

DC Wrap: Pocan says fight over reconciliation is not about moderates or progressives

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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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Sept. 29: WisPolitics.com D.C. Breakfast with U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, polling and political advertising expert Ken Goldstein and Milwaukee Common Council president Cavalier Johnson.

The breakfast starts at 8:30 a.m. with the program going from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m.

The cost is \$20 and includes breakfast.

Register here and enter "DC Breakfast" in the purpose of payment line:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/make-payments/>

All attendees must be vaccinated, wear a mask when not eating or drinking and do a morning-of "wellness check" in the forum lobby, according to building rules.

The WisPolitics.com D.C. breakfast event series is sponsored by: Michael Best / Michael Best Strategies, WPS Health Solutions, Xcel Energy and Exact Sciences. Their sponsorship support made this event possible.

Quotes of the week

"What costs a lot of money is when you stumble into war on someone else's terms, and the best way to do that is to project weakness. Weakness invites aggression. We can achieve peace only through strength."

- U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher, R-Allouez, in a House floor [speech](#) slamming those proposing to cut 10 percent of the Pentagon budget.

"Pouring billions more into the Pentagon's budget won't tackle real and present

dangers to our national security like COVID and climate change.”

– U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, in a [tweet](#) proposing to use money from a 10 percent Pentagon cut on fighting climate change.

This week's news

— After meeting with President Biden, U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan insisted the stalemate among House Dems over passing a \$3.5 trillion reconciliation package and a \$1 trillion infrastructure bill isn't a battle of moderates vs. progressives.

Moderates in the caucus have threatened to withhold their support for the reconciliation package unless they get a vote Monday on the infrastructure package that cleared the Senate as promised by Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif. Meanwhile, progressives have threatened to vote against the infrastructure bill unless it is paired with a vote on the reconciliation package.

Pocan, D-Town of Vermont and the House Progressive Caucus chair emeritus, said he is confident both will pass. In a statement after yesterday's meeting, Pocan said Biden agrees that the main issue is special interests.

“The debates we're having are not about progressives versus moderates, but it's a fight between the special interests who don't want to pay their fair share and making sure we build back better for the American people,” Pocan said.

Ahead of the White House visit, Pocan tweeted his support for the \$1 trillion “hard” infrastructure bill too.

“One doesn't pass without the other,” Pocan tweeted. “Let's make sure we pass both.”

However, his Republican colleagues have slammed the proposed spending, saying it's too much.

As House Dems voted along party lines in a 220-211 vote this week to provide temporary funding to keep the government open and suspend the debt ceiling, U.S. Rep. Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, in a statement slammed the House majority for “bad governance.”

“It's almost as if the Democrats didn't want to give us a chance to thoroughly

review the legislation—but we did, and what I saw was a bill full of damaging proposals that put Americans’ fiscal future at risk,” he said. “The Democrats’ \$3.5 trillion socialist wish list will drive American taxpayers further into debt largely in pursuit of partisan priorities.”

The House-approved bill to keep the government funded through Dec. 3 and suspend the debt ceiling is now headed to the Senate, where Republicans are expected to block it.

See the [roll call](#).

See Pocan’s [statement](#).

See Fitzgerald’s [statement](#).

— U.S. Rep. Tom Tiffany penned a letter to Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas requesting information about reports of sexual assault and child trafficking from Afghan refugee camps in the United States.

The letter referenced several news articles about Afghan women and girls who have endured sexual assault and were forced to marry older men in order to flee Afghanistan. Tiffany raised concerns that the assailants could have been evacuated with their victims to the U.S.

“The American public deserves clear answers to the questions that the administration’s conflicting and often contradictory statements regarding the now-accelerated vetting process raise - particularly given that the Afghan government no longer exists, and thus cannot confirm the identities, backgrounds and claims put forward by Afghans seeking legal status in the U.S.,” the letter said.

Read the letter [here](#).

— U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil introduced amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act he says would hold adversaries accountable.

One amendment would help prevent people from avoiding U.S. sanctions against Iran. It would give the secretary of the Treasury the authority to sanction any financial institution operating outside the U.S. for sanction-able trades that use the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges loophole.

Another amendment would require the U.S. Treasury Department to regularly report to Congress any sanctions waivers allowing transactions between financial institutions and targeted individuals.

The third amendment would require the Department of Defense to report to Congress information about threats posed by the U.S. backing the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces and other Iranian-backed militias.

Steil's fourth amendment would require the Treasury Department to issue a report to Congress about the status of U.S. and UN sanctions against the Taliban, including any gaps in current sanctions.

Steil's fifth and final amendment would require the executive branch to issue a report to Congress that describes any financial benefits that the Assad regime in Syria would get for allowing the export of gas into Lebanon through the Arab Gas Pipeline.

