

DC Wrap: Baldwin introduces bill to prepare for another pandemic; Gallagher blasts Psaki over “soft-on-crime” comments

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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:

<https://forms.gle/YLYZtjWHPSt24HhZ7>

Quotes of the week

“I think individuals who are seeing costs go up by an average of 7 percent feel like they're being punched in the face. Wages are not keeping up with rising inflation.”

-U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil. R-Janesville, ranking member of the Select Committee on the Economy, in a [tweet](#) on rising inflation.

Wondering why gas prices are high? Before you blame the president, take a look at Exxon's \$9B fourth quarter profit. Price gouging is okay when it's making your shareholders even richer, right? Gimme a break

-U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, in a tweet on rising gas prices.

This week's news

— U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin introduced a bill with Republican U.S. Sen. Bill Cassidy, La., to invest \$175 million annually in strengthening the country's response against future pandemics.

The ‘Tracking Pathogens Act’ would use the funds to support genetic surveillance and genomic sequencing, which has been used to identify, survey and understand new variants of COVID-19.

The bill would also issue guidance to encourage collaborations for genome sequencing, expand and improve genome sequencing within government health

agencies and award grants to public health agencies to establish centers of excellence and promote further infectious disease research.

“Unfortunately, it is not ‘if’ but ‘when’ our nation will face another pandemic and we must be better prepared than we were for COVID-19 to track new threats and mitigate the virus,” Baldwin, D-Madison, said in a statement. “I am proud to introduce the bipartisan Tracking Pathogens Act to increase the United States’ preparedness for future pandemics by ensuring we can effectively identify new pathogens and act quickly to best respond to them to keep our communities safe.”

The American Association for Clinical Chemistry, the American Institute of Biological Sciences, the American Society for Clinical Pathology, the American Society for Microbiology and the American Society for Virology, among others, support the legislation.

[See the release.](#)

[See the bill.](#)

— Baldwin also sent a joint letter with U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore to Sec. of State Antony Blinken this week requesting an investigation into the death of former Milwaukee resident Omar Assad.

The Palestinian American died at 78 in Israel after being detained by Israeli soldiers in the West Bank on Jan. 12. Baldwin and Moore, D-Milwaukee, have requested that the U.S. Dept. of State determine the circumstances of Assad’s death, how he was detained and whether the soldiers involved used any equipment paid for with American funds.

While Baldwin and Moore acknowledged the Dept. of State’s decisions to support an investigation by the Israeli government and express condolences to Assad’s family, they requested the investigation considering the “tenuous situation in the region and the concerning and sometimes conflicting reports surrounding the detention and death of Mr. Assad.”

In the letter, Baldwin and Moore reference reporting from the Washington Post about Assad’s death. According to witnesses that spoke with the Post, Assad was unconscious and not breathing when soldiers left him at a construction site.

The letter also references findings by the Palestinian Ministry of Justice that Assad

died from “stress-induced cardiac arrest due to external violence.”

“As a Palestinian American, Mr. Assad deserves the full protections afforded U.S. citizens living abroad and his family deserves answers,” Baldwin and Moore wrote.

The Israeli military has conducted an investigation into Assad’s death. According to AP News, as of Tuesday, the Israeli military said it would reprimand the commander of the battalion. The platoon commander and company commander will be dismissed and prohibited from taking on commanding roles for two years.

The military said in a statement that the soldiers thought Assad was asleep when they left him, and blamed his death on “a moral failure and poor decision-making” by soldiers.

[See the letter.](#)

— Baldwin voiced concerns following news that Wisconsin-based manufacturer Oshkosh Defense will build thousands of new post office delivery trucks in South Carolina instead of the company’s home state.

According to The Guardian, Oshkosh Defense is slated to manufacture 165,000 new trucks in an effort that is expected to bring more than 1,000 jobs. The contract could amount to more than \$10 billion and will last for ten years. Baldwin released a statement voicing her concerns not only that the trucks would be manufactured out of state, but also that employees might be inexperienced, non-union workers.

“Oshkosh Defense has a history of manufacturing trucks for government service in Wisconsin with skilled union labor, so I remain deeply concerned that they decided to manufacture the postal trucks in what appears to be a newly acquired facility with inexperienced, likely non-union hires, in South Carolina,” Baldwin said.

