

DC Wrap: Gallagher, Pocan criticize military and defense spending; Johnson, Fitzgerald push for closer look at low bail issues

Posted on Thursday, Mar 31, 2022

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

"Give me one good reason why the Pentagon shouldn't have to pass an audit."

- U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, in a tweet as President Biden this week announced his budget includes \$773 billion for the Department of Defense.

"Would it be fair to say that deterrence failed in Ukraine?"

- U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher, R-Allouez, in a House Armed Services Committee hearing questioning U.S. Gen. Tod Wolters about the U.S. effort to deter Russia. He answered, "I can't argue with your conclusion."

This week's news

— U.S. Reps. Mike Gallagher, R-Allouez, and Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, criticized President Biden's budget for its defense spending, but they each had different reasons.

Gallagher, a member of the House Armed Services Committee, in a tweet slammed Biden's budget for spending too little, especially when it comes to what he says will be future threats from China.

"I think the budget signals that President Biden and his defense team are choosing decline in this decade," he said. "They have no sense of the urgency of the threat we face, particularly the threat posed by the Chinese Communist Party."

Gallagher also called the latest budget a defense spending cut. He says the extra roughly 10 percent increase over past defense budgets will be negated by rising inflation costs.

Pocan, who has long opined the U.S. spends too much money on its defense budget, in a tweet was less critical of overall defense spending than in the past.

“Pandemics, climate change, and cyberattacks are all real, pertinent threats to our national security,” he said. “If we’re going to keep increasing our defense budget, we need to continue expanding our defense definition.”

[See Gallagher’s tweet.](#)

[See Pocan’s tweet.](#)

[See more on Biden’s budget.](#)

— U.S. Rep. Scott Fitzgerald and U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson introduced a bill requiring the Department of Justice to send a report to Congress within 180 days on individuals released on bail and those on pretrial release for violent felonies.

The Pretrial Release Reporting Act would also require DOJ to report how state courts assess bail and other pretrial release conditions of people who committed violent felonies. According to a release, the legislation aims to inform Congress and the public of bail policies and the release of violent offenders.

In a release, Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, said the Waukesha community was “rocked” after Darrell Brooks drove his SUV through the Waukesha Christmas parade, killing six and injuring dozens. The man charged had previously been released on \$1,000 bail.

“This incident could have been avoided and it exposed a severe shortcoming in the prosecutorial approach to bail and pre-trial release in Milwaukee County,” Fitzgerald said in a statement. “Brooks should never have been released on such a trivial bail amount, and although we cannot turn back the clock, we must hold local leaders accountable moving forward.”

Johnson, R-Oshkosh, said the tragedy was a “direct result of low bail and no bail policies.”

“The current Democrat policies of catch and release of violent offenders within our criminal justice system has resulted in untold tragedies throughout America,” Johnson said.

[See Fitzgerald's release.](#)

[See Johnson's release.](#)

— U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher is applauding passage of his legislation to fund a new icebreaking ship for the U.S. Coast Guard in the Great Lakes.

The Allouez Republican and all of his Wisconsin colleagues joined the rest of the House in a 378-46 vote, sending the Don Young Coast Guard Reauthorization Act to the Senate. Gallagher, a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, in a release touted the inclusion of his Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act in the measure.

“Here in Northeast Wisconsin, insufficient icebreaking capabilities hurt local businesses and can literally freeze the Great Lakes economy,” he said. “The Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act helps fix this problem by modernizing the Coast Guard’s icebreaking mission and authorizing funds for an additional Great Lakes icebreaker.”

[See the roll call.](#)

[See Gallagher's release.](#)

— Wisconsin's U.S. House members unanimously joined their colleagues in passing a bill aimed at improving access to retirement benefits.

The House in a 414-5 vote approved the SECURE Act, which would create an online database to help track retirement savings, approve grants for small businesses to offer matching contributions, allow more part-time workers to participate in savings plans and more. The bill now heads to the Senate.

Ways and Means Committee member U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, D-La Crosse, in a press release praised its passage.

“With financial security during the golden years of life out of reach for far too many Wisconsinites, it’s clear that we need to ensure easier pathways to savings,” he

said.

[See the roll call.](#)

[See the Kind release.](#)

— U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore applauded passage of her legislation aimed at allowing victims of domestic abuse to have penalty-free early access to their retirement fund advances.

The House passed the measure, included in the Securing a Strong Retirement Act, in a 414-5 vote. The Milwaukee Dem's legislation would amend current tax law to give victims of domestic abuse better access to their retirement fund advances. Moore in a press release praised passage of the measure because she says it will provide survivors with the flexibility to access retirement funds without paying a burdensome penalty.

"Domestic violence survivors fleeing danger need all the financial resources available to build a safe future for themselves," she said. "Tapping into retirement funds may provide critical resources to help them secure safe housing and meet their basic needs."

