

DC Wrap: Ribble says presidential candidates present 'two inadequate choices'

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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:

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Quotes of the week

"We gotta tell your governor we gotta open up our state."

- President Trump at a West Salem rally on Tuesday evening. Gov. Tony Evers' mask mandate is currently in effect but an appeals court on Friday put on hold his administration's limits on public, in-person gatherings. The state Supreme Court has agreed to take original action on a challenge to the mask mandate.

"The federal government's role is to have a national response to tackle this national pandemic. But Donald Trump failed and continued to fail to do that."

- Dem presidential nominee Joe Biden on the "UpFront" program.

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This week's news

— Former Republican Congressman Reid Ribble says the candidates at the top of the ticket for both major parties represent "two inadequate choices for president."

"It saddens me to say as a Republican that I don't really support the top of the

ticket,” Ribble, R-Sherwood, told the WisPolitics.com DC Wrap interview series. “And I’m not dismayed by the fact that I can’t support Vice President Biden either because both of them bring things that I think are really bad for the country.”

Ribble was an early dissenter of President Trump who retired from Congress in 2017 after representing northeastern Wisconsin’s 8th CD for six years. He voted for independent candidate Evan McMullin in 2016 and said he would likely vote third-party again this year.

Ribble, who is now the CEO of the National Roofing Contractors Association, told WisPolitics.com he’s found it “more difficult to identify as a Republican given the direction that President Trump has taken the Republican Party in.” He also predicted should Trump lose next week’s election, the GOP would conduct an audit of “who Republicans are and what they believe in.”

In the interview, Ribble also touched on the future of the Republican Party if Trump wins, nonpartisan redistricting and the need for patience on election night as clerks across the country work through an expected crush of absentee ballots.

See the interview:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndlc366c5uY>

— President Trump will be in Green Bay on Friday for his third Wisconsin campaign rally in seven days. He previously rallied supporters in West Salem and Waukesha.

The upcoming trip comes the same day Joe Biden will return to Wisconsin for the first time since September. It will be Biden’s third stop in the state this year, compared to Trump’s ninth visit. Biden’s campaign has not announced the location of his event.

See more on Trump’s rallies in [West Salem](#) and [Waukesha](#).

— Vice President Pence warned this election is a choice on whether “America remains America.”

At a campaign rally in Mosinee on Wednesday, Pence told viewers if Dem presidential candidate Joe Biden wins, he would only serve as a “Trojan horse for the radical left.”

“This election is really a choice between a Trump recovery and a Biden depression,” he said. “I promise you we’re going to make America great again, again.”

Pence spent the majority of his speech praising the first three years of the Trump presidency, arguing the administration successfully “made America great again” with a growing economy through 2019.

He also later mentioned the COVID-19 pandemic. He said Trump’s policies have been “protecting the vulnerable” against the virus, which so far has killed more than 227,000 Americans, and that the president “saved untold American lives.”

The VP again promised a coronavirus vaccine would be available by the end of the year, and then quickly pivoted to promises of “opening up” the country again, as many areas reach record-high daily case counts.

Responding to the event, Biden Deputy Campaign Manager and Communications Director Kate Bedingfield focused on White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows’ recent comment that the administration is “not going to control the pandemic. We are going to control the fact that we get vaccines, therapeutics and other mitigation areas.”

See more [here](#).

— The final Marquette University Law School Poll ahead of next week’s presidential election looked almost identical to what the survey has shown since May: Joe Biden with a durable lead that’s changed little despite the ups and downs of the campaign.

The latest poll found 48 percent of likely voters backed Biden, while 43 percent supported Trump. Another 2 percent said they support Libertarian Jo Jorgensen. Last month, the poll was 46-41 for Biden with 4 percent backing Jorgensen.

The poll also found Trump continues to be upside-down on his job approval rating with little movement in other measures of the race — from his personal favorability

to how he's handled the COVID-19 pandemic.

Poll Director Charles Franklin said since August 2019, Trump has had the edge on Biden in just one poll with the two tied in another. Altogether, adding together all of the polls over the past 14 months puts Biden at a 5-point advantage, though the Dem nominee has only hit 50 once since May.

"The most striking thing this year is how little things have changed despite a cacophony of events," Franklin says.

See more [here](#).

— The latest Washington Post/ABC News poll of likely Wisconsin voters has Joe Biden's lead dramatically expanding to 17 points.

The poll released Wednesday found 57 percent of likely voters back Biden, while 40 percent support Trump. Biden's edge was 52-46 in mid-September.

The poll found 59 percent of registered voters disapprove of how Trump has handled the pandemic, while 39 percent approve, compared to a 54-44 split in mid-September.

Trump's handling of COVID-19 has been a weak spot in a string of polls, while the economy has been his strong point. The new poll found 47 percent now approve of his work on the economy, compared to 53 percent in mid-September.

