

DC Wrap: House passes omnibus with \$14B for Ukraine; Baldwin, GOP introduce bill to allow wolf hunts

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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

This historic government funding package is huge for Wisconsin and the US. These investments will lower the cost of living for working families, create jobs, and tackle some of our biggest challenges from expanding access to affordable healthcare and mitigating climate change.

– U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, on passing the measure last night.

Instead of further digging our nation deeper into debt, Congress should focus on a spending measure that will decrease the federal deficit, cool down the inflation crushing hard-working Americans, and lower energy prices.

– U.S. Rep. Tom Tiffany, R-Minocqua, slamming Congress for passing the \$1.5 trillion bill.

This week's news

— The House passed a \$1.5 trillion bill to keep the government funded and send \$14 billion in aid to Ukraine and other eastern European countries.

The House voted 260-171 last night to approve the 2,700-page bill, which is set to fund the government through the end of the fiscal year as current funding is set to expire this week. Wisconsin's congressional members voted along party lines. While Republicans balked at the overall cost, members on both sides of the aisle approved of the aid to Ukraine. Dems also applauded social spending provisions.

U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore, D-Milwaukee, in a press release praised the bill for directing

resources to address health care, education, child hunger, climate change and other issues. But she didn't approve of everything in the bill.

"In putting together this package, we didn't win every funding fight, some programs got much less than I thought they deserved, and I certainly do not endorse every provision in this omnibus bill," she said. "However, on balance, this legislation includes key funding on the domestic front for health, education, labor, transportation, housing and other key investments that I simply could not ignore and which were worthy of my support."

Wisconsin's congressional delegation split along party lines with Dems in favor and Republicans opposed.

House Armed Services Committee member U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher in a press release praised funds for the Pentagon and to bolster America's defense position in Europe. But the Green Bay-area Republican criticized Dems for failing to include provisions that would increase domestic oil and gas production.

"Until we unleash America's full energy potential, Congress will only continue to take one step forward and two steps back in our response to Putin's war in Ukraine," he said.

[See Moore's release.](#)

[See Gallagher's release.](#)

[See the roll call.](#)

— Gov. Tony Evers hailed news that Congress was dropping a provision from the bill that he had earlier warned could cost the state \$225 million of \$2.5 billion in expected ARPA fund.

Just ahead of the provision being dropped, Evers fired off a letter to the nation's congressional leaders calling it "unacceptable" that the state could lose the money.

The original bill included about \$15 billion that the White House has requested for COVID-19 relief. It would've been funded with unallocated money from about 30 states that received their ARPA funding in two payments. That would've resulted in the \$225 million hit to Wisconsin.

[See more here.](#)

— CIA Director William Burns told U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher in a Select Committee on Intelligence hearing that he is genuinely concerned Russia could use President Biden’s decision to halt Russian oil imports as leverage in Iranian nuclear program negotiations.

The Allouez Republican in an annual hearing on worldwide threats asked Burns if the intelligence community is concerned about Russia leveraging the oil import decisions in nuclear program negotiations between Iran, Russia, the U.S. and other nations. Gallagher was concerned Russia could use their position in the nuclear agreement to take in Iranian enriched uranium as a bargaining chip. He said Russia could return the uranium to Iran, where it could be used to produce nuclear weapons.

“I think the concern, at least the concern I’ve heard from a lot of my constituents, is that the President has gone out and made an explicit promise — one that I agree with, by the way — to turn Vladimir Putin into an international pariah,” Gallagher said, referring to sanctions on the Russian economy.

“But at the same time, we have the State Department, who’s not represented here today, saying we’re going to continue to cooperate with Russia on the P5+1 negotiations over Iran’s nuclear program. Well, those two things don’t necessarily add up.”

[See Gallagher’s release.](#)

[See a video of the hearing with Gallagher at 2:27:18.](#)

— GOP U.S. Reps. Gallagher and Scott Fitzgerald also slammed Biden for turning to authoritarian regimes for possible oil imports to make up for those lost after announcing the U.S. would no longer import Russian oil.