Steil also cosponsored an amendment that would create a human trafficking coordinator position at the Treasury Department.

See more [here](#).

— U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher, R-Allouez, in a House floor speech also voiced his support for new changes in the NDAA.

He said he especially supports the changes because they restore funding for shipbuilding, procurement, missile defense and other areas he says will help improve the U.S. defense effort. Gallagher added he supports raising the base pay for troops by 2.7 percent because the raise shows he and others on the House Armed Services Committee's Subcommittee on Military Personnel are committed to improving the lives of soldiers and their families.

Gallagher praised the committee's work moving the measure forward.

"This process remains some of the most gratifying work that we do in Congress and a testament to the way in which this institution can work when we put our minds to it," he said.

The bill would also prohibit the Department of Defense from using money to conduct biomedical research in China, which he says would help protect the U.S.

from the Chinese Communist Party and COVID-19.

However, there has been no evidence that the CCP weaponized COVID-19.

See the [release](#).

— U.S. Rep. Scott Fitzgerald criticized President Joe Biden's and Vice President Kamala Harris' handling of crises at the southern border.

“While VP Harris continues to ‘address the root causes’ of this crisis, national security and humanitarian concerns have worsened to new lows we didn’t even imagine possible,” Fitzgerald said in a tweeted statement. “When will the President take this issue seriously?”

He also accused the Biden administration of giving “preferential treatment” to migrants. He said migrants who travel by land to the U.S. will be exempt from the White House’s vaccination requirement for all international travelers coming to the U.S. that will go into effect in November.

Fitzgerald additionally criticized Congressional Democrats for their actions after Senate Parliamentarian Elizabeth MacDonough ruled that they cannot include a pathway to citizenship for millions of undocumented immigrants in their \$3.5 trillion reconciliation bill.

“Instead of convening to address the crisis at our southern border, Democrats wasted our time last week at a @JudiciaryGOP markup on immigration proposals that have been ruled out by the Senate parliamentarian,” Fitzgerald tweeted. “Another missed opportunity to find solutions.”

See more [here](#).

— U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman in a floor speech also slammed Biden and Harris for their handling of the southern border.

The Glenbeulah Republican said the White House needs to increase the size of the Border Patrol to deal with the latest surge of Haitians, which he says is only increasing tensions over the 200,000 Border Patrol encounters per month for the

last two. Grothman singled out drug cartels as the biggest issue at the border.

Watch the floor [speech](#).

— U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin filed a brief in the case of Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization with 47 other Democrats in the Senate and 188 in the House of Representatives.

That case is a challenge from a Mississippi abortion provider against the state’s law banning all abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy with no exceptions for rape or incest and narrow exceptions for medical emergencies and severe fetal abnormality.

The brief urges the U.S. Supreme Court to uphold Roe v. Wade and protect abortion care, which they say is a constitutional right.

“Respect for precedent — a fundamental principle that is essential to our legal system, the legitimacy of judicial and legislative institutions, and the rule of law — compels affirmance of the decision below,” the lawmakers wrote.

Read the brief [here](#).

— U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore said the Ways and Means Committee spent many “grueling hours” marking up the Build Back Better Act.

“We focused on tax fairness,” Moore told MSNBC. “Just being more fair and more progressive.”

Moore added that she thinks Democrats have “made the case” for expanding Medicare in the 12 states, including Wisconsin, that have not done so.

“What’s going to enable us to overcome these challenges... is really the overwhelming public support that we’re feeling for things like providing dental and vision and hearing to Medicare patients,” Moore said, adding that it’s important to ask the wealthy to pay their fair share without resenting them.

Watch the interview [here](#).

— U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan is working to pass a measure that would restore at least some benefits to veterans who were discharged under the Don’t

Ask, Don't Tell policy.

The Town of Vermont Dem in a release said the move would help bring justice to thousands of American troops who received less-than-honorable discharges because of their sexual orientations. He added those veterans honorably served their country and deserve to receive benefits entitled to veterans.

"It is past time that Congress and the Department of Defense correct past injustices by restoring benefits to all LGBTQIA+ service members who served our nation honorably."

See the Pocan [release](#).

— With a federal court already moving ahead on a redistricting trial, the state Supreme Court agreed to take original action in a case asking the justices to draw Wisconsin's legislative and congressional boundaries if Capitol leaders fail to reach a deal.

The 4-3 conservative majority didn't explain its rationale for taking the case at the request of the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty. But conservative Justice Rebecca Bradley wrote in a concurring opinion that the court taking the case sends a message to the federal court that the justices are prepared to wade into the dispute.

"If instead we chose to sit idly by, the federal courts would logically interpret our inaction as a sign that we would not act should the political branches reach an impasse," Bradley wrote. "As a matter of comity, we owe the federal courts an answer on how we plan to proceed, and we furnish that answer by granting this petition."

