Welcome to our weekly DC Wrap, where we write about Wisconsin's congressional delegation. Sign up [here](#) to receive the newsletter directly.

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Quotes of the week, Aug. 31-Sept. 6

The Democrats have more than enough information to understand that this is a highly qualified jurist that should be the next Supreme Court justice.

– U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, praising President Trump's nominee for the U.S. Supreme Court, Brett Kavanaugh, in an [interview](#) on ABC's "This Week with George Stephanopoulos." Kavanaugh's confirmation hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee began this week.

Today, my colleagues in the Senate asked a crucial question: "What is the GOP hiding?" Why won't they let the VAST MAJORITY of Kavanaugh's paperwork be made public? #WhatAreTheyHiding #StopKavanaugh

– U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore, D-Milwaukee, on [Twitter](#), referencing a recent White House decision to withhold thousands of pages of documents from Kavanaugh's time with the George W. Bush administration, though more documents were released Monday night. National media reports indicate more than 400,000 pages had previously been handed over to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

If Trump succeeds with this sabotage, insurance companies will again be able to deny coverage or charge higher premiums for more than 130 million Americans with a pre-existing condition.

– U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, on [Twitter](#) in opposition to a lawsuit brought by 20 states, including Wisconsin, seeking to strike down the Affordable Care Act. A

U.S. judge heard oral arguments this week in the case, which argues the ACA can no longer stand given Congress, through its December 2017 tax overhaul, removed the individual-mandate tax. The federal DOJ has said it wouldn't defend the ACA in court. Proponents have argued striking down the law would turn over control to states, which are better suited to handle health care.

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This week's news

— U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher says he'll continue championing efforts to overhaul an "all so broken" Congress in the wake of two GOP House members facing indictments from the federal Department of Justice.

The Green Bay Republican was active during his first term in working to "drain the swamp" through legislative efforts such as instituting congressional term limits and ending the amount of time members of Congress spend fundraising for reelection.

And he said Congress needs to look at the influence of money in politics as well as the constant re-election cycle following indictments of U.S. Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., surrounding misuse of campaign finances and U.S. Rep. Chris Collins, R-NY, for insider trading.

"The influence of money gets worse every single year, and that's not the way it should be," he said in a recent interview with WisPolitics.com. "I think we want people in elected office to spend every waking moment thinking about how they can legislate, how they can represent their constituents and not what can I do so I can raise more money for re election and use my office as a stepping stone or a way to get rich."

In talking about the issue, Gallagher referenced former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort and Michael Cohen, President Trump's former personal lawyer, as examples that show "how many influence peddlers there are in D.C."

Manafort was convicted in August for a series of charges related to financial fraud, while Cohen pleaded guilty to charges including tax evasion and violating campaign finance law.

The freshman rep also pledged to continue his efforts to "send a signal that this isn't a career" by pushing to end congressional pensions and proposing lobbying limits. Gallagher had introduced legislation aiming to establish a five-year ban for members of Congress from engaging in lobbying at the federal level.

"If we continue business as usual in the swamp, in D.C., we are going to continue to get suboptimal results, and, on big issues, we are going to keep punting to the next generation — and that's my generation," the 34-year-old former Marine said. "That's unacceptable."

— On trade, Gallagher downplayed the Trump administration's threats to leave Canada out of a potential NAFTA substitute as "more of a negotiation tactic right now than an actual final agreement."

Gallagher said that while he has only seen the Trump administration's talking points on a deal that would create a bilateral trade agreement between the U.S. and Mexico, "the devil will be in the details."

While the U.S. and Canada have resumed efforts to renegotiate NAFTA, an agreement Trump has called one of the worst trade deals ever made, the president tweeted Saturday that "there is no political necessity to keep Canada in the new NAFTA deal."

"If we don't make a fair deal for the U.S. after decades of abuse, Canada will be out," Trump wrote on Twitter. "Congress should not interfere w/ these negotiations or I will simply terminate NAFTA entirely & we will be far better off."

Gallagher added he has been hearing concerns from 8th CD manufacturers and farmers who have seen price increases as a result of steel and aluminum tariffs imposed earlier this year.