Gallagher in a tweet said the U.S. must increase domestic oil and gas production to drive home the economic war against Russia after it invaded neighboring Ukraine. He said turning to other countries known for producing oil would not be as detrimental to the Russian economy as domestic production.

“Right now, the President is going around the world, begging Venezuela, potentially Iran, to produce,” he said. “You know where he’s not going? Texas, Pennsylvania,

Louisiana.”

Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, in a tweet said the U.S. should finish the Keystone XL pipeline and issue more drilling permits.

“Biden has gone from threatening oil sanctions on one authoritarian regime to lifting sanctions on another,” Fitzgerald said. “When will the President understand that the best way to relieve pressure at the pumps is to produce more American oil?”

U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil also tweeted his support for domestic oil production.

“Now that we are ending reliance on Russia for oil, we need to replace it with American oil. Energy security = national security,” the Janesville Republican said.

U.S. Rep Tom Tiffany joined the call as well, saying Americans want domestic oil and gas production.

“What is President Biden waiting on? Energy independence is national security!” the Minocqua Republican said in a tweet.

[See Fitzgerald’s tweet.](#)

[See Steil’s tweet.](#)

[See Tiffany’s tweet.](#)

[See Gallagher’s tweet.](#)

— U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson walked back on statements suggesting Republicans should repeal the Affordable Care Act if the party takes control of Congress this year and the presidency in 2024.

The Oshkosh Republican in an interview on a popular conservative podcast over the weekend said Republicans should again try to repeal the ACA and replace it with something Johnson says would be more effective. He said if the GOP takes over by 2024, “we can actually make good on what we established as our priorities.”

“In other words, if we’re for example, if we were going to repeal and replace Obamacare — I still think we need to fix our health-care system — we need to have

the plan ahead of time so that once we get in office, we can implement it immediately, not knock around like we did last time and fail.”

Johnson on Monday in a press release walked back those comments, saying repealing and replacing the health care program would not be a Republican agenda priority.

“Even when we tried and failed, I consistently said our effort should focus on repairing the damage done by Obamacare and transitioning to a health system that works,” he said. “I reiterated the necessity to fix our healthcare system in that interview and COVID-19 has exacerbated these failures.”

[See the Johnson release.](#)

— U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin in a tweet slammed Johnson.

“No Wisconsin family should lay awake at night wondering if the health care they have today will be there tomorrow. I will always work to protect your health care from those who want to take it away.”

[See the Baldwin tweet.](#)

— The Postal Reform Act passed 79-19 in the Senate this week, with Baldwin, D-Madison, in favor and Johnson, R-Oshkosh, in opposition.

The bill now heads to Biden’s desk for action.

The Postal Reform Act aims to bring financial reform to the U.S. Postal Service, including requiring the establishment of a health benefits program for postal workers and retirees and allowing USPS to enter into agreements with government agencies to provide nonpostal products and services, among other provisions.

The bill has widely received bipartisan support. When it passed in the House, U.S. Rep. Bryan Steil, R-Janesville, was the sole Wisconsin representative to oppose the legislation.

U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, D-La Crosse, in a tweet voiced his support for the bill.

“Proud to have voted for this bipartisan legislation in the House to bring financial stability to the Postal Service and ensure they can keep delivering for WI

communities for years to come,” he said.

[See the bill.](#)

[See Kind's tweet.](#)

— Baldwin this week also co-introduced a bill to fund the removal of landmines and other unexploded ordinances such as artillery, shells and bombs in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

The bill, introduced with U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., also honors communities from Southeast Asia for their support evacuating allied refugees, rescuing U.S. pilots shot down in enemy-controlled territory, and providing intelligence, food and shelter to American troops.

