

DC Wrap: Wis. lawmakers split on prospect of rejoining TPP; House fundraising round-up

Posted on Thursday, Apr 19, 2018

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

Quotes of the week, April 13-19

First of all, I don't think he should be fired. I think he should be left to do his job, and I don't think they're really contemplating this. We've had plenty of conversations about this. It's not in the president's interest to do that.

– House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Janesville, on “[Meet the Press](#)” about special prosecutor Robert Mueller. Ryan said he doesn't think it's necessary to pass legislation protecting Mueller and he doesn't believe the president is going to fire the special prosecutor.

This proposed constitutional amendment will give us the discipline that we have not had as we've sat and watched the deficit go up and up and up and away.

– [U.S. Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner](#), R-Menomonee Falls, on a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. The amendment failed on a [233-184 vote](#), although it gained the support of Sensenbrenner, Dem U.S. Rep. Ron Kind and GOP U.S. Reps. Glenn Grothman, Mike Gallagher and Sean Duffy. While bills typically require a simple majority to pass, the amendment needed support from two-thirds of members to advance.

Republicans have lost the right to claim fiscal responsibility after blowing a nearly \$2 trillion hole in the deficit just to give tax breaks to billionaires and corporations.

– [U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan](#), D-Town of Vermont. Pocan was the only Wisconsin lawmaker to vote against the amendment. Fellow Dem U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore, of Milwaukee, didn't vote, nor did Speaker Paul Ryan, who rarely does.

>> 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.](#)



This week's news

— Two members of Wisconsin's congressional delegation took opposite stands over rumblings President Trump may consider rejoining the controversial Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Reports that Trump was reconsidering the multicountry trade agreement he pulled out of days after becoming president drew praise from Republican U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, but irked Dem U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan.

Trump, though, changed course again Tuesday, seemingly backtracking on his administration's previous comments that it would begin preliminary discussions on rejoining the trade agreement.

"While Japan and South Korea would like us to go back into TPP, I don't like the deal for the United States," Trump wrote. "Too many contingencies and no way to get out if it doesn't work. Bilateral deals are far more efficient, profitable and better for OUR workers."

But Johnson, who sits on the Senate Foreign relations committee, [told Bloomberg TV](#) Wednesday he believes joining the other 13 nations in agreement would create a unified front against what he considers to be China's unfair trade practices.

Currently the partnership's economies comprise about 14 percent of the world's economy. If the U.S. were to join, the partnership would take up about a 40 percent share.

"That is a very powerful block demanding that China actually adheres to the rules of the WTO and other world trading rules. So we have to identify the main cause of the problem, we have to have an effective way of doing it," the Oshkosh Republican

said.

Even so, China's trade practices remain one point of consistency on which Trump and Johnson appear to agree.

"Let's face it, China has been winning and the rest of us have been losing, let's try to negotiate agreements where we win-win because that's really what trade is all about is a win-win situation," Johnson said.

But Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, panned Trump's potential warming up to the agreement and vowed to do everything in his power to prevent the U.S. from joining.

"The reason President Trump won the state of Wisconsin is because of the issue of trade and re-entering the agreement would be a direct slap in the face to people who voted for him expecting that he would save their jobs and deliver on economic promises such as ending outsourcing," he [said in a statement](#).

Pocan further argued the TPP would "decimate" certain communities, and called for fairer trade agreements that would prevent the outsourcing of American jobs, protect the environment and remove special protections for corporations.

The office of U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin said the Madison Dem continues to oppose the TPP. Baldwin has previously denounced the trade agreement and joined with seven other Senate Dems in 2015 against giving President Obama authority to expedite TPP negotiations.

— U.S. Rep. Ron Kind has the biggest war chest among Wisconsin's House members going into his 2018 re-election bid, a WisPolitics.com check of the FEC site shows.

The La Crosse Dem, who's facing GOP opponent Steve Toft, [ended the quarter](#) with more than \$3 million cash on hand after raising \$246,573 over the first three months of the year.

Kind spent \$288,942 over the period, which runs from Jan. 1 to March 31.

He outraised [Toft](#), who brought in \$82,268 over the period to end with \$103,152 cash on hand. Toft also spent \$32,224.

Other House members on the 2018 ballot with more than \$1 million in the bank include:

*U.S. Rep. Sean Duffy, who had nearly \$2.3 million in the bank after raising \$350,771 over the period. The Wausau Republican also spent \$223,121.

[Duffy](#) outraised each of his three Dem challengers who've filed statements of candidacy with the FEC. The three all officially announced bids within the last few months.

That includes Kyle [Frenette](#), the manager of indie artist Bon Iver, who logged \$243,716 in donations; spent \$79,173; and finished the period with \$164,543 cash on hand. While Frenette officially filed a statement of candidacy on Jan. 29, his FEC report covers "testing the waters activity" dating back to Dec. 6.

Marshfield physician Brian [Ewert](#) raised \$107,989, spent \$22,772, and finished the first three months of the year with \$85,216 in the bank.

Meanwhile, former Balsam Lake attorney Margaret [Engebretson](#) trailed behind her primary opponents, raising \$13,723, spending \$5,008, and ending the period with \$8,716 cash on hand.

