

DC Wrap: Final-five voting could bring more accountability to Congress, Democracy Found head says

Posted on Thursday, Apr 22, 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

"No more Black men or women must lose their lives. Our work is far from over, we must continue fighting for change outside of that courtroom to improve our communities."

- *U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore, D-Milwaukee, arguing more progress is needed on racial disparities after a murder verdict against a former Minneapolis police officer in the George Floyd case.*

"Maxine Waters is a sitting Member of Congress who decided to use her platform to encourage protesters in Minnesota to 'get more confrontational.' This is appalling, and the reason I voted to censure her."

- *U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman, R-Glenbeulah, in a tweet. The censure motion failed.*

This week's news

— Final-five voting would improve election processes, especially in congressional elections, says the head of Democracy Found.

Executive Director Sara Eskrich tells WisPolitics.com ranked-choice voting formats such as final-five voting are steps toward better public representation. And she says critics who argue the election reform proposals complicate the process for voters are wrong.

She argues ranked-choice voting without constraints can be slightly confusing if there are too many candidates to rank.

But voters don't have a hard time ranking a few candidates, she says.

Her group is advocating for state legislation that would turn congressional elections into final-five elections.

That process would mean partisan primary elections are replaced with a single primary election where voters can pick their one preferred candidate, regardless of party affiliation. The top five vote-getters in the primary would move on to the general election.

Voters would then rank those five primary winners on their general election ballots, with the candidate who earned the most first-choice votes emerging on top.

If the first-choice vote-getter in the general election does not earn more than the 50 percent of votes they need to win, an instant runoff is triggered. The last-place candidate is eliminated and voters who had chosen that candidate as their top choice have their single vote transferred to their second choice.

The votes are tallied again and the process continues until one candidate gets over 50 percent of the votes.

Eskrich says the final-five process could help improve congressional approval ratings, too.

She argues the current primary election process creates a system where only a small percentage of voters end up with a preferred candidate. And final-five primaries would change that.

"So instead you go into your primary election as a voter and you don't have to pick whether you're going to vote in the Democratic primary or the Republican Primary," she says. "You see all the candidates on one ballot, and you vote for your favorite."

Watch the interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Ysij3WH4i4>

— GOP Congressmen from Wisconsin say the Green New Deal would be

“disastrous” and cost farmers money.

Mike Gallagher and Bryan Steil raised concerns over the bill’s potential negative impact on Wisconsin’s economy. They said it would hurt farmers, manufacturing businesses and other industries. And they added the Biden administration should focus on creating jobs without legislating out of existence current jobs.

Gallagher, of Allouez, said the bill has no chance of passing in its second round through Congress. He said the legislation is “an absolute disaster that should be a non-starter in Congress, not a call to action.”

Steil, of Janesville, added the bill was an attempt at a “federal takeover of our economy.”

“We must focus on creating jobs and reopening our economy, not imposing unrealistic, anti-agriculture, anti-job mandates that spend trillions of dollars we don’t have,” Steil said.

U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, has voiced his strong support for the legislation in the past, arguing the bill’s environmental focus is important to combat climate change and protect the Earth for future generations.

See the Gallagher [release](#).

See the Steil [release](#).

— U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, introduced a bill that would bring Medicare coverage to people as young as 50.

The Medicare at 50 Act would give people between the ages of 50 and 64 years the option to buy into Medicare. And Baldwin, a Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee member, said the act would give millions of Americans quality healthcare coverage while lowering health care costs.

“This reform will provide a high quality option for people to buy into Medicare and get the health care coverage they need at a price they can afford,” Baldwin said.

The act has support from more than a dozen Dem Senate colleagues.

See the [release](#).

— Wisconsin's top Dems are hailing the guilty verdicts against former cop Derek Chauvin for the murder of George Floyd.

U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore, the only Black member of Congress from Wisconsin, said she hoped the verdicts would give Floyd's family "some comfort." She also said more work needs to be done reforming the criminal justice system.

Wisconsin's Republicans largely stayed silent on the verdict. But U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil, R-Janesville, over Twitter criticized his Dem colleague Maxine Waters for comments over the weekend calling for more "confrontational" action if Chauvin were acquitted.

See more [here](#).

— Wisconsin House Dems joined their colleagues in a 216-210 vote along party lines to table a measure to censure U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters.

The California Dem ahead of the Chauvin trial said protesters should "get more confrontational" if the former Minnesota police officer were acquitted.

She was in Brooklyn Center, Minn., supporting those who turned out to protest the recent police killing of local man Daunte Wright.

See more [here](#).

— More than half of the \$830,000 U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher raised during the first quarter of the year was thanks to a transfer he made into his personal campaign account from a joint fundraising committee, a WisPolitics.com review shows.

Even without the \$425,522 from Team Gallagher, the Green Bay Republican was still the best fundraiser in the delegation. His FEC report showed him pulling in

\$283,271 from individual donors and another \$121,250 from PACs.

The transfer is an example of the fundraising operation that Gallagher has been building. Though he easily won reelection to northeastern Wisconsin's 8th CD in 2020, pulling 64.2 percent of the vote, he's also been frequently mentioned as a possible candidate for the U.S. Senate if fellow Republican Ron Johnson, of Oshkosh, opts against seeking a third term next fall.

See more [here](#).

— State Treasurer Sarah Godlewski, a Dem U.S. Senate candidate, called on Congress to pass legislation offering paid family and medical leave.

Godlewski, along with 17 other state treasurers, in an open letter to congressional leadership said passing paid family leave as part of President Biden's American Families Plan would help hundreds of thousands of workers hit hard during the pandemic. The letter goes on to say many working families had to "face an impossible choice between working and potentially spreading COVID-19."