Baldwin said in a statement Wisconsinites and Americans are indebted to Hmong-Americans and other communities for their support and sacrifice helping American troops in Vietnam. She said the legislation will “do right by” communities still facing the consequences of the war.

“I’ve heard heart-wrenching stories from landmine survivors firsthand in Vietnam, and it is abundantly clear that the United States must take action to clear the unexploded ordinances and landmines,” Baldwin said.

The bill specifically honors the Hmong, Cham, Cambodian, Lu-Mien, Khmu, Lao, Montagnard and Vietnamese Americans. Wisconsin has the third-highest population of Hmong in the U.S.

Yee Leng Xiong, Executive Director of Wausau’s Hmong American Center Inc., thanked Baldwin for her leadership and said the bill would help to save lives and provide closure for generations to come.

“As a child of refugees, I’ve heard the numerous tragic stories of individuals losing their loved ones from unexploded bombs. Although these explosives were dropped or set up more than 40 years ago, it continues to affect our loved ones today, physically, spiritually, and mentally,” Xiong said.

[See the release.](#)

— U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman introduced a bill to raise the annual cap on

the amount of money deducted from seniors' Social Security benefits.

Under current law, for people aged between 62 and 67, \$1 is deducted from their Social Security benefits for every \$2 earned above the annual limit. The 2022 limit is \$19,560. The Senior Independence Act would increase the amount to \$30,000 per year starting in 2023.

The Glenbeulah Republican in a statement said senior citizens are opting out of work due to the restrictions and that his constituents have voiced frustrations about them, especially considering labor shortages.

“The federal government should not penalize anyone who wants to work. Instead, we need to create an environment that allows people to remain in the workforce without fear of losing the benefits that they have earned,” Grothman said.

The National Taxpayers Union and Association of Mature American Citizens have endorsed the legislation.

“There are 10.9 million job openings in the U.S. and we have people ready, willing, and able to work. We need them off the sidelines and in the game—which is where they want to be. That is why it is so important that Congress quickly acts to pass the Senior Independence Act,” Grothman said.

[See the release.](#)

— Gray wolf conservation group Project Coyote's Michelle Lute says Wisconsin's congressional members pushing to again remove wolves from the federal endangered species list are using the animals as political bargaining chips.

U.S. Sens. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, and Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, as well as all five of Wisconsin's House Republicans have started pushing bills that would remove federal protections for gray wolves. The bills would turn wolf population management responsibilities over to states, giving them the ability to hold wolf hunts. Project Coyote and other groups successfully sued in Wisconsin and at the federal level to protect gray wolves from state sanctioned hunts.

A federal court in northern California issued a ruling last month that placed gray wolves back on the endangered species list.

Lute, Project Coyote's national carnivore conservation manager, told WisPolitics.com in a phone interview that the delegates' moves are just meant to pander to minority interest groups. She added former Natural Resources Board Chair Frederick Prehn is contributing to the effort.

"Prehn and his cronies are just putting wolves on the auction block," she said.

Lute, who has a PhD in wildlife management, added a healthy wolf population would help Wisconsinites in the long run by reducing the spread of chronic wasting disease among deer, and stabilizing deer and other wildlife populations.

Referring to past wolf hunts, Lute said giving states the responsibility to manage wolf populations looks less like biologists making evidence-based decisions and more like "state sanctioned slaughter and eradication and a war on our land."

Johnson in a statement said Wisconsin must have a say in managing the gray wolf population.

"In the western Great Lakes region, state wildlife agencies should manage the recovered population so the wolf's ongoing role in the ecosystem does not come at the expense of farmers, loggers, sportsmen and people who simply live in these areas," Johnson said.

Baldwin said management should be returned to the state "because of the scientific conclusion that the population has recovered in the Great Lakes region."

Rep. Tom Tiffany has also pushed to remove gray wolves from the endangered species list through a very similar bill: the Managing Predators Act.

