

DC Wrap: Grothman, back from a trip to the border wall, says people want secure borders

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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:

<https://forms.gle/YLYZtjWHPSt24HhZ7>

Quotes of the week

“For far too long, the system has been set up to give an advantage to Wall Street investors over mom and pop investors, and what we need to do is make sure that everyone's on a fair playing field and that we make sure that mom and pop investors have a seat at the table, so that they can invest and reap the benefits of U.S. capitalism the same way that Wall Street is.”

- U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil, R-Janesville, on the recent stock market turmoil.

“Having a Democratic-controlled Senate, albeit 50-50, but having Bernie Sanders in charge of the Budget Committee is going to be very important because that will help us to be able to move this idea forward.”

-U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, on redirecting military budget funds to other areas.

This week's news

— U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman, R-Glenbeulah, in a WisPolitics.com interview ripped President Biden's immigration policy saying past policies “will not be undone.”

Grothman said Biden needs to continue Donald Trump's border wall, which Grothman said stands twice as tall as the existing border wall at 30 feet and extends eight feet into the ground, because Americans want more secure borders. The conservative added that closer relations with Central American countries such as Mexico have contributed more to the drop in illegal southern border crossings

since 2019 than the existing wall.

The current wall helped drop those numbers “to a certain extent, but more important is [that] President Trump reached agreements with the Mexican government and the Central American governments to hold people south of the border,” he said.

Trump’s threats to cut off aid and impose tariffs forced those governments to crack down in their own countries. “Matter of fact, when I was down there, I heard that cooperation with the Mexican military had never been better,” he said after his recent trip to the southern border led by co-chair of the Border Security Caucus, Rep. Andy Biggs, R-Arizona.

Grothman said immigration is an important issue because he believes Americans don’t want more illegal immigrants and decreasing the number of attempted crossings decreases the number of people who die trying.

Grothman said U.S. Border Patrol agents told him the taller wall makes their job easier and reduces the number of agents needed to patrol.

The existing wall “should really have two or three agents per mile,” he said. “When you have the [new] wall, it can be patrolled [by] one agent for every two miles.”

Grothman, ranking member of the Subcommittee on National Security, said he hopes Biden will also consider increasing the number of agents at the southern border while trying to maintain the close relationship with the Mexican government.

— The GOP congressional delegation has introduced a bill to restart construction of the Keystone XL pipeline.

The five Wisconsin Republicans in their individual statements said workers don’t need a presidential permit to continue construction of the pipeline. But the Keystone XL Pipeline Construction and Jobs Preservation Act legislation authorizes workers to finish construction of the 1,172-mile pipeline stretching from Steele City, NE to Alberta, Canada. The Wisconsin delegation joined 79 Republicans from other states to introduce the new bill.

They said the move is aimed to bring jobs back and increase U.S. energy

independence.

“The Keystone XL Pipeline provides good-paying jobs for Wisconsin workers, employs thousands across the country, and shores up American energy production,” said U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil, R-Janesville. “I am working to ensure these men and women receive a paycheck and get back to work.”

U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher said: “At a time when Americans across the country are struggling to make ends meet, Congress can and should do everything it can to protect jobs like those created by this project.”

U.S. Rep Glenn Grothman, R-Glenbeulah, tweeted that he opposed President Biden’s move to halt construction because “this move is bad for Wisconsin, bad for America and bad for the environment.”

U.S. Reps. Tom Tiffany, R-Minocqua, and Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, also co-introduced the bill.

See Steil’s [statement](#).

See Galagher’s [statement](#).

See Grothman’s [tweet](#).

— Fitzgerald and Gallagher also urged senators to pause Gina Raimondo’s confirmation as the next Commerce secretary over concerns about Chinese telecommunication company Huawei.

The pair in a Feb. 2 joint statement said they want Raimondo’s confirmation process to stop until the Biden administration decides whether it will keep Huawei on the Bureau of Industry and Security Entity List. They said the Chinese tech giant is on the list because of national security concerns and he wants the administration to clarify its stance on trade policies with China.

The pair joined 20 GOP representatives in support of suspending the confirmation.

“We urge those Senators who have a history of calling for Huawei to remain on the Entity List to stick to their principles and place a hold on Ms. Raimondo’s confirmation until the Biden Administration clarifies their intentions for Huawei and in general on export control policies for a country that is carrying out genocide and

threatening our national security,” they said.