"As we recover from COVID-19 and prepare for the next pandemic, it is clear that a federal public policy solution for paid leave is necessary to help employers weather the pandemic storm, and for an eventual economic recovery," the letter read.

See more [here](#).

— The Democratic National Committee has launched a new TV ad in the Green Bay market that declares President Biden is "delivering" and "getting America back on track."

The DNC said the ad will run for a week, but declined to provide additional details, including how much it's spending on the ad. The spot comes after the national party has promoted the latest COVID stimulus Biden signed via a number of avenues: a billboard in Milwaukee; digital ads thanking Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, for her vote; and a separate TV spot praising Biden in the Milwaukee market.

The latest TV ad touts "3 million shots a day," 150 million stimulus checks and a

million jobs created, which the narrator says is the most in the first two months of “any administration in history.”

See more [here](#)

— The conservative American Action Network, which has targeted U.S. Rep. Ron Kind on a range of issues so far this year, is now hitting the La Crosse Dem for calls from some liberals to expand the U.S. Supreme Court.

The group said it is targeting 14 House districts with the digital ads as part of a five-figure spend.

The version targeting Kind reads, “Liberals are trying to steal the Supreme Court.” It urges viewers to tell House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Kind to oppose the bill.

See the [ad](#).

— Dems and Republicans in an Assembly Committee on Constitution and Ethics committee expressed skepticism over a joint resolution calling for term limits in Congress.

Under the joint resolution, the state Legislature would apply to Congress under Article V of the U.S. Constitution for a convention “for the limited purpose” of establishing term limits for federal lawmakers.

A similar resolution last session passed the Assembly nearly along party lines but died in the Senate without a vote.

See more [here](#).

— A Minneapolis attorney facing discipline for a failed lawsuit he filed to overturn Wisconsin’s presidential election results is asking an appeals court to overturn the case against him.

Erick Kaardal argued in a filing with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit that Judge James Boasberg ignored the evidence he presented to support the assertion that state legislatures have to certify presidential electors before they're counted.

In referring Kaardal to the Committee on Grievances last month, Boasberg wrote he was unpersuaded by the "flimsiness of the underlying basis for the suit." What's more, he wrote Kaardal's response spent more than 70 pages on "irrelevant allegations of fraud" and was nothing more than "political grandstanding."

See more [here](#).

— U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson is pledging to uphold the congressional earmark ban.

The Oshkosh Republican signed a letter pledging his commitment to keep the congressional ban on earmarks. He added his signature alongside 13 fellow GOP senators.

The letter states they "will not participate in an inherently wasteful spending practice that is prone to serious abuse."

House Dems announced in February they would bring back earmarks, and House Republicans matched their decision in March. This overturned a ban in the House that had been in effect since 2011. U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher, R-Allouez, voted against his party's decision to bring back the ban.

See more [here](#).

— Baldwin and Johnson agreed on only one confirmation vote of Biden nominees, with all three passing.

The two joined their colleagues in the 98-2 vote confirming Lisa Monaco as the next deputy attorney general. Monaco formerly served as Homeland Security advisor under the Obama administration.

See the [roll call](#).

— Johnson voted against confirming Vanita Gupta as next associate attorney general.

He also voted against confirming Gary Gensler as a new member of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

However, Baldwin joined the party-line 51-49 vote to confirm Gupta and the 54-45 vote to confirm Gensler.

See the Gupta [roll call](#).

See the Gensler [roll call](#).

Posts of the week

The Investing in Innovation Initiative focuses on four key goals:

- Inspiring innovation and entrepreneurship
- Increasing Main Street access to investment opportunities
- Improving corporate governance
- Innovating to enhance our country's international competitiveness
pic.twitter.com/dCrDrFr0c5

— Bryan Steil (@RepBryanSteil) [April 21, 2021](#)

Congrats [@BadgerVB](#), #1 gets it done! [#GoBadgers](#)

<https://t.co/QQAbOsJDyy>

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

Today is the start of [#NationalVolunteerWeek](#)! I know the value of volunteering. I was a VISTA volunteer & helped start a community credit union from scratch that's still making loans in Milwaukee. I thank our country's volunteers for their selfless commitment to serving others.

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

It's [#NationalParkWeek](#)! Many of my favorite memories center around the trips Tawni, the boys, and I take to our National Parks & spending time outdoors as a family. As co-chair of the National Parks Caucus, I'm committed to protecting our lands for future generations to enjoy.
<pic.twitter.com/AiuZ7XS8uy>

— Archive: Rep. Ron Kind (@RepRonKind) [April 19, 2021](#)

Celebrating [#NationalParkWeek](#) is special in Wisconsin. It's the perfect time of year to get outside and explore all our beautiful state has to offer.
<pic.twitter.com/rsGPafXGbJ>

— Rep. Glenn Grothman (@RepGrothman) [April 21, 2021](#)

ICYMI

[Democrats' No. 1 Target for 2022](#)

[Ron Johnson Admits That He Didn't Think Wisconsin Voters Should Have Been Given Stimulus Checks](#)

[Rep. Ron Kind talks flood mitigation efforts with La Crosse officials](#)

[US Rep. Moore Hopeful Biden's Infrastructure Plan Will Help Solve Milwaukee's Lead Pipe Problem](#)

[Dodge County Republicans gear up for Democrats](#)

[House green lights new State Department cyber bureau](#)

[New Domains: Amazon's Twitter War Against Rep. Pocan And Unions](#)