

# DC Wrap: Kind says USMCA negotiations led to ‘much better’ deal

Posted on Thursday, Dec 12, 2019

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

*Note: There will be no DC Wrap product next week. Happy Thanksgiving!*

## **Quotes of the week**

“Now, I come from the state where Joe McCarthy came from. I met Joe McCarthy twice when I was first getting into politics as a teenager. Folks, you have made Joe McCarthy look like a piker, with what you’ve done with the electronic surveillance involved.”

*-U.S. Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner during a House Judiciary Committee’s impeachment inquiry hearing discussing subpoenas issued to phone companies to obtain numbers and records.*

“I have been a victim of the “welfare queen” trope—well, I’m proud to acknowledge that I am both a queen, and a former welfare recipient.”

*-U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore in a Twitter video address describing her proposed bill to expand the Earned Income Tax Credit.*

**>> 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***

**— U.S. Rep. Ron Kind credited negotiations between House Dems and the Trump administration for yielding a “much better” North American trade deal than the one originally unveiled by President Trump over a year ago.**

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Tuesday announced Dems struck a deal with the Trump administration on the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. The deal, which would fulfill one of Trump’s signature campaign promises, was originally agreed to in the fall of 2018. But its ratification had been held up as House Dems demanded stronger environmental, labor, enforcement and prescription drug pricing provisions.

But Kind, D-La Crosse, said negotiations over those demands ultimately led to a better deal, highlighting Dems work to add “strong enforceability language that was lacking in the original agreement.”

“I can’t emphasize enough why it was important to focus on enforceability, enforceability, enforceability,” he told WisPolitics.com. “You look at past trade agreements that lacked enforcement mechanisms. So when there was cheating going on, there was nothing you could really do about it and it cost us jobs.”

Kind said while the deal contained “a little bit of improvement” for the state’s dairy industry in the form of eliminating Canada’s Class 7 milk pricing system, he noted that “agriculture gets no further market access with Canada and Mexico than what they currently already have under the old NAFTA.”

And he knocked Vice President Mike Pence, who in a visit to Marinette Marine last month promoted USMCA as “a win for Wisconsin workers and a win for American jobs.”

“So the vice president coming into the state saying this is crucial to our farmers is nonsense,” Kind said. “What’s crucial is that we do have a good trade relationship with our two border neighbors with continued market access that we enjoyed under the old NAFTA agreement.”

Pence did not explicitly mention farmers in his Nov. 20 address.

Trump in a series of tweets this morning said the revised deal was “looking good”

and praised Dems' backing as "great for our Country!"

"It will be the best and most important trade deal ever made by the USA," he wrote.

Wisconsin House Republicans also lauded the deal.

"USMCA is a win for Wisconsin, for our dairy and manufacturing industries, and for middle-class families," said U.S. Rep Bryan Steil, R-Janesville, in a statement. "From day one, I've supported this agreement and I am happy to see we are nearing the finish line. Wisconsin farmers and workers depend on strong trade agreements with our allies."

The agreement also won praise from U.S. Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner, who called it "a huge win for America and for Wisconsin."

"It is a boon for our state's dairy farmers who will have more access to Canadian markets," the Menomonee Falls Republican said in a statement. "After enduring months of needless delay, I am eager to vote for the deal and am grateful to the Trump administration for their tireless work reaching an agreement."

U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher, meanwhile, reacted with a short statement.

"It's about damn time," the Green Bay Republican said.

A spokesman for U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan said this afternoon the Town of Vermont Dem hadn't seen a final text of the agreement and couldn't comment.

Pocan has previously been critical of the deal's lack of enforcement mechanisms and a provision Dems said would have increased prescription drug costs by mandating a 10-year "test data" exclusivity period for pricey medications across all three countries, which he had previously equated to "a big, wet, sloppy kiss" for the pharmaceutical industry.

Reports from Washington indicate both concerns were addressed in the final text of the agreement.

Pelosi's announcement clears the way for floor votes in the House and the GOP-controlled Senate, where the trade deal is expected to pass with wide margins.

Kind, meanwhile, said House Dems are aiming to get the deal passed before the

end of next week.