The Minocqua Republican led a letter Friday asking the U.S. Natural Resources Committee to hold a hearing on the bill that would permanently remove gray wolves from the federal endangered species list in the same states as Johnson and Baldwin's bill.

The bill would allow states to determine if gray wolves are threatened or endangered species and give them the authority to manage the population of gray wolves.

"Farmers, ranchers, hunters, and pet-owners have seen enough real-world evidence to know that it is their lives and livelihoods being threatened by federal policy

decisions – not the wolves’. And the numbers continue to bear that out,” lawmakers argued.

Fifteen lawmakers in all signed the letter, including Tiffany’s fellow Wisconsin GOP Reps. Bryan Steil, of Janesville; Mike Gallagher, of Green Bay; Glenn Grothman, of Glenbeulah; and Scott Fitzgerald, of Juneau.

Advocacy group Hunter Nation applauded Tiffany’s call for a hearing. The group’s president and CEO, Luke Hilgemann, called the bill “common sense legislation.”

“Too many times, activist judges and bureaucrats who spend no time in the woods or ever have to deal with the negative consequences of an uncontrolled wolf population seem to think they know better, and it’s time to return state control to this problem,” Hilgemann said in a statement.

[See Johnson’s release.](#)

[See Tiffany and colleagues’ letter.](#)

— A national group has filed a complaint with the state Office of Lawyer Regulation against attorneys Andrew Hitt and Jim Troupis over their actions as former President Trump sought unsuccessfully to overturn Wisconsin’s election results.

The complaint from the 65 Project is part of a national effort seeking to hold accountable attorneys who participated in Trump’s efforts to challenge the results and submit a slate of alternate electors in swing states.

The Wisconsin complaint asks OLR to open an investigation into the two GOP attorneys and lays out allegations against Troupis and Hitt for their roles in the 10 alternate electors that Wisconsin Republicans submitted even though Joe Biden’s victory in the state had been certified.

According to the complaint, Troupis on Nov. 18, 2020, received a memo laying out a plan to create the alternate electors in closely contested states, including Wisconsin. It accuses Troupis, who served as an attorney for Trump in his challenge of votes in heavily Dem Dane and Milwaukee counties, of participating in a “scheme” that became a “conspiracy.”

[See more here.](#)

— U.S. Rep. Ron Kind congratulated the Alma, Westfield and Norwalk Ontario Wilton school districts and Student Transit - Eau Claire, Inc. on \$160,000 in school bus rebate funding.

The funding was awarded under the Environmental Protection Agency's Diesel Emission Reduction Act, which provides rebates to reduce harmful emissions from older diesel vehicles.

"It's great to see \$160,000 going to Wisconsin's Third Congressional District to help ensure cleaner air and provide kids with a safe and reliable way to get to school," Kind said in a statement.

The funds will provide:

*\$20,000 for the Alma School District

*\$60,000 for the Westfield School District

*\$20,000 for the Norwalk Ontario Wilton School District

*\$60,000 for Student Transit - Eau Claire, Inc.

— U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan slammed GOP U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson after the Oshkosh Republican failed to respond to Pocan's calls asking why Johnson blocked a presidential appointment of his brother to a federal judgeship.

"Hey Ron, still waiting for your call... I promise you can't catch gay over the phone. Senator Baldwin calls back quite quickly," he said. "I look forward to hearing from you. XOXO. - Your pal, Mark."

The tweet came after Pocan tweeted earlier Tuesday it had been five days since he called Johnson's office regarding the issue. Johnson last month moved to block Pocan's brother, William Pocan, from taking a federal bench position in Green Bay after Johnson last year recommended William Pocan be a federal judge.

Mark Pocan said he has called Johnson's office three times so far.

Johnson previously cited one case where Judge Pocan issued a \$5,000 bail for someone after they committed a crime while on bail.

Johnson said he doesn't want to put any judges on a bench who issue low bail amounts because he says that's what led to the Waukesha Christmas parade tragedy where a man is accused of driving his SUV through the crowd, killing six and wounding dozens.

