

DC Wrap: Reform advocate Gehl says 'final five' voting can repair 'fixed' government

Posted on Thursday, Nov 12, 2020

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

"Regardless of the outcome, in my book he will always be a winner and patriot that truly loves America."

- U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, on President Trump following The Associated Press and other media outlets projecting Joe Biden has won the presidential election.

"A son of Scranton and the daughter of immigrants are heading to the White House. Thank you, Wisconsin. Thank you, America."

- U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, congratulating Biden in a Nov. 7 tweet.

>> 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

— Businesswoman, author and political innovation activist Katherine Gehl says the oft-maligned gridlock and partisan dysfunction in Washington has been intentionally designed "by and for the people in the politics industry."

Gehl is the former CEO of Gehl Foods in Germantown and now co-chairs the National Association of Non-Partisan Reformers.

She told the DC Wrap Interview Series lawmakers often decry Washington as “broken” when in fact it’s “fixed” and operating exactly as designed. She said the current system is built to answer the questions of “how (the political class) can get power, how they can keep power, how they should divide the spoils of power.”

“And then the question becomes, how do we change the design? How do we change the system so that it drives to working for us instead of working for the business of politics? And the good news is that once you look at it that way, it’s not nearly as impossible to change as we might have assumed,” she said.

The fix Gehl proposes is changing the electoral process to non-partisan, single-ballot primaries that advance the top five candidates into a ranked-choice general election.

Ranked-choice voting allows voters to rank their candidates in order of preference. If no candidate wins a majority, the votes for the last-place candidate are reallocated to the voters’ second preference and the votes are retallied, an “instant runoff” process that continues until a candidate wins a majority of the adjusted vote.

Ranked-choice voting has been adopted in cities in eight different states including Maine, where it is used in federal and state elections.

She said the move would be easy to implement across all 50 states, regardless of the party controlling the statehouse.

Gehl said unlike in the current partisan primary and first-past-the-post system, the so-called “final five voting” process would incentivize candidates to compete for voters in the middle of the political spectrum and pressure elected officials to work together.

“It’s a new way of voting because we need to change the way people get elected, which is to say the way they get and keep their jobs, so that the connection is between solving problems that benefit the public at large and keeping your job,” she said. “That’s not the current connection.”

In 2018, she co-founded Democracy Found, a Wisconsin-based initiative backing legislation to adopt a “final five” system. Gehl said Sen. Dale Kooyenga, R-Brookfield, and Rep. Daniel Riemer, D-Milwaukee, will introduce a bill in the coming

legislative session that would put the system in place statewide. Riemer confirmed the pair are working on legislation but noted bills for the next session can't be introduced until January.

See the interview:

— With over two-thirds of Wisconsin counties through their canvass process, President Trump was losing ground on President-elect Joe Biden.

The state's four most populous counties — Milwaukee, Dane, Waukesha and Brown — all had yet to post their canvass results. But results posted as of today at 7:15 a.m. at the state Elections Commission website showed Biden's lead growing.

Counties have until Tuesday to submit certified results to the Elections Commission.

WisPolitics.com compared the unofficial county results posted at the Elections Commission website with the certified canvass numbers posted for 55 of Wisconsin's 72 counties. The unofficial WEC tally of county results shows Biden with a margin of 20,427 votes, equal to 0.6 percentage points.

The canvassing numbers submitted as of yesterday showed Biden adding 116 votes to his total, while Trump had added 35. The biggest change for Trump's number was in Shawano County, where Clerk Pamela Schmidt said a municipality initially reported 636 votes for Trump on election night. But the correct number was 362. It appeared to be a data entry mistake, she said.

The Associated Press last week called Wisconsin for Biden after its unofficial results at the time showed the former vice president ahead by 0.6 percentage points. Trump's campaign has said it will seek a recount of ballots, which state law allows. But Trump would have to cover recount costs as the margin is above 0.25 percentage points.

Even some Republicans acknowledge Trump would have tough odds to overcome in a recount. Recent Wisconsin recounts haven't moved tallies by more than a few hundred votes.

