

DC Wrap: Pocan calls for COVID relief package to include Euro-styled paycheck guarantee

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Quotes of the week

"There's something magic about deadlines — nobody wants to see the government close."

– U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, expressing optimism lawmakers can agree to a COVID-19 relief package and add it to a government spending bill ahead of government funding running out tomorrow.

"There was fraud in this election — I don't have any doubt about that, there was fraud. We just don't know the extent, and we don't know what the remedy would be when identified."

– U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh during his committee hearing yesterday on election "irregularities." His comments drew blowback from Senate Dems, who said the hearing was "a destructive exercise that has no place in the United States Senate."

This week's news

— **U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan urged his colleagues to opt for a paycheck guarantee program in the next COVID-19 relief package.**

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The Town of Vermont Dem said such a program would see the federal government subsidize the wage of workers who otherwise would have been laid off. He said similar programs have been utilized in Canada as well as several European and Asian countries.

“If we actually supported small businesses with that payroll — I think they pay something like 80 percent of people’s payroll — not only does that business supported by that because that’s one of the largest expenses they have, but also people aren’t then on benefits,” said the Progressive small businessman. “They’re not on unemployment, they’re not on food stamps, they’re not on other things. It’s cheaper to support people on payroll than through government support programs.”

Pocan said he hoped his colleagues would consider the proposal and noted incoming Treasury Secretary and former Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen has been an advocate. But with negotiations on the coronavirus relief package set to conclude by tomorrow, he said he feared it wouldn’t be included “because it’s a little bit too much common sense.”

Pocan talked extensively during a Tuesday Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce “DC Meets Madison” webinar about how to improve the Paycheck Protection Program program that’s set to be extended in the upcoming relief package. He also said the voice of small businesses needed to be heard in Congress.

To that end, the small business owner noted that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi had invited him to be part of Congress’ Joint Economic Committee and mentioned the need for broader efforts, including boosts to infrastructure, in the new Congress.

But he said while he anticipated the relief package this year, it likely would fall short on new state and local government aid.

— U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin’s take on the lame-duck package noted a bipartisan push for direct payments to individuals.

The Madison Dem said Tuesday a bipartisan group of Senate lawmakers has sent a pair of COVID-19 relief package proposals to congressional leaders for final negotiations.

According to Baldwin, negotiators have thus far hashed out differences on about 80

percent of the issues, including a PPP extension, support for small businesses, a continued moratorium on evictions and foreclosures, rental assistance, and an extension of unemployment insurance, among a host of other measures.

What's more, she said the White House and lawmakers from across the ideological spectrum — from conservative Missouri U.S. Sen. Josh Hawley to liberal Vermont Independent U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders — are also pushing for another round of direct stimulus payments similar to the \$1,200 checks some received earlier this year. Baldwin said she also wants to see stimulus payments and reports from Washington indicate negotiators yesterday settled on a scaled-down version of stimulus payments.

Baldwin said negotiators have put together two packages: one encompassing the proposals on which consensus has been reached plus aid for state and local governments and liability protection and a second that strips out those elements and only includes measures negotiators have already agreed upon.

Baldwin said those two packages are now in the hands of the White House and the so-called “four corners” — Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., and Pelosi.

She said that group has agreed the areas of consensus should be “the framework for their final touches” while state and local aid and liability protection are “on the table.” But any package would have to be “guided” by a roughly \$900 billion limit, Baldwin said.

Baldwin said she hoped to see the three outstanding issues resolved and a coronavirus relief package attached to a federal omnibus spending bill and passed ahead of government funding running dry at midnight tomorrow.

“That’s a tall order but there’s something magic about deadlines — nobody wants to see the government close,” she said. “We’ve gotten this far to have pretty much an omnibus that’s ready to go and a COVID relief package that’s 80 to 85 percent there.”

— Minocqua Brewing Company in a Facebook post this week announced it

will launch a super PAC aiming to “cut short Tom Tiffany’s reign as the biggest congressional turncoat in Wisconsin.”

The Tuesday post indicated the brewery was targeting Tiffany, who hails from the same northern Wisconsin town, for “signing a brief to invalidate the votes of his own constituency and his neighbors in the rest of our state.”

