

DC Wrap: Pocan says Dem success in 2022 hinges on infrastructure and reconciliation bills

Posted on Thursday, Sep 30, 2021

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

"Inflation is wiping out wage gains, deficit spending is mortgaging our children's future, and Democrats need to take responsibility and be held accountable for adding trillions of dollars more to our national debt."

- U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, on his vote against a bill to continue funding the federal government.

"Last night, I voted to fund the government, prevent a shutdown and avoid a first-ever default on paying our bills, but Senate Republicans filibustered and insisted on being the party of default."

- U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, criticizing Republicans for voting against the continuing resolution, which failed in a 50-48 vote.

This week's news

— U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan says Dems' success in next year's elections lies in passing both the \$1 trillion infrastructure bill and President Biden's larger Build Back Better agenda.

The former Progressive Caucus Chair insists the infrastructure bill won't pass without assurance reconciliation will clear the Senate.

"We do well in the House in 2022 if Joe Biden does well because that's what most people understand," he said.

The 2nd District Dem told a WisPolitics.com breakfast event in D.C. that U.S. Sens. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Arizona, and Joe Manchin, D-West Virginia, need to “show their cards” and explain what they want out of the reconciliation to move the ball forward. But he added Dems who want to see both bills succeed will likely hold their ground in asking for a scheduled vote on the larger bill before voting on the smaller bill because they don’t want to relinquish that leverage.

“Whether or not there’s a vote tomorrow is of far less importance than we have a good, substantial bill that represents what the president wants to get done,” he said on Wednesday.

He also said any fights over the bills involve arguments over special interest spending, not among Democrats. He said some don’t want the \$3.5 trillion bill paid for by taxing wealthy companies and people.

But Pocan added he doesn’t want the larger bill to fail because it represents a much larger portion of Biden’s Build Back Better agenda. He added people will more immediately feel the effects of the larger bill than the smaller one.

He stressed the success of the bills is important because it is tied to Biden’s success, which is tied to House Dems’ success in the 2022 elections.

“If we get these two done plus the rescue act that we did; no Congress has done this much in three decades,” he said. “We are in a much better position.”

The Town of Vermont Dem said he wants to make sure spending in the larger bill expands the Child Tax Credit, access to childcare, and expanded Medicare because he believes those areas will impact average families most.

— Pocan said former president Trump caused increased division within Congress that lingers today.

He said Trump’s term made it more difficult for lawmakers to get things done and those challenges are only lingering after President Biden took office. Some issues, such as wearing masks, became politicized even though they should have had overwhelming support, Pocan added.

That division also makes convergence over redistricting between Republican and Democratic lawmakers on the horizon less likely.

Pocan said in the past he and U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman, R-Glenbeulah, likely would have agreed over redistricting, but that may not be the case now.

"I can't remember a time where we've had someone like Donald Trump come into office and then leave office and still have the disruption that we have," he said. "And honestly there's even an unnecessary disruption, I would say, in the Wisconsin delegation [in] how we interact because of the last president."

- Also speaking during the program was political polling and advertising expert Ken Goldstein, a former UW-Madison and University of San Francisco professor who's now with the Association of American Universities.

He said the next few weeks in Congress are important for Dems facing elections in 2022 because they could make or break their campaigns.

If Dems don't get their major spending measures through Congress soon, Goldstein said Dem approval ratings could drop. He added President Biden's approval rating, also tied to those spending measures, could strongly influence voters' decisions in the future.

Goldstein added voters will also strongly consider how lawmakers have dealt with COVID-19 and the economy before they cast their ballots.

Listen to the [event](#).

— U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, says he voted against a bill to fund the federal government because Dems control the executive and legislative branches and are "fully capable of increasing the debt ceiling without Republican votes."

Johnson and his GOP colleagues blocked the bill to fund the government until December and lift the debt ceiling. It needed 10 GOP votes to pass, but failed 48-50.

See more [here](#).

— Wisconsin's House delegation split over a \$768 billion defense policy bill, but not along the usual party lines.

U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, D-La Crosse, joined GOP colleagues Mike Gallagher, of Allouez,

Scott Fitzgerald, of Juneau, and Bryan Steil, of Janesville, in supporting the bill.

