

DC Wrap: Republicans argue against lifting Title 42 as they say it would bring a flood of immigrants and problems

Posted on Thursday, Apr 28, 2022

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

"The Biden administration has executed a comprehensive and deliberate strategy to destroy the sovereignty of our nation. There is nothing safe, orderly, and humane about it. @SecMayorkas has intentionally made a mockery of our immigration law, and tomorrow I will demand answers."

– U.S. Rep. Tom Tiffany, R-Minocqua, criticizing Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas over the Biden administration's handling of border security ahead of Mayorkas' appearance at a House Judiciary Committee hearing.

"We need to be doing some resources and some help in the countries people are coming from. If we give people a reason not to leave the country they're in, then this political argument that some people like to have will become even less relevant than it even is to people in my district."

– U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Town of Vermont, in a PBS Wisconsin interview arguing against making it harder to cross the southern U.S. border.

This week's news

— **Both GOP U.S. Reps. Scott Fitzgerald, of Juneau, and Tom Tiffany, of Minocqua, visited the southern border last week to highlight concerns about border security.**

A federal judge in Louisiana on Monday temporarily blocked the Biden

administration from rolling back the Trump administration's Title 42 immigration policy.

Wisconsin Republicans in Washington, D.C., have fought to keep the measure in place, voicing concerns about drugs and human trafficking coming into the state. But one top Dem suggests Republicans are engaging in an election-year anti-immigration ploy.

The Title 42 public health authority — implemented in 2020 by the Trump administration — is set to expire May 23. Under the policy, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol can immediately remove detainees from border detention facilities. The measure allows the president to halt or decrease immigration to avoid spreading disease.

Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas this week [released a plan](#) for the likely increase in migration into the country once the policy is no longer in place. The plan comes in the wake of concerns from Republicans and some Democrats that the United States isn't prepared for a potential surge.

The plan includes actions such as: adding more customs and border protection officers along the border; increasing efficiency at border facilities; and targeting transnational criminal organization and smugglers aiming to bring drugs in into the country.

The report states the Biden administration inherited a "broken and dismantled immigration system" and acknowledges a likely strain on that system with an influx of migrants. However, the report states, the immigration system is one that "only Congress can fix."

The House Judiciary Committee that Tiffany and Fitzgerald serve on will hold a hearing on oversight of the Department of Homeland Security with Mayorkas this morning.

Border security has been a focus for Republicans during the 2021-2022 legislative session, with GOP U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson and U.S. Reps. Glenn Grothman, Bryan Steil, Fitzgerald and Tiffany all visiting the border with Mexico.

Meanwhile Dem U.S. Reps. Mark Pocan and Gwen Moore plus GOP Cong. Mike Gallagher visited the border during the Trump administration: Pocan visited in 2018;

Gallagher and Moore made the trip in 2019. Western Wisconsin Democratic U.S. Rep. Ron Kind has not visited the border during his time in office. U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin did not respond to multiple requests for comment on whether she had visited.

After his trip to the border last week, Tiffany said President Biden is not protecting the border, but “intentionally erasing it” and charged the Biden administration with “empowering drug and human traffickers” by lifting Title 42.

The Minocqua Republican traveled to the city of Yuma and Pinal County in Arizona to meet with U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers. Tiffany also met with Pinal County Sheriff Mark Lamb, an ally of Trump.

Prior to last week’s trip, Tiffany visited Arizona in 2020 to meet with ranchers, sheriffs and border patrol officials in Cochise County to discuss border security and ways to combat drug trafficking. He also made two Texas trips in 2021: first to McAllen, a city in southern Texas, and then to the Rio Grande Valley.

Although the Mexican border is nearly 2,000 miles from Wisconsin, Wisconsin Republicans like Tiffany have tied immigration to issues such as human trafficking and illegal drugs like fentanyl.

Tiffany said the “crisis” is “coming through Arizona’s front yard and ending up in Wisconsin’s backyard.”

