

DC Wrap: House Dems will attempt to push through with pandemic relief package

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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

"Plainclothes militants, agents provocateurs, fake Trump protesters and then a disciplined uniformed column of attackers. I think these are the people that probably planned this."

- U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, during a Senate oversight hearing on security shortfalls at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6.

"I want to make one thing clear: 'provocateurs' did not storm the Capitol. They were not 'fake Trump protestors.' The mood on January 6th was not 'festive.' That is disinformation."

- U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., responding to Johnson.

"More than 70 years ago, Lt. Col. Megellas proudly represented the United States with a display of heroism in the face of one of WWII's bloodiest battles that is deserving of our nation's highest military honor. He saved many lives and stopped the advance of enemy troops to protect his brothers in arms without regard to his own safety. Luckily, Maggie survived the ordeal and so did many American soldiers who would not have if Maggie was absent."

- U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman, R-Glenbeulah, on why Lt. Col. Megellas, a Fond Du Lac native and U.S. Army 82nd Airborne veteran of the WWII European theater, should receive the Medal of Honor. His biography is called "All the Way to Berlin: A Paratrooper at War in Europe."

"My constituents, along with millions around the country, rely on the Postal Service for timely and secure mail delivery to receive important medication, paychecks, and

bills. I have received numerous calls to my office from constituents who are facing troubling issues, like late paychecks because of mail delays.”

– U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore, D-Milwaukee, on delays in a letter to district manager of the Lakeland District U.S. Postal Service, which covers most of Wisconsin and some of Illinois.

This week's news

— House Dems tomorrow will attempt to push through a wall of GOP opposition and OK President Biden's \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief bill.

The House of Representatives plans a vote tomorrow on Biden's COVID-19 relief package, which includes temporary expansion of unemployment insurance benefits, a \$15-an-hour minimum wage hike, \$1,400 direct relief checks and billions of dollars for COVID-19 vaccination programs and K-12 schools. While the bill has passed several House committees, many Republicans have criticized the bill for broad spending and provisions that will kill jobs.

Dems will need to pull in nearly every vote they have to take advantage of their slim 10-vote advantage in the House in order to pass it on to the evenly split Senate.

U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, told WisPolitics.com she will support the bill if it passes the House.

“After the House does its job, we need [to] pass legislation in the Senate that funds vaccine distribution and provides more support to Wisconsin workers, businesses, schools, and local governments throughout Wisconsin.”

The bill passed the House Budget Committee nearly along party lines in a 19-6 vote. U.S.Rep. Lloyd Doggett, D-Texas, Dem voted no, but his aide told AP reporters later in the day he misunderstood the vote.

The bill also includes provisions that would reduce healthcare premiums, stabilize some pensions, allow families to claim up to half their child care expenses on federal taxes and bump the Child Tax Credit up to \$3,000 per child and make it fully refundable. It would also increase tax breaks for workers without children through earned income tax credits.

U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, D-La Crosse, voted in favor of the bill in the House Ways and Means Committee. In a statement, he said quick passage of the bill is important to provide needed relief to Americans and reduce the potential number of lives lost in the future.

"The time for action is now and Wisconsinites need to know help is on the way. This COVID-19 relief package takes meaningful steps to support struggling families, end the public health emergency, and get our economy back on track. There's no time to waste – Wisconsin families need relief now," Kind said.

U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore, D-Milwaukee, voted in favor alongside Kind in the Ways and Means Committee. She said in a statement the issues caused by the pandemic need "a bold response."

"The crises resulting from the pandemic, extend far, impacting communities and small businesses causing food, job, health and economic insecurity for millions. Now is not the time for half measures; our nation is still struggling and we need a bold response," she said.

However, Republicans such as U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil, R-Janesville, say the bill would kill jobs and Americans don't need the kind of broad relief offered in Biden's package.

Steil in a tweet said Biden and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi are "ramming" the bill through, adding "We need targeted relief, not a partisan wish list."

He also said in a joint statement with U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman, R-Glenbeulah, that a provision in the bill would remove a section of the Fair Labor Standards Act and cost thousands of Wisconsinites with disabilities their jobs.

"If Section 14(c) is eliminated, which would likely result in the closure of organizations like RCS Empowers in Sheboygan and Northwoods Inc. in Portage, it will be very difficult for these wonderful folks to find meaningful employment," Grothman, member of the House Budget Committee, said.

That section allows companies to pay employees with disabilities less than the federal minimum wage if the companies receive a certificate from the Wage and Hour Division.

See the Kind [release](#).

See the Steil, Grothman [release](#).

See Steil's [tweet](#).

— GOP U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, knocked for spreading conspiracy theories on the Jan. 6 Capitol riots, is now asking Senate leaders specific questions.

The Oshkosh Republican in a letter yesterday asked Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Chairman Gary Peters, D-Mich., Ranking Member Rob Portman, R-Ohio, Senate Committee on Rules and Administration Chairwoman Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., and Ranking Member Roy Blunt, R-Mo., to answer more specific questions such as: Capitol Police officer Brian Sicknick's cause of death; the number of police officers who helped protect the Capitol; how many firearms were in the crowd; and how costly repairs to the Capitol will be.