The poll was conducted by landline and cell phones Oct. 20-25. The sample of 906 registered voters included 809 likely voters with a margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points among registered voters and plus or minus 4 points among likely voters.

The likely voter sample was 31 percent Dem, 27 percent Republicans and 36 percent independents.

See more [here](#).

— Joe Biden increased his lead over President Trump in the latest survey released Monday from the Elections Research Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Fifty-three percent of likely voters backed Biden, compared to 44 percent who supported Trump. Last month, the split was 49-44.

The poll also found:

*73 percent of those who have already voted said they backed Biden, while 26 percent supported Trump. Of those who haven't voted yet, the split was 57-39 in Trump's favor.

*44 percent approved of Trump's job performance, while 54 percent disapproved.

*45 percent approved of the job Gov. Tony Evers is doing, while 46 percent disapproved.

The October survey, the final in a series the Elections Research Center did this year, is part of a panel study in which many of the same respondents were interviewed multiple times. It found little movement among those who backed Biden or Trump as of midsummer; 99 percent of Biden's summer backers are still supporting him, as are 98 percent of Trump's supporters.

See more [here](#).

— Wisconsin voters will have to have their absentee ballots returned to local clerks by 8 p.m. on Election Day, under a ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court.

In a 5-3 decision released Monday evening, the court rejected a request from several groups to reinstate a federal judge's order that would've extended the deadline by six days so long as ballots were postmarked by Nov. 3.

Justice Neil Gorsuch knocked U.S. Judge William Conley's ruling extending the deadline, which was put on hold by the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals. Gorsuch noted the steps Wisconsin has already taken to accommodate voters amid the COVID-19 pandemic, including mailing absentee ballot requests to registered voters and

adding drop boxes. He also noted the variety of ways that voters can already return their absentee ballots.

“So it’s indisputable that Wisconsin has made considerable efforts to accommodate early voting and respond to COVID,” Gorsuch wrote. “The district court’s only possible complaint is that the State hasn’t done enough. But how much is enough?”

Attorney Doug Poland, who represented one of the groups that sued seeking changes to the November election, expressed disappointment in the ruling, saying it puts at risk “the rights of millions of Americans.

The ruling comes as Wisconsin has reported a surge in absentee voting. As of this morning, more than 1.45 million absentee ballots had been returned of the 1.8 million that voters have requested. The total returned includes more than 352,000 who voted early in person.

“This makes it more important than ever that Wisconsinites who are voting absentee return their ballot by mail or at a dropbox as soon as possible,” Poland tweeted.

See more [here](#).

— The head of the Wisconsin Municipal Clerks Association believes local election officials across the state will complete their tallies and produce unofficial results on election night despite a crush of absentee ballots.

Wendy Helgeson, who serves as president of the WMCA and clerk of the town of Greenville, on Tuesday told WisPolitics.com “as long as everything stays status quo and we’re able to get (the ballots) in, I don’t see any reason why we shouldn’t get results in the election night.”

“I’m going to assume everybody should have them in at some point that night, I haven’t heard of any large municipalities that wouldn’t,” she said a week out from Election Day.

Helgeson’s comments came after clerks from Madison, Janesville, Wausau and Kenosha told WisPolitics.com they believe they will complete their counts on election night. Election officials from Milwaukee and Brookfield last month indicated

they hope to be able to report unofficial results “by the time the sun comes up on November 4th.” Absentee ballots can’t be counted until Election Day.

A spokeswoman for the Green Bay municipal clerk’s office told WisPolitics.com the city intended to count ballots “quickly, accurately and diligently” but did not offer a timeline.

Still, Helgeson warned a number of factors could prevent municipalities from achieving that goal, including staffing levels and the environment at the polls on Election Day.

“Are there a lot of observers? Are there people causing disruption? All of those things feed into the Election Day and the process but I think everyone’s prepared,” she said.

— Wisconsin’s U.S. senators split along party lines as the chamber voted 52-48 to confirm Judge Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court.

U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson said in a tweet after the vote Barrett’s confirmation was “one of the most important things I do as a U.S. Senator.”

The tweet also took a shot at Dems. The Oshkosh Republicans said they “want superlegislators, not judges.”

All 52 votes to confirm Barrett came from Republicans. Maine Republican U.S. Sen. Susan Collins joined all Senate Dems and the chamber’s two independents voting against Barrett’s nomination.

In a floor speech kicking off proceedings on Monday, U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin slammed her Republican colleagues for a “rigged and illegitimate process” and warned Barrett will vote to “overturn the Affordable Care Act completely.”

“I oppose this illegitimate process and I oppose Judge Barrett’s confirmation for a lifetime appointment to our highest court because I do not have faith in her being a fair and independent Supreme Court justice for the American people,” she said.

See more [here](#).

— Outagamie County Exec Tom Nelson, who had already filed papers to run for the U.S. Senate in 2022, officially announced his campaign on Monday with a video that declared, “It’s never too early to do the right thing.”