See Trump's tweets:

<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1204408551034228737>

<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1204409386535473158>

See Sensenbrenner's statement:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/2019/u-s-rep-sensenbrenner-usmca-is-a-huge-win-for-wisconsin/>

See Steil's statement:

<https://steil.house.gov/media/press-releases/steil-statement-usmca-progress>

See Gallagher's statement:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/2019/u-s-rep-gallagher-statement-on-announcement-of-usmca-agreement/>

**— The Wisconsin congressional delegation continued to split along party lines after House Dems unveiled two articles of impeachment against President Trump.**

Kind, who has previously been reticent to indicate how he will vote if impeachment moves to the House floor, told WisPolitics.com on Tuesday he hasn't yet looked at the articles of impeachment "as they've been written." But he added, "actively soliciting a foreign government to interfere in our electoral process is way out of bounds and it can't be tolerated."

That language tracks closely with the first article, which charges Trump abused the power of his office when he "corruptly solicited the Government of Ukraine to publicly announce investigations into a political opponent."

"In so doing, President Trump used the powers of the Presidency in a manner that compromised the national security of the United States and undermined the integrity of the United States democratic process," the resolution says.

House Dems also accused Trump of committing "high crimes and misdemeanors" by directing "the unprecedented, categorical, and indiscriminate defiance of

subpoenas” issued by House impeachment investigators. The move, Dems charge, constituted obstruction of Congress as Trump “assumed to himself functions and judgments necessary to the exercise of the ‘sole Power of Impeachment’ vested by the Constitution in the House of Representatives.”

But Sensenbrenner, a member of the House panel responsible for drafting the articles of impeachment, in a statement fired back that Dems’ “obsession with ousting the President made today an inevitability.”

“Despite the fact that they could find no bipartisan support—a criterion once set by both Speaker Pelosi and Chairman Nadler—they are pushing forward with this exercise that will further tear the country apart,” the Menomonee Falls Republican said. “Just as the Founders feared, divided governments will now almost certainly lead to partisan impeachments.”

Kind countered that GOP lawmakers would likely feel different if the White House was controlled by a Dem.

“I challenge my Republican colleagues: just substitute Barack Obama’s name for Donald Trump and would they feel the same way given the facts and the evidence that’s before them today?” he asked.

U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore, meanwhile, offered full-throated support of the move.

“Every President takes a sacred oath to protect the country and the interests of the American people,” the Milwaukee Dem said in a statement. “When Trump solicited a foreign government to investigate a political rival for personal and political gain, he violated his oath.

“I do not take these actions lightly, but President Trump has left Congress no choice but to move forward with articles of impeachment to uphold the Constitution and protect our democracy.”

See the Sensenbrenner statement:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/2019/u-s-rep-sensenbrenner-statement-on-articles-of-impeachment/>

See the Moore statement:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/2019/u-s-rep-moore-statement-on-articles-of-impeachment/>

**— A report called for by U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin and Gov. Tony Evers revealed the Wisconsin National Guard created its own arm to investigate allegations of sexual harassment and assault in violation of state and federal law.**

After reviewing the report on how the Wisconsin National Guard botched the handling of assault and harassment allegations, Gov. Tony Evers on Monday called for and received the resignation of Maj. Gen. Don Dunbar, who has been adjutant general since 2007.

Evers vowed “top-to-bottom changes to ensure a safe workplace in the guard” that is free of sexual assault and harassment or the fear of retaliation for filing a report. The resignation of Dunbar is effective Dec. 31.

“New leadership is also needed to successfully implement these reforms,” said Evers, who signed an executive order implementing changes recommended in the 88-page report.

Baldwin, meanwhile, said the report shows the Guard failed to provide “leadership of unmatched integrity and a work environment free of sexual assault, harassment and the fear of retaliation.”

“The failure of leadership, wrongdoing, and lack of accountability that has been uncovered demands change at the Wisconsin National Guard, including new leadership and implementing all of the report’s recommendations on how best to prevent sexual assault and harassment, and confront it with accountability when it occurs,” the Madison Dem said.

The probe conducted by the National Guard Bureau’s Office of Complex Investigations found the state unit’s policies for handling assault and harassment allegations were “non-compliant with federal law” and resulted in “numerous, significant deficiencies that compromised the accuracy and legality of the investigations.” The move also shielded the Wisconsin National Guard from scrutiny by state and federal officials.

Under current policy, the Office of Complex Investigations is supposed to investigate reports of sexual assault. Instead, the Wisconsin National Guard used its

internal process to handle 22 of the 35 reports of sexual assault it received between May 1, 2009, and May 31, 2019.

The move to handle investigations from within created “internal, command-driven” probes, according to the report.

The decision was found to be a “direct violation” of Department of Defense policies and practices, and the probe found the move “negatively impacted” the quality and legality of sexual assault investigations. This, in turn, meant the credibility of the investigations “suffered to the detriment of all parties.”