U.S. Reps. Glenn Grothmann, R-Glenbeulah, Gwen Moore, D-Milwaukee, Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, and Tom Tiffany, R-Minocqua voted against the bill.

It passed 316-113.

See more [here](#).

— Dem U.S. Reps. Ron Kind, of La Crosse, and Gwen Moore, of Milwaukee, joined with Pocan to call on House leadership to expand healthcare availability in the reconciliation bill.

In a joint letter the three said Wisconsinites are urging Congress to make enhanced Affordable Care Act premium tax credits permanent because that would provide more access to affordable healthcare for those who need it. They also said expanding Medicaid is important.

“The priorities outlined above, when taken together, present us with a historic opportunity to invest in our health care infrastructure to ensure Wisconsinites and people across the United States have access to affordable health care for years to come,” they said.

See the [release](#).

— U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher said Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo and Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry should receive an immediate briefing on threats posed by the Chinese Communist Party.

The Allouez Republican joined his fellow GOP China Task Force members in demanding the two be briefed.

“We are calling on these officials to immediately receive a threat briefing and review the broken promises, theft of intellectual property, rampant economic espionage, and blatant coercion of American citizens that has resulted over decades of assuming commercial engagement would prevent tensions,” they said in a joint statement.

See the [release](#).

— A Minneapolis attorney who filed an unsuccessful lawsuit seeking to overturn Wisconsin's presidential results shouldn't be allowed to appeal a judge referring him to a discipline committee for possible sanctions, according to a Washington, D.C., lawyer.

The courts only allow lawyers to appeal discipline cases once a penalty has been imposed, Matthew Etchemendy opined.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia hired Etchemendy to consider the issues presented by the appeal of Minneapolis attorney Erick Kaardal and make a recommendation to the court.

Etchemendy wrote in a brief submitted to the court that a referral to the District Court's Committee on Grievances is not the kind of "final decision" that is appealable. The referral didn't decide any legal issues and isn't the culmination of the process, but the initiation of proceedings. He added the judge didn't exercise any uniquely judicial power in referring Kaardal to the discipline committee and "any member of the public can submit a similar complaint with materially identical legal consequences."

See more [here](#).

— Both houses of the Legislature signed off on a resolution backing a policy to "retain as much as possible the core of existing districts" in redistricting. Dems decried it as an effort to codify a partisan gerrymander.

The resolution, which doesn't require input from Gov. Tony Evers, cleared the Senate 19-12 and the Assembly 60-38 along party lines.

It comes amid a legal battle over redistricting. The state Supreme Court last week agreed to take original action in a lawsuit asking the justices to draw new boundaries if the GOP-controlled Legislature and Evers fail to reach a deal. A similar suit is pending in federal court as well, though GOP lawmakers have asked the U.S. Supreme Court to dismiss it.

See more [here](#).

— Gov. Tony Evers says he's unlikely to sign maps similar to the current lines, which he said are "clearly gerrymandered."

Evers' People's Maps Commission is scheduled to release draft maps for the Assembly, Senate and congressional districts during a meeting tonight. The commission plans to submit final maps to the Legislature for approval sometime next month, according to the Department of Administration.

See more [here](#).

— GOP lawmakers are poised to hire private attorneys as they seek to intervene in the redistricting suit now pending before the state Supreme Court.

The Republican-controlled Joint Committee on Legislative Organization noticed a mail ballot stating the Legislature's intention to intervene in the suit and hire outside counsel.

See more [here](#).

— U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher claimed his fourth consecutive "Fastest Man in Congress" title after winning this year's ACLI 5k race at the U.S. Capitol.

"It's a bit like being the best player on the Bears, but an honor nonetheless," the Allouez Republican said.

See Gallagher's [tweet](#).

See Gallagher's [release](#).

— The state Department of Public Instruction announced Wisconsin will see an additional \$20 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding to improve broadband access.

State Superintendent Jill Underly in a release applauded the FCC for allocating \$20 million to fund 189 projects that will provide students with more devices and more access to broadband.

See more [here](#).