Steil told WisPolitics.com that lifting Title 42 would be a “move in the wrong direction” and lead to a “dramatic and significant increase” in the number of adult migrants coming into the country.

The Janesville Republican has visited the border twice: first in 2019 with stops in New Mexico and Texas, and then another visit to Texas in 2021. Steil said he doesn’t have set plans to return to the border, but might make another trip.

“My biggest concern of all is the illicit fentanyl that’s coming into our country that’s killing thousands of people, even here in the state of Wisconsin — hundreds of people here in the state of Wisconsin,” Steil said.

According to the most recent data available from the state Department of Health Services, 1,051 Wisconsinites died of overdoses involving synthetic opioids — including fentanyl — in 2020. The data include drug overdose deaths where

fentanyl was found in the deceased's system. DHS is still finalizing the data for 2021. The numbers have increased over the years from 460 synthetic opioid deaths in 2017, to 504 in 2018 and 651 in 2019.

Gallagher last visited the border in 2019. The Allouez Republican told WisPolitics.com President Biden's push to lift Title 42 would only make matters at the border worse.

"Between trying to repeal the Trump administration's common-sense Remain in Mexico policy, rescinding Title 42, and flirting with the idea of clearing hundreds of thousands of cases from the immigration court backlog, the President has created a perfect storm in which illegal immigrants can come to the country, get a court date, and never have to show up because immigration judges cannot enforce discipline in the system," he said. "This is crazy."

Gallagher earlier this month announced a series of bills he says would help border issues. The legislation would bar members of cartels from coming into the United States, create a security team focused on combating illegal gun trafficking and give immigration judges the ability to impose fines on those in contempt of court, among other things.

Grothman told WisPolitics.com he's concerned lifting Title 42 could lead to what he called the end of the United States as we know it, and added lifting the policy would send a message the U.S. is a "weak" country with open borders.

"I think right now, as long as we have Title 42, some people from other countries stay here because they know some people are turned around," he said. "The day we get rid of that, there'll be a candy bar at the door and really the end of the United States of America."

The Glenbeulah Republican said lifting the policy would bring many immigrants the U.S. couldn't afford to deal with. He also raised concerns those crossing the border could increase the spread of COVID-19.

"So I think the idea that we just say 'devil may care anybody who come here' is a reckless thing to do, and for that reason, [Title 42] should be extended as well," he said.

But Pocan on MSNBC this month said he feels Title 42 had more to do with

extending Trump's border policies to prevent more immigrants from coming into the country.

"Title 42 had, I think, far less to do with COVID, and a lot more to do with an extension of the wall and, all of the other really divisive, hateful rhetoric that Donald Trump and some Republicans put forward," he said.

The Madison-area Dem added accepting refugees into the United States would be emblematic of the county's history.

"I think this is the right move so we can allow people who have legitimate asylum claims to be able to legitimately be refugees in this country like we have done for a very long time, and as we should continue to do as the greatest democracy on the planet," he said.

Fitzgerald's staff told WisPolitics.com the Juneau Republican is currently visiting the southern border. He also visited the border in July last year, raising concerns about illegal drugs and undocumented immigrants coming into the United States.

Fitzgerald did not respond to multiple requests for comment on Title 42, but he did voice support for the policy last year.

— Both Baldwin and Ron Johnson ranked among the 10 least popular senators in the country according to a new survey.

The Morning Consult survey released Tuesday asked voters in each state whether they approved or disapproved of the senators.

Of the 10 senators, Johnson ranked the second least popular behind U.S. Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., with a 51 percent disapproval rating; 37 percent approved of the Oshkosh Republican while 12 percent said they didn't know or didn't have an opinion.

Baldwin tied with Sens. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, and Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., with a 42 percent disapproval rating. Cruz came in at a 48 percent approval rating with Baldwin just behind at 43 percent approval. 15 percent of those surveyed said they didn't know or didn't have an opinion on Baldwin.

[See the survey.](#)

— Baldwin has introduced a bill aiming to boost access to clean water by providing water testing and treatment grants in rural areas.

