

DC Wrap: Johnson questions partisanship of two FBI officials; Ryan heads to the Middle East

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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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[*A Feb. 22 Madison luncheon with U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin.](#)

[*A March 7 DC breakfast with U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher and the Millennial Action Project.](#)

Quotes of the week, Jan. 19-25

Enough with round after round of fighting. We now have an opportunity in the Senate to do right by the American people so we need to get to work and do it.

- U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Baldwin, on her vote to reopen the government earlier this week after a three day shutdown. Baldwin on Friday joined most Dems in voting against a short-term government funding bill, resulting in the government shutdown over the weekend.

I'm glad Senator Baldwin and other Senate Democrats came to their senses and voted to fund the government. Hopefully, they will now work in good faith to secure our border, fix our horribly broken immigration system, and provide a long term solution and certainty to the recipients of DACA.

- U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh.

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How do we know the Senate isn't screwing us?

- U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore at a House Democratic Caucus meeting, according to two sources as reported in [Politico](#), after the Senate Democrats struck a deal with Republicans to open the government in exchange for a debate on DACA and immigration issues.

We're going through a period of twenty-first century McCarthyism. The name calling that is going on by the progressive left is worse than the name calling that Joe McCarthy had.

— U.S. Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner on U.S. Rep. Sean Duffy's [weekly podcast](#), arguing that today's left do not respect any arguments of the right, and want to completely undermine President Trump's agenda.



This week's news

— **U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson this week unveiled a series of “jaw-dropping” text messages from two senior officials at the FBI that he said could indicate partisan involvement in the special counsel investigation into Russia’s interference in the 2016 presidential election.**

The release of the correspondences between counterintelligence agent Peter Strzok and FBI lawyer Lisa Page comes as Republicans nationally have led an investigation into whether there was bias in the FBI’s Russia investigation and its look at former presidential candidate Hillary Clinton’s use of a private email server, per national media reports.

Johnson, who chairs the Senate Homeland Security Committee, received 384 pages of text messages between Strzok and Page, according to a copy of a letter he sent to the FBI over the weekend. But Johnson’s letter also showed five months of the pair’s text messages are missing — spanning from Dec. 14, 2016 to May 17, 2017 when Robert Mueller was made special counsel.

Johnson, R-Oshkosh, on Tuesday told radio host Jay Weber at Milwaukee radio station WISN about a May 19 text from Strzock. It questions, according to Johnson, whether Strzock wants to be part of the Mueller probe, writing in a message,

“there’s no big there there.”

“You and I both know the odds are nothing,” the message said, according to a release from Johnson’s office. “If I thought it was likely, I’d be there no question. I hesitate in part because of my gut sense and concern there’s no big there there.”

The message chain Johnson’s office released doesn’t explicitly mention the Mueller investigation, and the full context is unclear.

Johnson called the message “kind of shocking” in the interview with Weber, saying it “indicates they’re (Strzock and Page) considering joining the Mueller special counsel investigation.” But he added he wants to get ahold of the missing five months of text messages between the two.

“We can’t really connect it 100 percent; that’s why we need to see the texts,” Johnson said.

National media reports have noted there’s no public evidence Strzock’s or Page’s own views influenced either investigation.

[See Johnson’s letter.](#)

[See Johnson’s statement, including copies of the text messages.](#)

[Hear the segment.](#)

— Speaker Paul Ryan this week began a week-long bipartisan trip to the Middle East.

The delegation is expected to focus on regional stability, the campaign against ISIS and terrorism, and Iran.

The delegation has already stopped at Moron Air Base in Morón, Spain, where they met with U.S. military personnel and were briefed by the Marine Corps’ Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force — Crisis Response — Africa, which was deployed after the September 2012 attack on the U.S. diplomatic mission in Africa.

Joining Ryan are Armed Services Committee Chairman Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes, R-Calif., and U.S. Reps. Vern Buchanan, R-Fla., Liz Cheney, R-Wy., Stephanie Murphy, D-Fla., and Scott Taylor, R-Va.

— Ryan, R-Janesville, says his campaign collected \$1.4 million in receipts during the final three months of 2017 and finished the year with about \$9.7 million in the bank.

Of the \$1.4 million, more than \$270,000 was raised directly, while the rest was transferred from Team Ryan, the speaker's joint fundraising committee.

His cash on hand was down slightly from the end of October, when he had \$10.4 million in the bank. He also had \$2.3 million in receipts during the third quarter, though almost \$2 million of that came from other committees.

Ryan challenger Randy Bryce, a Racine-area ironworker, announced earlier this month he had \$1.2 million in receipts during the fourth quarter of 2017. Meanwhile, fellow Dem Cathy Myers raised \$182,656 for the period.

[See the release.](#)

— Meanwhile, Team Ryan, the speaker's joint-fundraising committee, pulled in nearly \$5 million during the fourth quarter.