[See Pocan's tweet.](#)

— A federal lawmaker from Virginia is leading an effort to prohibit the United States Postal Service from proceeding with a truck contract with Oshkosh Defense unless at least 75 percent of the vehicles are electric or zero-emission.

The legislation, called the Green Postal Service Fleet Act of 2022, is from Democratic U.S. Rep. Gerald Connolly. The contract in question is reportedly worth around \$11 billion.

Connolly wrote on Twitter the bill has 68 cosponsors and aims to “put an end to DeJoy’s contract for gas-guzzling delivery vehicles,” referring to U.S. Postmaster General Louis DeJoy.

His remarks come on the heels of the U.S. Senate passing the Postal Service Reform Act, an over \$100 billion effort to overhaul elements of the USPS including how health care coverage for its employees is handled. It would also require USPS to create an online dashboard for tracking delivery times, among other changes. The bill passed the U.S. House last month.

In response to Connolly’s legislation, Oshkosh Defense said its contract with USPS allows for flexibility in the types of vehicles provided.

The company said in a statement that USPS “will be able to replace their fleet of 30+ year-old Long Life Vehicles (LLV) with a much more sustainable fleet of both zero-emission battery electric vehicles (BEV) and low-emission internal combustion vehicles (ICE), built on a common chassis,” pointing to the company’s “next generation delivery vehicle,” or NGDV.

“Under the NGDV Contract, Oshkosh can produce any mix of BEV and ICE vehicles, up to 100% BEVs, that the USPS wants. The NGDV contract provides the USPS with the flexibility to order a higher proportion of battery electric vehicles as funding becomes available,” the company said.

[See the bill text here.](#)

[See more from WisBusiness.com.](#)

Posts of the week

As we mark the 57th anniversary of Bloody Sunday, we remember my dear friend John Lewis and those who marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. We honor his and many other brave American's dedication to equality for all by continuing to work towards a more perfect union.

pic.twitter.com/GVDFpRHtFD

— Archive: Rep. Ron Kind (@RepRonKind) [March 8, 2022](#)

I'm so inspired by this. Stand up, speak out, and let your voice be heard!
[#LetFreeFloridaSayGay](#) <https://t.co/KRHbfOkxrE>

— Sen. Tammy Baldwin (@SenatorBaldwin) [March 8, 2022](#)

Wisconsin has lost an outstanding leader today. Margaret Farrow was a force for good in our state for decades. She inspired many with her commitment to doing the right thing, and doing it the right way. She will be deeply missed. pic.twitter.com/c39GLQ7BHv

— Bryan Steil (@RepBryanSteil) [March 8, 2022](#)

I always enjoy meeting with [@wisbank](#). Thank you for coming to my [#DC](#) office! [#WI06](#) pic.twitter.com/5MhP8NmZHB

— Rep. Glenn Grothman (@RepGrothman) [March 9, 2022](#)

Celebrating [#WomensHistoryMonth](#) with the amazing [@BillieJeanKing!](#)
pic.twitter.com/VhZ7TqzxV8

— Rep. Gwen Moore (@RepGwenMoore) [March 9, 2022](#)

Every day, I'm inspired by the driven women who serve alongside me in Congress, working tirelessly to make our communities better.

This [#InternationalWomensDay](#), we continue the march toward equality, because women's rights are human rights. pic.twitter.com/tmZVHHJo7I

— Rep. Mark Pocan (@RepMarkPocan) [March 8, 2022](#)

ICYMI

[Wisconsin Republican congressmen appeal redistricting ruling](#)

[GOP braces for nail-biter with Ron Johnson reelection bid](#)

[Ron Johnson, Tammy Baldwin introduce bill to remove federal protections for the gray wolf](#)

[RonJohn, the GOP thorn who might grow McConnell a majority](#)

[Sen. Ron Johnson backs People's Convoy, bashes 'Covid cartel'](#)