

DC Wrap: Senate passes USMCA

Posted on Thursday, Jan 23, 2020

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

"Now that the USMCA contains provisions that will reopen export markets to Mexico for our cheese products, this is a win-win for Wisconsin."

- U.S. Sen Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison discussing the passage of the USMCA in the Senate.

"When we talk about impeachment — we're not talking about immigration, we're not talking about the welfare mess, we're not talking about trying to balance the budget — we're not talking about these important issues, and that's what we should be focusing on."

- U.S. Rep Glenn Grothman, R-Milwaukee, on how the impeachment of President Trump is taking coverage away from other important issues.



This week's news

— **The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement passed the U.S. Senate Thursday with bipartisan support and backing from both of Wisconsin's senators.**

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U.S. Sens. Ron Johnson and Tammy Baldwin voted in favor of the trade deal, which cleared the Senate 89-10.

In separate statements, Johnson highlighted economic growth while Baldwin focused on labor standards and benefits for workers. Both agreed the deal would open up new markets in Canada and Mexico.

“Wisconsinites rely on trade agreements that will benefit businesses, ensure collaboration between our trading partners, and promote stable economic growth,” said Johnson, R-Oshkosh. “The final version of the USMCA will help Wisconsin farmers and manufacturers continue to sell their goods throughout North America.”

Baldwin agreed the USMCA will help the state’s farmers and manufacturers but added that Trump’s trade wars have hurt Wisconsin’s economy and noted more than 1,900 dairy farms in the state have gone out of business.

“Going forward, President Trump needs to understand Wisconsin needs better trade deals, not trade wars,” Baldwin said.

In the release Baldwin noted the final package that passed the Senate includes many changes she pushed for, including enforceable labor standards. She saw confronting Canada’s trade barriers and Mexico’s limits on Wisconsin cheese exports — which would increase market access — as a win for dairy farmers and cheesemakers across the state.

“The USMCA is a better deal for farmers, manufacturers, businesses and workers,” said Baldwin in her statement. “In order to stop the outsourcing of manufacturing jobs we not only need fair trade deals, our workers need tax reform that rewards their hard work and doesn’t encourage corporations to send their jobs to other countries.”

The agreement was signed by all three countries in 2018, but the legislative bodies of each nation needed to ratify the deal. The USMCA ratification bill passed the U.S. House of Representatives last month, and Senate approval now clears the way for President Trump to sign it into law.

— Republican John Garske, who spent 20 years in the Army, and now runs a business helping vets transition to finding jobs in the private sector,

announced he will challenge Dem U.S. Rep. Ron Kind.

In a phone interview ahead of his formal announcements, Garske said he was inspired to run by “this impeachment fiasco and sham” as well as career politicians who have impeded progress in Congress.

As an example of the latter, Garske cited the time it took to pass the USMCA. Kind, D-La Crosse, supported the bill on final passage in the House last year after Dems made several changes.

Kind, D-La Crosse, was unopposed for reelection in 2016 and won the 3rd CD in 2018 with 59.7 percent of the vote. Republicans have been targeting him, in part, because President Trump won western Wisconsin’s 3rd CD by more than four points four years ago.

Kind voted for the articles of impeachment against Trump in the House.

“The ridiculous, nonsense, never-ending investigation against our properly, duly elected president, it’s just too much,” Garske said.

Garske said he found it unacceptable in the fall that Republicans were still looking for someone to challenge Kind. Two Republicans have filed for the 3rd CD including Kevin Ruscher, who bills himself on his Facebook page as “an anti-Trump Republican” who has “never liked the guy.” The other is Brandon Cook, of Hager City. He wrote on his Facebook page he’s running “as a common sense Conservative Republican.”

Other Republicans have been considering a bid.

Garske, 55, grew up in Minnesota and served 20 years in the Army, including a stint as a chief helicopter pilot. His parents are from Wisconsin originally, and he returned to the state before formally retiring from the Army in 2002. He has never run for public office before.

He had formal announcements planned in La Crosse and Eau Claire.

— Vice President Pence will be at the Wisconsin Capitol Jan. 28 to address the Wisconsin School Choice Student Showcase, according to the White

House.

The event is organized by Hispanics for School Choice for National School Choice Week and follows a rally Pence and President Trump did in Milwaukee last week.

Philip Shulman, a spokesman for the state Dem Party, slammed the upcoming visit, saying Pence and the Trump administration “have repeatedly attempted to slash funding for public education, threatened student loan forgiveness programs, and proposed massive budget cuts in teacher training programs. They care more about lining the pockets of big corporations than helping the next generation of Americans get the best education they deserve.”

