

DC Wrap: Gallagher calls for foreign policy shift to address 'near-peer adversary' China

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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.

Quotes of the week

"I just would ask everybody, regardless of whether you don't want President Trump to respond, or you do want President Trump to respond, let us all agree on the basic fact that Iran is the culprit here and not blame anyone in the U.S. for what is a brazen escalation on the part of the brutal Iranian regime."

- U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher addressing the drone attack on oil fields in Saudi Arabia during an appearance on the "Hugh Hewitt Show."

"We've got to let people know what is at stake, and we've got to hit the streets and bring people to the polls in ways that we have never done it."

- U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore talking the 2020 presidential election during an appearance on PoliticsNation.

"You hear a lot of this national narrative that people are getting out for all sorts of reasons—it's just a bunch of hogwash."

- U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil on the "Dan O'Donnell Show" discussing whether the recent spike in Republicans announcing their retirement is in anticipation of a GOP loss in 2020.

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This week's news

— Rep. Mike Gallagher called for the United States to “completely change how we do business” in the foreign policy sector in the face of growing competition from China.

Speaking Tuesday night at a closed-door reception in Washington hosted by the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, the Green Bay Republican called China “a near-peer adversary of the order of the threat we faced from the Soviet Union.” WisPolitics.com was invited to the reception.

But unlike the Cold War-era rivalry with the Soviets, Gallagher warned that “incredibly intertwined” economies meant competition with China would manifest itself on the home front.

“It’s not as easy as us saying we can just turn this off and we can decouple our economies,” he said. “Wisconsin farmers sell a ton of soybeans to China, we have those kinds of companies like Hatco in Sturgeon Bay that make big toaster oven things that have factories in China and sell a lot of stuff to China.”

Gallagher said the United States was “rightfully trying to get tough on China economically,” but knocked the Trump administration’s use of so-called 232 tariffs against America’s allies.

“My view on tariffs is that they’re taxes on the American people,” he said. “They pick winners and losers, they create enormous uncertainty.”

Instead, he said the only way to win the competition “while not destroying our domestic economy” was to unite a coalition of countries that would collectively be able to oppose China’s “predatory practices.”

Despite these complexities, Gallagher said the United States starts in a position of “enormous advantage,” citing the American democratic system and the nation’s allies — which he said comprise 60 percent of the world’s GDP.

But he warned that edge could be squandered by three factors: an increasing partisan divide, the country's declining fiscal health and efforts to "fundamentally change the character of America" in an attempt to "out-China China."

"That is the only way we can lose over the long term, which is ultimately why I'm optimistic," he said. "I think the reservoirs of strength in this country but certainly in Wisconsin are incredibly deep."

— Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett and DNC Chair Tom Perez touted a revamped ground game after acknowledging Dems' strategy in Wisconsin in the 2016 presidential election left "votes on the table."

Speaking at a WisPolitics.com breakfast in Washington, D.C., Barrett said the party made a "mistake" by buying into a media-led narrative proclaiming the state was solidly blue in the runup to the election.

"They had won it consecutively for several decades, but oftentimes it was maybe by 1 percent or 2 percent," he said. "So how anybody could just assume because you won by 1 percent four years ago or eight years ago or 12 years ago that you were going to win at this time was a mistake."

Coupled with a voter outreach program that Perez said barely kicked into gear four years ago, Dems saw voters who had twice turned out to support former President Barack Obama either stay at home or cast ballots for Jill Stein — a fatal blow in a swing state decided by fewer than 23,000 votes.

"If Jill Stein voters had been for Secretary Clinton, that would've been enough to cover the 21,000 plus delta," Perez said. "Same thing with the stay at home."

In Milwaukee, Barrett said a poor ground game manifested itself when enthusiasm for Clinton "dissipated horribly" at the polls. But he added that there is a desire among communities of color in the city "to have engagement from the Democratic party."

"I think that part of our challenge now is to make sure everyone's engaged," Barrett said, adding the DNC convention would not be a "parachute effort."

The focus on rebuilding a ground game in the state, Perez said, was among the

national Dem party's top priorities in choosing Milwaukee as the host city.

"It's not simply a party for four nights," Perez said of the convention. "It's an organizing opportunity."

But Perez noted that work would not begin at the convention. He said Dems have been active on the ground starting in 2017, when the party made "a commitment to organizing in every zip code."

"As a result of that, we saw a lot of these remarkable statewide victories in 2018," he said.

Those results spurred on further investments in the ground game and Perez touted a diverse and "homegrown" organizing base that coordinated with volunteers to knock on 200,000 doors this summer.