*And U.S. Rep. Mike [Gallagher](#), R-Green Bay, who logged \$1.2 million cash on hand after raising \$404,073 over the quarter. He also spent \$188,425.

His Dem challenger, Beau [Liegeois](#), raised \$38,399. The Brown County assistant DA also spent \$29,251 and had \$32,408 in the bank.

[See the full House fundraising roundup in Monday's PM Update.](#)

— No new Republican candidates have yet mounted a 1st CD bid following House Speaker Paul Ryan's announcement last week to not seek re-election later this year.

Instead, a series of sitting lawmakers and others politicos have decided to pass on a bid.

The latest is GOP Rep. Samantha Kerkman, who instead announced she'll seek re-election in the 61st AD. Before that, State Sen. Dave Craig most recently announced

he wouldn't run, joining Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, former White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus and others in deciding against a campaign.

Bryan Steil, a UW regent and attorney, will make a decision about launching a 1st CD bid this weekend, according to the Rock County GOP. And former Racine County Exec. Jim Ladwig's name has also been floated as a possible candidate.

So far, just two GOP candidates are currently in the running for Ryan's seat: veteran Nick Polce, who filed his statement of candidacy in November and Paul Nehlen, who lost to Ryan by 68 points in the 2016 GOP primary and has drawn scorn for a series of racist and anti-Semitic sentiments on social media.

Declared Dems are ironworker Randy Bryce and long-time school teacher Cathy Myers.

— Kind is touting the Trump administration's recent announcement of a new process to give notice to disabled veterans about forgiving their student loans.

Kind in February penned a joint [letter](#) to Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, Secretary of Veterans Affairs David Shulkin, and Acting Commissioner of Social Security Nancy Berryhill asking they forgive the student loans of those that have died or claim permanent disability.

"The last thing Wisconsin's disabled veterans need is to be worried about significant student loan debt and paying unfair taxes on that debt," Kind said in a [statement](#). "I'm proud to announce that by working together, we've found a solution to this problem, and permanently disabled veterans can now have their student loans discharged without paying additional taxes."

— U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore and two other reps this week launched a new caucus on addressing domestic violence.

The group, called Bipartisan Working Group to End Domestic Violence, was formed by Moore, D-Milwaukee, and Reps. Debbie Dingell, D-Mich., and Ryan Costello, R-Pa.

"Since coming to Congress, one of my primary passions has been freeing our

communities from the terror of domestic violence,” Moore said in a [statement](#). “This bipartisan working group takes a critical step forward to achieving that goal. I am hopeful that we will build innovative solutions that lift up survivors and protect future generations from domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.”

— U.S. Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner this week was honored for his work on a law to reduce recidivism and improve outcomes for individuals released from prison, jail and juvenile facilities.

The law, called the Second Chance Act, has been on the books since President George W. Bush signed it in 2008 and will need congressional reauthorization this year.

The Menomonee Falls Republican in a [statement](#) noted that he’s continuing to see efforts to reform the criminal justice reform continue to get wide bipartisan support even “in a time when our political climate is divided.”

“I’m proud of my work on the original Second Chance Act, which has empowered hundreds of thousands of individuals to reenter society successfully,” he said.

— U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman is looking to further curb insider trading in the Capitol.

The legislation, called the Member Financial Transparency Act, would require congressmen to file reports with the House and Senate Ethics Committee on transactions made in stocks and bonds no more than a week after the transactions are finalized.

The bill would also change the deadline period for the House clerk and Senate secretary to make these reports public to no later than 10 days after receipt.

Grothman, R-Glenbeulah, said in a [statement](#) it’s time congressmen “stop providing themselves with special rules and play by the same ones as everyone else in the stock market.”

“Due to the nature of the job, members of Congress often receive information on

actions that will be taken up by Congress before the general public does,” he said. “It was brought to my attention that some members, both Republicans and Democrats, decide to use this information for personal financial gain. In the private sector, this is called insider trading and it is strictly illegal.”

— U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin is introducing a new bill aimed at addressing the opioid crisis.

The legislation, called the Opioid Crisis Response Act of 2018, would reauthorize and make changes to grants to states for opioid prevention and treatment; spur further research for non-addictive painkillers; and let hospice programs dispose of unneeded controlled substances to reduce the changes for misuse, among other things.

“Washington needs to step up with a stronger federal investment to support local prevention, treatment and recovery efforts,” the Madison Dem said in a [statement](#). “This crisis is not going away, and this legislation takes an important step to extend and improve critical programs, and to open up new resources to help states and tribal communities continue to have the tools they need to save lives.”

Posts of the week

https://www.instagram.com/p/BhmgZldnwU_/?taken-by=repgallagher

[@usmint](#) features [#Wisconsin](#) on its latest America the Beautiful quarter. pic.twitter.com/XYsErckp7r

— Senator Ron Johnson (@SenRonJohnson) [April 13, 2018](#)

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BhcmmK-HvG7/?taken-by=repgwenmoore>

ICYMI

[Pocan critical of Trump TPP reversal](#)

[Senator Ron Johnson cautiously considers regulating Facebook](#)

[Ron Johnson continues focus on FBI probe of Hillary Clinton emails](#)

[Wisconsin US senators respond to Syrian airstrikes](#)

[Senate drops measure to exempt ship ballasts from Clean Water Act](#)