

DC Wrap: Pocan introduces bill to cut \$100B from defense; Grothman praises progress for Air America Act

Posted on Thursday, Jun 16, 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

"The gentleman from Wisconsin, Senator Ron Johnson, is back at it again. Trying to dismantle the Affordable Care Act, including its protections for people with pre-existing conditions. A hundred million people have pre-existing conditions."

- President Joe Biden at an AFL-CIO event slamming the Oshkosh Republican for what he called a move to take away health care coverage for those with pre-existing conditions.

".@POTUS lied that he never talked to his son about his overseas business dealings. Now he is lying that I don't want to protect people with pre-existing conditions. I do, and I've repeatedly said so. Is Biden habitually deceitful or simply losing it?"

- U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson in a tweet charging Biden with lying about his position on getting rid of coverage for those with pre-existing conditions.

This week's news

— **Defense Spending Reduction Caucus Co-chair U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan introduced a bill that would cut the defense budget by \$100 billion.**

The Town of Vermont Dem in a press release said the People Over Pentagon Act is meant to bring the nation's budget priorities more in line with its citizens' priorities. He added reducing the budget by \$100 billion would still leave the United States at the top of the list of nations that spend the most on their militaries.

"The amount of money the defense industry convinces Congress to spend each year

doesn't protect us from real threats like climate change, pandemics, or cyber-attacks," he said. "It only lines contractors' pockets. Just imagine for once if we led the world in funding peace and not wars."

The bill would exempt from cuts the Defense Health Program, military personnel accounts and accounts providing for pay and benefits for persons appointed into the civil service as defined in section 2101 of title 5, United States Code.

[See the release.](#)

— U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman praised passage of a bill to ensure former Air America employees receive federal retirement benefits and recognition.

Air America was secretly owned and operated by the Central Intelligence Agency between 1950 and 1976, allowing it to supply and support covert operations in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. Employees of the company did not receive benefits or accolades for their service after the company was terminated.

Grothman, R-Glenbeulah, in a press release said Congress has passed measures to provide benefits to other CIA-affiliated groups and should do so again.

"It is not right that they have chosen to ignore Air Americans for so long," he said. "These patriots risked their lives, many of them giving their life, fighting communism in the same way members of the Air Force did. I am honored that so many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle are joining me to support these heroes."

Grothman authored the House companion bill to the Senate bill that unanimously passed this week. The Senate bill now heads to the House for consideration.

[See the release.](#)

— U.S. Rep. Gwen Moore praised passage of the Federal Reserve Racial and Economic Equity Act meant to increase access to federal credit unions in underserved communities.

Wisconsin's congressional members voted along party lines in the 215-204 vote, sending the package, which includes Moore's Expanding Financial Access for Communities Act. The Milwaukee Dem in a press release said passing the legislation would be a step toward helping underbanked and unbanked communities.

“With this much-needed legislation, we will help honor the promise of financial freedom for all Americans and help give those previously shut out access to resources to achieve their dreams.” Wisconsin’s only Black congressional members said.

[See the release.](#)

[See the roll call.](#)

— U.S. Reps. Mike Gallagher and Ron Kind introduced a resolution highlighting the important role Wisconsin demonstration farms play in the adoption of conservation farming practices.

The resolution would recognize the 33 demonstration farms across Wisconsin and other farming conservation efforts across the country for their efforts modeling best farming practices that conserve the environment. Kind, D-La Crosse, in a joint release with his Gallagher, R-Allouez, said he’s proud of the legislation he says will recognizes efforts to ensure farming lands and watersheds stay healthy for generations.

““Demonstration farm networks play a critical role in allowing our agricultural industry to test and share cutting-edge conservation practices that help further our farmers’ efforts to be good stewards of the land,” he said.

Gallagher also touted his work with Kind he says will celebrate the innovation and hard work of these farmers.

“Northeast Wisconsin leads the nation in demonstration farm networks that educate and promote conservation farming practices, and the knowledge demonstration farmers share with their peers has helped expand soil health practices that protect freshwater sources in communities across the country,” Gallagher said.

[See the release.](#)

— U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin praised a bipartisan agreement to address gun violence that would increase background check requirements and incentivize states to pass red flag laws, among other things.

