

DC Wrap: House Dems dig into \$3.5T reconciliation bill as Republicans want to cut it up

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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

"This is an important responsibility of the United States government to help folks right now who are here to find places in the United States, and to help others."

- U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, on Fort McCoy troops processing Afghan refugees at the U.S. Army base in Wisconsin.

"The buck stops with the President of the United States. The failed evacuation is in the hands of President Biden."

- U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil, R-Janesville, in a "Capital City Sunday" interview on the Afghanistan withdrawal effort. Steil also praised the efforts of those at Fort McCoy.

This week's news

— U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin and U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan are urging Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to include support for homegrown renewable fuels in the reconciliation package.

The pair, along with several Dem colleagues, in a letter asked for five pieces of bipartisan legislation:

1. The Biofuel Infrastructure and Agricultural Product Market Expansion Act, which would install new fuel pump infrastructure to deliver ethanol blends greater than 10 percent and biodiesel blends greater than 20 percent. The group said the bill is a "sorely needed federal investment in renewable fuel

infrastructure” that “will allow small businesses across the nation to provide cleaner, more affordable, and lower emission options to American drivers.”

2. The Consumer and Fuel Retailer Choice Act, which would strengthen an EPA rule, struck down by a D.C. court, that allowed retailers to sell fuel blends with 15 percent ethanol year-round by extending a Reid Vapor Pressure volatility waiver to those blends. The group said this rule “allowed for an open marketplace with more fuel options for consumers while encouraging competition and driving down fuel costs.”
3. The Low Carbon Biofuel Credit Act, which would establish a low carbon fuel tax credit to incentivize ethanol blends of 15 percent or greater in the marketplace. The group said this measure “will reduce emissions, diversify our fuel supply, and provide for rural economic development.”
4. The Clean Fuels Vehicle Act, which would offer a \$200 tax credit and restore corporate average fuel economy credits for original equipment manufacturers who produce flexible-fuel vehicles. The group said this bill will incentivize manufacturers to produce renewable fuel-friendly vehicles.
5. The Biodiesel Tax Credit Extension Act, which would extend the current federal biodiesel tax credit through 2025. After the 2019 extension of the credit, production grew more than 150 million gallons despite headwinds from coronavirus-related market challenges, the group noted.

The Dem letter also showcased support for enacting a long-term extension of the Second Generation Biofuel Producer Tax Credit, a \$1.01 per gallon credit that expired in 2020. The group said the credit will help increase the production of advanced biofuels that cut carbon emissions between 70 percent and 126 percent.

Read the letter [here](#).

— U.S. Rep. Ron Kind penned an op-ed asking lawmakers to “learn from past mistakes,” limit programs and solidify long-term solutions during the bipartisan reconciliation process.

The La Crosse Dem said lawmakers should cap the number of programs in the bill to ensure proper long-term funding, added that funding programs for two to three years “creates uncertainty and unnecessary fiscal ‘cliffs.’”

“This approach would be far more impactful on the lives of Americans than putting in place too many short-term programs that are inadequately funded and poorly executed,” Kind said.

Kind compared the situation to the Affordable Care Act. He said Congress “tried to do too much with too little,” resulting in “drastically underfunded” legislation that prevented many Americans from accessing affordable health.

“We continue to kick the can down the road and pass short-term stop gap measures,” Kind said. “Congress should learn from our past mistakes and make the right choices now so we don’t keep passing the buck onto future generations.”

He also encouraged lawmakers to put partisanship aside and focus on long-term funding for affordable health care, climate change and childhood poverty in the reconciliation process.

“Rather than waste this opportunity by doing too much too fast, we need to learn from the past and focus on implementing sustainable policies that create long-term solutions to the toughest challenges we face,” Kind said.

Read the op-ed [here](#).

— GOP House members are already putting up roadblocks to the massive spending measures, charging Dems want to burden the nation with more debt rather than conserve spending.

U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman, R-Glenbeulah, slammed Dems for passing a framework for the \$3.5 trillion reconciliation bill and the smaller \$1.2 trillion infrastructure package. He called the moves “another huge increase in the role of the federal government in our society” that will likely pass along party lines.

“These bills, along with the forthcoming budget reconciliation bill of up to \$3.5 trillion, will further increase the federal debt, erode the value of the dollar, and increase the role of the federal government in people’s lives,” Grothman said.

U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil also raised concerns that the package could move the country further into debt and raise taxes. Steil said he will continue to fight against the reconciliation package over the next month.

“I don’t think that battle is over. I’m going to be continuing to push against this level of spending,” Steil said during a WCLO interview last week. “I’m very concerned that we’re going to overheat the economy and enter an inflationary period that will impact folks all across the spectrum.”

Steil added that the package would “dramatically change” how the average person interacts with the federal government, noting that its provisions could shift power away from states and local governments.

“I think it’s moving us in the wrong direction,” Steil said of the reconciliation package. “I hope that we’re able to stop this.”

Listen to Steil’s interview [here](#).

— U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore at a recent Wisconsin Conservation Voters’ Milwaukee event said climate change is one of the biggest threats to humankind.

