DC Wrap: Johnson, Baldwin back unanimously supported $2 trillion coronavirus stimulus package

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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: **https://forms.gle/YLYZtJWHPSt24HhZ7**

Quotes of the week

"This helps workers keep their jobs and keep money in their pockets, and it gives small business owners a fighting chance to stay afloat."
-U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, on the coronavirus funding bill that passed the Senate floor late Tuesday night.

"It is unrealistic to choose between economic devastation on the one hand and millions of deaths on the other. With better use of data and bottom-up solutions tailored to the unique needs of our states, we can Cancel the Apocalypse."
-U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher, R-Green Bay, on what America has to do to keep the economy afloat while not risking the lives of Americans.

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This week's news

— The U.S. Senate unanimously backed a sweeping $2 trillion package designed to stimulate the economy and direct financial support to Americans hit hardest by the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Wisconsin's two senators, often at philosophical odds, joined the rare consensus.

U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin praised the package as "another strong step forward by Congress responding to the challenges we face in Wisconsin."

"We need to continue working together across party lines to take additional steps to get through this public health crisis, stabilize our economy, and help it move forward," the Madison Dem said in a statement.

U.S. Sen Ron Johnson said the package was "far from perfect" but added he backed the measure because it was "essential that Congress provide this support."

Still, the Oshkosh Republican said the price tag was "pretty hard to swallow" and predicted the speed at which lawmakers moved to approve the package amid limited information available on coronavirus meant there would likely be "negative unintended consequences."

"In this case, 'not letting a crisis go to waste' dramatically drove up the cost of the bill and provided funding for purposes not essential to address the current crisis," he said.

The measure is the largest in U.S. history, carrying a price tag that more than doubles the 2008 bank bailout as well as the subsequent 2009 economic stimulus.

The package includes: $150 billion to bolster state and local governments; $100 billion in funding for hospitals; $350 billion in loans for small businesses to cover wages; and a $500 billion loan program for large businesses. It also boosts funding for unemployment insurance, provides tax incentives for businesses to keep redundant workers on payroll and expands food assistance by $25 billion, among a host of other measures.

The package now heads to the House.

Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., indicated the body will vote on the measure on Friday. President Trump said he will sign it "immediately."

See the Baldwin statement [here.](#)

See the Johnson statement [here.](#)

— U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher said he still hopes to get proposals by the U.S. Cyberspace Solarium Commission passed by the House, though the coronavirus has become top priority in Washington.

In its final report, the commission co-chaired by the Green Bay Republican rolled out more than 75 recommendations. They ranged from upping the number of military personnel trained for cyber operations to using government resources to protect "systemically important" critical infrastructure owned by the private sector to promoting the use of paper-based voting systems as widely as possible.

The commission proposed a framework of "layered deterrence" that incorporates recommendations to promote "responsible" nation-state behavior in cyberspace, harden the country's cyber defenses and retaliate against attackers.

But cases of coronavirus in America began to skyrocket shortly after the report was released , diverting energy on Capitol Hill.

Gallagher told WisPolitics.com he still sees a "path forward" for the proposals though, especially as concerns of a cyber attack while Americans are isolated rise.

"All across the board cyber criminals, even potentially nation state-backed cyber groups, are trying to exploit this crisis to attack us in cyberspace," he said. "If anything I would suggest the coronavirus crisis adds a sense of urgency to the solarium report."

While many committee meetings that would have considered the report's recommendations are being postponed, Gallagher said he was having conversations with relevant committee chairs as well as colleagues in the House and the Senate "to try and move this thing forward."

"We hope that this is at worst a little slow down, but doesn't prevent us from getting across the finish line."

— U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson's sale earlier this year of his ownership stake in the plastics company he helped found netted him between $5 million and $25 million, according to a filing with the Senate.

A spokesman said the move stemmed from a previously announced sale, not the coronavirus pandemic.

Johnson's recent filing came as some of his U.S. Senate colleagues came under intense scrutiny for dumping millions in stock after briefings on the disease.

In February, the San Francisco-based private equity firm Gryphon Investors announced it had signed an agreement for what it called a "strategic investment" in Oshkosh-based Pacur LLC. That announcement said the company's management team — including the senator's brother and company CEO Barry Johnson — would continue to manage the business while the family would "remain significant owners." The release didn't mention the senator.

"The transaction was the result of an investment by a private firm in Pacur that was months in the making and was unrelated to the coronavirus pandemic," said Johnson spokesman Ben Voekel, adding the senator and his wife no longer have an ownership stake in the company.

The filing with the U.S. Senate shows Johnson completed the transaction March 2 for between $5 million and $25 million.