See more [here](#).

- Polling paid for by Mandela Barnes' campaign shows the Dem candidate tied with GOP U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, according to a memo shared with WisPolitics.com.

The survey found Barnes and Johnson tied among likely voters at 43 percent each.

According to a polling memo from Barnes' campaign, he had a net favorability of plus-2. Meanwhile, 40 percent of voters had a favorable impression of Johnson, R-

Oshkosh, while 41 percent had an unfavorable one.

Among Barnes' Dem rivals, 11 percent had a favorable impression of Godlewski, while 23 percent had an unfavorable one. Alex Lasry, who's on leave from his job with the Milwaukee Bucks, had a 14-21 split.

See more [here](#).

— Two state lawmakers say pending federal legislation would accelerate efforts in Wisconsin to develop modern infrastructure such as electric vehicle charging stations and broadband internet, while creating thousands of new jobs in the state.

But a lack of Democratic unity among federal lawmakers and GOP opposition to the high cost of the bills could put the efforts in jeopardy. That's according to Lou Jacobson, a veteran D.C. journalist who joined a Biden administration official and state lawmakers for a virtual luncheon hosted by WisPolitics.com and WisBusiness.com.

"It's basically a real cluster right now," Jacobson said. "You have these two bills: the bipartisan infrastructure bill and the reconciliation bill, which has some of the softer sorts of infrastructure in it, but at the same time you also have spending set to run out in a couple days, and you also have the debt ceiling, which is going to lapse very soon."

See more [here](#).

— Former Supreme Court Justice Michael Gableman says his probe of the 2020 election for the state Assembly is not about challenging the results.

But he said in a new video the probe is about holding public officials accountable to the public for their actions. He adds the burden is on those who ran the election and the for-profit interests that did work for them to demonstrate it was conducted with "fairness, inclusivity and accountability."

"The burden is not on the people to show in advance of an investigation that public officials and their contractors behaved dishonestly," Gableman said.

See more [here](#).

— U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan spokeswoman Caty Payette told WisPolitics.com she will be leaving her position in the Town of Vermont Dem's office to return to her home state.

She will be again working in the office of U.S. Rep. Tim Ryan, D-OH,.

Matthew Handverger will be taking over for Payette in roughly two weeks.

— Melanie Fonder Kaye, who served as an aide to Dem Gov. Jim Doyle, has been named deputy assistant to the secretary for Strategic Engagement with the U.S. Defense Department.

She had been running her own communications firm MFK Strategies after working as communications director to then-second lady Jill Biden during the Obama administration.

Posts of the week

Happy Wisconsin Brandy Old Fashioned Day!

Brandy sweet for me. Cheers! ☺☺ <https://t.co/fTemuSTpCY>

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

Today is World Alzheimer's Day. Earlier this month, I joined friends in Waukesha to raise awareness about this devastating disease. We need to come together, find a cure, and end this terrible disease.

[#WorldAlzheimersDay2021](#) pic.twitter.com/qHI3qo1Fwh

— Bryan Steil (@RepBryanSteil) [September 22, 2021](#)

Such wonderful news that so many prayers were answered, and State Senator Andre Jacque left the hospital today. He and his family remain in all our prayers for a full recovery.

— Senator Ron Johnson (@SenRonJohnson) [September 21, 2021](#)

There is nothing dishonorable about serving your nation as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

On the anniversary of the repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,' I'm reintroducing my bill to [#RestoreHonor](#) to those who were dishonorably discharged because of their sexual orientation. pic.twitter.com/GLfPfrvHj6

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

Happy 60th Anniversary to the Peace Corps! Today we thank the more than 240,000 citizens, including over 6,000 Wisconsinites, who have volunteered and served our nation since 1961. <https://t.co/QsHixGQ4I2>

— Archive: Rep. Ron Kind (@RepRonKind) [September 22, 2021](#)

Happy Birthday to the [@usairforce](#)! pic.twitter.com/rV7bxYu7yH

— Bryan Steil (@RepBryanSteil) [September 18, 2021](#)

ICYMI

[Port Washington Post Office renamed in honor of World War II veteran Joe Demler](#)

[Key House Republicans Balk At Saving \\$1.2 Trillion Infrastructure Bill From Progressive Boycott](#)

[Nominations Sought for First District Veteran Honor](#)

[Democrats' big bill faces a cliff-filled future - NBC News](#)

[Rep. Gwen Moore Doesn't Want People to "Resent" the Rich](#)

[Congressman Tom Tiffany Writes Secretary Of State About Child Brides](#)

[Sen. Johnson letter demands DHS Sec. Mayorkas reveal how many migrants released into the US](#)

[Cap Times Idea Fest: Rioters were 'moments away' from Sen. Tammy Baldwin during insurrection](#)