

DC Wrap: Pocan says his new measure would help worldwide vaccination rates; Delegation thoughts on Afghanistan

Posted on Thursday, Aug 19, 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

"If this was the plan, then it was one of the dumbest plans in the history of our country. I can't help but think why we haven't seen a press briefing from @SecDef and @thejointstaff."

- U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher, R-Allouez, U.S. troops withdrawing and Afghan refugees evacuating from Afghanistan.

"As we await further details regarding this ongoing situation, I have full confidence in our outstanding service members at Fort McCoy and stand ready to work with local, state, and federal leaders to assist however possible."

- U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, D-La Crosse, on the thousands of refugees who could be headed for Wisconsin.

This week's news

— U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan says a measure he proposed to repurpose about 1 percent of the Pentagon budget for an international vaccination effort would help protect Americans from new COVID-19 variants.

The Town of Vermont Dem in a WisPolitics.com interview said the COVID Defense Act would help protect the American populus and economy because a higher worldwide vaccination rate would reduce the chance of new COVID-19 variants. The measure would take 1.3 percent from the Pentagon's budget and spend that \$9.6

billion on the COVAX vaccination effort, which helps bring vaccines to low-and-middle income countries.

Pocan said using those Pentagon dollars on an international vaccination effort would still help protect the country and make it more competitive with China in a more diplomatic way.

“But it certainly goes to the defense definition,” he said. “In my opinion it’s not just F-35s and private contractors that benefit the country, it’s really things like fighting climate change, things like fighting pandemics that we should also be putting our defense dollars into.”

Listen to the [interview](#).

— Also on the call he said the U.S. is obligated to help ensure Afghan citizens who helped U.S. forces are safe and can start new lives in America.

The Town of Vermont Dem in an interview with WisPolitics.com said many Afghans put their lives at risk on behalf of American interests and “we now have that obligation to help resettle these people.”

The 2nd CD Dem said President Biden followed through with the plan to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan because that was what needed to be done. But he also said the entire move to deploy troops to the area was doomed to result in problems from the start.

“You can’t go into a country like Afghanistan and expect to leave it with Dunkin Donuts and Disneylands,” he said. “And too often I think that that is what we try to do.”

Pocan also said he wishes the evacuation process began months ago to prevent at least some of the catastrophes witnessed during the withdrawal over the past few days.

“But of course it’s easy to say that as an armchair quarterback,” he added, referring to himself.

He said he hopes U.S. forces will not have to deploy again to Afghanistan or anywhere in the Middle East for at least the next 10 years. He said he wants to see

more diplomatic action to solve problems traditionally tackled using military force.

— And on infrastructure Pocan said the House will still likely start work on the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill and \$3.5 trillion reconciliation measure to follow in September.

He said the two would be some of the most significant measures to clear Congress during his time on the House.

— U.S. Rep. Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, said he was disappointed to hear President Joe Biden “shift blame” for the ongoing crisis in Afghanistan.

“President Biden stayed silent as the Taliban cemented power taking one capital after another,” Fitzgerald said in a statement. “President Biden continues to fail the American people and our partners who remain in a precarious situation overseas.”

See the [release](#).

— U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil, R-Janesville, accused Biden of mishandling the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, calling it a “tragic disaster.”

“President Biden’s absentee leadership, flawed decision making, and lack of a thoughtful plan for withdrawal from the region created this crisis,” Steil said in a statement. “President Biden’s own words show how badly he misjudged the situation.”

See the [release](#).

— U.S. Rep. Tom Tiffany said he is “deeply disturbed” by the process that could bring thousands of Afghan refugees to Fort McCoy.

The Minocqua Republican in a statement said he’s concerned many of those refugees do not have valid visas or proper identification documents. Tiffany blasted the Biden administration for what he calls a “ready-fire-aim” plan to evacuate the refugees. He said President Biden should transport the refugees to another country for vetting before bringing them to Wisconsin or anywhere else in the country.

