

DC Wrap: Johnson and GOP colleagues block voting rights measure

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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

They would rather continue their Big Lie that the 2020 presidential election was stolen and try to rig elections than win them based on ideas and policy. I am disappointed but not surprised by the Senate Republicans who failed to vote to strengthen our democracy.

– U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore, D-Milwaukee, on Senate Republicans' blocking the For the People Act.

S. 1/H.R. 1 will completely undermine public faith in our elections. Pelosi & Schumer want to weaken voter ID laws, steamroll states' authority over election procedures, & force Americans to fund politicians' campaigns—whether they support them or not. This bill is a disaster.

– U.S. Rep. Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, on the legislation.

This week's news

— Wisconsin's U.S. senators voted along party lines in a failed Dem attempt to advance the For the People Act to expand voting rights.

The measure would require automatic voter registration, limit state voter ID laws and expand absentee voting rights. But Republicans argue it would expand the federal government's power in handling elections, which they say should rest with state governments instead.

Oshkosh Republican Ron Johnson helped his Senate colleagues block the measure

because he said it would only help Dems cheat to win future elections. Johnson added Republicans on the other hand want to expand voting rights by making it easier to vote, but harder to cheat.

“It’s another Orwellian-named bill in the long line of Democrat bills like the ‘Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act’ that really have nothing to do with the title,” Johnson told the conservative news channel Real America’s Voice.

“It has everything to do with consolidating power in the Democrat Party for years and decades to come — consolidating their control over the government, which means consolidating their control over each individual American’s life,” he added.

U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, ahead of the vote tweeted Republican efforts to block the measure were born out of conspiracy theories about the last presidential election.

“Senate Republicans are afraid to stand up to Trump’s Big Lie that the election was stolen from him,” she tweeted. “It wasn’t. He lost. Now your voting rights are under attack because they want to make it harder for you to vote.”

Wisconsin’s House delegation joined a 220-210 vote nearly along party lines on an almost identical measure in March. U.S. Rep. Bennie Thompson, of Mississippi, was the only Dem to break ranks and oppose the legislation.

While Republicans blocked the latest federal voting rights legislation, the John Lewis Voting Rights Act could still make progress in Congress. And Baldwin is hopeful about the future.

“Senate Republicans refuse to even debate protecting your voting rights because they support making it harder for people to vote,” Baldwin tweeted. “I will keep fighting to pass legislation that stops voter suppression, protects your voting rights, and strengthens our democracy.”

The John Lewis Voting Rights Act has not been taken up in this session of Congress, but it passed a nearly party-line 228-187 vote in the House last session with one Republican breaking rank in favor.

The federal government battle over voting rights comes as the state Legislature sent several Republican election bills to Gov. Tony Evers’ desk this week.

Baldwin told WisPolitics.com those Wisconsin lawmakers are also backing the same conspiracy theory their congressional counterparts are.

“In states across the country, Republican state legislators are passing laws that make it harder to vote in federal elections,” Baldwin added. “They are afraid to stand up to Trump’s big lie about the last election and they are trying to suppress the vote up-and-down the ballot in the next election.

See the Senate [roll call](#).

See Baldwin’s [tweet](#) before the vote.

See Baldwin’s [tweet](#) after the vote.

See the Johnson [interview](#).

See more on the state election bills in [Quorum Call](#).

— President Joe Biden is to travel to the state Tuesday, the White House announced.

Joining Biden will be joined by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, who was governor of Iowa before serving as ag secretary under President Obama.

According to the brief notice, the two will visit southwestern Wisconsin to talk about agriculture and rural communities. The notice didn’t list a time or specific location.

Read more [here](#).

— U.S. Rep. Ron Kind introduced a bill that aims to ensure the equal treatment of tribal governments and state and local governments for federal tax purposes.

The Tribal Tax and Investment Reform Act, with bipartisan support, is meant to create fairness in the federal tax code for Native American tribal governments this week.

“Indian tribes have the responsibility and authority to provide governmental programs and services to tribal citizens, develop tribal economies, and build community infrastructure,” said NAFOA Board President Cristina Danforth. “However, despite having similar responsibilities, revenue generation for tribal governments is vastly different from their state and local government counterparts.”

“This does not adhere to our constitution, and correcting this treatment is long overdue. Wisconsin Tribes deserve a level playing field, which is why I’m proud to introduce legislation that will end inequities in the tax code and create more access to opportunity,” Kind said.

See the release [here](#).