That’s a reference to Tiffany signing onto an amicus brief with more than 100 House members urging the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn the state’s election results and those in three others at the urging of Texas. Tiffany was the only member of the Wisconsin delegation to join the brief and the high court on Friday rejected the case.

The brewery, which is owned by former Dem Assembly candidate Kirk Bangstad, indicated it was crafting a Chocolate Blonde Ale and 10 percent of the profits from the so-called “Inauguration Day Beer” and corresponding merchandise would be put toward the super PAC.

In an email, Tiffany said in response “I support free speech and open debate, I support bars and restaurants being able to serve their customers without arbitrary government mandates and lockdowns”

“I like beer, too (although I’m more of a PBR guy than a chocolate-blond-whatever drinker),” he said.

See the post [here.](#)

— U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson’s claim that fraud undoubtedly occurred in last month’s election spurred the panel’s ranking Dem member to accuse the Oshkosh Republican of peddling destructive rhetoric.

Johnson during yesterday’s Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee hearing investigating election “irregularities” pointed to testimony from a pair of Trump campaign attorneys in alleging voter fraud. But he conceded “the conclusion has collectively been reached” by a combination of courts, election officials and the Electoral College that it was not widespread enough to alter President-elect Joe Biden’s victory.

“There was fraud in this election — I don’t have any doubt about that, there was fraud,” Johnson said. “We just don’t know the extent, and we don’t know what the remedy would be when identified.”

Those comments drew a fierce response from U.S. Sen. Gary Peters, the Michigan Dem who serves as the panel’s ranking member. He labeled the hearing as “a destructive exercise that has no place in the United States Senate.”

“The president and many of his supporters are unfortunately continuing their efforts to undermine the will of the people, disenfranchise voters and sow the seeds of mistrust and discontent to further their partisan desire for power,” Peters said in an opening statement. “Whether intended or not this hearing gives a platform to conspiracy theories and lies.”

Johnson and Peters at one point engaged in a heated exchange with Johnson accusing Peters of lying repeatedly and spreading Russian disinformation and the Dem firing back the hearing was “not about airing your grievances.”

“I don’t know what rabbit hole you’re running down. ... This is terrible, what you’re doing to this committee,” Peters said as the pair bickered and Johnson banged his gavel.

The hearing also drew President Trump’s eyes as he tweeted urging followers to tune in and praising Johnson for “doing an excellent job.”

The spat came during what the Oshkosh Republican said would be his last hearing as committee chair as he faces the Senate Republican Conference’s term limit of six years leading a panel. Johnson is up for reelection in 2022.

The hearing featured testimony from Chris Krebs, the Trump administration’s former top election security official who was fired after tweeting that claims of manipulated voting machines were either “unsubstantiated or are technically incoherent.”

Krebs, the ousted director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, said he has yet to see any irregularities on the cybersecurity front and referenced a statement last week from outgoing Attorney General William Barr indicating the Justice Department has not uncovered evidence of widespread voter fraud.

“I think that continued assault on democracy and the outcome of this election that

only serves to undermine confidence in the process is ultimately ... corrosive to the institutions that support elections,” Krebs said. “The trick about elections is that you’re not so much trying to convince the winner they won — it’s the loser that they lost and you need willing participants on both sides — and I think we’ve got to get back to that point.”

See more [here](#).

— Elections Commissioner Dean Knudson at a Friday GOP-called joint state legislative committee hearing said there was “no credible evidence” of major fraud and irregularities in Wisconsin’s fall election.

Knudson, a former Republican lawmaker, told the panel Wisconsin has one of the most decentralized, and thus most secure from tampering, election systems in the entire nation. He added there hasn’t been credible evidence from the Trump campaign or others to show the results finding Joe Biden the winner were illegitimate.

“There has been no credible evidence presented to the Elections Commission that any of these problems occurred in Wisconsin,” he said.

Although Knudson touted the accuracy and professionalism of the election, he asked lawmakers in the next session to pass legislation to clear up some practices.