A 2016 presidential election recount in the state increased Trump's victory by only 131 votes. And a 2011 recount of that year's state Supreme Court race had a swing

of 300 votes.

Dem Gov. Tony Evers last week even ventured to call Trump's deficit an "insurmountable hurdle." But he added the Trump campaign is well within its rights to call for a recount.

The president on Monday over Twitter appeared to falsely claim he won Wisconsin, and yesterday in another tweet he said he's "preparing to win the state." He also has yet to concede the national race while AP called it for Biden with 290 electoral votes and Georgia and North Carolina outstanding.

See more [here](#).

— The Trump campaign will have to pre-pay the estimated cost of a recount before that process can begin, Elections Commission Administrator Megan Wolfe says.

And she added that payment must be received within a day of the last of the state's 72 counties turning over its canvass to the state. Wolfe said the Elections Commission is currently preparing a cost estimate but said it was too early to speculate on what that figure would be.

In the 2016 presidential election recount carried a final cost of just over \$2 million after initial estimates were pegged at around \$3.9 million.

See more [here](#).

— The Wisconsin Elections Commission has issued a seven-point memo rebutting conspiracy theories and misinformation that have circulated on social media platforms in the wake of last week's election.

"At this time, no evidence has been provided that supports allegations of systemic or widespread election issues," WEC Administrator Meagan Wolfe said in the memo. "Unfortunately, we are seeing many concerns that result from this unsubstantiated misinformation. We want Wisconsin's voters to know we hear their concerns and to provide facts on these processes to combat the rumors and misinformation."

The memo goes on to address seven false theories, including one circulated by believers in QAnon, a baseless conspiracy theory that charges the nation's top Dems run a cabal of satanic pedophiles.

According to the QAnon theory, President Trump through the Department of Homeland Security ordered “official ballots” used in last week’s election to be labeled with invisible, “non-radioactive isotope watermarks” in an effort to weed out fake ballots planted by Dems to boost Joe Biden.

But the commission detailed in the memo that “ballots do not have any special encoding with invisible watermarks or blockchain codes.”

“Clerks do not print any watermarks or codes on them that would identify any voter or political party,” Wolfe said.

State Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, last week directed the Assembly Campaigns and Elections Committee to use its subpoena power to investigate allegations of fraud. He shrugged off the memo.

“I would rather guarantee that everyone at the end of the day has certainty that the election was conducted fairly because we do a thorough investigation as opposed to trusting a bunch of bureaucrats in Madison saying, ‘Look, we did it just fine,’” he said.

See more [here](#).

— U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson early this week dismissed questions from DC reporters asking if he had reached out to congratulate Biden on defeating Trump.

Video of the Tuesday interaction shows the Oshkosh Republican walking down a hallway as a Capitol Hill reporter asks, “Senator, have you congratulated Vice President Biden yet?”

Johnson said no and when asked why not, he said “nothing to congratulate him about,” before walking through a set of doors and out of view of cameras.

Johnson’s office did not comment.

See more [here](#).

— An RNC spokeswoman confirmed Trump Victory staff in Wisconsin are moving to Georgia to help with the runoff elections for two U.S. Senate seats.

CNBC first reported the move and that some field staff will remain in Wisconsin with others losing their temporary positions.

Trump Victory is a joint operation between the national GOP and the president's campaign. The move comes as the Trump campaign has said it is gearing up for a recount in Wisconsin.

See more [here](#).

— The chairman of the Democratic Party of Wisconsin credited President-elect Joe Biden's win in the state to intense work by Democrats across Wisconsin.

"Democrats came out of the woodwork and worked so intensely in every corner of the state," Ben Wikler said in an interview aired Sunday on "UpFront," produced in partnership with WisPolitics.com.

He said the party boosted Dem margins in the city of Madison and its suburbs, and also the Milwaukee suburbs, which prevented "blowout gains" by President Trump in more rural counties. He said while Trump turnout went up 15 percent from 2016, Democratic turnout went up 18 percent.

"And that is how you take a narrow Trump win and turn it into a narrow Biden win," Wikler said.

Wikler cast doubt on whether the Trump campaign would actually go ahead with a recount in Wisconsin, "because they don't have a prayer of changing the outcome."