The Milwaukee Dem said lawmakers must take major action to address the effects of climate change as she referred to major storm damage in Milwaukee and across Wisconsin that caused electrical fires in many Black neighborhoods in her hometown. Moore added addressing the causes of climate change is also necessary to ensure future generations inherit a world worth living in.

Moore said her work on the House Ways and Means Committee helps create jobs that protect the environment and create green energy, addressing climate change and ensuring future generations have good job opportunities.

“This is all going to make a big difference,” Moore said. “My very first asthma attack happened while I was shoveling coal into a furnace, so it’s personal to me that we have a cleaner environment.”

Erin Bloodgood, Wisconsin Conservation Voters communications manager, said Congress should push for climate legislation.

“As Congress works on the Build Back Better Agenda, it is critical that they stay focused on passing a bill that will meet the climate ambition goals science and justice require,” Bloodgood said.

The organization is also hosting events in La Crosse, Oshkosh, Madison and Green Bay this month with local elected officials and citizens who are leading climate initiatives.

“We are encouraging Congress to invest in climate, clean energy, justice, and jobs at the scale that science demands,” Bloodgood said. “Inaction on climate is not an

option. We are out of time.”

Watch the [event](#).

— Bloodgood also announced that Wisconsin 12 municipalities and three school districts have committed to work toward using 100 percent clean energy.

Those areas include:

- *Dane County;
- *Brown County;
- *Eau Claire County;
- *City of River Falls;
- *City of Eau Claire;
- *City of Fitchburg;
- *City of Lacrosse;
- *City of Wauwatosa;
- *City of Green Bay;
- *City of Madison;
- *City of Menomonie;
- *City of Middleton;
- *Madison Metropolitan School District;
- *Green Bay School District; and
- *Eau Claire School District.

Bloodgood added that Wisconsin Conservation Voters organizers are working with West Allis and Elm Grove on 100 percent clean energy resolutions. She said De Pere recently made a commitment, and Northeast Organizer Casey Hicks is working with officials to add deadlines to the resolutions.

— U.S. Rep. Scott Fitzgerald introduced a bill that would require local school districts to post the curriculum for each grade of their K-12 schools on a public website in order to receive federal funding.

“Parents across the country are flocking to their local school board to demand transparency and to oppose dangerous ideologies, like critical race theory,” Fitzgerald said. “My bill, the CRT Transparency Act, will solve this problem by helping parents get a straight answer about what their children are being taught in school.”

Read the Curriculum Review of Teachings Transparency Act [here](#).

— U.S. Rep. Tom Tiffany sent a letter to several resettlement organizations requesting a thorough vetting of Afghan refugees before they are resettled in Wisconsin communities.

Tiffany said the U.S. knows “very little” about the Afghan refugees. He also said Fort McCoy officials told him that Afghan nationals housed at the facility are free to leave the base without check-in or monitoring requirements.

“What we do know is that vetting procedures that previously took months or years have been hastily conducted for many of those currently arriving to just days or hours,” Tiffany said. “I strongly support admitting these individuals to the United States and will continue to assist with that effort however I can. However, not every Afghan national seeking to enter the U.S. fits into that category, and we must all work together to ensure that those who did not directly support American efforts are thoroughly screened and vetted before being released into American neighborhoods.”

Read the letter [here](#).

— Wisconsin’s congressional Dems after a Fort McCoy visit said they are confident the vetting process for Afghan refugees will keep terrorists from infiltrating the U.S.

U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, alongside U.S. Reps. Mark Pocan and Ron Kind during a Fort McCoy news conference, said she feels confident those in charge of vetting refugees are taking their jobs seriously. She added no additional flights of refugees are arriving at Fort McCoy, but that will likely change as refugees already there begin to be relocated across the country.

Kind, D-La Crosse, said it’s important to properly vet those coming here.

U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore, D-Milwaukee did not attend. Spokeswoman Samara Sheff told WisPolitics.com Moore will visit Fort McCoy alongside staff from the Muslim Women’s Coalition in the future.

See more [here](#).

— U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan praised President Biden for advocating passage of

the Protect the Right to Organize, or PRO, Act.

The measure would protect several worker union rights including the rights to collectively bargain and organize protests. It would also prevent employers from forcing employees to attend meetings that discourage them from joining unions and stop employers from punishing workers for joining unions or participating in union activities. Pocan in a tweet said the move would be a big step in helping many Americans.

“Worker power is essential to expanding the middle class and we owe it to workers to give them every opportunity we can to unionize and encourage collective bargaining,” the Town of Vermont Dem said.

Biden said the almighty American economy was built by middle-class workers, not big banks and corporations.

“In my White House, you will always be welcome. Labor will always be welcome. You’ve heard me say many times, I intend to be the most pro-union president, the most pro-union administration in American history,” Biden said.

See Pocan’s [tweet](#).

— Mandela Barnes’ campaign released a new poll showing him with a 29-point lead over his Dem rivals for the U.S. Senate.

Still, 38 percent of likely Dem primary voters were undecided on who they back in the crowded field.