The video takes aim at GOP U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, who hasn’t announced if he’ll run for reelection in 2022 or stick to his pledge to only serve two terms in the Senate. Nelson says the “crisis is out of control” while knocking Johnson for speaking at a party fundraiser as he awaited results from a COVID-19 test after he’d been exposed.

“When we elect people like Ron Johnson, people get hurt, and that is no exaggeration,” Nelson says. “I mean who gets tested for COVID and then turns around and goes to a party and puts people at risk?”

Nelson also calls the confirmation of Amy Coney Barrett the “last straw,” saying the Affordable Care Act, a woman’s right to choose and labor rights are “at stake.”

He then challenges Johnson to visit with local officials to “see what it’s like to make real decisions.”

“Someone needs to go to Washington to do the work that you’re supposed to do,” Nelson says.

Other Dems who have been mentioned as possible Senate candidates in 2022 include: Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes, state Treasurer Sarah Godlewski and Milwaukee Bucks Vice President Alex Lasry.

See more [here](#).

— Candidates for Wisconsin’s 3rd CD both accused one another of playing partisan games while touting themselves as someone who could work across the aisle and get things done.

U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, D-La Crosse, also slammed his GOP opponent Derrick Van Orden for doing “all the things our health care experts are telling us not to do” in the

middle of a pandemic, like attending public gatherings without a mask and shaking hands and hugging people.

“Leadership is needed right now,” he said in the WPR-sponsored virtual debate on Monday. “And unfortunately, from the Oval Office to many of those running for office, they’re missing the mark when it comes to practical steps we can do to protect one another and to try to keep ourselves healthy until we can develop a safe and effective vaccine.”

As of yesterday, Wisconsin’s seven-day average coronavirus case count is at 3,919, while its total death toll is at 1,897.

Meanwhile, Van Orden, of Hager City, agreed the disease, which so far has killed over 225,000 Americans this year, is “real.” But he countered it’s “exceptionally important” to balance public safety efforts with personal freedoms and protecting the economy.

He said his campaign only engages with citizens at their own level of comfort, either in-person at events where he said hand sanitizer and face masks are available for those who want them, or virtually through streaming services like Facebook Live.

“We have to safely, effectively and efficiently open our economy again otherwise we’re not going to have an America to return to,” he warned listeners.

See more [here](#).

Posts of the week

My heart breaks for the families across our state, and our nation, who are grieving the unimaginable loss of their loved ones right now. This hits home for all of us because this is our home and we lost friends and members of our community. pic.twitter.com/djT2qD4HzN

— Rep. Gwen Moore (@RepGwenMoore) [October 27, 2020](#)

It was a fun volleyball season for Katherine and the LUHS volleyball team and families. Unfortunately it came to an end in Merrill tonight. Good luck to the Blue Jays as they advance. pic.twitter.com/uj7mqT7LrT

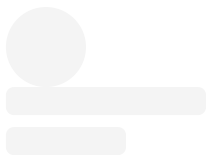
— Tom Tiffany (@TomTiffanyWI) [October 25, 2020](#)



[View this post on Instagram](#)

It was a pleasure to meet Judge Amy Coney Barrett this afternoon. She is a wonderful person, a brilliant legal mind and a judge who is committed to applying the law, not altering it. I look forward to voting to confirm Judge Barrett in the coming days and believe she will be a Justice on Supreme Court that will remain faithful to the Constitution. #acb #confirmacb #supremecourt

A post shared by [Senator Ron Johnson \(@senronjohnson\)](#) on Oct 21, 2020 at 6:02pm PDT



[View this post on Instagram](#)



Today is National First Responders Day! Thank you to all of our first responders in Southeast Wisconsin!

A post shared by [Bryan Steil](#) (@repbryansteil) on Oct 28, 2020 at 10:17am PDT

Today is National First Responders Day, and I encourage all Wisconsinites to join me in honoring the heroic men and women who dedicate their lives to helping others. To our first responders, thank you for all you do to keep our communities safe. pic.twitter.com/fsxcqHfMNY

— Archive: Rep. Ron Kind (@RepRonKind) [October 28, 2020](#)

ICYMI

[Wisconsin officials stress need for quick return of mail ballots in wake of Supreme Court ruling](#)

[Wisconsin Republicans have been facing an outbreak among lawmakers and aides. But they don't want to talk about it.](#)

[Democrats already angling to take out Ron Johnson in 2022](#)

[WATCH: Sen. Tammy Baldwin speaks on senate floor on Amy Coney Barrett](#)

[Glenn Grothman discusses Wisconsin 6th District campaign amid Coronavirus pandemic](#)

[GOP US Rep. Tom Tiffany Calls For Targeted COVID-19 Relief Aid](#)

[Kushner, Employing Racist Stereotype, Questions if Black Americans 'Want to Be Successful'](#)

[5th Congressional District preview: Senate Majority Leader Fitzgerald faces off against Navy veteran Palzewicz](#)