

DC Wrap: Sensenbrenner questions Mueller, charges former special counsel is ‘fishing’

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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 think the fundamental dilemma — and I’ve been talking about this for a while and this is just the perspective of a rank-and-file member of Congress who tries to understand this stuff and not accordingly based on information and what northeast Wisconsin wants — is that this stuff is all negotiated behind closed doors.”

– U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher in a Twitter video calling for change to the budget process. See the [video](#).

“Wisconsin—America’s Dairyland—has lost over 1,600 dairy farms in the last two years, and forward-looking strategies to increase the value and utilization of milk cannot come fast enough.”

– U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin wrote in a letter to U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, asking the Trump administration to direct at least \$60 million in trade aid to USDA’s Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives. See the [release](#).



This week’s news

— **GOP U.S. Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner accused Robert Mueller of “fishing” without charging President Trump with a crime during a House Judiciary Committee hearing.**

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Lawmakers on Wednesday quizzed the former special counsel on his report detailing Russian interference in the 2016 election.

In the five minutes of time allotted by the committee, the Menomonee Falls Republican questioned why Mueller pushed ahead with the investigation after receiving an opinion from the Office of Legal Counsel indicating that Trump could not be indicted while in office.

Mueller responded that “you don’t know where the investigation is going to lead” and noted that the OLC opinion indicated he could continue the probe.

“If you’re not going to indict the president, then you’re just going to continue fishing, that’s my opinion,” Sensenbrenner said.

Sensenbrenner, who chaired the Judiciary panel for six years during the Bush administration, also asked why Mueller didn’t use the phrase “impeachable conduct” in his report. He noted that former special counsel Ken Starr used that phrase “on a number of occasions” in the report summarizing his investigation of the Clinton administration. Mueller replied that his mandate “does not go to other ways of addressing the conduct” but rather “developing the report and turning the report in to the attorney general.”

Sensenbrenner was the only member of the state’s congressional delegation to question Mueller. The former special counsel also appeared before the House Intelligence Committee, but no Wisconsin lawmaker sits on that panel.

— The NRCC shared an overview of a new poll with WisPolitics.com that shows U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, D-La Crosse, neck-and-neck with a “named Republican candidate.”

But the House GOP’s campaign arm declined to release the identity of the Republican Kind was matched against.

A memo on the poll said it found the “named Republican candidate” backed by 45 percent of likely 2020 votes, while 43 percent supported Kind.

The poll's margin of error was plus or minus 4.9 percentage points.

According to the memo, 23 percent of undecided voters had a favorable impression of Kind, while 24 percent had an unfavorable one.

It also found a generic GOP candidate with a 47-40 edge in the district.

The poll of 400 likely 2020 general election voters in the western Wisconsin district was conducted July 7-11 using automated calls.

Kind was unopposed in 2016 as President Trump won his district by just less than 4.5 percentage points. He then won re-election last year with 59.7 percent as Dem Tony Evers beat Republican Scott Walker in the western Wisconsin district by 2.1 percentage points.

Read the [memo](#).

— U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan says he believes Democrats in Congress can work with President Trump to secure funding for infrastructure projects that would create “good union jobs” in the state.

Speaking at a ribbon-cutting ceremony for Wisconsin Laborers' District Council's newly expanded training center, the Town of Vermont Dem touted renovations to the nation's energy grid, roads, bridges, broadband and water delivery systems as areas where bipartisan compromise could be found.

“I am still optimistic that despite having a president who comes from a very different place than some of us, this could be one area that we could still be able to get some funding to be able to support that,” he said.

Pocan played up his roots as a card-carrying union man for nearly three decades and said investment in infrastructure would “invest in jobs right here in Wisconsin and right here for the Wisconsin laborers.”

He indicated that House Dems were involved in a “\$2 trillion conversation” with the White House on the infrastructure package.

— U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson added he “doesn't agree with” President Trump's tweet that he doesn't believe four Dem congresswomen — known as “the squad” — “are capable of loving our Country.”

The Oshkosh Republican didn't condemn Trump's tweet during an appearance Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union."

"That's his opinion," Johnson said of Trump after host Dana Bush pressed him several times on the president's knocks on the congresswomen, including that they should "go back" to the countries they're from.

Johnson also said during the appearance that he'd "like to see us move toward a color-blind society" and wanted to see "everybody reduce the rhetoric" so the country could deal with some of the issues it faces.

Asked about the chant at a recent Trump rally — "send her back" — Johnson said he didn't like it and the president didn't, either.

"The whole America 'love it or leave it' is not a new sentiment," Johnson said. "You know, back in the '60s that wasn't considered racist."

Johnson, chair of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, also talked about Iran and the southern border during the appearance.

Watch the [appearance](#).

— Johnson told CNN that Iran "is playing a very, very dangerous game."

Johnson added he thinks that Iran is "trying to divide the U.S. from our friends and allies" by "(going) after the UK."

"They're just uniting us in hopefully standing up to Iran once and for all demanding they never have a nuclear weapon," Johnson concluded.

The senator then touted his Operation Safe Return while discussing the southern border and challenges with finding solutions to fix a "broken asylum system."

See the release [here](#).

— U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher, R-Green Bay, said chants such as "send her back" that were directed at a Dem colleague during the president's recent rally in North Carolina are "abhorrent."

Gallagher tweeted a video in which he didn't mention by name Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-

Minn., who was one of the targets of the chants at last night's rally. A naturalized citizen, she came to the U.S. from Somalia.

In the video, Gallagher referred to a "Democrat member" who said controversial things, including "trafficking in anti-Semitism." He said both sides politically are feeding off each other.

"This is not a good look for the United States of America," Gallagher said. "We have to find a way to take the temperature down and to rediscover some common ground. We don't want to spend the next year engaging in this endless tribal warfare and Twitter nonsense."

See Gallagher's video on [Twitter](#).

Posts of the week

Saw [@MLB](#) and [@Brewers](#) legend, Rollie Fingers on the Hill today!
pic.twitter.com/F3BHQNrKSB

— Bryan Steil (@RepBryanSteil) [July 17, 2019](#)

Nobody:

Wisconsin: pic.twitter.com/MMqj5VkThh

— Sean Duffy (@SeanDuffyWI) [July 22, 2019](#)

Proud to join the [@WILaborers](#) this week to celebrate the expansion of the Wisconsin Laborers' Apprenticeship and Training Center in DeForest.

This center is a valuable resource for training the skilled craft laborers that build and maintain Wisconsin's infrastructure.

pic.twitter.com/qmt2oMB7Ik

— Rep. Mark Pocan (@RepMarkPocan) [July 23, 2019](#)

ICYMI

[Republicans tune out Robert Mueller](#)

[Bash presses senator to disavow Trump's attacks on Dems](#)

[Bill to expand broadband to rural Wisconsin communities passes Senate committee](#)

[Sen. Baldwin is part of bipartisan effort to build more resilient roads](#)

[Wisconsin Republicans mostly silent on 'send her back' chant at Trump rally](#)

[Wisconsin's congressional races beginning to shape up ahead of 2020 cycle](#)

[Mike Gallagher says he won't call Trump and supporters racist, despite criticizing chant](#)