

DC Wrap: Republicans, Dems clash over Afghan refugee vetting

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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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Quotes of the week

"America's longest war is finally over. As we pause to reflect on the thousands of lives we've lost over these 20 years, let's also commit to stopping endless wars. Never again."

- U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, [on](#) the last flight of U.S. troops out of Kabul airport in Afghanistan.

"It is our American duty to protect the interpreters that risked their lives to aid our mission in Afghanistan. But, it's important that Afghan refugees are properly vetted."

- U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman, R-Glenbeulah, [on](#) Afghan refugees arriving at Fort McCoy.

This week's news

— Gov. Tony Evers clashed with congressional Republicans over Afghan refugees arriving at Fort McCoy, calling their concerns "dog-whistle crap."

The RNC criticized his "victory lap" press conference. And Wisconsin's GOP members of Congress who visited Fort McCoy called for additional vetting processes for Afghan refugees arriving there.

U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson said he believes the majority of refugees will come to the base "for the right season," but remains worried "if somebody slips through and commits an act of terror." He added that he wants to "fully integrate" Afghans who fought with U.S. soldiers into American society.

U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil echoed Johnson's concerns, noting that servicemembers processing refugees might need additional resources.

"America stands ready to assist those who truly helped our soldiers carry out their mission, but we must have clear safeguards and processes in place to ensure that the disasters seen abroad are not brought to our shores," Steil said in a statement. "I have the utmost confidence in the men and women who serve our country at Fort McCoy, but we need to ensure that they have the tools to succeed."

U.S. Rep. Scott Fitzgerald called on Congress to pass legislation to fix potential housing problems for refugees, noting that long processing wait times could jeopardize Wisconsinites' health and security.

Evers said during a press conference Monday that those GOP lawmakers are either misinformed about the vetting process or trying to label children and Afghans who have aided U.S. forces as terrorists.

"They like to raise that specter of maybe some of those little kids I saw at Fort McCoy are terrorists or maybe those adults that I saw at Fort McCoy who were working hand in hand with our soldiers and airmen in Afghanistan, somehow they are terrorists even though they've been vetted four or five or six times even before they left Afghanistan," Evers said, adding that he is confident in the existing vetting process.

But Republicans also called out Evers for holding a press conference highlighting Dems' successes since the election of President Biden shortly after 13 U.S. soldiers were killed in suicide bombings that also left at least 160 Afghans dead.

"Wisconsin Democrats and the DNC should be ashamed of themselves for taking an undeserved victory lap after Joe Biden's botched withdrawal from Afghanistan cost 13 service members their lives," said RNC Spokesperson Preya Samsundar.

Johnson and Steil also cast blame for service members' deaths on the Biden administration's handling of evacuation efforts in Afghanistan. All U.S. troops have left Afghanistan.

"It did not have to happen this way," Steil said of the deadly bombings. "The fundamental misunderstanding of the situation on the ground in Afghanistan, a faulty plan for withdrawal, and poor strategic decision making in Washington put

our troops in harm's way.”

— Dem Wisconsin Congress members say they are welcoming Afghans as a continuation of Wisconsin's history of helping refugees.

U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore told WisPolitics.com in an email she is happy to see the refugees headed to Fort McCoy.

“Our state has a proud history of welcoming refugees and for decades, they have enriched our communities,” she said. “Our service members are working tirelessly to settle Afghan refugees and I am fully confident in their ability to perform these duties.”

The Milwaukee Dem also said she is happy to see her Republican colleagues witnessed those efforts in person.

Dem colleague Mark Pocan tweeted his sympathy for families of the 13 U.S. troops who lost their lives in a bombing near the Kabul airport. But he said evacuation efforts must continue.

“We need to continue to do everything we can to evacuate Americans and Afghan refugees as quickly and safely as possible,” the Town of Vermont native said.

U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin in a statement added she is also proud to host the refugees in Wisconsin, but the war in Afghanistan needed to end and future deployments must be carefully considered.

“Over the last 20 years, presidents of both parties made mistakes in Afghanistan—and the lasting impacts of this war will be felt for generations—but ending this conflict was the right decision,” she said. “If the end of this conflict has taught us anything, it is that Congress and policymakers must understand the full weight of the decision to go to war.”

See the Pocan [tweet](#).

See the Baldwin [statement](#).

— U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson slammed doctors and media reports he says wrongly accused him of advocating for people to take Ivermectin to prevent themselves from contracting COVID-19.

The Oshkosh Republican in a statement yesterday said he has never advocated for any specific drugs to fight COVID-19, remaining “agnostic” in his recommendations. Johnson said actions by those who accuse him of recommending the veterinary version of ivermectin amount to “intentional slander and defamation.”

Dems have criticized Johnson for recommending the drug, which is commonly used by veterinarians to treat parasites.

The Food and Drug Administration tweeted its response to those buying ivermectin in an attempt to fight the coronavirus.

“You are not a horse,” the FDA said. “You are not a cow. Seriously, y’all. Stop it.”

Johnson pressed for a focus on early treatment.

“Unfortunately, because of the dereliction of duty of our federal health agencies and too many in the medical community ignoring early treatment, some Americans have resorted to obtaining veterinary ivermectin out of desperation,” he said. “The solution lies in developing and offering early treatment of Covid, not in slandering and defaming those of us who strongly advocate for this common sense approach to saving lives.”

Ivermectin tablets are approved for human use to treat some parasitic worms, according to the FDA.

See the [release](#).

See the [tweet](#).