Under the Health Drinking Water Affordability Act, grant money from the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture would go to individuals, non-profits or local governments. The legislation is intended to protect residents from emerging contaminants such as “PFAS, lead, nitrates and manure.”

PFAS, or per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, are a series of chemicals found in industrial and everyday products, most notably firefighting foam. They are commonly referred to as “forever chemicals” because they do not break down easily in the environment and are linked to several diseases and cancers in humans.

“Every Wisconsin community deserves access to clean drinking water and an environment free of toxic chemicals,” Baldwin said. “Across our state, communities are struggling to identify and treat known and emerging chemicals that endanger our health, especially for children.”

[See the release.](#)

— The House reauthorized the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources says it’s an important step to make sure states and the federal government collaborate.

DNR Office of Great Lakes Director Steve Galarneau told WisPolitics.com the legislation that was originally authorized in 1990 brings resources to Wisconsin to help protect the environment alongside its Great Lakes neighbors. Galarneau said without federal funds provided by the legislation, many projects and programs never would have gotten the extra funds they needed to get off the ground.

The House passed the measure in a voice vote and is up for consideration in the Senate.

“A lot of times these funds leverage other funds,” he said. “They make really important projects happen that wouldn’t happen but for the additional resources from these projects.”

Galarneau said the cooperation between different natural resources departments in different states helps them cover more ground with projects. He said it’s important

for states to cooperate on environmental issues because many ecosystems and environmental issues transcend borders.

He also said he's happy to see environmental issues have bipartisan support.

"The importance of the Great Lakes is apolitical," he said.

[See the bill text.](#)

— Tiffany introduced a bill to stop the Biden administration from appealing a decision by a Florida judge that lifted the national mask mandate on airplanes.

Under the bill, the administration would not be able to use federal funds to appeal the decision. The Minocqua Republican in a release said Americans "should be free to choose whether they want to wear a mask or not."

"Taxpayers shouldn't be forced to finance President Biden's endless campaign of virtue signaling to satisfy his political base," Tiffany said. "This sad saga of bureaucratic overreach has gone on for far too long."

[See the release.](#)

Posts of the week

Today, Rep. Gallagher met veterans participating in the Old Glory Honor Flight at Arlington National Cemetery.

It's always incredible to see generations of veterans get the opportunity to come to DC and see the memorials that honor their courage and sacrifice. pic.twitter.com/CliVlxkyc7

— Rep. Gallagher Press Office (@RepGallagher) [April 26, 2022](#)

Attention [#WI02](#) high schoolers ☐ Have you submitted your artwork for the Congressional Art Competition yet?

We're accepting submissions for one more week. Click here for more information: <https://t.co/hq8W8R9IC4> pic.twitter.com/8y4rNe0WAY

— Rep. Mark Pocan (@RepMarkPocan) [April 26, 2022](#)

Thank you Oak Creek Police Department for your efforts to fight crime and keep our community safe! pic.twitter.com/fsO0caADRZ

— Bryan Steil (@RepBryanSteil) [April 26, 2022](#)

Absolutely devastating. Tawni and I are keeping Lily's family, friends, and the entire Chippewa Falls community in our prayers during this unimaginably difficult time. <https://t.co/YpnqMSxFbQ>

— Archive: Rep. Ron Kind (@RepRonKind) [April 26, 2022](#)

Today is [#DenimDay](#) which means that every day we must stand up against sexual violence and stand with survivors so they know they are never alone. pic.twitter.com/s35PoKK5iT

— Sen. Tammy Baldwin (@SenatorBaldwin) [April 27, 2022](#)

ICYMI

[Rep. Ron Kind announces the winning entries to the Artistic Discovery art](#)

[competition](#)

[Tom Tiffany launches re-election campaign](#)

[McCarthy defends 1/6 audio, House GOP backs 'next speaker'](#)

[In DC, Musk's Twitter deal is either a free speech victory or fuel to tax the rich](#)