There is no final bill text for the agreement yet, but the framework for the agreement would provide states funding to create and implement red flag laws,

otherwise known as extreme risk protection orders, and require gun buyers under 21 to go through stricter background checks. The Madison Dem in a tweet praised the work.

“I stand on the side of taking action and this is a positive step forward that can help protect people from gun violence, mass shootings, and help save lives,” she said.

The framework also includes more funding for mental health resources and school safety resources, and stricter penalties for straw purchases.

U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson spokeswoman Alexa Henning told WisPolitics.com the Oshkosh Republican could like to see the bill text before saying if he would support it.

[See Baldwin's tweet.](#)

[See a release on the agreement.](#)

[See PolitiFact's breakdown of the framework.](#)

— U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher introduced a bill that would largely bar the Biden administration from canceling student loan debt.

The Student Loan Accountability Act would also bar loans already forgiven from being tax-exempt and block the Internal Revenue Service from sharing tax data it might use to cancel loans on a large scale. Gallagher, R-Allouez, in a press release said canceling student debt as many Americans struggle with the rising costs of goods would only exacerbate inflationary problems.

“While I believe the President lacks the legal authority to take this unilateral step, the Student Loan Accountability Act will provide an additional safeguard against executive overreach and this reckless agenda,” he said.

To prevent the Biden administration from canceling student debt, the bill would prohibit the Department of Education, Department of Justice, and the Department of Treasury from taking any action to cancel or forgive the debt.

[See the release.](#)

— U.S. Rep. Tom Tiffany this week called on Attorney General Merrick

Garland to do more to combat violent crime, citing concerns that local district attorneys are “declining to prosecute crimes.”

In a letter to Garland, the Minocqua Republican and GOP colleagues claimed there is a trend of local DAs trying to reduce sentences and offering plea agreements to repeat offenders.

“This abdication of professional responsibility has emboldened criminals and undermined the trust of law-abiding Americans in public institutions,” they wrote.

The lawmakers slammed Milwaukee District Attorney John Chisholm for releasing the man who drove his car through the Waukesha Christmas Parade in 2021, killing six and leaving more than 60 injured. They argued the idea that the criminal justice system is systematically racist has led to prosecutors “favoring criminals over their victims.”

The lawmakers requested information from each U.S. Attorney’s office about indictments and referrals for felon-in-possession cases and immigration-related criminal offenses for the past five years.

[See the letter.](#)

— The House of Representatives this week passed 369-42 bipartisan legislation aiming to make it harder for ocean carriers to unreasonably decline goods to export at ports and to address shipping backlogs and rising prices.

Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, co-sponsors the bill. The measure passed unanimously in the Senate in April and will now head to the president’s desk.

“This bipartisan legislation will ease the shipping backlogs, add transparency to the ocean carrier operators, and support our Made in Wisconsin economy, helping Wisconsin’s manufacturing and agriculture sectors get their products to market for a fair price and lowering costs for Americans,” Baldwin said.

Under the bill, ocean carriers must ensure late fees comply with federal regulations and shift the burden of proof for late fees to the ocean carrier, among other things.

U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher, R-Allouez, voted against the measure while U.S. Rep. Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, did not vote. All the state’s other representatives voted

to pass the legislation.

[See Baldwin's release.](#)

— The U.S. Department of Commerce this week awarded \$2.2 million in federal money to the Village of Muscoda to expand the village's industrial park.

The American Rescue Plan Act dollars will fund development opportunities for food processing and manufacturing businesses seeking to expand or relocate in the region. The endeavor includes \$55,455 in local funds and is estimated to create 100 jobs and produce \$35 million in private investment.

U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, who voted to pass the ARPA, said he was happy to see the legislation deliver for communities.

"This [Economic Development Administration] investment will go a long way towards creating jobs, supporting local businesses, and generating new opportunities for Wisconsinites," the La Crosse Dem said.

[See Kind's release.](#)

— Wisconsin's House delegation unanimously voted to approve extra protections for Supreme Court justices and their families.

The representatives approved the measure 396-27 with only Dems opposed to the bill that would give extra federal security protections for the justices' families. The news comes as justices have faced public backlash and seen protesters outside their homes after the leaked first draft opinion to overturn abortion access rights created by Roe V. Wade.=

Law enforcement outside Trump-appointee Justice Brett Kavanaugh's home recently arrested a man for attempting or threatening to kidnap or murder a U.S. judge.