[See the roll call.](#)

[See Moore's release.](#)

— U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin is pushing for Kohl's Corporation to reject offers from private equity and investor groups that could increase debt, sell off assets, increase shareholder payouts at the expense of reinvestment or increase the chance of bankruptcy.

The Madison Dem in a March 24 letter cites a Kohl's spokeswoman saying the board would "weigh potential bids against remaining independent and will choose the path that maximizes shareholder value."

Baldwin in the letter noted that though the retailer is under pressure from investment funds, those funds "have not contributed any actual capital to the company." Baldwin said demands that capital be returned through stock repurchases are "a sleight of hand that only serves to enrich short-term shareholders."

Baldwin cited ShopKo as a cautionary tale. The Wisconsin-founded retailer went bankrupt in 2019. Baldwin said the bankruptcy resulted in the loss of roughly 3,000 employees losing their jobs.

“Many were promised severance to incentivize them to work until the very end — only to find out that there were not enough funds remaining to pay them. Wisconsinites are rightly concerned that history will repeat itself at Kohl’s,” Baldwin wrote.

[See the letter.](#)

— Baldwin met with Supreme Court nominee Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson and voiced her support for Jackson’s nomination.

If confirmed to the court, Jackson would be the first Black woman to serve as a justice on the nation’s highest court. Baldwin said Jackson is “extremely well qualified” and has a record of “being an impartial, fair and independent judge.”

“Judge Jackson’s lifetime of hard work and perseverance has prepared her well for this inspiring moment and I believe she has the character, temperament, and experience we want in a Justice on our highest court,” Baldwin said in a statement.

[See the release.](#)

— Transportation and electric vehicle experts say federal dollars could go a long way toward making charging stations more accessible, but the Legislature needs to clarify public utility laws before Wisconsin sees widespread charging network expansion.

UW-Madison Transportation Engineering Prof. David Noyce at a Wisconsin Tech Council luncheon in Madison today said those involved in figuring out where to place new charging stations purchased with federal dollars from the bipartisan infrastructure law will focus largely on where drivers start and end their trips.

The federal infrastructure bill includes \$79 million for EV charging stations in Wisconsin, according to a White House fact sheet.

Godfrey & Kahn’s Art Harrington said legislation governing who is allowed to provide electricity to the public must be clarified before widespread EV adoption or charging station construction happens.

[See more here.](#)

Posts of the week

I was four years old when Emmett Till was lynched.

It was moving and sobering to watch President Biden sign the Emmett Till [#AntilynchingAct](#) into law, making lynching a federal hate crime. pic.twitter.com/OrSVrvvS3I

— Rep. Gwen Moore (@RepGwenMoore) [March 29, 2022](#)

It was an honor to receive [@FRCdc](#)'s True Blue award this morning in recognition of my commitment to protecting the sanctity of life in Congress. pic.twitter.com/B9xVDIlg6WX

— Rep. Glenn Grothman (@RepGrothman) [March 29, 2022](#)

Today we honor Vietnam War Veterans across Wisconsin. Although we can never repay the debt of gratitude we owe, thank you for your sacrifice and service to our nation. [#NationalVietnamWarVeteransDay](#) pic.twitter.com/7rDDqpPIFu

— Archive: Rep. Ron Kind (@RepRonKind) [March 29, 2022](#)

On National Vietnam Veterans Day, we thank all of our veterans for your service and sacrifice to our nation. pic.twitter.com/w4ZfeaLrXK

— Bryan Steil (@RepBryanSteil) [March 29, 2022](#)

Today, I stopped by the [@uscapitol](#) carpentry shop to see some of the historic [#MadeinWI](#) mahogany wood that is being used to repair parts of the Capitol damaged during the violent January 6 attack. Thanks to [@fsWoodLab](#) & [@DeptofDefense](#) for working with Wisconsin on this project! pic.twitter.com/G4loo3H9II

— Sen. Tammy Baldwin (@SenatorBaldwin) [March 30, 2022](#)

Rep. Gallagher visited with representatives from Wisconsin Ukrainians Inc. to learn more about their efforts to collect supplies for Ukrainians. The group has collected truckloads of aid that will be shipped to Eastern Europe to help Ukrainians in need. pic.twitter.com/JvasQurQA3

— Rep. Gallagher Press Office (@RepGallagher) [March 28, 2022](#)

ICYMI

[‘Here & Now’ Highlights: U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher, U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, Zac Schultz](#)

[Human rights experts dispute Rep. Glenn Grothman’s reason for voting against Russia sanction](#)

[Sens. Grassley, Johnson allege \\$100,000 payment from Chinese oligarchs to Hunter Biden, provide receipt](#)

[GOP lawmakers turn Will Smith’s slap into anti-Biden memes](#)

[Tiffany highlites mining policy](#)

[Area legislators in D.C. propose new 'Great Lakes Authority'](#)

[Sen. Baldwin meets with Supreme Court nominee Ketanji Brown Jackson](#)

[Sen. Baldwin urges Kohl's board to consider the impact of a sale on employees, communities](#)