Meanwhile, 3rd CD GOP candidate Derrick Van Orden, a former Navy Seal who served in Afghanistan, said several questions should be answered before any refugees are allowed into Wisconsin. That includes ensuring foreign nationals

allowed in were allies to the U.S. and what will be done with anyone found to have worked with the Taliban. Fort McCoy is in the 3rd CD.

See more [here](#).

— U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, D-La Crosse, tweeted out the need for us to help our Afghan partners who served alongside U.S. troops. According to Kind, every effort must be made to ensure their safety.

“As we await further details regarding this ongoing situation, I have full confidence in our outstanding service members at Fort McCoy and stand ready to work with local, state, and federal leaders to assist however possible,” Kind said in a tweet.

See the [release](#).

— U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman, R-Glenbeulah, said he was not surprised by the Taliban’s quick takeover of Afghanistan despite 20 years of American intervention.

As a ranking member of the House Oversight Committee Subcommittee on National Security Grothman attended several meetings about Afghanistan over the past year. Grothman also said that he hoped we are able to protect interpreters who aided the U.S. from retaliation from the Taliban.

See the [release](#).

— U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan tweeted that he agreed with President Biden’s address Monday.

“Our mission in Afghanistan was not about nation building,” said Pocan. “Our current mission needs to be helping to evacuate the Afghani citizens and families who helped our troops.”

See the [tweet](#).

— U.S. Rep. Gallagher, R-Allouez, and a colleague sent a letter to the Biden administration asking what the plan was for Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover.

Gallagher said he is worried what implications the move will have for terror groups

in the region. “We request that you immediately provide Congress with your plan to prevent terror groups from using Afghanistan as a safe haven to recruit and train the next generation of terrorists,” said Gallagher. “We demand to know how and from where our ISR, counterterrorism, and conventional forces will be used to disrupt the formation for terrorist operations.”

See the [release](#).

— U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, joined 45 of her fellow senators in urging the Biden administration to protect and support Afghan women leaders who are now in danger with a Taliban government.

The bipartisan group of senators cited various reports of threats of violence against these women leaders as reasons the process needs to be expanded and expedited.

See the [release](#).

— U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, said he urges the Biden administration to reverse course in Afghanistan in a statement. According to Johnson, the consequences of leaving Afghanistan were obvious.

“Public executions, the subjugation of women and the flourishing of terrorist organizations will be depressing to witness,” he said.

See the [release](#).

— Dem U.S. Senate candidate Sarah Godlewski and her husband have assets worth between \$24.7 million and \$60.6 million, according to her financial disclosure statement.

Her filing also includes four investments that are described as worth more than \$1 million and held independently by her spouse, but doesn’t provide additional details. One is a solar plant in England, while another is the farmland next to the facility. The other two are corporate securities on the London stock exchange.

Godlewski’s campaign said Senate disclosure rules allow for those investments to be reported in that way instead of a range and declined to provide more details on their value.

See more [here](#).

— Godlewski listed nearly 600 assets on her financial disclosure statement.

That includes investments such as mutual funds and IRAs that include stocks ranging from Bank of America Corp. and Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. to Tesla Inc. and Amazon.

Prior to becoming state Treasurer, Godlewski and her husband Max Duckworth launched MaSa, a company that invests in renewable energy projects, start-ups and women-owned businesses. Duckworth is also a consultant with SOL Systems, which helps finance solar energy systems, and Energy Atlantica, which manages oil and natural gas assets of large commercial and industrial customers.

See more [here](#).

— Dem U.S. Senate candidate Alex Lasry is personally worth between at least \$61.4 million and more than \$80 million, according to a WisPolitics.com review of his financial disclosure statement.

More than \$50 million of that is Lasry's ownership stake in the Milwaukee Bucks, which is in a trust. The campaign says NBA ownership rules mean Lasry can't use his stake in the team to help finance his campaign.