See more [here](#).

— Also on the program, Republican Congressman-elect Scott Fitzgerald, one of President Trump's earliest supporters in Wisconsin, said the statewide canvass is the first step toward a possible recount. The Trump campaign signaled it would seek a recount in Wisconsin.

"Once that (canvass) is complete, I think then you'll see kind of where we're headed as far as recount goes," Fitzgerald said.

Fitzgerald, the outgoing Senate majority leader, won the race in Wisconsin's 5th Congressional District to succeed retiring Republican U.S. Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner.

He said if the canvass comes back and shows that local elections officials did everything right, “that makes it much more difficult, I think, to say a recount is in order.”

Fitzgerald also said the massive number of mail-in absentee ballots this year may require lawmakers to put new “safeguards” in place.

See more [here](#).

— Fitzgerald said he will be in Washington, D.C., for orientation starting the week of Nov. 9 until just before Thanksgiving. He’ll then return for more meetings through early December.

He will resign his Senate seat in January, when he will be sworn in to Congress. Once he resigns, it will trigger a special election to fill the final two years of his term in his heavily Republican seat.

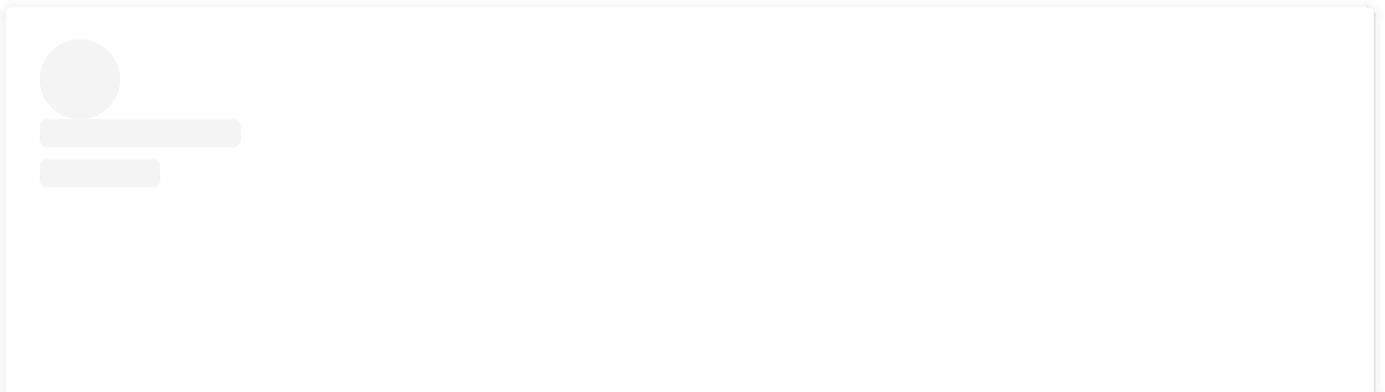
“I’m going to try and work with the team, but there’s a lot with the transition to do between now and January,” he said.

— Josh Orton, a former Dem operative in Wisconsin who now works for U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, has joined Joe Biden’s transition operation as part of the team that will review the Labor Department.

Biden’s transition released the list of teams that will review agencies on Nov. 10 as he prepares to take office in January.

See more [here](#).

Posts of the week



[View this post on Instagram](#)



The 2020 Veteran of the Year is Steven Perrigo of Franklin! Steven served in the U.S. Army and received the Army Commendation Medal for his leadership and commitment to his duties. Steven is an active member in the veterans community, helping vets with PTSD & homeless veterans.

A post shared by [Bryan Steil \(@repbryansteil\)](#) on Nov 10, 2020 at 4:42pm PST



[View this post on Instagram](#)

[Redacted content]

Last year, @repjasoncrow and I led a run on the National Mall to help promote our efforts to build a Global War on Terror Memorial. While I can't beat him in that run this year, I still ran to Veterans Memorial Park in Green Bay as a way to honor our vets for their service.

