

DC Wrap: Baldwin praises defense bill; House Dems vote to hold Meadows in contempt

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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

“Radical spending drove inflation to a 39-year high and hardworking Americans are paying the price. But rather than rein things in, Democrats’ solution is to spend trillions more on a package that would dramatically expand the IRS, create a Civilian Climate Corps, and drive energy prices even higher.

– *U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher, R-Allouez, arguing the Senate must vote against Dem spending.*

From lowering prescription drug prices, to extending the child tax credit, to investing in climate change, the #BuildBackBetter Act will make real, tangible improvements in the lives of hardworking Americans. It’s time for the Senate to act. Who’s with me?

– *U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, tweeting his praise for President Biden and Dems’ agenda.*

This week’s news

— Wisconsin’s senators alongside their colleagues approved the National Defense Authorization Act, sending the bill to President Biden for consideration.

In an 88-11 vote U.S. Sens. Ron Johnson and Tammy Baldwin voted in favor of the \$768.2 billion bill, which cleared the House last week. The bill includes provisions that revise how the military handles sexual assault claims and excludes a provision that would have required women to sign up or selective service.

Baldwin, D-Madison, in a statement said she supports the military's new topline budget because it includes provisions that help Wisconsin soldiers, families and industries.

"I am proud to vote for the bipartisan defense authorization legislation that strengthens our national security, makes vital investments to support Wisconsin's service members, veterans, and communities, and supports our Made in Wisconsin economy," she said. "This legislation supports our brave service members – increasing pay, providing parental leave, and investing in their health and wellbeing – and makes long-overdue improvements to the military justice system to curb and prevent sexual assault and harassment."

U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher, R-Allouez, in a statement praised the bill, which includes his legislation authorizing construction of a Global War on Terrorism Memorial on the National Mall.

"There is no place more fitting to honor the service of the more than three million Americans who fought in the Global War on Terror," the former Marine said. "I'm grateful to see this memorial is one step closer to becoming a reality and proud to have worked in bipartisan fashion to ensure my generation of veterans is remembered on the Mall."

See the Baldwin [statement](#).

See the Gallagher [statement](#).

— Wisconsin Dems praised the \$1 billion infrastructure bill for providing \$143 million to Wisconsin to replace lead water lines, but that likely won't cover most of the lines that need to be replaced.

The bill Biden signed into law last month authorizes the Department of Natural Resources to distribute \$142.7 million for lead pipe replacement. Those funds will be made available through an Environmental Protection Agency loan program. U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, in a tweet praised the move.

"Clean drinking water is a right," he said. "Time to make it a reality."

According to past WisPolitics.com reporting using Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and municipal estimates, Wisconsin would likely need over \$1 billion to replace all of its lead lines. There are over 170,000 known utility-owned lead pipes

across the state, which could increase as workers find more.

At the DNR estimated cost of \$3,000-5,000 to replace each line, reporting earlier this year showed replacing utility-owned lines would cost between about \$530 million and \$884 million. And that doesn't include lead lines owned by utility customers.

Replacing the 148,494 known customer-side lines at \$3,000 to \$5,000 per line would cost roughly between \$445 million and \$742 million.

Despite all that, U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, in a tweet praised the measure and slammed her Republican colleagues for voting against it.

“Not one Wisconsin Republican in Congress voted for this investment in Wisconsin,” she said. “I did because it will help local communities replace dangerous lead pipes, address toxic PFAS chemicals, and provide safe and clean drinking water across our state.”

See Pocan's [tweet](#).

See Baldwin's [tweet](#).

See past [coverage](#) on the issue.

— House Dems voted to hold former Trump Chief of Staff Mark Meadows in contempt of Congress.

In a 222-208 vote Dems with two Republicans joining left the decision to criminally prosecute Meadows to the Department of Justice. He could face up to a year in prison after refusing to testify to the Jan. 6 House Select Committee. Earlier, he submitted thousands of documents of evidence from the day the U.S. Capitol was attacked.

U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, slammed her Wisconsin Republican colleagues for voting against the measure.

“The bipartisan January 6th House Committee is right to refer Mark Meadows for criminal contempt of Congress and every member of Wisconsin's delegation should support it if they in fact support the rule of law and the idea that no one is above it,” Baldwin told WisPolitics.com.

U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, D-La Crosse, in a statement said Meadows needs to be held accountable and Americans need to know what happened on Jan. 6.

“We need to know how and why this violent insurrection took place so that we can ensure this never happens again,” he said. “To that end, Mark Meadows owes the American people answers – anything less is unacceptable. His decision to stonewall the bipartisan January 6 Committee and hinder efforts to find the truth has forced us to take action today. No one is above the law.”

U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh and Wisconsin’s GOP House members did not respond to requests for comment.

See the [roll call](#).

See Kind’s [statement](#).

— U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, says the Waukesha Christmas parade tragedy is a sign of a bigger problem with violent criminals released on bail committing crimes.

In a letter to AG Merrick Garland Johnson demanded the DOJ release more information on violent crimes committed by those on pre-trial release. He said the unusually low \$1,000 bail for Darrell Brooks, the man accused of driving his car through the Waukesha parade and killing eight, is a sign of a nationwide problem.