That pushes its overall haul in 2017 to \$44.3 million with \$32 million of that transferred to the National Republican Congressional Committee. Ryan's team says the \$44.3 million is a record amount for an off year.

[See the release.](#)

— President Trump has signed U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin's bipartisan bill that looks to provide family caregivers with more support.

The legislation, which the Madison Dem and Maine GOP Sen. Susan Collins first introduced in July 2015, cleared the House in December and the Senate earlier this month.

It previously passed the Senate unanimously in December 2015. It would direct the Health and Human Services secretary to create a national strategy to recognize the nation's family caregivers.

"Every day, family caregivers do right by their loved ones, and I am proud to say we are doing right by them with the RAISE Family Caregivers Act being signed into law to formally recognize and support family caregivers across this country," Baldwin

[said in a statement.](#)

— President Trump’s pick for the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals appeared before the U.S. Senate’s judiciary committee Wednesday morning.

Trump in August nominated Milwaukee lawyer Michael Brennan, bypassing the state’s Federal Nominating Commission process in making the pick.

Meanwhile, U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin has withheld her “blue slip” on Brennan. Senate tradition has allowed home state senators to block judicial nominees by withholding it.

Liberal groups on a media call this week, including One Wisconsin Institute, knocked the process that led to Brennan’s nomination, as well as the nominee himself.

Analiene Eicher, OWI program director, said Brennan “holds some troubling beliefs,” in addition to failing to gain the support of both of the state’s senators.

“We have deep concerns about his ability to fairly rule on the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals,” she said.

Meanwhile, U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson introduced Brennan to the committee Wednesday as someone who’s “not an ideologue,” nor, the Oshkosh Republican said, has Brennan ever “worn his politics on his sleeve.”

The seat, which has been vacant since 2010, is the longest opening on the appellate in the country. That year, then-President Obama nominated UW professor Victoria Nourse for the seat, although she eventually withdrew from consideration in 2012 after her appointment stalled.

— U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan this week [signed onto a letter](#) asking President Trump to include broadband funding in any infrastructure proposal.

Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, joined five other co-chairs of the House Rural Broadband Caucus in making the pitch.

“Rural communities must have adequate broadband infrastructure to attract and retain businesses and human resources, close the homework gap for students and teachers, open innovative and convenient pathways to telemedicine for seniors and providers, and help farmers increase efficiencies in their barns and on their land,”

they wrote. “The future wellbeing of our communities is dependent upon this technology.”

After the passage of the GOP tax overhaul bill last month, national media reports showed the Trump administration signaled infrastructure was the next issue on the agenda.

— U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman has made an appearance in a new Weather Channel spot.

In it, the Glenbeulah Republican and meteorologist Reynolds Wolf tell viewers to prepare for severe weather. It airs this month and next month.

— U.S. Rep. Sean Duffy has introduced a bill to define “natural cheese.”

The bill, called the CURD Act, would codify the term as one within federal statute. The legislation would also narrow the scope of the Food and Drug Administration’s work in defining “natural.”

“Thanks to hard working dairy farmers in our state, Wisconsin cheese is the best in the world.” said Duffy, R-Wausau. “Both dairy farmers and American consumers deserve certainty and clarity that a definition for ‘natural cheese’ will bring. The FDA’s inaction on this definition has led to confusion for consumers, so it is necessary for Congress to settle the debate.”

Posts of the week

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BeQmz9yFrdQ/?taken-by=repgwenmoore>

Welding at [@UAPipeTrades](#) Local 434 in Mosinee. Thanks for showing me around- had a great time! pic.twitter.com/Z6lONeEm69

— Sean Duffy (@SeanDuffyWI) [January 24, 2018](#)

ICYMI

[Wisconsin Senator Ron Johnson says informant claims FBI has 'secret society' working against Trump](#)

[Republican lawmakers spotlight 'jaw-dropping' FBI texts](#)

[Senator: FBI missing months of texts between officials involved in Trump, Clinton probes](#)

[Ron Johnson will donate shutdown pay to Oshkosh Boys and Girls Club](#)

[Senator Johnson disappointed with vote on continuing resolution](#)

[MoveOn.Org rips Tammy Baldwin for 'flip-flop' on vote to reopen government](#)

[Feinstein accuses Grassley of disrespecting female senator over 'blue slip' tradition](#)

[Grassley Moves on Judicial Nominee Over Baldwin's Objections](#)

[Tammy Baldwin, Ron Johnson vote to reopen government](#)

[Gallagher supports legal status for undocumented immigrants if border security is bolstered](#)

[Ben Carson joins Rep. Sean Duffy at annual homelessness summit in Rothschild](#)

[Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner: U.S. going through 'period of 21st century McCarthyism'](#)

[Rep. Ron Kind calls short-term spending bills embarrassing, blames leaders of both parties](#)