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations Wisconsin president Stephanie Bloomingdale called the move “another slap in the face to Wisconsin workers.”

“I want these trucks made in Wisconsin,” Baldwin said.

— U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher in a video blasted White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki for her support of “soft on crime policies.”

Psaki in a video podcast interview balked at Fox News covering “the effects of soft-on-crime policies,” saying “what does that even mean?” Gallagher, R-Allouez, said those soft-on-crime policies led to low bail releases for violent criminals, as was the case with the man accused of driving his maroon Ford Escape SUV through the Waukesha Christmas Parade.

“It means advocating to defund police departments, which both emboldens criminals and endangers cops, 346 of whom were shot last year,” he said. “This isn’t some fictitious narrative being spun by the media. Soft-on-crime policies have made neighborhoods across the country less safe, including right here in Wisconsin.”

[See Gallagher’s video and press release.](#)

[See the podcast with Psaki’s comments around the 30-minute mark.](#)

— Kind also joined a bipartisan letter this week asking the Biden administration to direct funding in the 2023 budget to address contamination from per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances.

They are often found in firefighting foams and are known as “forever chemicals” because they do not break down easily in the environment.

In the letter, representatives cite the “grave dangers to human health and communities” that even low levels of PFAS can cause, including health problems such as thyroid, kidney, liver, heart and reproductive conditions.

“We need to take action to protect Wisconsin communities from harmful PFAS contamination,” Kind said in a statement. “As the Administration develops the Fiscal Year 2023 budget, I strongly encourage including comprehensive and robust funding to address PFAS chemicals and ensure clean, safe drinking water for all.”

The letter requests that more be done to address PFAS contamination after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released a PFAS Strategic Roadmap in October. The representatives propose sending funds to a number of federal agencies in order to assess and monitor the presence of PFAS in the environment and our bodies and find ways to transition to using PFAS-free equipment and goods.

The agencies recommended for funding include the U.S. Dept. of Defense, U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, EPA, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Food and Drug

Administration, Federal Aviation Administration, National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, National Institute of Standards and Technology, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and U.S. Dept. of Agriculture.

[See the release.](#)

[See the letter.](#)

— U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson pulled in less money during the fourth quarter than three of his Dem rivals, according to FEC filings.

But the Oshkosh Republican also had at least \$1 million more in the bank than any of his top challengers at the close of the year.

Johnson reported \$711,498 in receipts during the final three months of 2021 before he formally launched his reelection bid in early January. He spent \$548,464 and had nearly \$2.5 million cash on hand to end the year.

[See more on the campaign finance reports here.](#)

— U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher ended the latest campaign finance period with a war chest twice that of his nearest Wisconsin colleagues, despite spending more money than he brought in during the period.

The Allouez Republican [reported](#) \$214,880 in receipts between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31 while spending \$244,982. He finished the year with \$2.6 million on hand.

For the rest of the delegation:

*U.S. Rep. Bryan [Steil](#), R-Janesville, raised \$310,103, spent \$199,354 and finished with \$1.3 million the bank.

*U.S. Rep. Mark [Pocan](#), D-Town of Vermont, raised \$134,783, spent \$67,273 and finished the year with nearly \$1.1 million cash on hand.

*U.S. Rep. Ron [Kind](#), who has announced he won't seek reelection, listed \$86,376 in disbursements, including \$47,801 in returned contributions. He finished the year with nearly \$1.2 million in the bank.

*U.S. Rep. Gwen [Moore](#), D-Milwaukee, raised \$101,955, spent \$124,365 and had

\$61,397 cash on hand.

*U.S. Rep. Scott [Fitzgerald](#), R-Juneau, raised \$131,382, spent \$64,747 and ended the period with \$287,798 in the bank.

*U.S. Rep. Glenn [Grothman](#), R-Glenbeulah, raised \$193,858, spent \$94,954 and had \$572,845 cash on hand.

*U.S. Rep. Tom [Tiffany](#), R-Minocqua, raised \$154,594, spent \$92,123 and had \$191,823 on hand.