The Entity List was created to help U.S. citizens understand which businesses and entities could pose a threat to national security or work against U.S. foreign policy interests, according to the BIS website.

See the [release](#).

See the BIS Entity List [website](#).

— The Senate Commerce Committee supported Raimondo’s nomination 21-3 on Feb. 3, but she still needs confirmation from the full Senate.

Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, voted against her nomination after questioning her stance on Huawei.

Cruz asked, “Will you commit to ensuring Huawei and its subsidiaries and affiliates that are currently on the Entity List remain on the Entity List, should you be confirmed as the Secretary of Commerce?”

Raimondo said she will work to keep telecommunication equipment from untrusted vendors out of U.S. networks.

“With respect to Huawei, let me be clear: telecommunications equipment made by untrusted vendors is a threat to the security of the U.S. and our allies,” she said.

“We will ensure that American telecommunications networks do not use equipment from untrusted vendors and will work with allies to secure their telecommunications networks and make investments to expand the production of telecommunications equipment by trusted U.S. and allied companies,” Raimondo added.

See the [questions](#).

Watch the [executive session](#).

— U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, in a Feb. 2 statement slammed Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and other social media platforms for failing to “root out” COVID-19 misinformation on their platforms.

He said in a statement that companies like Facebook have allowed groups of

thousands of people to spread misinformation about COVID-19 and vaccines, leading to the shutdown of the vaccination center at Dodger Stadium in California where roughly 8,000 vaccinations were given every day. Facebook has a duty to work against the spread of that misinformation, he added.

“Time and time again, we hear promises from companies like Facebook that vow to root out misinformation from their massive platforms and time and time again they fall short of doing their jobs,” he said in the statement.

Pocan co-authored a letter to Zuckerberg demanding to know why Facebook allowed the group of almost 3,000 anti-vaccination activists to spread misinformation that resulted in the vaccination center shutdown.

“California and our country cannot afford anymore interruptions to our vaccine distribution, Facebook has a job to do, it’s time they do it,” he added.

See the [statement and letter](#).

— Pocan is also set to speak at the WisPolitics.com virtual luncheon today at 11 a.m.

He will take questions on the economy, vaccine rollout, Biden administration priorities and their chances in the new Congress, impeachment, the Capitol riot and more.

The event will begin with a moderated discussion and then shift to questions from the audience.

Register [here](#).

This event series is sponsored by Michael Best/Michael Best Strategies, WPS Health Solutions, Excel Energy and Exact Sciences.

— U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, voted against confirming Alejandro Mayorkas as secretary of Homeland Security.

Johnson also voted against the nomination in committee as Republicans asked Mayorkas, the first Latino to lead the agency, about how he handled the visa program for wealthy foreign investors while serving in DHS during the Obama administration.

The nomination cleared the Senate 56-43 with U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, backing the president's pick.

Baldwin and Johnson both supported the nomination of Pete Buttigieg to become Transportation secretary. He was confirmed 86-13.

See the Mayorkas [roll call](#).

See the Buttigieg [roll call](#).

— Baldwin also joined her Dem colleagues in supporting a budget resolution that sets the stage for passing a COVID-19 relief package.

Johnson joined all Republicans on the party-line 50-49 vote. Sen. Pat Toomey, R-Pennsylvania, didn't vote.

The vote opens debate on Dems' budget resolution.

See the [roll call](#).

— Wisconsinites who missed a chance to get insurance through HealthCare.gov now have another opportunity to sign up between Feb. 15 and May 15 — a development that could lead to a spike in coverage.

HealthCare.gov will be re-opening for Americans to enroll in health insurance coverage following an announcement from the Biden administration. It will be available for people who missed either the original enrollment deadline or their first payment for their enrolled plan. State Insurance Commissioner Mark Afable and U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin were two of many advocates who pushed Biden to reopen the enrollment period.

People who are already enrolled also have another chance to review their plan to make sure it still meets their coverage needs.

— U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, who's not up for reelection until 2024, had nearly \$2 million in the bank to end 2020, according to her latest campaign finance filing.

Meanwhile, U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, who's still weighing whether to seek a third term in 2022, had \$559,333 in the bank to end last year.

Baldwin, D-Madison, reported on her year-end report \$485,934 in receipts between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31 and \$287,757 in expenses.

See more [here](#).

— Johnson on the other hand in an interview on “UpFront” said he feels no pressure to decide to run again in 2022.

But the Lincoln Project, a group of former Republican strategists who formed to oppose President Trump and what they call “Trumpism,” promises to work toward Johnson’s defeat.