Guard investigators in the report present 21 recommendations to address the issues, including calling on the Wisconsin National Guard to stop conducting internal investigations into allegations of sexual assault and to update its policies to prevent “command-directed” probes in the future.

The report also calls on the Wisconsin National Guard to update its written policies to comply with federal law, implement internal controls to “better manage the administration of discipline” and centralize all military justice records.

See more in Monday’s PM Update.

**— U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan reaffirmed support for a House-passed bill to encourage a two-state solution for Palestine and Israel, saying the proposal sent a “clear and necessary message.”**

The Town of Vermont Dem’s statement came after U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced the United States no longer considers Israeli settlements on the West Bank to be a violation of international law.

“Reversing on decades-long bipartisan U.S. policy opposing the settlements in the West Bank is a blatant attempt to help Prime Minister Netanyahu—not promote peace in the region,” Pocan said in a release.

The bill, which the House passed on Dec. 6, would express Congress’ support of a two-state solution in an attempt to ensure peace in the region. Pocan said the bill also contradicts Pompeo’s position by establishing opposition to settlements in the

West Bank.

“Prime Minister Netanyahu’s recent pledge to annex the West Bank eliminates any possibility of a future Palestinian state and the reality of long-lasting peace in the region,” Pocan said.

See Pocan’s statements:

<https://pocan.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/pocan-opposes-pompeo-reversing-policy-on-west-bank-settlements>

<https://pocan.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/pocan-votes-to-affirm-two-state-solution-for-palestine-and-israel>

**— U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman slammed a bill backed by Dems that would add increased supervision of voting practices as a “federal government takeover of elections.”**

Passed along party lines in the House, the legislation would require states with documented instances of voting rights violations to report to the U.S. Department of Justice any changes they make to statewide voting practices.

But in a release, Grothman, R-Glenbeulah, said the measure was aimed at “taking power away from citizens and states and instead giving it to politicians and bureaucrats.”

He noted the bill could potentially overturn Wisconsin’s voter ID laws, which require a form of government-issued identification in order to vote.

“When I speak with poll workers and town clerks around Wisconsin, I get an overwhelmingly positive response on our state’s photo I.D. laws. These laws are intended to protect the integrity of our elections by ensuring votes are cast properly and in the correct elections,” Grothman said.

The bill was supported by Moore, Pocan and Kind.

See Grothman’s statement:

<https://grothman.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=1356>

## ***Posts of the week***

Last weekend, we took back the Axe. Tonight, [@BadgerFootball](#) is taking back the [#BigTen](#) championship.

Go Badgers! [#OnWisconsin](#) [pic.twitter.com/IJ7pd1gSBX](https://pic.twitter.com/IJ7pd1gSBX)

— Sen. Tammy Baldwin (@SenatorBaldwin) [December 7, 2019](#)

Me patiently waiting on a response from [@Jim\\_Jordan](#)  
<https://t.co/dZZ4HHa5x7> [pic.twitter.com/WsjETKkupQ](https://pic.twitter.com/WsjETKkupQ)

— Rep. Gallagher Press Office (@RepGallagher) [December 5, 2019](#)

Global engagement and diplomacy means a strong, secure America.  
Especially with these amazing women of color leading the way!

Thank you [@gmfus](#) for hosting this tremendous panel with these powerful women! [pic.twitter.com/EgSLvEVuYZ](https://pic.twitter.com/EgSLvEVuYZ)

— Rep. Gwen Moore (@RepGwenMoore) [December 6, 2019](#)

It's fair to say that the craft fair in [#Columbus](#) was a great event for the holiday season. [pic.twitter.com/4AVTCi9z0A](https://pic.twitter.com/4AVTCi9z0A)

— Rep. Glenn Grothman (@RepGrothman) [December 8, 2019](#)

Clouds blanketing Walworth County this morning.  
[pic.twitter.com/UM29cYAdcX](https://pic.twitter.com/UM29cYAdcX)

— Bryan Steil (@RepBryanSteil) [December 7, 2019](#)

## **ICYMI**

[Ron Kind Criticizes Trump Administration For Delaying China Trade Deal](#)

[Wisconsin's Jim Sensenbrenner assails impeachment inquiry at House Judiciary hearing](#)

[Mark Pocan wrong to blame President Trump, trade wars for all dairy woes](#)

[Sen. Ron Johnson says Ukraine whistleblower's name should be public, and he will be 'celebrated,' like Christine Blasey Ford](#)

[Senator Tammy Baldwin wants to provide affordable housing for volunteer first responders](#)

[Wisconsin dairy, business interests weigh in on new North American trade agreement](#)