He called tariffs "taxes that distort the free market" and said — referencing a Green

Bay manufacturer — the increased prices often get passed down to the taxpayer.

— Meanwhile, Gallagher attributed Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election to weak foreign policy under past administrations that allowed for a “permissive environment.”

But he praised the Trump administration’s “very hawkish” approach to dealing with Russia, referencing defensive assistance to Ukraine and recent sanctions rolled out in response to a lethal chemical attack in the UK.

“If we are strong with Russia abroad, we also deter their willingness to attack us here at home,” the House Homeland Security Committee member said.

On election security, Gallagher noted the influence of cyber actors could be fought through better communication between federal and state governments.

Gallagher also said Congress is beginning to turn its attention to what he thinks is a bigger problem — Chinese influence and efforts to undermine the U.S. economy.

“Rather than putting tariffs on our allies... it’s [best] to unite the free world in opposition to the predatory practices of China,” he said.

— GOP U.S. Senate candidate Leah Vukmir knocked U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin this week for refusing “to perform a basic function of her job and meet with Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh.”

The Madison Dem announced in July she would oppose the nomination of Kavanaugh, who was before the Senate Judiciary Committee this week to begin the public hearing on his nomination.

Still, Baldwin’s campaign said the senator has always planned to meet with the nominee and has reached out to the White House to schedule a meeting. The campaign said Baldwin was awaiting a response from the White House on possible dates the senator has suggested.

Vukmir, R-Brookfield, on Tuesday also [pledged](#) to meet with every Supreme Court nominee if elected.

— U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson has introduced a bill aiming to shore up

protections for chemical facilities.

The legislation, called the “Protecting and Securing Chemical Facilities from Terrorist Attacks Act of 2018,” aims to improve the Department of Homeland Security’s Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards program.

“This bill reauthorizes the CFATS program, which regulates ‘high-risk’ chemical facilities to reduce the risk of terrorist attacks,” [said Johnson](#), R-Oshkosh. “In addition to reauthorization, it introduces management reforms to the CFATS program to bring much-needed regulatory relief to the U.S. chemical industry without compromising the safety and security of these facilities.”

— U.S. Rep. Ron Kind has called for an investigation into the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau following the resignation of a top student loan official.

Former Student Loan Ombudsman Seth Frotman stepped down last week because the Trump administration has “turned its back on young people and their financial futures,” per his resignation letter.

Kind, D-La Crosse, [requested in a letter](#) that the Office of the Inspector General open an investigation into issues Frotman brought up as he resigned from his post.

“Now more than ever, students need to feel confident that the CFPB is looking out for the best interests of student borrowers, not for powerful special interests,” Kind wrote.

Posts of the week

Great to be back at my alma mater to cheer on our Logan Middle students as they head back to school today! Wishing a great and fun year to all of our students across Wisconsin! pic.twitter.com/wsY8NAOIhi

— Archive: Rep. Ron Kind (@RepRonKind) [September 4, 2018](#)

Today it's [#BackToSchool](#) for [#MilwaukeePublicSchool](#) & back to work for Congress! I'm geared up & ready to keep fighting for [#ABetterDeal](#) for students & teachers. Every student deserves access to the tools they need to thrive like affordable school lunch & higher pay for teachers.
pic.twitter.com/AMh8Ok6P8P

— Rep. Gwen Moore (@RepGwenMoore) [September 4, 2018](#)

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BnHGD58nmaO/?hl=en&taken-by=repseanduffy>

ICYMI

[‘UpFront’: Moore advocates cautious approach to impeaching Trump if Dems win House](#)

[Sen. Ron Johnson: 30 Years Ago, Kavanaugh Would Have Passed Unanimously](#)

[Wisconsin U.S. Senate race: Tammy Baldwin, Leah Vukmir clash on health care](#)

[Baldwin Seeks to Overturn Trump Rule on Short-Term Health Insurance Plans](#)

[Glenn Grothman vs. Dan Kohl: Donald Trump is key figure in hotly contested House race](#)

[Rep. Kind urging Wisconsinites impacted by storms to contact his office](#)