"All security-related questions as well as details about the breach and violent actions must be addressed and fully explained," Johnson said.

The letter was sent after Johnson suggested in a hearing this week that the riots were caused by "fake Trump supporters" and instigated by riot police who shot tear gas at them.

See the [letter](#).

— Two days earlier, Johnson suggested agitators and police who shot tear gas at "fake Trump supporters" incited the crowd ahead of the Jan. 6 Capitol riots.

Johnson in Feb. 23 a Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee joint oversight hearing on security failures during the riots, also insisted "plainclothes militants" among others were the instigators, not the former president's backers. Johnson based some of his comments on a column published by "The Federalist" that he read during the hearing.

He added that Capitol riot police fired tear gas into the middle of a crowd of protesters instead of firing it at a group that was fighting near the front of the crowd, prompting a “mood” change that pushed the crowd to breach the Capitol.

See more [here](#).

— Those remarks come just a day after Johnson slammed the head of the Jan. 6 Capitol riot investigation for being “an extreme partisan.”

See more [here](#).

— Former House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Janesville, became a partner at the private equity firm Solamere Capital, the company announced.

The former chair of the House Budget and Ways and Means Committee said in a statement from the company he plans to use his experience as a leader in Congress to help Solamere Capital create jobs and build companies.

Tagg Romney, son of U.S. Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, is a co-founder of Solamere Capital.

“For two decades in Congress, I advocated for policies that would create jobs, increase economic growth, and support workers and businesses. I fought to improve free markets and expand the free enterprise system so more people could realize their version of the American Dream. Now, as a Partner at Solamere, I’m excited to put into practice the values that I have long preached,” Ryan said.

Solamere Capital co-founder Spencer Zwick announced in a statement yesterday Ryan will “bring new insights that will yield tangible results for our investors.”

— Baldwin is also supporting new immigration reform proposals launched in both Houses.

In a statement, the Madison Dem said the U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021, introduced as bicameral bills in the Senate and House of Representatives yesterday, is an important step towards fixing the “broken” immigration system.

The bills would make obtaining a visa or green card easier while improving border security and increasing assistance to Central American countries to decrease the number of asylum seekers. The bills would also incentivize increased wages for non-immigrants over immigrants and help keep immigrant families from being separated.

See the [statement](#).

— Baldwin also voiced support for Xavier Becerra as the next U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Baldwin said she supports Biden’s nomination of the California attorney general to the cabinet post in part because of his work on the Affordable Care Act.

See more [here](#).

— A bipartisan group of state lawmakers is circulating a bill that would establish a ranked-choice voting system for the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives.

Under the bill, voters could rank candidates by designating a first choice, a second choice and so on. If a candidate received a majority of first-choice preferences cast, the candidate would win. If no candidate met that threshold, the last-place candidate would be dropped from the count. Then the second-choice preferences of those who made that last-place candidate their first selection would then be added to the counts of the remaining candidates. The process would be repeated until someone had a majority.

— Baldwin yesterday was one of 11 lawmakers today who met in the Oval

Office with President Biden and Vice President Harris about U.S. supply chains.

According to the White House, the bipartisan group of lawmakers included six Republicans and five Dems.

See more [here](#).

— Johnson and Baldwin announced renewal of a commission to recommend nominees for vacant U.S. attorney and district judge positions for Wisconsin.

In a joint statement, the lawmakers said they have appointed six lawyers from the Wisconsin State Bar to join the Wisconsin Federal Nominating Commission, led by co-chairs Judge Charles N. Clevert Jr. and attorney Paul Swanson.

The commission will be responsible for nominating candidates to fill the vacant U.S. attorney positions in the Western and Eastern districts of Wisconsin, as well as a replacement for Judge William Griesbach, who's based in Green Bay and took senior status at the end of 2019.

It will be President Biden's first chance to appoint a judge to a Wisconsin bench since taking office.

See more [here](#).

— Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Alex Lasry said he will invest in his race, but will not self-fund.

Lasry, the son of Milwaukee Bucks co-owner Marc Lasry, a hedge fund billionaire, said he wants to "build a great grassroots campaign from the bottom up."

Lasry, in an interview that aired Sunday on "UpFront," also said he would not accept corporate PAC money. "UpFront" is produced in a partnership with WisPolitics.com.

Host Adrienne Pedersen asked Lasry — a Milwaukee Bucks executive who plans to take a leave of absence from the team for his campaign — how a New York native with a privileged lifestyle could represent Wisconsin residents.

Lasry said if elected he would be “someone who is actually going to be able to deliver results on their behalf.”

See more [here](#).

— Timothy O’Shea, the first assistant U.S. attorney for the Western District, will become acting U.S. attorney after Scott Blader’s resignation becomes official tomorrow.

Blader and Eastern District U.S. Attorney Matthew Krueger both announced earlier this month their plans to resign following a request from the Biden administration.

See more [here](#).

— Dem AG Josh Kaul is urging President Biden and Congress to cancel up to \$50,000 in student loans per student to help with the dramatic increase in education costs.