“I would say I think that he should expect we will bring all the tools in our toolbox and all the assets available to us to the fight to ensure he doesn’t serve another term in the U.S. Senate,” said Lincoln Project co-founder Reed Galen.

See more on “UpFront,” produced in partnership with WisPolitics.com

See more from the [program](#).

— About 80 percent of the voters who registered as indefinitely confined to get a ballot in last year’s presidential election have provided a photo ID in past elections to their local clerk, a new report from the Wisconsin Elections Commission finds.

But in total, the number of those who voted under the status made up just 11 percent of absentee ballots returned.

The status, which allows voters to register for an absentee ballot without providing photo ID, was the subject of litigation from the Trump campaign in the wake of the November election. The status can be claimed because of “age, physical illness or infirmity or are disabled for an indefinite period.”

Donald Trump’s legal team sought to toss out all ballots cast by those who claimed the status in Dane and Milwaukee counties, arguing local clerks didn’t do their due diligence to remove voters who fraudulently claimed the status. That suit was rejected by a Racine County reserve judge and the state Supreme Court.

See more [here](#).

— Former GOP U.S. Rep. Mark Green has been named president, director and CEO of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, a non-partisan policy forum that tackles global issues.

After representing the 8th CD and running unsuccessfully for gov in 2006, Green became the U.S. ambassador to Tanzania. Since then, his roles have included executive director of the McCain Institute for International Leadership and administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

See the [release](#).

Posts of the week

Had a great time speaking today with 6th grade student senators Camden and Elliot and their teacher [@maggieleemchugh](#) from [@lacrossepoly](#). We talked about everything from the pandemic to education. Wisconsin's future is bright thanks to outstanding students like Camden and Elliot!
pic.twitter.com/dLTi8U0CyY

— Archive: Rep. Ron Kind (@RepRonKind) [February 3, 2021](#)

Tonight, Officer Brian Sicknick will lie in honor in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda. Officer Sicknick made the ultimate sacrifice protecting our Capitol & his legacy will never be forgotten. May he rest in peace.
pic.twitter.com/srLLWK8Hvf

— Rep. Scott Fitzgerald (@RepFitzgerald) [February 3, 2021](#)

Great to meet with the winners of this year's Congressional App Challenge and other computer science students at Fox Valley Lutheran High School yesterday to talk about the importance of STEM education. These talented

kids will make a real impact in the economy of the future.

pic.twitter.com/WM17IreC06

— Rep. Gallagher Press Office (@RepGallagher) [February 2, 2021](#)

For this week's [#MagicMonday](#), here's a pre-pandemic throwback to when I visited [@Ancorakingst](#), to show why every American deserves access to healthcare. pic.twitter.com/rCngKWPbcl

— Rep. Mark Pocan (@RepMarkPocan) [February 1, 2021](#)

Celebrating [#BlackHistoryMonth](#) in Wisconsin means celebrating the life and legacy of Vel Phillips, a trailblazer and barrier breaker who has inspired me and so many others in public service.

pic.twitter.com/FIZBDoQfL6

— Sen. Tammy Baldwin (@SenatorBaldwin) [February 3, 2021](#)

The 48th annual [@March_for_Life](#) may be virtual this year, but the mission remains. I'm proud to support this movement in years past and will continue to fight for life. [#WhyWeMarch](#) pic.twitter.com/4zNHXxT4b1

— Senator Ron Johnson (@SenRonJohnson) [January 29, 2021](#)

Far too often, precious members of our communities are taken due to gun violence. As we remember those who are gone, we are reminded of the

other pandemic in our nation and we recommit ourselves to the survivors. We see you, we hear you, we are fighting for you. [#GVSurvivorsWeek](#)

— Rep. Gwen Moore (@RepGwenMoore) [February 3, 2021](#)

ICYMI

[As Wisconsin's Johnson weighs future, Trump ties take a toll](#)

["Stuck on Stupid" Baldwin, POCAN blast potential mask mandate repeal](#)

["We're going to have to get answers": Rep. Steil among lawmakers calling for hearing after trading freeze](#)

[Gallagher to WTMJ: Dems removing U.S. Rep. Greene would start 'escalating war'](#)

[Navy Pauses Plan To Move Wisconsin Badger Statue To Virginia Museum](#)

[Wisconsin Farmers Union's 90th convention recognizes rural leaders](#)

[Progressives gear up for assault on defense budget](#)