See the FDA ivermectin [FAQ](#).

— U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore called for federal legislation to extend the eviction moratorium after the U.S. Supreme Court ended it.

“Following their familiar pattern, GOP justices hand down another partisan decision,” Moore said in a statement. “This callous decision will cause housing insecurity for families as COVID-19 cases and tragically, deaths, continue to increase in our country.”

She also asked the Biden administration to ease federal rental assistance program requirements to distribute funding more quickly.

See more [here](#).

— U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin visited Broadwind Heavy Fabrications, one of the largest employers in Manitowoc.

Baldwin said the U.S. Senate’s bipartisan infrastructure bill will help companies like Broadwind expand and become a partner in rebuilding infrastructure nationwide. She also toured the facilities and spoke about clean energy tax incentives and efforts to combat the climate crisis with renewable energy.

See more [here](#).

— Wisconsin’s five GOP House members want to intervene in one of the redistricting suits filed in federal court.

The filing notes all five are “probable candidates for re-election” to the House in 2022 and have a substantial interest in establishing the boundaries of their districts given their intent to run next year.

The three-judge panel overseeing the case has already granted a motion allowing the GOP-controlled state Legislature to intervene in the suit that was filed against the Wisconsin Elections Commission. The five House members argue they have unique interests that aren’t represented by the Legislature or Elections Commission.

See more [here](#).

— The window to submit new legislative and congressional boundaries to the state Legislature is now open.

GOP legislative leaders announced the effort last month. The window to submit maps will run through Oct. 15.

Gov. Tony Evers' People's Maps Commission has offered a similar opportunity.

See the Legislature's [website](#).

— West Allis resident David Mish pleaded guilty during a D.C. court hearing on his participation in the Jan. 6 violence at the U.S. Capitol.

Mish pleaded guilty to parading, demonstrating or picketing in a Capitol building for entering the Capitol Jan. 6 alongside others who were shouting chants to "breach the building." Mish is scheduled to attend a Nov. 18 pre-sentencing hearing at 1 p.m. via Zoom, his lawyer said.

— During a Milwaukee news conference, Evers announced he will use \$25 million in ARPA Funds to boost transit funding for the state's two largest communities.

The funding comes on the heels of the GOP-controlled Legislature cutting state money for transit in Milwaukee County and Madison by \$41.3 million. Republicans argued the cut was more than offset by federal money the cities were in line to receive from various COVID-19 packages.

But Evers said the cut was short-sighted and made it harder for people to get to work and school. Evers said his administration "did as much as we could" to backfill the cut.

See more [here](#).

— Rachel VerVelde, who had been working as chief of staff for U.S. Rep.

Glenn Grothman, R-Glenbeulah, is leaving to join Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce.

She will be director of Workforce, Education & Employment Policy, according to the group. Her first day will be Sept. 13.

Posts of the week

Thank you to everyone who came out to my town hall meetings in [#Grafton](#) and [#TwoRivers](#) yesterday! I enjoyed engaging in conversation and answering your questions. pic.twitter.com/enBQfTVfyr

— Rep. Glenn Grothman (@RepGrothman) [September 1, 2021](#)

Always good to come back to Fincantieri Bay Shipbuilding in Sturgeon Bay, a great [#MadeinWI](#) shipbuilder whose workers support our national defense and our Wisconsin economy. pic.twitter.com/JD18VQ4Z4a

— Sen. Tammy Baldwin (@SenatorBaldwin) [September 1, 2021](#)

Congratulations, Hailey! Way to make SE [#Wisconsin](#) proud. <https://t.co/FldZOk9bxV>

— Rep. Scott Fitzgerald (@RepFitzgerald) [August 30, 2021](#)

Rep. Gallagher shares a message for veterans who may be struggling in

light of the tragedy in Afghanistan and provides some of the resources available to them if they need help, including:

NEW Battalion: newbravocompany@gmail.com

Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255 & Press 1
pic.twitter.com/DVgAH9Cyiw

— Rep. Gallagher Press Office (@RepGallagher) [August 28, 2021](#)

Today is Women's Equality Day, and I'm highlighting some of the unsung heroes of WWII - the Women's Army Corps (WAC) Six Triple Eight Battalion, which is the only all-black, all-female WAC battalion to serve overseas during the war. pic.twitter.com/EWpRGy4gsI

— Rep. Gwen Moore (@RepGwenMoore) [August 26, 2021](#)

Extra proud to be a Badger today! Congrats to [@UWMadison](#) on placing *FIRST* among all public universities across the nation. ☐☐☐
<https://t.co/smydpwBlJu>

— Rep. Mark Pocan (@RepMarkPocan) [August 30, 2021](#)

ICYMI

[Sen. Ron Johnson Sounds Like A 2022 Candidate, But Says He Isn't One Yet](#)

[Sen. Ron Johnson: 'Nothing obviously skewed' about 2020 election results](#)

[Wisconsin Marine felt impact from blast at Kabul airport](#)

[Wisconsin Conservation Voters have a message for Rep. Ron Kind](#)

[House liberals call for reduced military spending in wake of Afghanistan withdrawal](#)

[Sec. of Education Miguel Cardona and Sen. Tammy Baldwin visit NWTC to talk affordable college and 'Build Back Better Agenda'](#)

[Wisconsin Republicans Rebecca Kleefisch, Ron Johnson, Bryan Steil and others kick off 2022 campaign season](#)

[Wisconsin Congressmen tour Fort McCoy as refugees come in](#)