He proposed either eliminating municipal central counts or clarifying the laws that govern them. Most municipalities don’t use central count locations, and Knudson said the late returns from places like Milwaukee led some to falsely believe that counting had paused or votes were later discovered in parts of the state.

Friday’s hearing before the Assembly Campaigns and Elections Committee and Senate Elections, Ethics and Rural Issues Committee featured a string of Donald Trump supporters who raised numerous concerns about the Nov. 3 election. Many of the issues have been raised in lawsuits seeking to overturn Wisconsin’s results, including the use of drop boxes to collect absentee ballots. Some also complained they weren’t allowed to adequately monitor the recount of Milwaukee County votes following the president’s request.

At various points in the hearing, witnesses urged lawmakers to reject the results of

the vote and try to appoint the state's electors instead. GOP lawmakers asked Leg Council for advice on whether they had the power to do that.

See more [here](#).

— The legal team that includes former Trump attorney Sidney Powell is citing Wisconsin Republicans' decision to have electors meet and cast their votes as part of its effort to have the U.S. Supreme Court hear a challenge to the state's election results.

Powell's team filed an emergency petition over the weekend, but the justices have yet to signal whether they will hear the case.

The legal team followed up that original filing with another one Tuesday that noted Trump electors in Georgia, Wisconsin and Arizona met in those states to cast their votes for president. It also notes Trump electors in Michigan tried to meet in the state Capitol there, but were denied entry and met on the grounds to cast their votes for the president.

The filing suggests that means there is now a "competing slate of electors" in those states.

See more [here](#).

— The 7th Circuit Court of Appeals on Monday granted President Trump's request for an expedited schedule as he seeks to throw out Wisconsin's election results and have the GOP-led state Legislature decide the state's electors.

The order came down hours after the Wisconsin Supreme Court in a 4-3 ruling rejected the president's attempt to throw out 221,000 votes in heavily Dem Dane and Milwaukee counties. It also comes after the state's electors met on Monday and cast the state's 10 votes for Joe Biden, who won Wisconsin by more than 20,000 votes.

Following the state Supreme Court decision, Trump attorney Jim Troupis said the

campaign was “considering additional legal steps and will make an announcement when appropriate.”

The state Supreme Court ruling left Trump and his allies 0-for-8 in their attempts to reverse Biden’s Wisconsin win. The state Supreme Court three times refused to take original action in lawsuits challenging the results. That includes one case filed by the president, who then went to circuit court, where the campaign also lost. The case then came back to the Supreme Court for Monday’s ruling.

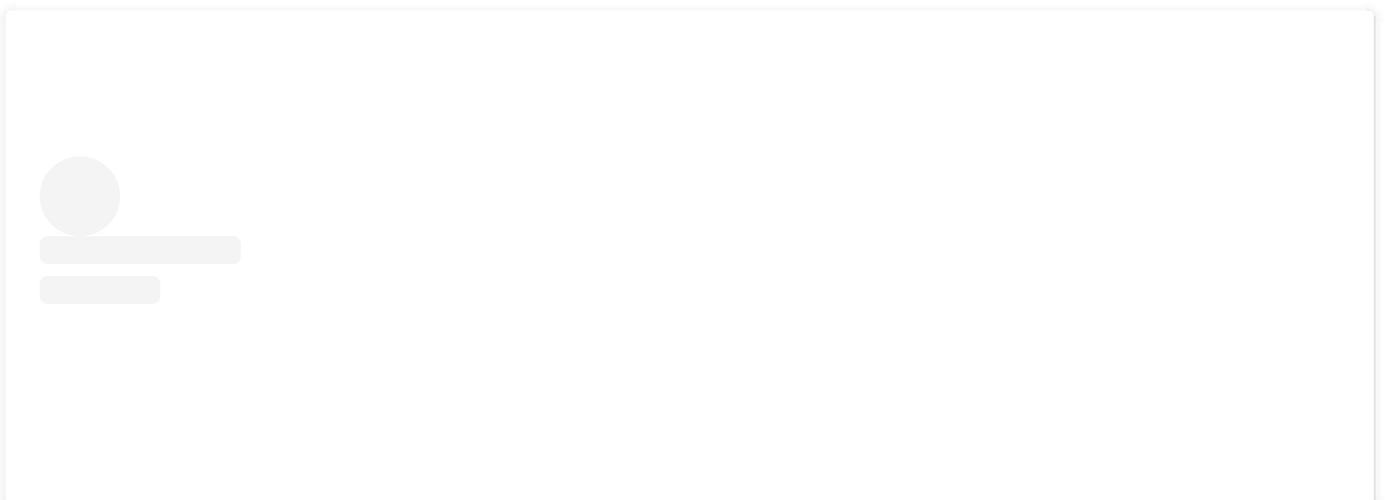
U.S. District Judge Pamela Pepper last week rejected a lawsuit filed by former Trump attorney Sidney Powell on behalf of 3rd CD GOP Chair William Feehan seeking to declare the president the winner of Wisconsin’s electoral votes. Powell initially appealed to the 7th Circuit, which has yet to take any action on it. Over the weekend, she filed an emergency petition with the U.S. Supreme Court, which has yet to add the case to its docket.