— U.S. Sens. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, and Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, announced their recommendations for a federal judge to serve in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin.

The senators made their decisions after receiving nomination recommendations from the bipartisan Wisconsin Federal Nominating Commission. The announcement comes as Judge William C. Griesbach announced he will retire from the court.

The nominees are:

- Krista Ann Halla-Valdes, who works as a lawyer for Federal Defender Services of Wisconsin in Green Bay.
- Tammy Jo Hock, who was appointed judge by former Gov. Scott Walker to the Brown County Circuit Court in 2012. She won re-election in 2019.
- William S. Pocan, who was appointed judge by former Gov. Jim Doyle to the Milwaukee County Circuit Court in 2006. He won re-election in 2019.
- Thomas J. Walsh, who was elected judge to the Brown County Circuit Court in 2012 and 2018. He still serves in that role.

See the release [here](#).

— U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher introduced the COVID-19 Act of 2021 in the

House in an effort to get the Chinese government to allow a transparent investigation into the origins of COVID-19 or face sanctions from the U.S. government.

“The CCP has lied repeatedly about the origins of this pandemic, blocked access to important records from the Wuhan Institute of Virology, and corrupted the World Health Organization,” he said. “This is unacceptable.”

If the bill passes, and the Chinese government does not allow a transparent investigation within 90 days of its passage, sanctions against the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and any affiliated institutions, would be enacted. The bill would also prohibit any U.S. company or person from receiving federal funds if they were to cooperate on gain-of-function research with any Chinese company or person.

A companion bill was also introduced in the Senate.

See the release [here](#).

— Freshman U.S. Rep. Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, is celebrating passage of his first bill in Congress.

The bill would make technical corrections to title 41 of the United States Code to ensure statute is made more clear, easier to read and is consistent with the original intent of Congress.

Fitzgerald said it would also “have the significant benefit of preventing frivolous lawsuits that may arise when the wording of statutory language is unclear, thereby saving taxpayer dollars.

“I’m proud of the overwhelming support my bill has received, and I look forward to seeing H.R. 3239 receive consideration in the U.S. Senate.”

See the [release](#).

— Efforts to save two Wisconsin paper mills received a boost with an Assembly vote to use American Rescue Plan Act funds to help

cooperatives buy the facilities.

Lawmakers voted 63-35 on AB 367, which would allow the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation to loan Consolidated Cooperative \$50 million to purchase the shuttered Verso Paper Mill in Wisconsin Rapids.

The bill also authorizes WEDC to award a loan of up to \$15 million to Park Falls Mill Multi-Stakeholder Cooperative to buy the idled Park Falls Pulp and Paper Mill.

See more [here](#).

— Gov. Tony Evers says “partisan politics” is to blame for the state Assembly not adopting a bipartisan amendment to the bill, after the Legislative Fiscal Bureau in a memo said this use of the ARPA funds may not be allowed.

According to a release, Evers and a bipartisan group of state lawmakers met Monday to develop the amendment, which would have replaced ARPA funding with an appropriation to the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation in the state budget, among other changes including giving WEDC discretion to make the loans forgivable. The amendment wasn't taken up or adopted, the release shows.

“We had a great meeting where we worked together to address parties’ concerns and find consensus on a solution to get resources to Verso and the Park Falls Paper Mills and help support local families, communities, and economies in Wisconsin, so it’s pretty disappointing that it seems like those words yesterday from Republican legislators rang hollow,” Evers said in a statement Tuesday.

See more [here](#).

— The Senate voted to send the governor a bill that would prohibit Wisconsin law enforcement from enforcing certain future federal gun laws.

AB 293, concurred in through a voice vote, would prohibit enforcing federal laws that take effect on or after Jan. 1 this year if they ban or restrict assault weapons or

magazines, or if they require registration of firearms, magazines or other firearm accessories, among other things.

It would also prohibit any state or local agency from spending money or using other resources to confiscate lawfully possessed firearms.

See more [here](#)

— A petition seeks to draft former GOP U.S. Rep. Sean Duffy to run for gov in 2022, with backers saying a strong leader is needed “who can defeat the growing threat to our great State of Wisconsin.”

A group calling itself Draft Sean Duffy for Governor sent out an email to generate support and posted the petition to change.org. WisPolitics.com found no group registered by that name with the state Ethics Commission.

“We have watched our businesses shutter, our capitol vandalized and towns like Kenosha burned to the ground. Now is not the time for another politician to make the same empty promises,” the appeal reads. “What Wisconsin needs is Sean Duffy.”