On top of his personal holdings, Lasry is also a partner in a series of investments worth between \$82.2 million and \$192.1 million.

See more [here](#).

— Marc Lasry split his ownership shares in the Bucks equally among his five children and put them into trusts, Alex Lasry's campaign said.

Marc Lasry and Wes Edens led the group that purchased the team in 2014 for \$550 million from former U.S. Sen. Herb Kohl, D-Milwaukee.

Forbes estimates the team was worth more than \$1.6 billion as of February. Since then, the Bucks have won an NBA championship.

See more [here](#).

— Steven Olikara, who announced in late May he was exploring a bid for

U.S. Senate, formally entered the race.

Olikara, founder of the Millennial Action Project, joins an already crowded Dem field looking to challenge GOP U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, who hasn't said yet whether he will seek reelection next fall.

In an interview with WisPolitics.com ahead of his formal announcement, Olikara described himself as a "radical bridge builder" and vowed to bring a new approach to politics to the race.

See more [here](#).

— State Sen. Jeff Smith, D-Brunswick, tells WisPolitics.com he'll consider a bid for the 3rd CD next fall now that U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, D-La Crosse, has announced he won't seek another term.

Smith said he has no timeline to make a decision. He is up for reelection to his state Senate seat next fall and would have to forgo that to make a bid for the 3rd CD if he got in.

"Seriously, it's too early to close the door on anything. I want to serve wherever I feel I can be most effective," Smith said. "We'll just see how things fall in the coming months."

See more [here](#).

— A new ad slams U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson for opposing the For the People Act.

The 15-second digital ad also criticizes Johnson for working to help big donors instead of most of his constituents.

End Citizens United and Let America Vote Action Fund launched the ad as part of a \$250,000 buy that will run on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Google and connected TV in Wisconsin starting August 17.

"Ron Johnson won't bite the hand that feeds him," the narrator says. "He's taken millions in contributions from corporate interests, and voted against getting dark money out of politics."

Watch the [ad](#).

Posts of the week

During this difficult time, I want to remind our brave veterans, service members, and their loved ones that you are not alone. Help and support is available. <https://t.co/2aT2XuuZrC>

— Archive: Rep. Ron Kind (@RepRonKind) [August 18, 2021](#)

Great day touring the new Emergency Services Building for La Pointe and meeting Town Administrator, Michael Kuchta.

Highlight of the day: seeing the [#MadeInWI](#) wind sled!
<pic.twitter.com/540kIRIFkv>

— Sen. Tammy Baldwin (@SenatorBaldwin) [August 17, 2021](#)

Connor interned in my [#FDL](#) office this summer. Thanks for your help and good luck back at school! <pic.twitter.com/6KuBBOkVlj>

— Rep. Glenn Grothman (@RepGrothman) [August 17, 2021](#)

The Show Ski National Championship is taking place in Janesville Wisconsin today! Good luck to the Aqua Jays! <pic.twitter.com/VT3sKWvCvr>

— Bryan Steil (@RepBryanSteil) [August 15, 2021](#)

It really is notable that Leinie's survived the consolidation of the brewing industry. Most local brewers like Walters weren't as fortunate. There was always a case of Walters at Grandpa/Grandma's. Keep er brewing Leinie's!
<https://t.co/ejUmGnLz04>

— Tom Tiffany (@TomTiffanyWI) [August 15, 2021](#)

Happy birthday to my dear friend and colleague, [@repmarkpocan](#)!

— Rep. Gwen Moore (@RepGwenMoore) [August 14, 2021](#)

ICYMI

[Sen. Baldwin touts infrastructure bill, calls it 'long overdue'](#)

[Head of GOP Senate campaign arm suggests U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson will run for reelection next year](#)

[US Rep. Steil brings flag from US Capitol to Brighton War Memorial](#)

[Democrat unveils bill to redirect Pentagon spending toward global vaccination efforts](#)