The U.S. Supreme Court also last week refused to hear a Texas lawsuit seeking to overturn the results in Wisconsin and three other states.

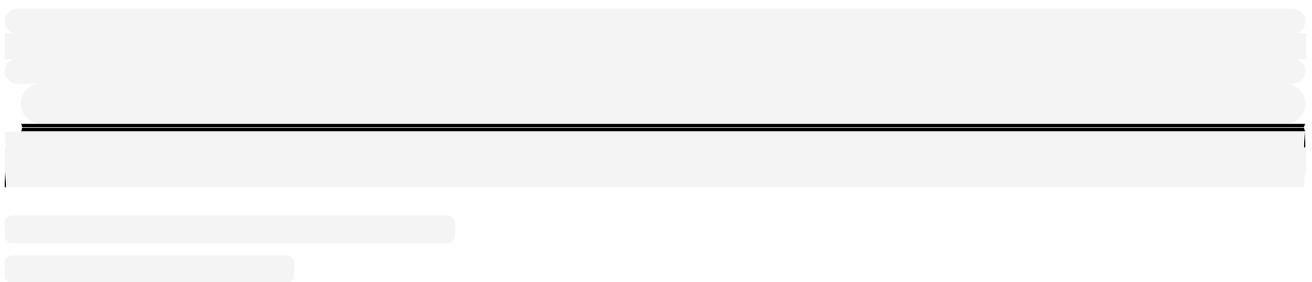
The appeal that will now get an expedited briefing schedule before the 7th Circuit involves U.S. District Court Judge Brett Ludwig’s rejection on Saturday of Trump’s claims that the way Wisconsin’s election was run usurped the Legislature’s authority.

The briefing schedule the 7th Circuit set wraps up Dec. 20.

Posts of the week



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A post shared by Mike Gallagher (@repgallagher)





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A post shared by Representative Mark Pocan (@repmarkpocan)

The Bill of Rights protects our civil liberties and guarantees the basic rights of all American citizens. 229 years later, we celebrate the ratification of the first 10 amendments to the Constitution on [#BillofRightsDay](#). pic.twitter.com/GDITvOePQr

— Rep. Glenn Grothman (@RepGrothman) [December 15, 2020](#)

I am saddened to learn of this tragic loss of life. I send my warmest condolences to the family of the Wisconsin Air National Guard pilot and extend my deepest sympathies to the pilot's friends and colleagues at the 115th Fighter Wing. <https://t.co/2I5XKDo0r2>

— Rep. Gwen Moore (@RepGwenMoore) [December 11, 2020](#)



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A post shared by Senator Ron Johnson (@senronjohnson)

Congratulations to Milwaukee native, CAPT Amy Bauernschmidt. In a historic first, [@USNavy](#) has recommended HER to command an aircraft carrier. This barrier-breaking trailblazer makes Wisconsin proud.
<https://t.co/iF41IP7i0Y>

— Sen. Tammy Baldwin (@SenatorBaldwin) [December 15, 2020](#)

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