The bill now heads to President Biden for consideration.

[See the roll call.](#)

— Johnson is demanding Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas participate in a hearing on the disbanded

Disinformation Governance Board.

The Oshkosh Republican alongside seven GOP colleagues in a letter to Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Chair U.S. Sen. Gary Peters, D-Mich., to talk about the nature and scope of what some have called the “Ministry of Truth.” The senators say they have obtained evidence contradicting Mayorkas’ May 4 testimony that the Disinformation Governance Board had not yet begun its work.

“The American public deserves transparency and honest answers to important questions about the true nature and purpose of the Disinformation Governance Board and it is clear that Secretary Mayorkas has not provided them – to the public or this Committee,” the senators wrote. “Therefore, we request you hold a hearing with Secretary Mayorkas and join us in insisting that all records related to the Board be provided to the Committee prior to the hearing.”

[See the release and letter.](#)

— Former Republican U.S. Rep. Reid Ribble has signed a letter urging Republicans to cooperate with the Jan. 6 committee investigating the attack on the U.S. Capitol.

“If in fact, they’re wanting their side of the story put out there, well go and tell it,” said the former Green Bay-area congressman. “If there’s some alternative reality here that we’re not seeing and there’s something different that happened that they know about that would make this look illegitimate, why don’t they go ahead and provide that information to the American people so that they can hear that side of the story, but apparently they’re not wanting to do that.”

More public hearings are scheduled this week.

[See more of Ribble’s interview on WISN’s UpFront.](#)

[See more here.](#)

— One Nation, a 501(c)(4) aligned with U.S. Senate GOP Leader Mitch McConnell, is out with a third TV ad praising Johnson.

The group didn’t release details about where the ad is running. It previously announced plans to spend \$9 million in Wisconsin as part of an issue advocacy

campaign.

The new ad focuses on gas prices, with the announcer saying the Biden administration cut American energy production. The spot then switches to an interview clip in which Johnson says the administration wants to “drive up the price of energy so apparently we use less of it.”

[See more here.](#)

[See the ad.](#)

Posts of the week

I had a great visit to [@MicronTech](#) to discuss the urgent need to pass the [#BipartisanInnovationAct](#), including the CHIPS Act, along with the FABS Act, to:

- ☐ Strengthen domestic manufacturing
- ☐ Invest in research
- ☐ Boost our supply chains
- ☐ Create good-paying jobs pic.twitter.com/ii1ZK4jPYt

— Sen. Tammy Baldwin (@SenatorBaldwin) [June 15, 2022](#)

Rep. Gallagher had a great time meeting with an [@packers](#) executive this afternoon, but we're still waiting on Aaron Rodgers to swing by. pic.twitter.com/FuDfuvuIRu

— Rep. Gallagher Press Office (@RepGallagher) [June 14, 2022](#)

This afternoon, I met with [@Energizer](#) regarding their impressive plant in [#Portage](#) that is bringing continued innovation and manufacturing jobs to

[#WI06. pic.twitter.com/8ZwNI3d5sb](#)

— Rep. Glenn Grothman (@RepGrothman) [June 15, 2022](#)

Gov. La Follette believed that we must be aggressive for what is right in order to save our government from those who are aggressive for what is wrong. On Fighting Bob La Follette Day, we renew that mission. Let's keep up the good fight in his memory. [pic.twitter.com/sR5aQgoZag](#)

— Rep. Mark Pocan (@RepMarkPocan) [June 14, 2022](#)

Happy 247 years to the U.S. Army! [pic.twitter.com/gFNFQ1gWiv](#)

— Bryan Steil (@RepBryanSteil) [June 14, 2022](#)

ICYMI

[Vets Exposed to Burn Pits in Afghanistan and Other Fronts Finally Get Recognition of Service-Related Health Issues](#)

[Wisconsin congressional delegation offers split response to Jan. 6 hearing as Republicans turn attention elsewhere](#)

[No challenger for Van Orden in WI-3 August primary, but four Dems will face off](#)

[Four Senate Democrats push Klobuchar to revise antitrust bill over hate speech concerns](#)

[A legacy of past choices: Milwaukee's housing crisis explained](#)