“The attack on the Waukesha Christmas Parade by a repeat violent offender brought to the nation’s attention the issue of pre-trial release of criminal violent offenders and subsequent violent crimes committed by such individuals,” he said. “This is not a singular issue; there are numerous reports from across the country of violent crimes committed by individuals out on pre-trial release after being charged for a felony violent offense.”

See the [statement and letter](#).

— House Dems in another nearly party line vote approved a Senate-backed bill to raise the debt limit by \$2.5 trillion.

In a 221-209 vote Dems with one Republican joining agreed to raise the debt limit to about \$31.4 trillion. The Senate passed the bill earlier this week in a 50-49 vote. The measure now awaits President Biden’s approval.

See the [roll call](#).

— The Senate Foreign Relations Committee sent Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett one step closer to becoming the U.S. ambassador to Luxembourg.

The committee's approval of President Biden's pick preps the former state lawmaker and congressman's nomination for a full Senate vote. U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, is a member of the committee but did not immediately answer questions whether he voted in favor of or against Barrett's nomination.

— President Biden has nominated Milwaukee County Judge William Pocan, the brother of Dem U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, to fill a vacancy on the Eastern District of Wisconsin.

Pocan was one of four candidates for the post forwarded to the White House by a commission created by U.S. Sens. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, and Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh.

Biden tapped him for the vacancy over Brown County Judges Tammy Jo Hock and Thomas Walsh, and attorney Krista Halla-Valdes, a lawyer with the Federal Defender Services of Wisconsin.

See more [here](#).

— First lady Jill Biden and second gentleman Douglas Emhoff visited Wisconsin this week.

They first stopped at Children's Hospital in Milwaukee, where they met with health care workers who cared for COVID-19 patients and victims of the Waukesha Christmas parade tragedy. They also talked with children who have received their COVID-19 vaccine and their families. It's part of an effort to urge parents of kids ages 5 and up to get vaccinated.

They then traveled to Waukesha City Hall, where they met with families of the victims and first responders from the Waukesha Christmas parade tragedy.

— The U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear the MacIver Institute's appeal challenging Dem Gov. Tony Evers' decision to bar the conservative group's reporters from a budget briefing and other media events.

The court, without comment, declined to hear the appeal of a unanimous 7th Circuit ruling that found Evers didn't violate the constitutional rights of Maclver reporters by excluding them from some events and not including them on his email list sent to other reporters.

See more [here](#).

Posts of the week

Dick provided the opportunity for young people like myself and others growing up all over Wisconsin to know that they aren't alone and that they stand on the shoulders of people who came before them.

He lived a life that showed that history only moves in one direction:
[#Forward](#). pic.twitter.com/jzQPxxprdV

— Sen. Tammy Baldwin (@SenatorBaldwin) [December 15, 2021](#)

Today, we celebrate the 230th anniversary of the ratification of the first 10 amendments to the Constitution. The Bill of Rights protects our civil liberties and guarantees the basic rights of all American citizens. Happy [#BillofRightsDay!](#) pic.twitter.com/KZdn0FRk70

— Rep. Glenn Grothman (@RepGrothman) [December 15, 2021](#)

Light up the darkness. Wishing you a happy and safe holiday season.
pic.twitter.com/LCqzMPEJll

— Archive: Rep. Ron Kind (@RepRonKind) [December 15, 2021](#)

I encourage everyone to join in on “Operation Cheesehead.” The mission is simple, write a letter thanking our sailors aboard the [#WI](#) built USS Milwaukee LCS-5 ship that is deployed this Christmas! This is a terrific way to thank our service members. Details on the address ↓ [pic.twitter.com/WSJrpkqwFh](#)

— Rep. Scott Fitzgerald (@RepFitzgerald) [December 15, 2021](#)

Today is the last day for ground shipping ahead of Christmas... but you can always shop local! Great to visit small businesses in Kenosha during the Christmas season! [pic.twitter.com/sgcBugUkj](#)

— Bryan Steil (@RepBryanSteil) [December 15, 2021](#)

bell hooks’s black feminism was rooted in a humble tribute to her grandmother. This humility and yielding to her art and consciousness paved her road to greatness.

bell hooks’s work will inspire generations of women of all races.

— Rep. Gwen Moore (@RepGwenMoore) [December 15, 2021](#)

Rob and Amy did a great job once again decorating for Christmas at the Al Gen. Pay a visit if you want to lift your spirits at this joyous time of year! [pic.twitter.com/amMcAluNIG](#)

— Tom Tiffany (@TomTiffanyWI) [December 14, 2021](#)

ICYMI

[PolitiFact: Is President Biden in talks to pay illegal immigrants 450K?](#)

[Local Congressman questions Build Back Better benefits](#)

[Local Congressman shares inflation optimism](#)

['Massive undertaking': Milwaukee expecting federal funds to make dent in lead service line replacements](#)

[Biden's rural investments run up against the culture wars in Wisconsin](#)

[Sound On: Red-Hot Inflation, CBO Score of BBB \(Radio\)](#)

[Wisconsin will soon receive nearly \\$143 million for water infrastructure to address lead, 'forever chemicals' in drinking water](#)