The poll found 37 percent of likely primary voters backed the Lt. gov, while no other candidate cracked double digits. Outagamie County Exec Tom Nelson was next at 8 percent, while state Treasurer Sarah Godlewski was at 7 percent and Alex Lasry, on leave from his post with the Milwaukee Bucks, at 5 percent.

See more [here](#).

— Milwaukee Ald. and Dem U.S. Senate candidate Chantia Lewis was charged with theft, misconduct in public office and violating campaign finance laws for co-mingling political donations and personal money.

The four felonies and one misdemeanor stem from allegations Lewis used her

campaign finance account to cover personal expenses, put political donations into her personal checking account and improperly seek reimbursement from the city for travel she covered with campaign funds.

She faces charges of misconduct in office, theft and embezzlement for the misuse of \$21,667 in campaign and city funds.

“We will make the necessary corrections. But make no mistake, I am innocent of any criminal wrongdoing,” Lewis said.

See more [here](#).

— New polling for the conservative Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty conducted by the GOP firm Rasmussen shows broad support for requiring uniform statewide standards for early, in-person voting hours and for clerks correcting errors on absentee ballots.

The poll didn’t provide specifics on what those standards would be. Current state law allows communities to offer early, in-person voting up to two weeks before an election with the Sunday before an election the final day it can be offered.

The Elections Commission in 2016 advised local clerks they may use readily available sources to fill in missing information on absentee ballot envelopes such as a witness’ ZIP code. Former President Trump challenged that advice in his unsuccessful lawsuits seeking to overturn Wisconsin’s election results.

See more [here](#).

— The coalition of groups that filed a federal redistricting lawsuit is seeking to amend its complaint to add eight plaintiffs and make a new argument that the voting power of Black voters in Milwaukee has been diluted under current maps.

The new claim charges Black voters have either been “packed” into Assembly districts well above the numbers needed to afford them the opportunity to elect their preferred candidate or “cracked” from districts containing other Black voters so their power is overwhelmed by whites voting in opposition to their preferred candidate.

All eight new plaintiffs are Black and live in Milwaukee or its suburbs.

See more [here](#).

— The Elections Commission is urging state justices to send a redistricting lawsuit to the lower courts first, arguing the drawing of new maps is complex and the Supreme Court isn't meant to be a fact-finding body.

The conservative Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty has urged the justices to take original action in a suit asking them to draw new maps if the GOP-controlled Legislature and Dem Gov. Tony Evers are unable to reach a deal.

But the state Department of Justice, representing the commission, argued the Supreme Court has traditionally reserved original action for questions of law, “not complex fact-finding.”

See more [here](#).

— State GOP Chairman Paul Farrow said former President Trump “tapped into an energy” across the state, and Republicans will be looking to build on that in next year’s election.

“We’ve got a great energy flow that’s moving across the state because of what President Trump has done in his four years. We have to be able to harness that as we move forward to make success in ‘22,” Farrow said in an interview aired Sunday on “UpFront,” produced in partnership with WisPoltics.com.

See more [here](#).

Posts of the week

Beautiful morning for a parade on Merrill pic.twitter.com/XY1ujbEoQA

— Tom Tiffany (@TomTiffanyWI) [September 6, 2021](#)

No place I would rather be than Baldwin, Wisconsin, and nothing I'd rather be doing than working for our great state in the Senate.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve.

pic.twitter.com/m85azlVWnA

— Sen. Tammy Baldwin (@SenatorBaldwin) [September 4, 2021](#)

Outstanding performance by these champions! Congratulations to the Wisconsinites on the team: John Boie, Nate Hinze, Matt Lesperance and Jacob Williams. <https://t.co/d9Pv3UBPpS>

— Senator Ron Johnson (@SenRonJohnson) [September 8, 2021](#)

Happy Birthday to my friend, [@SenSanders](#)! pic.twitter.com/PTWvg5HSBY

— Rep. Mark Pocan (@RepMarkPocan) [September 8, 2021](#)

I wish for a peaceful and happy Rosh Hashanah for all those celebrating. Shanah tovah! [#RoshHashanah](#) pic.twitter.com/pE0EflUMYO

— Rep. Glenn Grothman (@RepGrothman) [September 7, 2021](#)

Happy New Year to all those celebrating [#RoshHashanah](#)!

— Rep. Gwen Moore (@RepGwenMoore) [September 6, 2021](#)

Happy Labor Day! Today we celebrate workers in Southeast Wisconsin and their contributions to strengthen our communities.

pic.twitter.com/qUfWMHRLSX

— Bryan Steil (@RepBryanSteil) [September 6, 2021](#)

ICYMI

[Senator Baldwin Urges Loggers to Take Advantage of Pandemic Relief Funding](#)

[Baldwin, colleagues urge climate action in Reconciliation Package](#)

[Sen. Ron Johnson's evolution from Tea Party insurgent to conspiracy theory promoter](#)

[HASC Passes NDAA That Boosts Shipbuilding, Authorizes 13 Battleforce Ships](#)

[Kind: \\$1.7 million in grants go to fire departments in 3rd District](#)