Kaul in a statement said that he, along with more than a dozen other attorneys general, signed a letter to Biden and Congress urging immediate student loan forgiveness of up to \$50,000 per borrower from the federal government.

See more [here](#).

— Opportunity Wisconsin has announced a third TV ad calling on Johnson to support stimulus checks in a COVID-19 stimulus bill now before Congress.

It’s the third ad as part of a \$1 million buy the liberal group has running across the

state. Opportunity Wisconsin said the new ad is running on broadcast and cable alongside the previous spots in Milwaukee, Green Bay, Madison and La Crosse.

See more [here](#).

— The conservative American Action Network is again targeting U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, D-La Crosse, this time over the COVID-19 stimulus bill now before Congress.

Kind's western Wisconsin seat is one of 11 House districts where the group is doing digital ads and phone calls over the bill. The group said the overall campaign is the mid-five figures.

The spot accuses liberals of "hijacking COVID relief" with a "blue state bailout," because it doesn't reopen schools and includes "tax \$ to illegal immigrants."

See more [here](#).

— Baldwin and Johnson voted to confirm Linda Thomas-Greenfield as the new U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations.

The two joined the rest of the Senate to confirm the UW-Madison Center for the Study of Public Policy and Administration alum in 78-20 vote.

Thomas-Greenfield is the second Black woman ever to hold the position in its 75-year existence.

She was also named U.S. ambassador to Liberia by President George W. Bush in 2008.

— The two also voted to confirm Thomas J. Vilsack as the new Secretary of Agriculture.

Johnson and Baldwin joined Senate colleagues who voted 92-7 to confirm Vilsack to the cabinet position. Vilsack held the same position during the Obama administration for both terms.

He also formerly volunteered to work on President Biden's failed bid to become president in 1988. He also served two terms as governor of Iowa starting in 1998.

— Oshkosh Corp.'s Oshkosh Defense won the U.S. Postal Service contract to produce the USPS's first large-scale fleet procurement in three decades.

Wisconsin-based Oshkosh Defense will make both zero-emission battery electric vehicles and fuel-efficient low-emission internal combustion engine vehicles. Under the contract, the USPS has committed to pay Oshkosh Defense \$482 million to initiate engineering efforts to finalize the production vehicle design, and for tooling and factory build-out activities that are necessary prior to vehicle production.

Posts of the week

Lt. Colonel James "Maggie" Megellas was a Wisconsin legend and American icon. I'm proud to join [@RepGrothman](#) in working to ensure our nation can rightfully award him our highest honor for his courage under fire during the Battle of the Bulge in WWII. <https://t.co/yz5lqGqXwH>

— Rep. Gallagher Press Office (@RepGallagher) [February 24, 2021](#)

Last Friday, I received a tour of Attwill Medical Solutions in [#Lodi](#), an industry leader in freeze drying technology. For more information on how they are helping combat [#COVID19](#), check out the article below. <https://t.co/0WCCu7028y>

— Rep. Glenn Grothman (@RepGrothman) [February 23, 2021](#)

Did you know that George Washington's tomb was supposed to be in the United States Capitol?

Washington died before construction of the Capitol was complete and remained buried at Mount Vernon. pic.twitter.com/WS6x9EX3Sm

— Bryan Steil (@RepBryanSteil) [February 23, 2021](#)

Today is [#SupermarketEmployeeDay](#)! My staff came out to [@MetcalfesMarket](#) in Madison to recognize the dedicated Wisconsinites who are working hard during this pandemic to keep our grocery shelves stocked & our families fed. Let's give it up for our [#SupermarketHeroes!](#) [#KeepErMovin](#) pic.twitter.com/jntm26MLnN

— Sen. Tammy Baldwin (@SenatorBaldwin) [February 22, 2021](#)

This [#PublicSchoolsWeek](#), we celebrate the teachers, administrators, and staff who go above and beyond every day and the incredible accomplishments of our students. Public schools are shaping the future, and when we strengthen public schools we strengthen our nation. pic.twitter.com/qcmTp2MS6y

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

This [#NationalCaregiversDay](#), I applaud our nation's selfless caregivers, especially throughout the difficult past year.

Let's be real: Caregiving is a job even if it doesn't pay. That's why my bill, the WRCR Act, expands the [#EITC](#) to unpaid caregivers to honor their hard work.

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

ICYMI

[Capitol Notes: Ron Johnson's Latest Comments Prompt More Calls To Resign Or Be Voted Out In 2022](#)

[Sen. Tammy Baldwin, others call for increased substance use disorder funding](#)

[Local lawmakers update public on issues brought up in Washington, D.C.](#)

[PolitiFact Wisconsin looks at claims by Sen. Johnson and Rep. Pocan](#)

[Congressional art competition deadline April 14](#)

[Rep. Kind says he does not support cancelling \\$50,000 of student debt despite progressive push](#)

[Mandela Barnes, Scott Fitzgerald penalized for accepting too much in campaign contributions](#)

[Congressmen work to secure location for war on terrorism memorial](#)