Posts of the week

Always have a great time at Milwaukee Night!

pic.twitter.com/EO0pGhZKgK

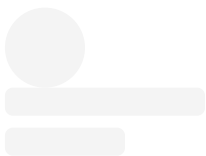
— Rep. Gwen Moore (@RepGwenMoore) [September 29, 2021](#)

Today, on Veterans of Foreign Wars Day, I'm happy I got the opportunity to speak directly with a [#WI](#) representative of [@VFWHQ](#). Thank you to all [#veterans](#) for standing up for our American freedoms and ideals all across the globe. I salute you. [#NationalVFWD](#) [pic.twitter.com/fiyUgfdCsk](#)

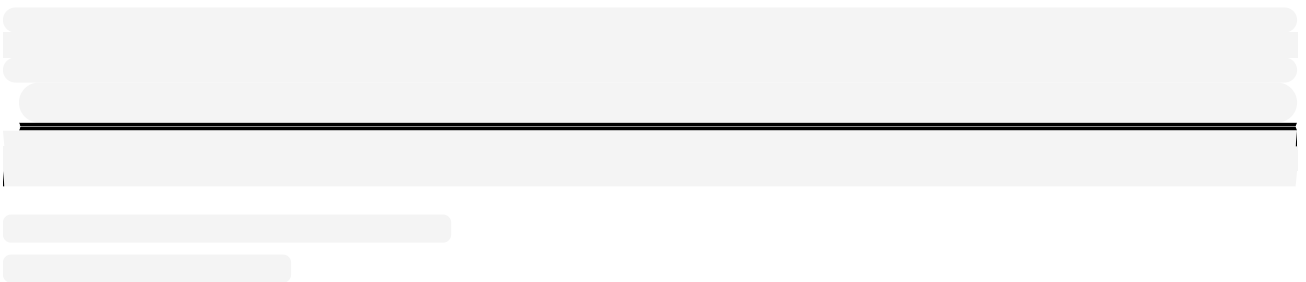
— Rep. Glenn Grothman (@RepGrothman) [September 29, 2021](#)

[#NationalDrinkBeerDay](#) is a holiday best celebrated in Wisconsin. Drink responsibly! <https://t.co/bNhLzGJD3g>

— Senator Ron Johnson (@SenRonJohnson) [September 28, 2021](#)



[View this post on Instagram](#)



A post shared by Representative Tom Tiffany (@reptiffany)

Flu season is here and the best way to protect yourself, your family, and friends is to get your flu shot!

Make sure to go get yours today and help us all [#FightFlu](#).
<https://t.co/FXssRKD5o3>

— Sen. Tammy Baldwin (@SenatorBaldwin) [September 29, 2021](#)

A great showing by Team USA this weekend in Wisconsin! Way to bring the hardware home 🏆 <https://t.co/LYVcstWQfU>

— Rep. Scott Fitzgerald (@RepFitzgerald) [September 26, 2021](#)

Today is Gold Star Mother's & Gold Star Family's Day, a day to honor the mothers and families of our fallen servicemembers who paid the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our country. pic.twitter.com/WULdQOcE8Z

— Bryan Steil (@RepBryanSteil) [September 26, 2021](#)

Once a Badger, always a Badger!

Greet meeting with students from [@UWMadison](#) today at this morning's D.C. Breakfast hosted by [@WisPolitics](#). [#OnWisconsin](#)
pic.twitter.com/Ue5MgQCzS0

— Rep. Mark Pocan (@RepMarkPocan) [September 29, 2021](#)

ICYMI

[Wisconsin Republicans raise concerns over 2 Afghans' alleged crimes at Fort McCoy](#)

[Gwen Moore, Ilhan Omar say Afghan refugees at Ft. McCoy need trauma-based care, but are fine overall](#)

[Afghan refugee describes life at Fort McCoy, hopes for better future](#)

[Despite guidance from health officials, Ron Johnson says vaccinating people during a pandemic 'could be dangerous'](#)

[Johnson and Senate GOP's Debt Ceiling Vote Could Spell Trouble for US, World Economy](#)

[U.S. House approves Sen. Baldwin's bill to protect the right to an abortion](#)

[University of Wisconsin Eau Claire professor explains debt ceiling](#)

[Engineering group calls on Congress to pass infrastructure bill](#)

[National Beer Institute lists Ron Kind among bipartisan dozen Beer Champions of year](#)