See the [email](#).

See the [petition](#).

— The anti-abortion group Susan B. Anthony List launched an ad campaign targeting U.S. Rep. Ron Kind and seven other members of Congress for supporting elimination of the Hyde Amendment.

The 30-second digital ad, which airs on Facebook and other streaming platforms in Kind’s district, says the La Crosse Dem “and his radical allies want to force you to pay for abortions, even painful late-term abortions.”

A spokeswoman for the group did not say how much money was spent on the campaign against Kind, but the entire campaign, including ads against the other targets, is worth “six figures.”

“Ron Kind and the liberals in Washington have an extreme abortion agenda,” the ad says. “Tell Congressman Kind: Don’t force Wisconsin taxpayers to pay for abortions.”

Watch the [ad](#).

— The progressive group Opportunity Wisconsin launched a statewide RV tour to criticize U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson’s attempt to block the American Rescue Plan.

Program director Meghan Roh said she hopes the tour, “Summer Is On, No Thanks To Ron,” will help hold the Oshkosh Republican accountable for his efforts to block pandemic-related recovery efforts. Johnson’s photo will be wrapped around the RV to urge Wisconsinites to call his office.

See the [release](#).

Posts of the week

Happy birthday to a defender of liberty and one of the greatest Constitutional scholars of our time—Justice Clarence Thomas.

<https://t.co/U68dhWNpyY>

— Rep. Glenn Grothman (@RepGrothman) [June 23, 2021](#)

Thanks to [@SecVilsack](#) and [@USDA](#) for making \$400 million available for the Dairy Donation Program to support our dairy farmers donating dairy products to food banks and other food assistance organizations.

[#NationalDairyMonth](#) [#JuneDairyMonth](#)

[#DairyPridehttps://t.co/TN8k1LxCmN](#)

— Sen. Tammy Baldwin (@SenatorBaldwin) [June 23, 2021](#)

Great to see NBA Legend and Racine native, Caron Butler, at this weekend's Juneteenth celebration! pic.twitter.com/Rb0Qyo2S0p

— Bryan Steil (@RepBryanSteil) [June 23, 2021](#)

The hunt for the Riverfest Medallion is underway. Best of luck to all my hunters! <https://t.co/913DEG9DKK><https://t.co/913DEG9DKK>

— Ron Kind (@KindforCongress) [June 22, 2021](#)

For 35 years, Calumet County's Sundae event has brought together families from across Northeast Wisconsin to celebrate our proud dairy heritage. Glad to see this tradition will continue this weekend at Woldt Farms LLC, a family run dairy farm in Brillion. <https://t.co/zKa5tfUB0h>

— Rep. Gallagher Press Office (@RepGallagher) [June 22, 2021](#)

Happy [#Juneteenth](#)! I'm proud to be from Milwaukee, one of the first cities in the North to hold Juneteenth celebrations. I joined our community in celebrating Juneteenth and its new designation as a national holiday! pic.twitter.com/xH9mWI9xPb

— Rep. Gwen Moore (@RepGwenMoore) [June 19, 2021](#)

I'll always have your back! pic.twitter.com/lAxz2wG2sG

— Ron Johnson (@RonJohnsonWI) [June 22, 2021](#)

The Paper People are creating the next generation of packaging products that will benefit the environment and economy. [#AmericanIngenuity](#)
pic.twitter.com/utSkXB0yrZ

— Tom Tiffany (@TomTiffanyWI) [June 21, 2021](#)

Wishing a happy [#FathersDay](#) to all the dads & father figures in Wisconsin and across the country! pic.twitter.com/x3rdjYhDtP

— Rep. Mark Pocan (@RepMarkPocan) [June 20, 2021](#)

ICYMI

[Democratic senators introduce resolution apologizing for government discrimination against LGBTQ community](#)

[GOP redistricting put Fitzgerald brothers - who live 13 miles apart - in different congressional districts](#)

[Sen. Ron Johnson booed at Milwaukee's Juneteenth celebration](#)

[Tom Tiffany, only Wisconsin lawmaker to vote against Juneteenth holiday, says it 'fuels separatism'](#)

[Democrats eye two pathways for infrastructure plan](#)

[School districts, Democrats decry Republican K-12 education 'shell game' for Wisconsin](#)

[Shut down Milwaukee streetcar? Wisconsin Sen. Ron Johnson says 'Yes'](#)

[Town facing devastating 'forever chemical' contamination hopes to see aid from federal stimulus package](#)