

DC Wrap: Steil highlights focus on ‘core pocketbook issues’; members split on Trump’s border security speech

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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

We have leaders, new leaders, with new energy, committed to ending the divisiveness in this state, bringing people together and moving this state forward.
– U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, speaking at Gov. Tony Evers’ inauguration gala at Monona Terrace in Madison. [See coverage of the event in Quorum Call.](#)

I’m honored to continue leading the committee’s important work on serious issues facing our nation – border security, cybersecurity and critical infrastructure protection to name a few – in this nonpartisan spirit during the #116thCongress.
– U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, on [Twitter](#) after his office announced he will again chair the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee.



This week’s news

— U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil says he’s focused on “core pocketbook issues” as the newest member of the state’s congressional delegation.

Steil, who replaced former House Speaker Paul Ryan in the 1st CD following his retirement, said in an interview with WisPolitics.com this week he’s hoping to hone

in on addressing the skills gap and health care affordability during his first term in Congress.

The Janesville Republican and former Ryan aide said he doesn't have a specific committee assignment he's eyeing; rather, he said he thinks "there's a handful of opportunities there where I could be impactful" on his priority issues.

Steil said he's looking forward to taking his background as an attorney for manufacturers and a UW System Board of Regents member and "applying it to the issues of the day."

In the time between winning election and taking office, Steil said he sought advice from Ryan, also of Janesville.

"First and foremost you can learn from Paul Ryan about the tone, that you can disagree without being disagreeable," he said. "And you can work with people to try to move ideas forward. You fight ideas, you don't fight people."

Steil also said the pair talked about "doing your homework" and becoming immersed in policy.

"Legislating is hard work and the people who are most effective are the people that really spend the time, dive into the policy, understand it and try to move the ball forward, that's the type of member that I'd love to be," he said.

See more from the interview in today's PM Update.

— Wisconsin Republicans are applauding President Trump's border security address as sensible and eminently necessary.

Meanwhile, Democrats slammed the president's rhetoric and demands as inflammatory and wasteful.

Trump on Wednesday [delivered a speech](#) emphasizing the need for a border wall with Mexico, which his administration has argued will prevent drugs and criminals from crossing into the United States.

Republicans were quick to praise his remarks, including U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, of

Oshkosh, who [wrote on Twitter](#) Trump made a “strong case for securing our border.” And U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil, of Janesville, [in a statement](#) reiterated his “frustration with the logjam we find ourselves in,” adding “we must secure our border and end the shutdown.”

Likewise, U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher commended the White House’s “serious” address and attempts at compromise. The Green Bay Republican [in an interview on America’s Newsroom](#) also argued his Dem counterparts, including Speaker Nancy Pelosi, would support the president’s proposals but were being “held hostage” by the progressive wing of their party.

On the Democratic side of the aisle, U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin [on Twitter](#) linked the president’s failure to keep his campaign promise that “Mexico will pay” for the border wall with the ongoing shutdown, which the Madison Dem called “a national crisis.”

And U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore slammed Trump [on Twitter](#) for manufacturing “a national emergency to gear up his reelection campaign.”

— A handful of Wisconsin members of Congress are forgoing pay during the shutdown, according to their offices.

That includes U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson and U.S. Reps. Sean Duffy, Ron Kind, Bryan Steil and Glenn Grothman.

Johnson, R-Oshkosh, is forwarding his salary during the shutdown to The Boys and Girls Club of Oshkosh as he has in previous years, spokesman Ben Voelkel said.

Duffy, Kind and Steil are also having their salaries withheld during the shutdown, their offices said.

Meanwhile, a Kind spokesman noted the La Crosse Dem backs legislation that would pause congressional pay if the chambers don’t pass appropriations bills or a budget resolution on time.

“As long as furloughed federal workers go without pay, I will not take my own salary,” Kind said in a statement.

And Grothman said he's asking for his next paycheck to be delayed, adding he's planning to donate a portion of it to charity, though he's still figuring out the exact amount.

— Grothman says he's working to get Dem cosponsors on his bill to crowdsource funding for a border wall.

The Glenbeulah Republican told WisPolitics.com this week he's trying to talk to some of the "more reasonable Democrats" about backing his legislation to create a new Department of Treasury account to house donations for a wall on the nation's southern border.

"It's hard for me to believe the zeal for open borders among some Democrats would prevent the bill from getting to the floor," he said.

A [similar bill](#) was first introduced by Rep. Diane Black, R-Tenn., last May. Grothman introduced the legislation himself [last week](#).

Currently under federal law, citizens can make donations to a general Treasury fund called "Gifts to the United States." But Grothman said while that option exists, it doesn't allow the donor to dictate where the funding is being used.

"We want to make sure the money's used for the wall and if you use just give money in general to the government, who knows what they're going to do with it, you know?" he said. "They can grab it for something else."

— U.S. Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner has re-introduced legislation to direct the funds acquired during drug seizures toward increased border security.

The Menomonee Falls Republican initially introduced the bill last year, and has since generated further support in Congress due to the government shutdown.

The so-called "BUILD WALL Act" will attempt to eventually fund the construction of a physical wall, as well as the implementation of other security technologies.

In a [statement](#), Sensenbrenner said his plan would "create a path to reopen the

government” and he called upon fellow legislators to consider the bill so that Congress can “return to other important legislative business.”

— U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin has cosponsored a bill to allow Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices with pharmaceutical companies.

This legislation aims to lower out-of-pocket costs for seniors enrolled in Medicare Part D.

Titled the “Empowering Medicare Seniors to Negotiate Drug Prices Act,” the bill would eliminate the “non-interference” clause allow the Health and Human Services secretary to bargain.

Baldwin, D-Madison, [in a statement](#) called the legislation “a critical reform that would help safeguard the Medicare program.”

Posts of the week

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BsLqNQ5nuF-/>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BsOaZF3HT2s/>

ICYMI

[Sen. Tammy Baldwin makes hay with farm loss claim](#)

[Senator Tammy Baldwin seeks Air National Guard sexual misconduct probe](#)

[Bryan Steil, Wisconsin's newest member of Congress, takes office amid government shutdown](#)

[Steil plans to open office at Racine County Courthouse](#)

[Steil comments on his votes against funding bills](#)

[Rep. Ron Kind: Congress will write individual appropriations bills to fund agencies](#)

[during shutdown](#)

[15 Democrats, including Ron Kind, don't back Nancy Pelosi for speaker](#)