— Republican Derrick Van Orden pulled in more during the fourth quarter than the combined fundraising of his 3rd CD Dem rivals, FEC filings show.

The former Navy SEAL, who lost to U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, D-La Crosse, in 2020, also spent more than three-fourths of what he raised during the period.

Van Orden [reported](#) \$830,955 in receipts, \$650,654 in expenditures and \$1.4 million in the bank.

Van Orden was a top recruit for House GOP leadership to run in 2022 after his narrow loss to Kind, who decided in August not to seek reelection. Van Orden's fundraising dipped a little from the \$1.1 million he raised during the third quarter, when Kind was still an active candidate.

Van Orden also listed \$292,737 in debts to end the year. Most of that is for consulting, including \$265,937 in consulting and digital ads to Virginia-based Targeted Victory LLC.

Dem Brad [Pfaff](#), a state senator, raised \$353,629, spent \$66,827 and had \$286,802 in the bank.

Meanwhile, former CIA officer Deb [McGrath](#) raised \$233,893, spent \$16,421 and had \$217,472 in the bank.

Eau Claire businesswoman Rebecca [Cooke](#) raised \$158,404, spent \$43,560 and finished the year with \$114,844 in the bank. Cooke announced this fall she'd raised \$100,000 over the first few days after the formal launch of her campaign.

Dems Mark Neumann and Brett Knudsen have also filed to run.

Neumann, a retired pediatrician, lost a primary challenge to Kind in 2020. He formally announced his latest campaign last week and reported \$1,000 raised during the fourth quarter.

Knudsen, a Navy vet, said he didn't raise enough money in the fourth quarter to meet the FEC's reporting requirements. Candidates have to report if they've raised or spent more than \$5,000.

Posts of the week

Who's ready for some curling!?

I can't wait to cheer on these Madison locals in just a few days.
[#Beijing2022 https://t.co/EJ05Ht9twV](https://t.co/EJ05Ht9twV)

— Rep. Mark Pocan (@RepMarkPocan) [January 31, 2022](#)

Last week, I made many new friends on my visit to MToxins Venom Lab in [#Oshkosh](#). I also learned about the research on animal venoms conducted by the employees to produce antivenoms. Thank you for what you do!
<pic.twitter.com/5vKUj1C1D0>

— Rep. Glenn Grothman (@RepGrothman) [January 30, 2022](#)

What are “soft-on-crime” policies? They are the policies resulting in 25 murders and 3 officers getting shot in Milwaukee in January. We must take surging crime seriously! <pic.twitter.com/QzjPGYaT1A>

— Bryan Steil (@RepBryanSteil) [January 31, 2022](#)

You can't begin [#BlackHistoryMonth](#) in Wisconsin without first recognizing and celebrating the life and legacy of Vel Phillips, a trailblazer, barrier breaker, and civil rights leader who committed her life to social justice, inspiring me and so many others today and every day.

pic.twitter.com/IEA3GoR2rf

— Sen. Tammy Baldwin (@SenatorBaldwin) [February 1, 2022](#)

Happy Lunar New Year of the Tiger to the Taiwanese-American community leaders and friends in Wisconsin!

— Rep. Tom Tiffany (@RepTiffany) [February 1, 2022](#)

During [#BlackHistoryMonth](#) we come together to celebrate the historic contributions and accomplishments of Black Americans. This month, and every month, we honor the trailblazers who changed our nation and the world, and continue working towards equality and justice for all.

— Archive: Rep. Ron Kind (@RepRonKind) [February 1, 2022](#)

ICYMI

[Representative Tom Tiffany holds listening sessions across the Northwoods](#)

[Republicans again call for Oversight hearing on Afghanistan withdrawal](#)

[Steil nominates 15 students for appointment to U.S. service academies](#)

[A simplified, 3-digit national suicide hotline will go into effect in July](#)

[How the end of monthly child tax credit impacts Wisconsin families](#)

[Israel punishes officers in death of Palestinian-American who lived in Milwaukee](#)

[Bodies of missing Wisconsin, Illinois women found in Panama](#)

[Johnson wrong on claim that COVID vaccines are killing athletes on the playing field](#)