"The folks we hired in Wisconsin, almost all of them are from Wisconsin," he said. "So basically they're going back to their communities to engage."

See video of the event:

<https://youtu.be/OpsB0vHrqjo>

— Sen. Scott Fitzgerald announced he'll be joining the race to fill U.S. Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner's seat in the 5th Congressional District.

Fitzgerald, who has served as Senate majority leader for multiple delegations throughout his 25 years in politics, called Washington a "mess" and said he hopes to bring a conservative voice to the Senate.

"Congressman Sensenbrenner spent decades advocating for conservative ideals in Washington, D.C. The residents of the 5th Congressional District deserve another strong conservative voice continuing to represent their interests in our nation's capital," Fitzgerald said in a release.

The Juneau Republican touted his accomplishments as Senate majority leader, saying he will continue to focus on labor rights, tax reform and pro-life legislation.

He indicated he had no intention of stepping down from the role while he

campaigned, saying he doesn't believe the run for Congress will negatively affect his work in the Legislature. His term in the state Senate doesn't expire until 2022, meaning he can return to his old post if he loses.

Fitzgerald is joined by one contender, Dem Tom Palzewics, who is the only other candidate to enter the race so far.

See Fitzgerald's release:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/2019/fitzgerald-campaign-announces-candidacy-for-fifth-congressional-district/>

— U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin tweeted out her opposition to the nomination of Catholic University Law Professor Robert Destro for a top position in the U.S. State Department.

This came after President Trump announced he was tapping Destro to serve as assistant secretary for Human Rights, Labor and Democracy.

In the tweet, the Madison Dem made it clear she plans to vote against Trump's nominee, calling Destro "the wrong choice."

"America should provide strong leadership on human rights and this nominee's long record of hostility towards the LGBTQ community makes it clear he won't provide it," Baldwin tweeted.

Destro has taught at the Catholic University Law School since 1982. He served as the university's interim dean from 1999 to 2001.

Multiple organizations, including the Human Rights Campaign, have publicly denounced Trump's pick, because of Destro's attitudes toward the LGBTQ community. The HRC released a letter opposing the nomination, noting that Destro has actively opposed the Equality Act.

"Mr. Destro's record of disrespect toward the LGBTQ community disqualifies him from being appointed to lead our efforts to protect the human rights of LGBTQ people and others around the world," HRC Government Affairs Director David Stacy wrote in the letter.

See Baldwin's tweet:

<https://twitter.com/SenatorBaldwin/status/1174017673686061056>

See the HRC letter:

<https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/HRC-Letter-to-Senate-Destro-April-2019.pdf>

— U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan called for military officials to improve noise pollution testing at Truax Air National Guard Base in Madison.

“As I hear from more members of the community, it has been brought to my attention that the noise impact is difficult to assess due to the Air Force’s use of the Day, Night, Average Sound Level metric,” Pocan wrote in a letter.

The Town of Vermont Dem was joined by Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway and other local officials in speaking out for increased analysis of the base’s noise impact. Pocan has previously advocated for similar noise reduction measures and sent a letter to Acting Air Force Secretary Matthew Donovan in August, but has yet to receive a response.

“The Air Force should conduct a take-off and landing of the F-16 and the F-35 planes so community members will have a more accurate understanding of the noise impact from the F-35 mission,” he said.

See Pocan’s release:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/2019/u-s-rep-pocan-calls-for-further-testing-of-noise-impact-at-truax-air-national-guard-base/>

Posts of the week

Oktoberfest is right around the corner but Volksfest season is upon us!
[#Waupun pic.twitter.com/pquE2Ozqw1](https://twitter.com/pquE2Ozqw1)

— Rep. Glenn Grothman (@RepGrothman) [September 15, 2019](#)

In Wisconsin, we make great beer, and the folks here at @PHBCBeer know that well.

Thanks for having me today - cheers! ☐ pic.twitter.com/tc53984cdA

— Sen. Tammy Baldwin (@SenatorBaldwin) [September 14, 2019](#)

Happy to be in Madison speaking at @CapTimes Idea Fest with @Emilee_WKOW @UWMadison #ctif19 pic.twitter.com/6nR11PMY65

— Senator Ron Johnson (@SenRonJohnson) [September 14, 2019](#)

I had a great time at Milwaukee Night in D.C. and enjoyed running into @JimPressOffice! pic.twitter.com/bzd3uActDJ

— Rep. Gwen Moore (@RepGwenMoore) [September 17, 2019](#)

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