CJ Szafer, executive vice president of the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty, which is co-sponsoring the Jan. 28 rally, praised Pence for planning to attend the event.

“Unlike Gov. Tony Evers, the Trump administration is willing to stand with anyone who will fight to ensure every child has access to a high quality school,” Szafer said.

— U.S. Reps. Bryan Steil, R-Janesville, and Lisa Blunt Rochester, D-Del., recently launched the bipartisan Future of Work Caucus, created to “educate” both Washington and the public “on the challenges and opportunities prevalent in our economy.”

Before being elected to Congress, Steil worked in the manufacturing industry in southeast Wisconsin as an executive at plastics manufacturer Charter NEX Film.

“One-third of the jobs that will exist in 10 years, haven’t even been invented yet,” he said in a [video](#).

The caucus plans to tackle issues like the growing effects of automation in the workforce, and possible opportunities presented by technology in the economy, among others.

“We’ll examine how to create effective skills programs, promote growth within emerging industries, and help workers access good-paying jobs,” the co-chairs said.

Alongside the Middle-Class Jobs Caucus, the Future of Work Caucus is the second

caucus Steil will co-chair.

See the release [here](#).

— U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin introduced a bill that would “advance U.S. global leadership” in sectors like artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, quantum information science, synthetic biology, and next generation wireless networks.

“I want Wisconsin workers and businesses to be global leaders in developing the next generation of infrastructure, technology and advanced manufacturing,” Baldwin said in a release.

The introduction of the Industries of the Future Act of 2020 came as Congress held hearings similarly titled “Industries of the Future” last Wednesday, focusing on how the U.S. can maintain a global economic edge.

“We must ensure that our investments into research and development today produce economic growth and job creation in the future,” Baldwin said.

The [bill](#) would require the president to establish a council that focuses on issues concerning the “industries of the future.” The council would begin by developing a report on the research and development of programs the federal government is supporting that focus on those industries, then make a plan to double investing into those industries by 2022.

“Our bipartisan legislation will support strong investments that will boost new, emerging industries and drive our nation’s workforce into the future,” Baldwin said.

See the release [here](#).

— Recent PFAS legislation passed by the House is drawing praise by U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher after an amendment he helped co-author categorized two subsets of PFAS chemical as hazardous substances under the Clean Air act.

The amendment also includes provisions that would require the Environmental Protection Agency to create a standard for levels of PFOS and PFOA allowed in drinking water throughout Wisconsin. The Great Lakes would also get their own standards for the toxins allowed within two years.

“For far too long, toxic chemicals like PFAS have contaminated local water sources, literally poisoning the well from which Wisconsinites drink,” the Green Bay Republican said in a release.

Gallagher is a member of the recently formed bipartisan PFAS Task Force, that also includes fellow Wisconsin lawmaker U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont.

“The PFAS Action Act is a thorough, comprehensive, and long overdue solution. I want to thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their hard work in protecting our water and our communities,” Gallagher said.

See the release [here](#).

See the floor speech [here](#).

Posts of the week

Thanks to everyone who came to my town hall meeting in [#Algoma](#). It was great to hear your feedback! pic.twitter.com/kQH5KMOMkK

— Rep. Glenn Grothman (@RepGrothman) [January 20, 2020](#)

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. lost his life pursuing equality & dignity for people casted in the margins of society. Today isn't a day off. It's a time to recommit to achieving racial, social, and economic justice, using the forces of radical love, courage, and moral urgency.
pic.twitter.com/A065qn97Uw

— Rep. Gwen Moore (@RepGwenMoore) [January 20, 2020](#)

Good to be back in Wisconsin. pic.twitter.com/AOFt6myt1k

— Bryan Steil (@RepBryanSteil) [January 16, 2020](#)

"We the People...in Order to form a more perfect Union..." As much as any man, Dr. King's courageous leadership and inspiring words furthered America's realization of that worthy goal. On this [#MLKDay](#) let us dedicate our efforts to America's continuing perfection. (□Slinger HS) pic.twitter.com/izwBOdU9kE

— Senator Ron Johnson (@SenRonJohnson) [January 20, 2020](#)

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

This [#MLKDay](#), let's honor his life and legacy by working to break through the vitriol in today's public discourse and restore civility in our words and actions. pic.twitter.com/IOBL0gSnBF

— Rep. Gallagher Press Office (@RepGallagher) [January 20, 2020](#)

ICYMI

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