The mass selling that propelled the stock market into bear territory began Feb. 24.

National media reported several U.S. senators sold significant amounts of stock before the market began to tumble. They include U.S. Sen. Richard Burr, R-North Carolina, who made 33 separate transactions selling between $628,000 and $1.7 million of his holdings on Feb. 13, according to ProPublica. The Senate Intelligence Committee he chairs was receiving regular updates on the disease at the time.

U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin's assets are in a blind trust.

See Johnson's filing [here.](#)

See the February announcement of the deal [here.](#)

— Baldwin and Johnson have asked Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for help to secure the return of Wisconsinites stranded abroad due to travel restrictions.

Both sent separate letters to Pompeo and Baldwin's correspondence also went to Defense Secretary Mark Esper.

Johnson's office said it's been helping travelers in more than a dozen countries.

"These Americans are scared, desperate and running out of hope," Johnson wrote. "I hope you will give your fullest and most immediate consideration to this request, and I appreciate your time and consideration to this urgent matter."

Read the Johnson letter here.

See Baldwin's tweet on her letter here.

— Baldwin helped introduce a bill that aims to give rural broadband providers financial relief in order to keep those services up and running during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The bill would appropriate $2 billion to a fund at the FCC that providers could apply for if they are continuing to service low-income customers at a free or discounted rate.

"Reliable high-speed broadband is necessary for helping our small businesses and rural communities get through the coronavirus pandemic," Baldwin said in the release.

The bill already has the support of many rural broadband groups including NTCA—the Rural Broadband Association.

"This legislation will help ensure that families and students in Wisconsin have access to broadband during this public health emergency—no matter where they live," Baldwin said.

See the release here.

— A bipartisan group of five Wisconsin lawmakers is urging the U.S. Department of Defense to increase the state's access to critical medical

supplies like masks and ventilators.

In a letter to Defense Secretary Mark Esper, U.S. Reps. Mike Gallagher, Mark Pocan, Glenn Grothman, Ron Kind and Bryan Steil said they strongly support measures the agency has taken so far. But they added that they "want to ensure states like Wisconsin are receiving as much assistance as possible in order to counter this pandemic."

The lawmakers also posed questions to the DoD on if it has plans to provide additional supplies to the states from the National Defense Stockpile.

"In this time of unprecedented uncertainty and growing crisis, we cannot afford to leave potential resources untapped," the lawmakers wrote. "We urge the Department to make use of all the tools at its disposal to assist civil authorities in their efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic."

At the time the letter was written, the agency had approximately five million masks and 2,000 ventilators being prepared to be released to the states.

See the release here.

Posts of the week

I am so grateful for @hungertaskforce's tireless work to reduce food insecurity in Milwaukee. They have created an interactive map that includes locations where children and adults can receive meals throughout the area. Find participating sites here: https://t.co/WtazdtHtJe

— Rep. Gwen Moore (@RepGwenMoore) March 24, 2020

I'm working with the @StateDept and the U.S. Embassy in Lima to get Maddie out of Peru and back home to Janesville. Thanks to @nbc15_madison for bringing awareness to this situation: pic.twitter.com/qUkCQOAqje

— Bryan Steil (@RepBryanSteil) [March 24, 2020](#)

The CCP's insecurity and resulting coverup of the coronavirus has endangered millions and sent the global economy into a tailspin. Proud to stand with [@RepJimBanks](#) and others in opposing the CCP's disinformation and propaganda. [https://t.co/x0Urljxoyi](#)

— Rep. Gallagher Press Office (@RepGallagher) [March 24, 2020](#)

This is what community looks like. I am so grateful for our health care workers at [#WI](#) hospitals like Ascension St. Joseph in Milwaukee that are on the frontlines of this pandemic working to save lives. Thank you for all you do! [https://t.co/3bHOrWlJoH](#)

— Sen. Tammy Baldwin (@SenatorBaldwin) [March 24, 2020](#)

I'm with [@RepRoKhanna](#).

No more piecemeal fixes.

A national crisis deserves a nationwide solution. [https://t.co/ak1zi7lSiX](#)

— Rep. Mark Pocan (@RepMarkPocan) [March 24, 2020](#)

ICYMI

[U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher: Wisconsin can cancel the apocalypse](#)
["We are all in this together." Bryan Steil and Andrea Palm answer coronavirus](#)

questions
Unsanitized: Senator Tammy Baldwin v. the Bailout
GOP senator says only small percentage of population might die of coronavirus
Congresswoman Gwen Moore self-quarantining for COVID-19
Rep. Mark Pocan on rent relief, evictions in the pandemic