A post shared by [Mike Gallagher \(@repgallagher\)](#) on Nov 11, 2020 at 12:01pm PST

Great to see our Native American veterans receive this long overdue recognition for the sacrifices they have made for our country. This memorial takes important steps towards recognizing a rich legacy of service. <https://t.co/hlAW7XfzR2>

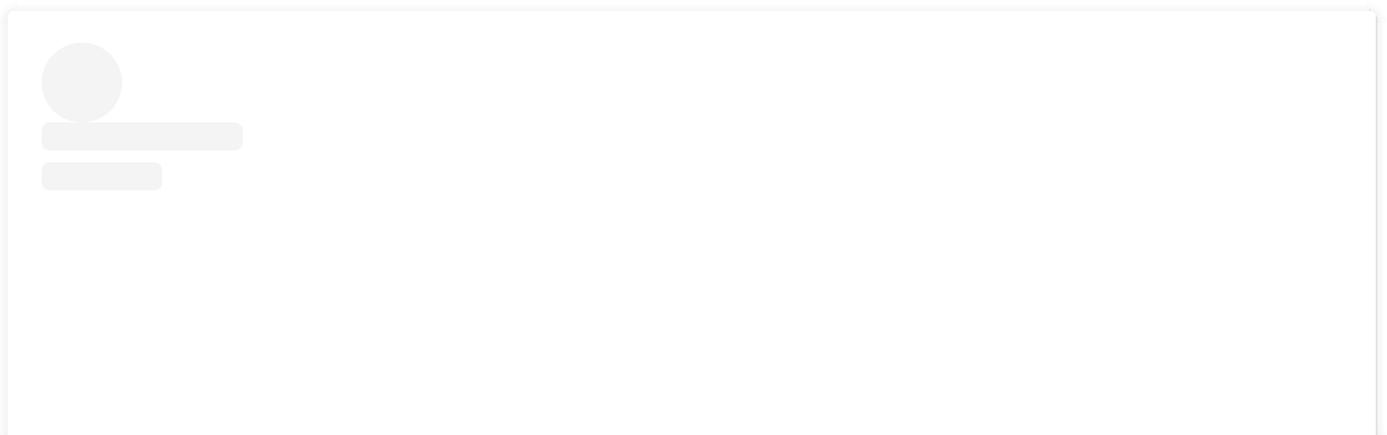
— Archive: Rep. Ron Kind (@RepRonKind) [November 11, 2020](#)

Millions of Americans risk losing access to their health care, thanks to Republicans' outrageous lawsuit. Retweet if you want to [#SaveTheACA!](#)
<pic.twitter.com/LhTRnxfSWG>

— Rep. Gwen Moore (@RepGwenMoore) [November 10, 2020](#)

This [#NationalApprenticeshipWeek](#), we're celebrating the workers who utilize [#apprenticeships](#) to build skills for lucrative careers and the employers who offer them. Congress should work to expand apprenticeships, which will increase economic opportunities for future generations. <pic.twitter.com/ytpi1P8DbD>

— Rep. Glenn Grothman (@RepGrothman) [November 10, 2020](#)



[View this post on Instagram](#)



Wisconsin, let me be very clear: the #COVID19 pandemic has not gone away. Everyone has a responsibility to do their part, so let's stand together, confront this deadly pandemic and help save lives. #StopTheSpread #MaskUpWisconsin

A post shared by [Senator Tammy Baldwin \(@senatorbaldwin\)](#) on Nov 10, 2020 at 3:24pm PST

ICYMI

[Fact check: Wisconsin county did not have a glitch that stole votes from Trump](#)

[Wisconsin county jails have far higher rates of Black inmates than Black residents, and voices for reform are getting louder](#)

[Senator Ron Johnson on Biden's win: 'Nothing to congratulate him about yet'](#)

[Sen. Tammy Baldwin calls on Facebook CEO to explain why Kenosha Guard's 'divisive' message was posted](#)

[Wisconsin GOP congressional delegation in denial about Joe Biden victory](#)

[Tiffany Says Wolf Delisting Will Help Ag](#)

[Mark Pocan projected to win fifth Congressional term](#)

[Kewaunee County voters favored Trump, Republicans by 2-1 margin or more in Nov. 3 election](#)